

TRANSPORTATION: Fed's cost-sharing scheme to work like infrastructure plan

Traffic plan offers funding trade-offs with municipalities

BY RICK VANDERLINDE
STAFF WRITER

If the federal government wants to help untangle York Region's traffic tie-ups, it won't get a fight from municipal politicians.

In fact, at least two high-level regional politicians say they've been lobbying GTA Minister David Collette to do just that.

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch and Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell, head of the region's transportation committee, say they've asked for federal support, especially when it comes to improving rail transit.

BEARING FRUIT

"It looks like some of that lobbying may be bearing fruit," Fisch said yesterday. "We've always wanted the feds to be involved."

Collette has been criss-crossing the country, floating a plan that would see the federal government help solve traffic problems in large urban areas.

Collette argues his government has jurisdiction because traffic gridlock is impeding trade and harming the environment, both federal responsibilities.

"We cannot just say that transportation problems are local issues to be solved by local municipalities or even just the province," he said in Toronto last weekend. "We have to look at it in a national context."

Municipal politicians don't seem to be worried about jurisdictional problems, as long as Collette puts up some money.

SOME CONTROL

Fisch and Bell agree the federal government should have some control if it helps fund solutions.

"There's an old saying," Bell said. "If you want some say, you've got to pay. And we all know they (the federal government) have lots of money."

Bell and Fisch say the federal government could help municipalities take over abandoned CN rail lines and create more space for transit on other lines.

"If we could bring a lot more trains into the area, that would certainly help," Fisch said. "The federal government should help because transit affects everyone."

Local politicians are keen to accept federal help because the province has handed most of the roads — and the cost of

maintaining them — over to the municipalities.

Only highways 400 and 404 remain under provincial jurisdiction in York Region.

The province assumed half of education costs in return but municipal politicians complain the swap isn't revenue neutral.

York Centre MPP Al Palladini wasn't available for comment yesterday but a spokesperson said the former transportation minister has also been lobbying Collette for federal money.

NATIONAL PLAN

Collette suggests a national transportation plan would work much the same as the Liberals' infrastructure program.

Under that program, each level of government paid one-third of the cost toward local projects. York Region built arenas, police stations and water treatment plants under the program.

While the federal government had control over which projects were chosen, Bell said there was little interference.

"We submitted a list and they pretty well approved everything we asked for," he said.

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Rev. Robert Nightingale
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9:30 a.m. - Worship Service - Joined by St. James Presbyterian Summer Program for Children
Everyone Welcome

WIDEMAN MENNONITE CHURCH
10530 Hwy. 48 North of Hwy. 7
Sunday, August 2nd, 1998
Interim Pastor Henry Regehr
10:00 a.m. Service at Willowgrove
No Evening Service
Everyone Welcome

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A Fellowship Church
6273 Main Street
Pastor: Rev. Gordon Bickle
Asst. Pastor: Gordon MacCormack
Sunday, August 2nd, 1998
10:00 a.m. Bible Class
11:00 a.m. Morning Worship
Message - God's Response to prayer
Communion
Wednesday 2 pm Bible Study & Prayer
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BLOOMINGTON GOSPEL CHURCH
South of 47 Highway formerly Bloomington Rd.
Pastor: Dr. John Howarth
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11:00 am - Communion Service
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Corinthians 11:23-26
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