

York's economy on fire

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According to the region's long-range planner John Waller, the results of the report, which looks at population and employment forecasts, will be used to help ensure services and infrastructure are provided to handle the growth.

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"The population and employment growth rates that are anticipated to occur in York Region through to the year 2026 will put increased pressures on the quality of life that residents currently enjoy and on the community services the region will be able to provide," the report said.

"York Region will continue to face a number of growth management challenges in maintaining its economic competitiveness and high quality of life."

The report stated 713,000 people were living in the region by the end of 1999. That's up about 35,000 over 1998, said Waller, adding York has seen three years of strong growth.

But while population growth in the late 1990s was above regional forecasts, he said it was bal-

anced by the fact the recession saw slower than predicted growth.

Because the fertility rate in the region is less than the 2.1 births per woman needed to replace the population, York's population increase is attributed to international immigration and migration from other parts of Canada.

Meanwhile, employment growth is outpacing residential growth, the report said.

"Employment growth has increased at a higher rate than population growth, an indicator of the strength of the region's economy. York's total employment increased from 49,000 in 1971 to 110,000 in 1981, 248,000 by 1991 and reached 330,000 by 1998," the report said.

"Annual growth rates averaged 8.6 per cent in the 1970s and 1980s. During the recession of the early 1990s, employment growth averaged 3.3 per cent and has since rebounded to over 6 per cent since 1996."

Waller expects York's good fortune will continue. The region's share of the Greater Toronto Area's population climbed from 9.4 per cent in 1986 to more than 13 per cent last year. Waller predicts it will hit 17.5 per cent in 2021.

York's population is expected to hit one million in 2011, 1.1 million in 2016, 1.18 million in 2021 and 1.28 million in 2026.

In 2011, the number of jobs in York is expected to reach 540,000, climbing to 600,000 in 2016, 655,000 in 2021 and 696,000 in 2026.

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