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Sunday, March 6, 2016

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York leaders seek federal funding from Trudeau

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As part of the first trip of its kind to Parlia-

ment Hill for York Region leaders, politicians will meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau today to lobby for funding for a number of regional projects.

"This is a big deal for York Region. This is a great opportunity for us to (meet) face-to-face with those in the federal government who are making the decisions," regional chair Wayne Emmerson, who is leading the contingent,

"I know we'll get results. I'm confident."

In addition to Emmerson, the group includes East Gwillimbury Mayor Virginia Hackson, Georgina Mayor Margaret Quirk, Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Aurora Mayor Geoff Dawe, Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Justin Altmann, Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Markham Councillor Jack Heath, Markham Councillor Ioe Li, Markham Councillor Nirmala Armstrong, Richmond Hill Councillor Brenda Hogg, regional CAO Bruce Macgregor, director of government relations and executive assistant to the chair Lina Bigioni and Greg Stasyna, program manager of training, exercise and public education.

Vaughan and King Township are not sending representatives.

The group left by bus Wednesday at noon and is expected to arrive back late tonight.

The cost for the bus is \$1,000 and 15 hotel rooms at \$169 a night each comes to \$2,535.

In addition to seeing Trudeau, the contingent is meeting with York MPs and officials from a number of federal departments including finance, environment and climate change, infrastructure, innovation and science and economic development.

The trip marks the first time York has sent a group of leaders together to promote the region's infrastructure priorities and seek funding from the federal government, Emmerson said.

York politicians and officials are arguing for

the need for more federal dollars to help the region keep up with its tremendous growth, he said.

The region now has a population of more than 1.1 million, which will grow to 1.8 million by 2041.

The region has many shovel-ready and shovel-worthy projects ready to go that would improve residents' quality of life while creating jobs and protecting the environment, Emmerson said.

The group will lobby for:

- · Extending the Yonge Street subway north from Finch Avenue to Richmond Hill's Langstaff urban growth centre, which would help remove many of the 2,400 buses serving the route every day;
- · Completing the final four Viva rapidway segments, including along Yonge from Richmond Hill to Newmarket, east from Unionville station to Cornell, along Hwy. 7 west from Islington Avenue to Hwy. 50 and at Yonge Street and Green Lane;
- · Commitments for long-term investments in affordable housing and developing a national housing strategy;
- Funding for the Upper York Sewage System, needed to accommodate growth in East Gwillimbury, Newmarket and Aurora until
- · Supporting public sector broadband initiatives throughout the region, which suffers from areas lacking broadband connectivity.

While York politicians aren't expecting to get a firm commitment for federal funding, the trip is about raising the region's profile as the government delivers on its policies, including the March 22 budget, Emmerson

Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti agreed.

"I think it's important for us, with a population of over one million in York Region, I think it's important for us to continue to tell the York Region story and the story on many fronts is that we want to continue with economic prosperity in this region," he said.

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