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For Immediate Release

York Region commits to taking action on sustainability and improving air quality at the 2006 Smog Summit

Theme for the 2006 Smog Summit – Partnerships for Clean Air

NEWMARKET – York Region joined federal, provincial and GTA municipal leaders today at the 2006 Smog Summit, being held June 7 and 8 in Toronto. At the Summit, participants affirmed a common commitment to clean air initiatives to reduce smog, air pollution and greenhouse gases with the signing of the *Toronto and Region 2006 Inter-governmental Declaration on Clean Air*.

Vaughan Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio, Chair of the York Region Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee, signed the *Declaration* on behalf of York Regional Council.

“York Region is taking action on sustainability by working with our many partners to enhance York Region’s natural environment, improve air quality and protect public health,” said Councillor Frustaglio. “We must ensure that growth management decisions are sustainable and meet not only the needs of our current communities, but our future residents as well.”

Over the next 25 years, York Region’s forecasted population and employment growth will add almost 600,000 people and 340,000 jobs, bringing the population to 1.5 million and employment to 780,000 by 2031. To plan for these increases, York Region faces a number of complex issues, including managing growth, congestion, and most importantly, protecting and enhancing our environment, including the air we breathe.

During a municipal roundtable dialogue, Councillor Frustaglio discussed York Region’s many sustainability and growth management initiatives that will help reduce emissions and improve air quality. Several of these initiatives have won national and international awards, such as the *Water for Tomorrow Program*, the *State of the Environment 2005 Report*, the *Energy and Environmental Management System* and Viva Rapid Transit.

In keeping with the theme of the 2006 Smog Summit, “Partnerships for Clean Air,” Councillor Frustaglio described a few Regional initiatives that will continue to benefit from public and private partnerships. These include:

- *Planning for Tomorrow*, York Region’s new Growth Management initiative: Initiated in March 2006 and continuing over the next 18 months, Regional Council has begun a process to solicit public and partner input to ensure that the growth management decisions are sustainable and meet the needs of current and future communities.
- *Sustainable Buildings Program*, recently approved by York Regional Council: New regional facilities will be designed and constructed to meet, at a minimum, the certification of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver program, a rating system that represents an international effort to improve occupant health and production, environmental friendliness and economic returns of buildings by using an established set of innovative practices, standards and technologies. One example is the joint Fire and EMS emergency response station currently under construction, in partnership with the City of Vaughan. This 13,600 square foot LEED Silver

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Standard facility is projected to result in 37% energy savings below the model national energy code for buildings, and an annual reduction of 43.8 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

- *Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan Study*: This program will improve walking and cycling routes which, in turn, will support more sustainable land development and complement public transit. The Region is consulting with partners including local municipalities, conservation authorities, York Region Transit, and other stakeholders including the general public.
- *Smart Commute York Region*: To manage travel demand, improve local air quality and promote sustainable modes of transportation York Regional Council recently approved the Smart Commute York Region program which is designed to encourage employees to use alternative modes of transportation to the single occupant vehicle.

As outlined in the *Declaration*, York Region joins other members of the GTA Clean Air Council to participate in the following activities:

- Develop a strategy to reduce emissions associated with off-road equipment and heavy duty vehicles in the municipal fleets.
- Promote low-cost energy efficiency options through the organization of workshops and or pilot projects
- Explore best practice approaches to improve air quality and promote renewable energy projects
- Explore the development of a Heat Health Strategy and Guideline to address smog, extreme heat and health impacts
- Research green building programs currently under development in other jurisdictions

A “Best Practices Exchange” workshop series will be held at the Smog Summit the afternoons of June 7 and 8. Through the workshops local networks in Ontario, Quebec, eastern Canada, mid-western and north-eastern United States will unite to identify best practices and future areas of partnership and collaboration to achieve the common goal of reducing air pollution within our shared air shed. York Region will be highlighting the *20/20 The Way to Clean Air Program* and the *Greening Strategy* as examples of how partnerships have achieved successes in improving air quality.

York Region has been a member of the GTA Clean Air Council since 2001. Other members include five of York Region’s local municipalities: the Township of King, the Towns of Markham, Newmarket and Richmond Hill, and the City of Vaughan. For more information about the Council and the 2006 Smog Summit, visit www.smogsummit.org

For further information on air quality issues, or to obtain a copy of the *Smog Alerts* booklet or *20/20 The Way to Clean Air Planner Guide*, please contact York Region Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.

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Attachment: Copy of *Toronto and Region 2006 Inter-governmental Declaration on Clean Air*.

For more information on the Regional Municipality of York and our services, please visit www.york.ca

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