

Region approves Development Charge policies to help address housing concerns

York Regional Council has approved new Development Charge (DC) policies aimed at addressing the housing crisis.

Among the key changes is a deferral in DCs – that is, money that developers are required to pay municipalities to account for a strain on infrastructure due to growth – in several key areas, including a deferral for non-luxury rental units, as long as they operate as rental units for a minimum of 40 years before their use changes; a deferral for ground-related development and deferring payment for hard-service development charges like water and wastewater until the Region issues its first building issuance; on high-rise buildings for their first two years; and more.

“We have continued taking necessary steps to create a more inclusive and accessible housing market for residents in the Regional Municipality of York,” said Regional Chair Eric Jolliffe in a statement. “While we consistently work with our partners in senior levels of government on advocacy efforts for this important work, there are actions we can proactively put in place at a Regional level by way of development charge deferrals and incentives and prioritize those struggling to find and keep housing.”

Additional measures include a first-time homebuyers' DC-equivalent rebate for new homes up to \$1.5 million, “passing savings to homebuyers to take effect pending receipt of new dedicated funding from provincial and federal governments to fully offset costs”; increasing flexibility for developers providing upfront financing for infrastructure; modernizing security requirements to accept Pay on Demand Surety Bonds for DC deferral agreements; and new redevelopment measures to encourage the “prompt demolition of derelict buildings.”

“This persistent effort is crucial as we implement timely updates to development charges in the Region,” said Township of King Mayor Steve Pellegrini, Chair of Finance and Administration. “Development charges are an important tool to produce infrastructure needed to support any new development. We look forward to hitting the ground running with these incentives to help encourage a variety of housing options to improve the current landscape.”

Regional Council members took a final sweep of the DC changes in a lengthy meeting at the end of June, where much of the debate focused on the intent of terms used within the motions that were up for consideration.

Concerns were also raised about the financial impacts deferring Development Charges would ultimately have on the Region and its reserve funds.

By Brock Weir