

# Court OKs 407 toll increase

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

The 407 ETR responded to a court victory granting it the right to raise tolls this week by announcing it will do just that.

Peak rates for cars and other light vehicles will rise a penny a kilometre Feb. 7 to 14.95 cents.

The highway's owners said the increase will speed up trips for customers by paying for road widening and other improvements.

The increase may not change habits of ordinary commuters, 407 spokesperson Dale Albers acknowledged, but the new heavy-truck rate of 44.85 cents a kilometre is so high, he suggested, trucking companies may avoid the road during peak hours, reducing congestion.

The consortium is hoping some of the heavier vehicle customers will choose off-peak hours, where the heaviest will pay 42.30 cents a kilometre, Mr. Albers said.

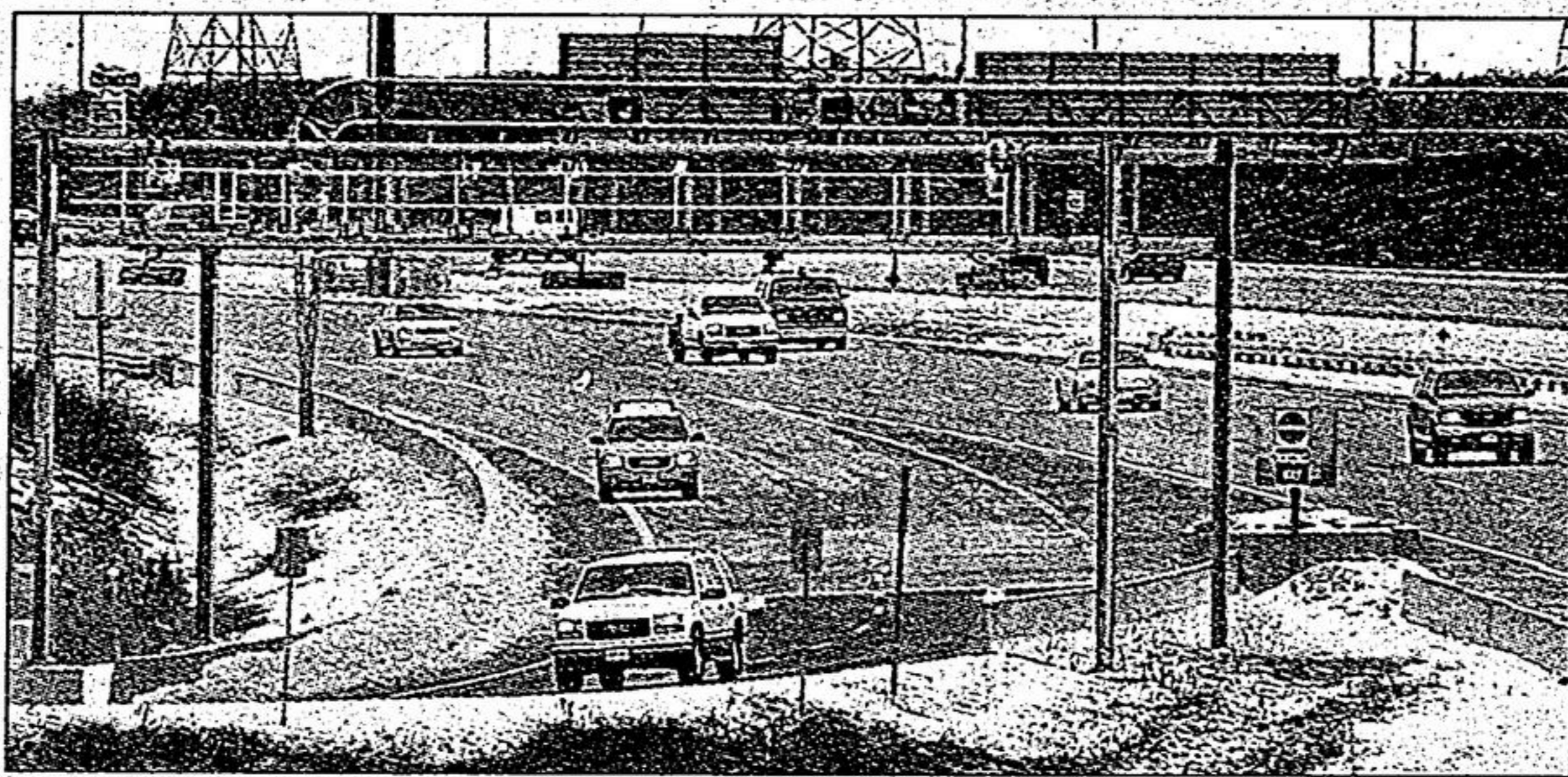
"Because they take several trips a day, they will save a lot of money," he explained.

