

Little provincial election debate about managing growth

From page 1.

boundaries, rather than sprawling further outward.

The hope is to create work/live/play neighbourhoods, where you can walk or take transit, instead of commuting or driving to do what you need to.

Having accessible transit is a big part of getting so many new people into York Region without worsening the already-terrible gridlock. The Liberals have moved aggressively to take the higher ground on the issue.

The extension of the TTC Spadina subway up into York Region has been in the works for years, finally getting the go-ahead in 2006. But Dalton McGuinty surprised everyone in May when he announced a \$17.5 billion regional transit plan which included extending the Yonge line up to Richmond Hill.

The Progressive Conservative party voted against the Spadina extension at Queen's Park, but local candidates including Peter Shurman in Thornhill and Alex Yuan in Richmond Hill, have expressed support for the Yonge line.

Whether people will change their car-loving ways and make use of it is the big question.

As for the major parties, they must be assuming that sprawl is now being hemmed in because there is little talk about it on the campaign trail.

"There are bits and pieces, none of which I'd describe as dramatic," said Mark Winfield, an assistant

professor of environmental studies at York University

He said the major parties have made scattered promises about improving transit or growing the greenbelt, but there is nothing to match the ambitious plans, since passed into legislation, proposed by the Liberals in 2003.

Paradoxically, those plans being in place but not yet fulfilled can create the illusion there is nothing more to do.

"There's a risk of that," Mr. Winfield said. "The problem is that we're not done ... the process of sprawl is continuing to move outwards."

Mr. Winfield was also the project director of a report from the Pembina Institute in which York Region was the seventh-ranked community in the province in terms of its sustainability. He said he does not see any of the parties bringing a holistic approach to the problems of growth and sustainability.

In Markham and Vaughan densely concentrated, transit-oriented neighbourhoods are in the works, but Places to Grow's shortcomings are also becoming evident. York Region has grown more than 20 per cent in the past five years while Ontario's population grew six per cent. That huge discrepancy has led to vast funding shortfalls, with local residents receiving far less than the average Ontario resident for crucial social services.

A recent report by the Strong Communities Coalition found a

The pace of growth is so exceedingly rapid, it's a game of catch up.

Daniele Zanotti
CEO, United Way of York Region

gap of \$1.6 billion between what the 905 regions need and what they are receiving.

"The pace of growth is so exceedingly rapid, it's a game of catch up," said Daniele Zanotti, United Way of York Region CEO.

Most crucially, while municipalities are finding new ways to house the 3.7 million people expected to move to the Golden Horseshoe area by 2031, they are also asking where they will find the money for hospitals, libraries and social services to make those lives comfortable. Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti has been leading the charge, asking the province to step to the table with money specifically earmarked for the tremendous growth taking place here.

In May, Markham hosted an event celebrating the first anniversary of Places to Grow and Mr. Scarpitti used the opportunity to praise David Caplan, the provincial minister of public infrastructure and renewal, but also to needle him. "I know the minister hasn't heard this in the past year but municipalities need more money," Mr. Scarpitti said.

But, is anybody taking up that

challenge? The Liberals have said they are awaiting word from the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, set to report in early 2008 on who should be paying for what. In the meantime the government has taken steps to upload some of the costs downloaded onto municipalities under the Harris regime.

Most significantly, they are phasing out GTA pooling, a system under which local residents sent \$85 million to fund social services in Toronto.

Progressive Conservatives have said they would have the delivery review report completed this year so they can implement changes in a spring budget.

For now, they have promised to invest \$8.5 billion in the health-care system over four years, including growth funding earmarked for regions such as the 905. That constitutes progress, but it is still just a drop in the bucket.

Ongoing funding and a \$1 billion lump sum would be a start, but no one is offering that just yet.

These are all big dollar figures but they should not distract from the very real impact on families: Whether it is fewer women's shelters or longer waits for therapy, local residents are feeling the impact in very tangible ways and they will get worse if the funding situation is not rectified in the near future.

If you have a \$100,000 family income and are in the market for a detached home in York Region, you should be okay. If, on the

other hand, you are looking for a cheap home to start your family or, heaven forbid, an apartment to rent, you will have a much tougher road ahead.

Yes, more high-rises than ever before are going up as are subdivisions with greater densities, but shaking York Region out of its single-detached stupor is a long-term effort.

