

# Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

## New chief welcomed

We welcome the news that Julian Fantino will lead York Region's police force.

We don't envy him the task he faces, but we believe he certainly has the ability and the track record to address, among other issues, the litany of problems with York Region's police force.

Recall what the force has been through in the past few years:

- a damning provincial audit that indicated the force was poorly managed and ineffectively structured;
- a serious morale problem among rank-and-file officers, who feel there is no opportunity for promotion or advancement in the York Region department's restrictive environment;
- a former chief facing breach-of-public-trust charges one involving a payment of \$125,000 from Magna;
- a weapons unit officer convicted of benefiting from the sale of weapons;
- external criticism of the force's investigation techniques and results, particularly in the case of Christine Jessop, whose killer has never been found and for whose murder Guy Paul Morin was wrongly convicted.

It's definitely a challenge for any chief. And that's why we're delighted to see someone with the experience and track record that Fantino has.

He has been police chief in London since 1991, serving before that with Metro police for 23 years in a variety of postings.

As head of London's force, he oversaw a massive restructuring of the department, the creation of a public order unit and an emergency response unit, the upgrading of the force's technology, including installation of mobile computer workstations in the cruisers and the development of a computer-aided dispatch system, the development of many community partnerships and the opening of a police reporting centre.

As a cop, he worked in uniform patrol, undercover drug enforcement, in the detective branch, criminal intelligence, homicide and as a division commander.

His knowledge and experience has resulted in numerous invitations to lecture to police forces, the public sector and government bodies in Canada and the United States on a wide variety of police matters and public safety issues.

He is a vice-president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and a member of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police law amendment and crime prevention committees.

All of this contributes to the general consensus that this appointment is precisely what the force needs.

In its official statement, the police services board says its members are looking forward to working with Fantino, in light of the experience and leadership he will provide to the uniformed and civilian members of the police service.

We would encourage the police services board to show its support to the new chief by providing him with the appropriate funds to do the job he needs to do - the job they say they want him to do.

Police union president Paul Bailey was enthusiastic in offering the union's congratulations and welcome to the new chief.

"Our association indicated to the board that Fantino has the style we believe is necessary for the job at hand," he told the Toronto Star.

"He's up-front and direct and an accomplished administrator. If anyone's going to clean up this mess, he's the one to do it."

We couldn't agree more - as long as he continues to have the support of the officers who work for him and the board for whom he works.

With his reputation for being tough on crime, for being forthright in his comments and criticisms, for being direct in his approach and fair in his manner, Fantino is the prescription York Region needs to fix the police department's ills.



## Let's not abandon service too hastily

Dear Editor:

On June 15, the Trentway-Wagar Company announced to its riders that the service it offers to Uxbridge, Stouffville, Markham and Unionville passengers will cease.

This will come as a surprise to those of you that didn't know the service existed, providing twice-daily return rides to Toronto, express from Highway 7 and the 404. Advertising and promotion has not been the strong point in Trentway's program.

This change comes from a decrease in ridership - a change which itself may be brought about by an improvement in the GO service.

As is so often the case, better and faster service for those closest to a metropolitan centre has the unintended effect of service reduction for those further away - in this case north of Markham, especially Uxbridge and points between.

No one thinks that Trentway should not make money providing service - as Don Charmichel, the manager responsible for the route points out, they do not

have the luxury of financial subsidy, as does GO, where there is financial support to achieve public policy transportation objectives.

In good faith they took over the line run when GO backed out of it some years ago, and they have provided exemplary service - comfortable, clean coaches and dependable fast service.

When the province privatizes elements of the GO service, new service providers could take some lessons from Trentway.

This service reduction to Uxbridge along highways 47, 48 and 7 matters not at all to those who prefer to drive, paying in parking alone in downtown Toronto the cost of daily return fare to Stouffville, but it matters to those who can't or don't want to drive.

Direct access to the Bloor Street subway (at Castle Frank) in 45 to 60 minutes and other midtown points is far superior to Union Station

access to the Yonge subway offered by GO, shaving commuting time for anyone working in midtown.

I hope the regional and municipal governments take note of in this service reduction, and that Trentway Wagar will make some effort to recapture and build ridership.

Current users of the service might well be willing to solicit new riders, if local advertising campaigns are too expensive.

We have the incentive to keep the route.

Perhaps given a bit more time and some promotional materials, we could make the route profitable.

Let's not abandon a premium service too hastily - at the very least, all stakeholders should have an opportunity to discuss possible solutions to everyone's benefit.

Who is interested in convening a meeting?

Ian Hilton

### LETTERS

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