

# Mobility drivers may be replaced

BY CHRIS TRABER  
Staff Writer

Disabled transit riders may soon be losing their familiar drivers if York

Region Transit's plan to replace them with contract workers is approved.

The restructuring, which would shuffle full and part-time Mobility Plus

drivers to desk jobs and put casual drivers out of work, is being opposed by their union.

"Our main concern is the impact on

the users of the service. These people can be vulnerable. The clients are familiar with the drivers who know how to deal with them. Now, they have to be delivered by contractors with no familiarity or experience with their needs," said Doug Sheppard, chairperson of the CUPE local 905 York Region Municipal and Long-Term Care Workers unit.

An internal York Transit proposal circulated at a union meeting two weeks ago outlined a Mobility Plus reorganization to reduce 19 permanent full-time staff by two, six permanent part-time by one and eliminate five casual staff altogether.

The plan, to be reviewed by regional council in September, suggests the region can save \$213,098 by contracting private transport firms. Current drivers make \$22.10 an hour while contract employees start at \$13.10 per hour.

One potential casualty is Markham's Marilyn Gould.

Ms Gould, 49, as a casual, on-call employee since 2003, would have no recourse if the restructuring is approved.

She has not worked since she was injured on the job May 17. She is undergoing physiotherapy in hope of getting back to her route in Newmarket, where is she transports up to 45 clients during an eight-hour shift.

"It takes a certain type of person and personality to take care of the people we drive," she said. "You have to be patient and know the Ministry (of Transportation) rules and regulations. Above all, we know our clients, they know us. We greet them with a smile and often we're the only one they talk to in a long time."

But the restructuring follows the pattern in services across the region, York Region Transit general manager Don Gordon said. All regular transit is contracted to private companies, as is operation and maintenance.

All but 20 per cent of the region's Mobility service is already contracted.

"It's important to know we'll work closely with the union," Mr. Gordon said. "With the growth in the region, we'll need more inside staff. We're confident we can accommodate each and everyone."

There is, however, no obligation for the five casual drivers.

"Casuals are casuals who were hired as interim individuals. There was never that long term security," Mr. Gordon said.

He said, however, the region would work with the contractors to find positions for the casual employees.

The union takes a dim view of the region's strategy. "If you look at their numbers, it's savings of a couple hundred thousand dollars. In scope of the regional budget, it's nothing," Mr. Sheppard said.



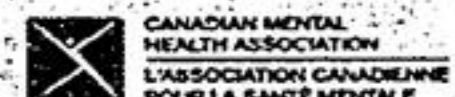
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**Brenden Fletcher**

Interests/Hobbies: Playing hockey for Markham Waxers "AA" Hockey team and baseball for the Markham Mariners Rookie Team

Saving Money: A car  
Saving Points: Portable basketball net

**Carmen Magno**

Interests/Hobbies: Hockey, soccer and watching T.V.

Saving Money: Digital camera  
Saving Points: For a T.V.

**Hemal Patel**

Interests/Hobbies: Soccer, ice hockey, cricket, and read mystery books.

Saving Money: Hemal is saving his money for higher education.

**Dennis Stainton**

Interests/Hobbies: Competitive soccer player for Unionville-Milliken boys U12 premier team.

Saving Money: One day when he needs something.

**Christopher Tan**

Interests/Hobbies: Drawing, playing the drums and basketball

Saving Money: For a new drumset  
Saving Points: Basketball net or trampoline



**MARILYN GOULD:** Mobility Plus casual driver could be out of work if York Region Transit plan approved.

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