

ANALYSIS: Pace of Growth Symposium examines issue in York Region

Managing growth requires input from all stakeholders

Is York Region growing too quickly?

Are there too many subdivisions and not enough trees?

Is traffic getting on your nerves as you make your way from one end of the region to the other?

York Region officials recognize there's concern in the community about the pace of growth we're experiencing and how our regional government is managing it.

Within two decades, there will be 1.1 million (or more) of us living in York Region. Right now, there's 677,000.

Through its Official Plan Report Card process last year, an extensive program of community seminars, workshops and surveys, the region learned that residents had strong feelings about traffic congestion, about lack of transit, about the provision of human and social services, about protecting agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas, about retaining the identity of their communities and about provision of community facilities, such as schools.

An outstanding example of inviting the public to get involved in the decision-making process, the Official Plan Report Card allowed residents to tell the



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region how effectively it is doing its job for them.

And on Monday, the region took its open approach another step by asking community stakeholders to help officials determine how effectively the region is dealing with its rapid growth.

The Pace of Growth Symposium, held at the region's headquarters on Yonge Street, drew representatives from the development industry, from environmental groups, from health care and education, from politics and business, from the media and asked them to provide their input on growth, on the development process and on its implications on the quality of life in the region.

We reviewed the pace of growth (for example, there are 57,000 new housing units approved, a seven-year supply of housing) and some of the

processes in place to manage that growth.

The region has already created its official plan (and completed a review of that plan), there are long-range water and sewer plans, a transportation network plan, financial forecasts, capital works plans and a tracking and monitoring system in place.

Out of the review process, the region has developed strategies to deal with human services, integration of transit and corporate planning.

So the challenge given to the stakeholders at Monday's symposium was to assess the pace of growth and help the region identify ways to more effectively manage it.

We broke into discussion groups and the input was as varied as the backgrounds of the participants.

In my group, for example, developers and environmentalists shared their expertise and their concerns.

Consultants and educators offered insights into the people who make York Region home. The discussion was wide-ranging and, we all hope, beneficial to the region's planning process.

We asked the region to take

See REGIONAL, page 11.

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