Mr. Winfield's Pembina Institute report ranked York Region 27th out of 27 Ontario communities in terms of the diversity of its housing stock and starter homes of \$300,000 or less are virtually extinct south of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

As for the rental market, it is so anemic as to make the housing market look soft.

Condominiums are becoming increasingly normal north of Steeles with several landmark high-rises in early stages, but the same cannot be said for rental units.

With over 5,000 people on the region's waiting list for subsidized housing, and an average wait approaching eight years, the problem is already critical.

The Liberal platform does pledge to create a long-term strategy for affordable housing, but what that will be remains to be seen.

The Tories have countered that they would look into expanding co-op housing, but their platform otherwise skips over the issue.

Overall it seems that while the major parties have some potentially good ideas about steps that need to be taken, no one has yet made the leap to formulating a solution.

Stouffville Churches Welcome You

STOUFFVILLE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH
6853 Main Street
Sunday, October 7, 2007
Thanksgiving Sunday
10:00 a.m.
"Serving Our Community"
- Pastor Paul Hilsden -
Kidsville for ages 2 - Grade 8
Wednesday at 7:00 pm
Kidz Club - Ages 5 - Grade 5
Junior Youth - Grades 6, 7 & 8
Ladies Exercise Class
Marriage Course Sunday Evenings
Oct. 14 - Dec. 2
Call church at 905-640-5696 for information
www.spckids.ca

HARVEST BIBLE CHAPEL
Sunday Service
10:00 am
at Middlefield Collegiate
525 Highglen Ave., Markham
Message: "The Anchor of the Soul"
Questions? Call us at (416) 725-6155
Visit us at www.harvestmarkham.ca
Email us at info@harvestmarkham.ca
Pastor Dave Teruel

STOUFFVILLE UNITED CHURCH
34 Church St. N. 905-640-1163
info@stouffvilleuc.ca
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, 2007
10:30 AM WORSHIP SERVICE
Guest Minister
Lillian Perigoe 'The Reverend Doctor'
COMMUNION SERVICE
Children's Worship & Baby Fold
& Youth Spirit
EVERYONE WELCOME
Website: www.stouffvilleuc.ca

BLOOMINGTON GOSPEL CHURCH
13660 Ninth Line N.
(905) 642-4414
Rev. Peter Pallant
Sunday, October 14, 2007
174th Anniversary of B.G.C.
11:00 am
Rev. Bud Penner
of the A.G.C. will be
our guest speaker in the
Morning Worship Service
Everyone Welcome

Springvale Baptist Church
Stouffville Rd. at Kennedy Rd.
905-887-5651
www.springvale.org
Senior Pastor: Bob Flemming
Youth & Family: Jay Sandiford
Student Ministries: Alex Street
Children's Ministries: Sharon Russell
Counselling Services: Karla Kamerman
October 7th, 2007
9:45 am
Thanksgiving
Celebration Service
Pastor Jay Sandiford
11:11 am
Sunday School for all Ages

Parkview Village
12184 Ninth Line South, Sunday,
Sunday, October 7th, 2007
Pastor Cameron Kauffman Fry
Community Mennonite Church
7:00 pm

Welcome to...
ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Kathryn Strachan, Minister
6432 Main St. Stouffville
Phone: 905-640-3151
email: st.james.stouffville@bellnet.ca
Sunday, October 7
Service of Thanksgiving
World Communion
Sunday
10:30 a.m.

Saturday, October 27
Fall bazaar
9:30 a.m. to noon
'A Friendly Family Church'

THE ANGLICAN PARISH of CHRIST CHURCH
254 Sunset Blvd., Stouffville
The Rev. Canon Robert Shields
The Rev. Jason Prisley, Associate
(905) 640-1461
Sunday, October 7th
Harvest Thanksgiving
Services at 8am & 10am
Nursery and Church School
at 10am
Friday, October 5th
Floor Hockey in the Great Hall
at 7pm
Come & See
www.stouffvilleanglican.ca
e-mail: admin@stouffvilleanglican.ca

Bored with Church?
Join the club.
PATHWAYS UNITED CHURCH
A vibrant and fresh spiritual community offering
worship, life and faith programming meaningful
for all ages in today's society regardless of
background. Come check us out!
Sundays at 10:30 a.m.
Heritage Centre 17 Anna Russell
Way, Unionville
More Info? www.pathwayschurch.ca
or 647-400-0673
Sunday Children's corner
Teens programming

To advertise in the Church section please contact Tyler Duncan at 905-294-2200