

Taxpayers on hook for GTSB

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

Property owners in the Greater Toronto Area will be paying 200 per cent more to keep the Greater Toronto Services Board running this year.

Local taxpayers will be on the hook for \$2 million this year, including \$315,504 from York Region residents and business owners.

That's a 211-per-cent increase over last year, when property owners kicked in \$668,200. York, which is responsible for 15.2 per cent of the budget, contributed \$101,570 in 1999.

But the GTSB had the benefit of a \$499,000 grant from the province last year during the board's first year of operation.

The board, which approved its 2000 budget at its monthly meeting Friday, is now going it alone.

The budget has increased from \$1.18 million last year to \$2 million, which includes a \$186,655 jump in administration costs and a \$540,000 hike in committee and workshop costs.

The board will spend \$805,000 on strategies to address issues facing the sprawling area that includes Toronto and York, Durham, Peel and Halton regions.

By far, the largest amount is the \$550,000 set aside to conduct new studies and bring together past research to deal with the GTA's transportation crisis.

But not all the politicians are convinced the money on consultants is well-spent.

"Local government is just a gravy train for consultants," Mississauga

Mayor Hazel McCallion said.

"A lot of taxpayers' money can slip away. It's so easy to say we can bring in a consultant, and all levels are guilty of it. I'm not picking on the GTSB."

But GTSB executive director Lynn Morrow argued the board isn't hiring consultants in the traditional sense that they would work independently to bring in their own reports.

Instead, the consultants will work with municipal staff. In some cases, the GTSB will pay existing staff to do work for the board.

"It so happens, the best brains (to do GIS mapping) are in York Region," Morrow said.

"But they can't do it by themselves. So, we're going to hire somebody to help them out."

McCallion and Scugog Mayor Doug Moffatt questioned spending \$25,000 on an annual report — which Georgina Mayor Rob Grossi eventually convinced politicians to slash by \$15,000.

"It's a coffee table book," Moffatt said. McCallion agreed.

"I suggest we leave it to the next year until we accomplish something. If you want to spend \$25,000, allocate it to something worthwhile," she said.

"I think it's pitiful. We haven't accomplished anything this year. I don't know what we're going to report. Usually, an annual report reports progress."

The attack rubbed GTSB chairperson Alan Tonks the wrong way.

"Mayor McCallion, don't get argumentative," he said.

"I'm not argumentative," McCallion shot back.

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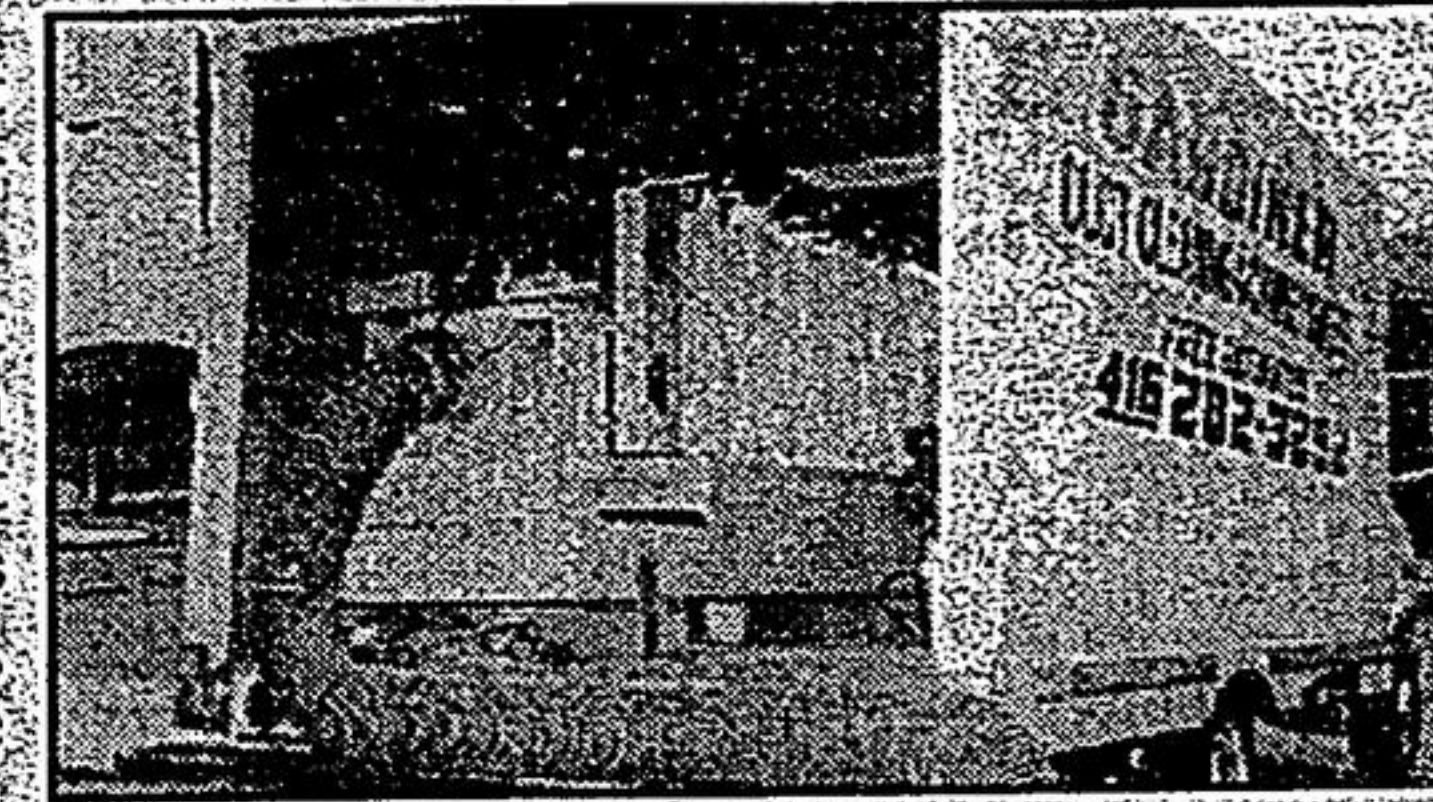
They also use the air snake method which ensures ducts are completely rid of dust and debris. This method consists of a device being inserted into the ductwork while a mobile head reaches into every inch of duct work to dislodge dust and debris.