While truckers are welcome on the road, he said other commuters want to see fewer of them.

"Even (truckers) understand a transport truck takes the space of five or six smaller vehicles and it's sometimes hard to negotiate around them," Mr. Albers said.

Since taking office, the provincial Liberals have fought to control tolls on 407 and renegotiate the contract for the 99-year lease sold by the previous Tory government. This week, a judge upheld an earlier ruling that the 407 owners can raise tolls without the province's permission — a setback for the province, which pledges to keep fighting on what 407 ETR counts as seven separate legal disputes.

"We're doing what has to be done," Danna O'Brien, spokesperson for Trans-



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Motorists exit Hwy. 407 at Bayview Avenue. Tolls for the route, which stretches across the GTA, are on the rise.

portation Minister Harinder Takhar said Friday. "Our first read (of the judge's ruling) indicates this is not a slam dunk for the 407."

The highway suffers from congestion, particularly around its Dufferin Street interchange in Thornhill and a stretch east of Hwy. 400 in Woodbridge, said Mr. Albers, who said 407 ETR will decide how much of the Woodbridge stretch to widen and start construction this year.

The province could end the expensive battles by having some "nice conversations" with 407 ETR to solve the disputes, Mr. Albers said. "We're not politicians, we're businessmen."

Tory MPP Tim Hudak agreed Friday, charging the Liberals and Premier Dalton McGuinty promised to freeze tolls while knowing the consortium's contract rights couldn't be challenged in court successfully.

"It's nothing but a cynical use of taxpayers' money to hide a promise he knew he couldn't keep," he said.

The Canadian Automobile Association is disappointed to hear the province doesn't have more influence

on the tolls, which are becoming hard for consumers to take, Mark Arsenault of CAA Ontario said.

"They're penny increases but, in the end, they all add up. You've got to wonder where the breaking point is."

The province, meanwhile, will keep fighting to improve this "incredibly disgusting contract", promised Liberal MPP Mike Colle, who will hand the minister his fact-finding report soon on 407 customer service practices.

# Rural township rejects dump plan

BY ROY GREEN  
Staff Writer

York Region is still looking for an alternative to shipping garbage to Michigan after politicians in a rural Ontario township rejected a plan to establish a landfill site there.

Southgate Township Mayor Don Lewis proposed the dump as an alternative to the Michigan landfills, where the region sends 200,000 tonnes of waste annually.

But his council, citing health concerns, voted against even allowing preliminary environmental surveys to proceed. The mayor said it was no surprise many local residents opposed the plans.

Earlier this week, York Region chairperson Bill Fisch said a search among Ontario municipalities to find a willing host for trash from the GTA has been

under way for two years.

Even with the region's diversion plans, which could see the annual tonnage reduced by 50 to 60 per cent, there is still a substantial need for a new landfill site, he said.

Early last year, Michigan politicians voted to severely limit the kind of material it accepts in its landfills and more than doubled the fines for non-compliance.

Until late last fall, the region and Toronto faced the possibility Michigan could be closed to its trash.

Opponents of out-of-state garbage in Michigan are still pushing for an expansion of state legislation covering landfilled waste and a tipping fee surcharge to help discourage imports.

At the same time, legislation now being debated at the federal level would allow local United States jurisdictions to ban trash imports.

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