

GO chairman thankful province resuming control

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

The province is preparing to take back responsibility for GO Transit, working with municipalities to increase spending and improve service.

The move is a significant reversal for the Tories, who downloaded public transit to municipalities just a few years ago.

And it's about time for that reversal, according to GO Transit chairperson Eldred King.

"Certainly it's welcome news," King said Wednesday morning, when the first reports of the province's intentions appeared. "We have been begging the province and the federal government to contribute to GO Transit."

King said municipalities such as York Region have been able to cover the costs of the existing system, which includes both rail and bus service, but could not afford the millions of dollars in capital improvements it needs.

"The real property tax bill will only pay for so much," said King. "The capital requirements of GO Transit would be a substantive increase. We would require twice as much from the municipalities as we receive now and they are not prepared to do that."

An official announcement is expected from

Premier Mike Harris today.

Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees said the premier will announce a multi-year commitment that recognizes the need for the province's involvement in transit and transportation. The province downloaded fiscal responsibility for transit in 1998.

"There's been a full about-face on this thing, obviously," said Klees. "When the ball was handed off, the people the ball was handed to weren't prepared to run with it."

GTA representatives have lobbied their cabinet colleagues on the issue for some time, Klees said. "I don't believe anyone was under the illusion that municipalities could bear this burden on their own."

York Region chairperson Bill Fisch, also a member of GO's board of directors, said the expected policy shift is a recognition of fiscal realities by the Tories.

"I think the province recognized (downloading of transit) was a mistake from the outset," said Fisch.

He predicts renewed provincial involvement — it is anticipated the province

will assume 75 per cent of the cost of the GO system, with municipalities acting as 25 per cent partners — will bring about much-needed capital improvements, ushering GO into the next phase in its evolution as a GTA-wide service.

And more partners may be encouraged to come on board, he said.

"I think this will bring the federal government in — and they need to be here too — and the private sector may be involved," Fisch said.

Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell supports the province's reassuming a leading role in the funding and operation of

GO, "as long as they don't screw it up."

"The provincial government are control freaks and I guess they figured that if they were going to pay for it, they were going to run it," said Bell.

Although improvements to GO's capital infrastructure are badly needed, King argued it is far from broken.

The system raises millions through the fare box, which has allowed the board to increase service and address some capital issues, he said.

In fact, of GO's \$314-million budget for 2001, the municipal contribution was \$107 million. The remainder was to be raised through commuter fares, he said.

"Our goal for GO in York Region is all-day service," said Fisch, who also predict-

ed provincial support for York Region Transit, the recently amalgamated system serving the region.

A predicted casualty of the province's move is the Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB), a caucus of

mayors and councillors that has dealt primarily with transportation since being created by the province a several years ago.

"If it were a public corporation, I would sell," Bell said.

'I don't see any need for the Greater Toronto Service Board's continuation if the province takes (transit) back'

Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell

The Regional Municipality of York MUNICIPAL CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE Sixteenth Avenue Trunk Sewer, Phase 2

In 1997, York Region completed the York-Durham Trunk Sewer Master Plan. The Master Plan recommended a number of activities necessary to upgrade the York-Durham Trunk Sewer to meet the long-term needs of the Region. The Region of York is currently constructing the Ninth Line Trunk Sewer and Phase 1 of the Sixteenth Avenue Trunk Sewer as the first component of the new parallel system for the York-Durham Sewage System. The Region of York intends to construct Phase 2 of the Sixteenth Avenue Trunk Sewer from Stone Mason Drive to Woodbine Avenue. The proposed location of the trunk sewer is shown on the map below.

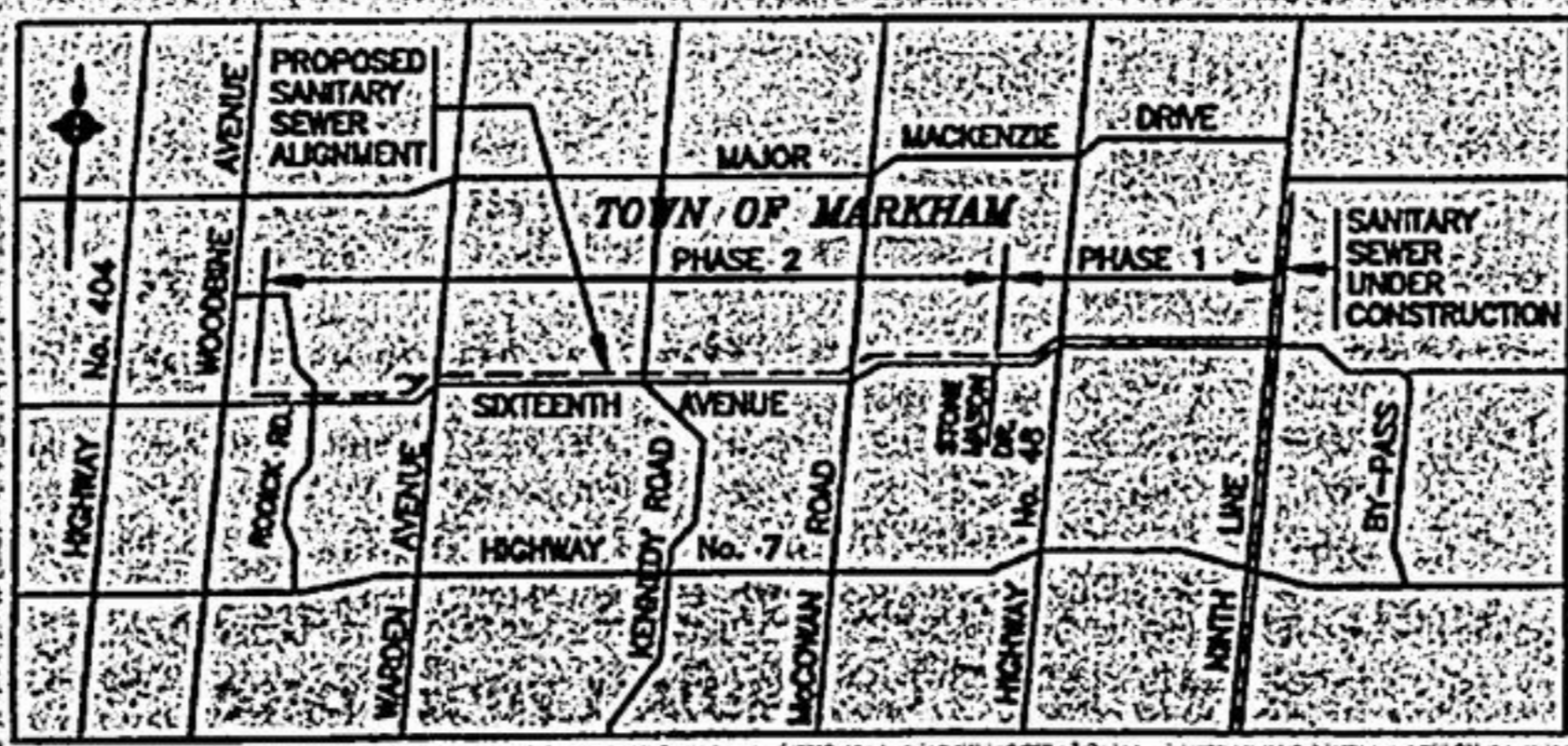
The project is being undertaken in accordance with the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment. Consultation with the public and review agencies forms an important component of the project. To provide more detailed information and an opportunity for public comment on the study, a Public Information Centre will be held:

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Fellowship Hall

Should you require further information about this project please contact:

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