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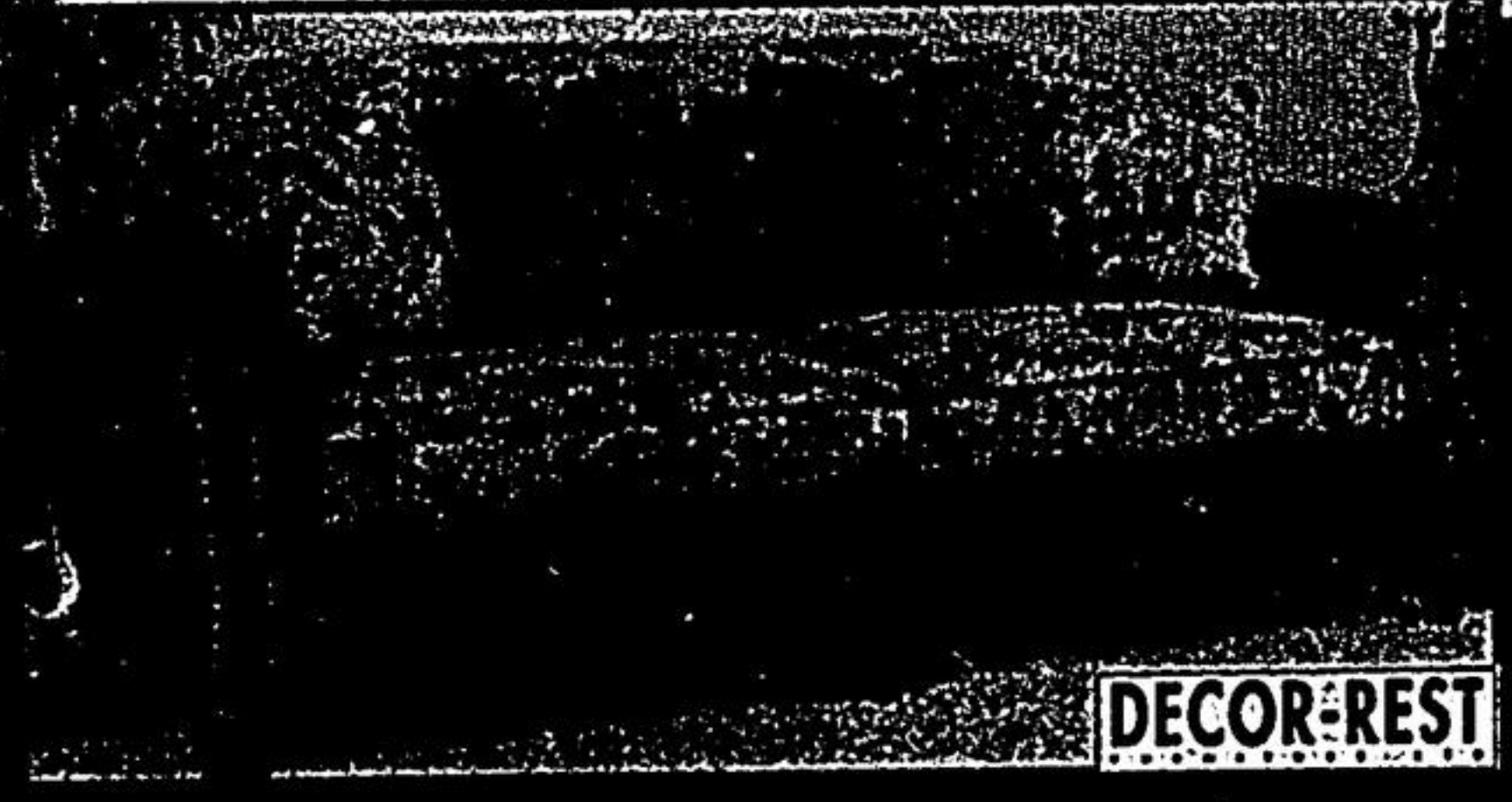
