

# Hydro lines may be on backburner

BY ROY GREEN  
Staff Writer

Plans for a controversial hydro transmission line stretching from Markham to Newmarket may be shelved in favour of a new transformer station in King Township and energy conservation programs, regional politicians were told this week.

While that is good news for Markham and Aurora residents whose homes border the hydro line, it raises concerns about the future supply of electricity.

The York Region Electricity Supply working group, made up of residents from six of the region's nine municipalities as well as representatives from the region and area municipalities, have been meeting weekly with the Ontario Power Authority since mid-June to discuss options for bringing additional power to the north end.

At a meeting of elected officials this week, Oak Ridges MPP

Frank Klees and a number of mayors and councillors were told the best short-term solution is to build a new transformer station, probably on land owned by Hydro One in King Township, and begin "aggressive energy conservation programs" among residents and businesses.

There is a general consensus in the working group that transmission lines, especially the Hydro One plan for a line of towers from Markham to Newmarket, are no longer a priority, at least in the short term, according to Mr. Klees.

Aurora Councillor Phyllis Morris agreed, saying "It's not that (transmission) is not an option any more. It's no longer a desired option."

Building a transformer station could assure there will be electricity until at least 2011 and a successful conservation demand management program could stretch that to 2016, the

group was told. But abandoning transmission lines altogether could be dangerous, considering the region's population growth, East Gwillimbury Mayor James Young said.

"If transmission lines don't get built, what are we going to do for power in the future?" Mr. Young said. He cited a report circulated Wednesday showing an average of almost 11,000 housing starts every year since 2001 in York Region and forecasting the same growth rate to 2011.

"I would feel more comfortable if we had the power we need here, regardless of how well conservation works," he said.

The OPA will make its final recommendation Sept. 9 and intends to make a formal presentation to the Ontario Energy Board Sept. 30.

There will be an open house explaining the options and conclusions Sept. 14.

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