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**REGIONAL NEWS: End GTSB procedural wrangling, regional officials urge**

# York Region pushing for transportation strategy

BY LISA QUEEN  
 Staff Writer

York Region councillors are taking credit for pressuring members of the Greater Toronto Services Board to end months of futile debates and get on with mapping out a transportation strategy.

"York is right on the mark. What they've done is recorded the frustration of many people," Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion said at the board's monthly meeting Friday.

"I want to thank you for bringing it forward because we might set a priority we didn't have previously."

McCallion is irritated by GTSB meetings at which nothing is accomplished, but councillors spend hours discussing procedural matters.

"Are we going to spend all our time on procedure? If we are, we're going to go nowhere — we're going nowhere anyway."

McCallion urged GTSB chairperson Alan Tonks to listen to the frustrations of politicians. "There is a message in York's resolution and I hope you, as chairman, realize it."

Accusing the GTSB of simultaneously overstepping its bounds and spinning its wheels, York councillors urged the board to focus exclusively on the traffic crisis in the GTA.

York chairperson Bill Fisch insisted regional councillors want the board to chalk up a victory by accomplishing something before next year's municipal elections.

"Some people have said there are ulterior motives (to limiting the GTSB's powers) in this

motion. There are none," he said. "I would very much like to see some accomplishments from the board by next June."

But York's solution — to concentrate solely on transportation and shelve other issues — ended up being watered down.

Politicians agreed to make transportation the board's top priority, but argued they must look at other concerns, such as issues facing rural areas.

The province is also expecting the board to recommend by December 2000 how GTA services should be delivered and, perhaps, how municipal boundaries can be realigned.

"We have to prioritize but you can't prioritize to the point that you become myopic," said Burlington Mayor Robert MacIsaac. "We can't just focus on one thing. We have to keep our eye on the big picture."

But politicians agreed the GTSB has accomplished very little in its first eight months of operation.

"The GTSB has been taking \$100,000 of taxpayers' money every month. That's \$1 million a year and we don't have anything to show for it," said Toronto Councillor David Shiner.

He said it's time to tackle the GTA's transportation headaches, which are threatening the area's economy.

"You don't have to convince anyone in the GTA that transportation is a mess," Shiner said. "I often think I'm getting up in Los Angeles because you can't move. Everything is blocked. Our roads aren't working and our transit isn't co-ordinated."

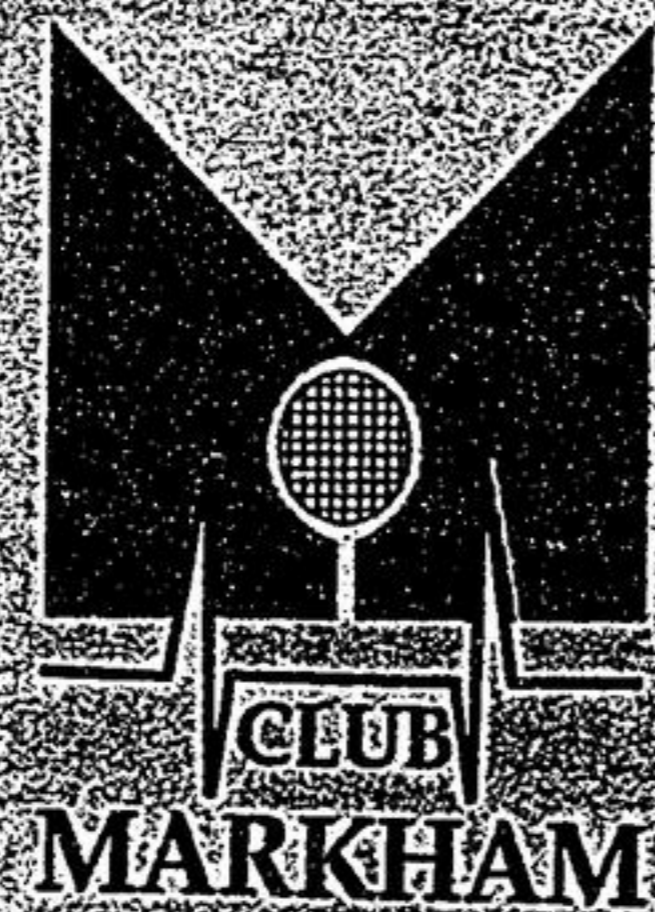
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