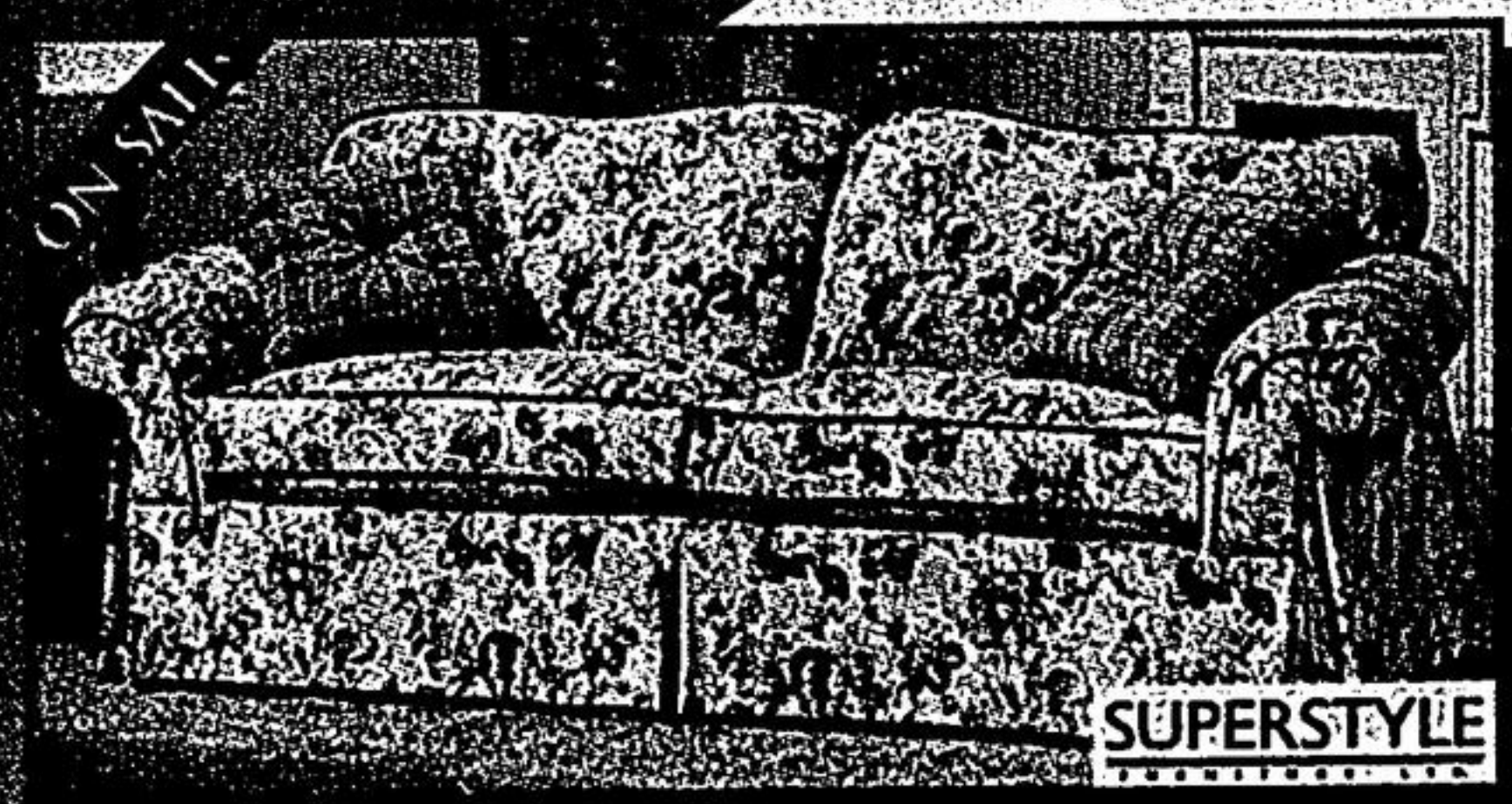
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