

# U.S. model cities controlling sprawl

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all, within a budget that reflects the rate of inflation, so as not to overburden weary taxpayers.

"Really what we're trying to accomplish is a very business-like orientation to the matters we handle at the region," Fisch said.

"Not only do they require big dollars, they're serious quality of life issues here in the region."

Planning commissioner Brian Tuckey sees a future of managed, smart growth in York Region and throughout the Greater Toronto Area. Earlier this month, his department presented a preliminary report to regional politicians, outlining the goals and principles of growth management. York will focus on issues within its boundaries and take a leading role in a GTA-wide strategy, Tuckey said.

There are numerous issues, including infrastructure, transit, nodal development and green space conservation, that transcend parochial boundaries and concerns, he said.

Tuckey favours the smart-growth philosophies being embraced south of the border, where states and cities throughout America have adopted planning policies aimed at reining in sprawl and making efficient use of lands within urban boundaries.

Massive federal, state and municipal investment has occurred. Public transit and

infrastructure are being designed to move people efficiently. And cities are redirecting development and housing to core areas and old inner neighbourhoods, Tuckey said.

As a result, sprawl is being brought under control and greenspaces are being preserved, rather than being devoured by low-density residential development. Downtown cores, once all but lost to desertion and decay, are being reclaimed. Cities are being brought back to life.

Such a model is ideal for York and the GTA, Tuckey insists.

"It's very much city-building now, we're not suburban anymore," he said.

And a strategy to handle future growth is essential.

*"I really believe we are in a position to do something that will have an impact in 60 years."*

"One hundred and five thousand to 110,000 people are going to come to this area (the GTA) every year for the next 10 years," Tuckey said.

He said that kind of sustained population boom will require an appropriate variety of housing, huge improvements in public transit and massive investments in infrastructure.



**DON EASTWOOD:** York Region's economy will continue to be strong through economic downturn.

Tuckey says the work that's being done now will have profound effects on the quality of life in York Region and the GTA 40, 50 and 60 years from now. And that's what makes the task at hand so daunting — and exciting.

"I really believe we are in a position to do something that will have an impact in 60 years," Tuckey said.

Going hand-in-hand with planning and growth will be York's economic development. The region recently endorsed the formation of an economic development strategy that will identify York's strengths and needs and help plot a course for the future.

Economic development director Don Eastwood is hopeful that strategy will involve

partnerships between government and the private sector to maximize growth and prosperity opportunities.

Eastwood knows that during the consultation phase of the study, he'll be hearing divergent views from across a large, diverse region. But he is confident of one thing: York's economy is strong and will continue to be healthy through the current economic downturn and into the future.

While some negative signs are already evident — the social services department reported increases in welfare dependency for two consecutive months this fall, the first time that's happened in years — Eastwood contends the region's economy has enough forward momentum after years of growth to sustain itself.

The economy's diversity — a combination of large employers; with a majority of "agile" smaller businesses — is its strength, Eastwood said.

"I have a feeling the next few years are going to be turbulent ones in terms of the global economy," he said.

"Our ability to weather them is pretty good, because we have a diverse range of businesses in York Region."

A business-like approach will be the key to addressing issues, providing services and planning effectively for the future, Fisch said. That begins with setting budgets and staying within them.

# Hospital user fees called 'risky business'

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Health Act for 20 years. If anything, it has prevented changes that are necessary.

But others are loath to introduce user fees to cover funding shortfalls.

"I think it's risky business," Joe Pilon said when the issue of user fees was discussed at the annual conference of the Ontario Hospital Association in November.

Pilon is the executive director of the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance, an organization representing the interests of hospitals in York, Durham, Peel and Halton regions.

He said taxes should cover health care, including the \$100-million shortfall hospitals in the Greater Toronto Area are facing.

"I think people will fall through the cracks (if user fees are implemented). I personally don't think we want a deterrent for people who need the system," Pilon said.

"I think it's a risky place to go. But, having said that, the public may have a different response."

Dr. Jim MacLean, president of Markham Stouffville Hospital, also voiced opposition to user fees when hospital associ-

ation president David MacKinnon warned his organization is being forced to consider them to cover funding shortfalls.

"Canadians value their universal health-care system," MacLean said.

"I think we all have to pay for it. If that means we have to pay for it through taxation both at the federal and provincial levels, then that's the way we should pay for it, instead of having people who use it, pay more."

MacLean disagreed there is rampant abuse of the health-care system by patients.

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*Dr. Jim MacLean, president of Markham Stouffville Hospital*

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