

## Region

# Council decision on water plans to 2031 expected soon

By **MIKE ADLER**  
Staff Reporter

York Regional council's looming decision on future water supplies is going to determine more than which lake that water will come from.

The plan it chooses will raise water rates for York Region consumers, or lower them consistently for the next 34 years.

The wholesale rate of 43 cents a cubic metre could rise as high as 67 cents (in 1996 dollars) by 2031, or it could go as low as 26 cents, in nine possible solutions presented by Consumers Utilities.

The consortium, in partnership with the region, plans to build pipelines to Lake Simcoe, Georgian Bay, or Lake Ontario, or a combination of several.

The independent solutions, which don't share water with other municipalities, cost the most — \$900 million to \$1.3 billion — and all lead to increases in water rates, steep at first, then less so.

All others, which assume water continues to flow north from Metro Toronto until 2031, show a slight, steady decline in rates. But some of these solutions trigger a big, immediate jump in the water portion of regional development charges — a few would push them up 20 to 52 per cent.

After the consortium presented its solutions last week, Markham Mayor Don Cousens said he wants to hear ways the project can lower the water portion of the charge, "so we can show it to people who are looking at (building in) York Region.

"That to me is a win-win situation," he explained. But Regional Councillor Carole Bell and other councillors disapproved, saying this would force water rates up. "You're suggesting (that we) give the developers a break and put it on the back of the consumer," argued Bell.

Afterwards, Regional Councillor Bill Fisch said new residents must pay their fair share. "We have to ensure whatever alternative we choose is affordable to our present community," he concluded.

The one-time development charge hike is designed to work off the debt caused by construction of one pipe, and then a second, along each route by 2031. By then, the consortium said, the region will need 210 million gallons a day, even if it manages to save almost four million more gallons a day by fixing leaks and encouraging conservation.

Making the necessary applications and building the pipes is expected to take about seven years.

A deal on the table to raise the 38 million gallons received each day through Toronto to 57 million can give the region enough water to handle growth during this period, but the region will need to spend \$103 million to pay for this "bridge," Consumers Utilities vice-president Jim Southworth said.

## Keep watch for counterfeit bills: Police

York Regional Police are asking the public to keep a sharp eye out for counterfeit money.

An increasing number of reports about people passing the fake stuff have been received in Stouffville, Markham, Richmond Hill and Newmarket. The most common denominations are \$10, \$20, \$50. Police said if it doesn't feel right, don't accept it.

You can conduct your own simple tests. Fold the suspect bill and rub it across a white piece of paper. If a color smear appears, it's not counterfeit. Also, on a genuine bill the little green dots called planchettes are removable. On a counterfeit bill they don't come off because they are usually photocopied on.

Police ask residents to report all unusual bills to police at 881-1221.

There will be an open house with regional staff on the alternatives at Markham Centennial Community Centre at 8600 McCowan Rd. from 2 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 7.

"Nothing has been decided," cautioned Regional Chairman Eldred King.

Regional Council may vote on a preferred solution as early as Dec. 19.

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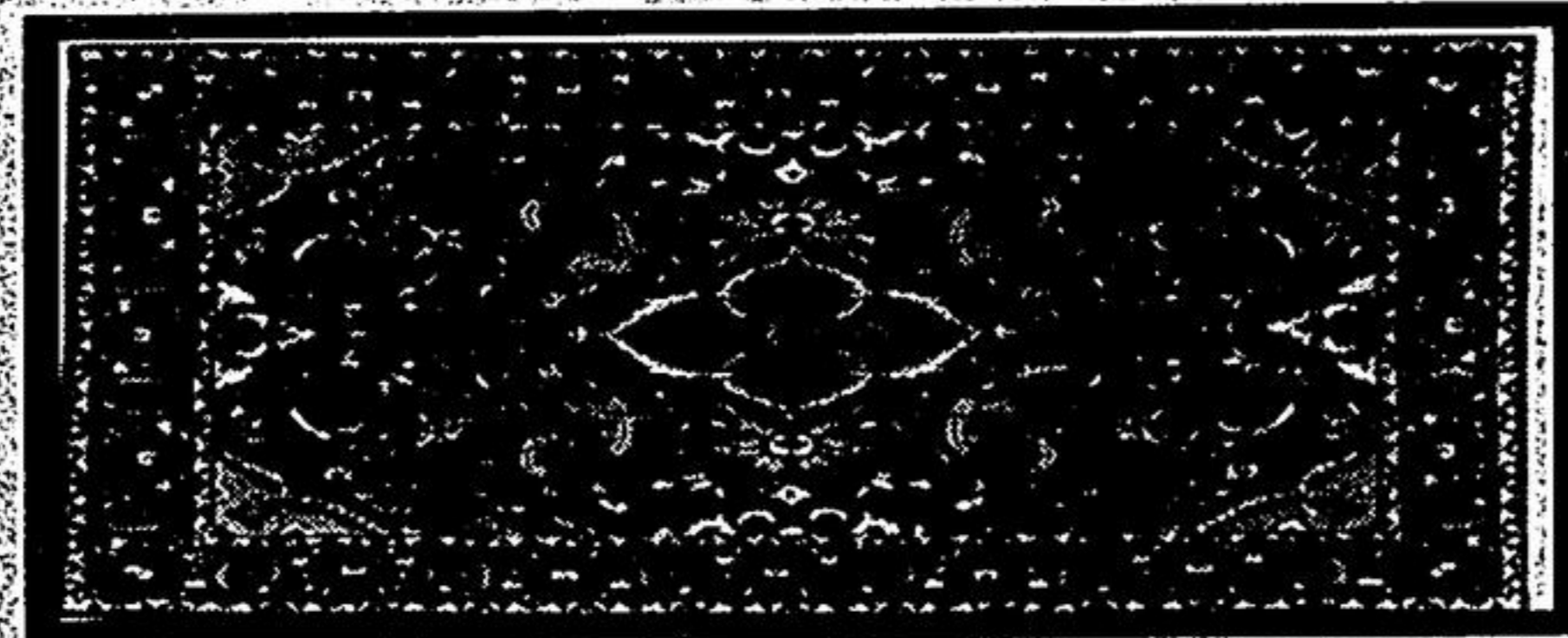
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