

• OUR VIEW •

Tolls good idea if used for transit

Are road tolls an idea whose time has come? Toronto Mayor John Tory seems to think so, given his announcement he'd like to charge motorists \$2 to drive the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway. According to Tory's arithmetic, the move could generate more than \$200 million per year to invest in transit infrastructure.

York Chair Wayne Emmerson acknowledged that charging a toll to make use of the DVP and the Gardiner could have a significant impact on those who rely on the routes. He hopes to meet with Tory to discuss the matter.

As a concept, tolls aren't necessarily a bad thing.

'Our concern is how the money raised will be allocated. Will the tolls be for the good of all GTA commuters, or only boost Toronto's coffers?'

They were among the revenue tools the province banded about when it floated various means through which to fund needed transit improvements. York Region has a number of projects on the go and remains hopeful the Yonge Street subway will eventually extend into Richmond Hill. That alone will cost billions, and the money will have to come from somewhere, be it tolls, new taxes or other user fees.

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Will the tolls be for the good of all GTA commuters, or only boost Toronto's coffers?

According to the Toronto Star, the Gardiner alone needs \$3.6 billion worth of repairs, and Toronto's operating budget is facing a \$516-million shortfall next year. Despite the fact Toronto's own city manager, Peter Wallace, noted the 416 enjoys the lowest residential tax rate in Ontario, Tory has made it clear that raising taxes above the inflation rate is a non-starter. Other municipalities grapple with higher increases and their residents often receive considerably fewer services. Why is it Toronto can nix higher property taxes and jump right to tolls?

Thankfully, the province would have to sign off on any new road tolls first. Again, the tolls aren't the issue, per se, but rather how the money they raise would be used. If the plan is to set aside funds to improve the GTA's transit network, so be it, but if it's to help Toronto stave off a long overdue property tax increase or to help pay for pet projects of dubious benefit (i.e. the Scarborough subway), then they should be treated as, to quote Tory when he was PC leader, "highway robbery".



• LETTERS •

Mayor right to use caution on fill bylaw

Re: Mayor right not to sign landfill permit, Oct. 8.

I couldn't agree more with Ron Boyd's letter and want to thank Mayor Altman for trying to exercise caution on behalf of the people of Stouffville.

I am very concerned about a number of issues that surround the passing of the bylaw to allow "clean fill" to be dumped.

1. Like Ron Boyd, I would like to know what the rush was to have this bylaw passed? Asking for two weeks to get more information seems very reasonable. I would like the councillors who voted for this bylaw (Maurice Smith, Rick Upton and Ken Fernandes) and the deputy mayor, Hugo Kroon, to explain why it

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had to be done so quickly.

2. I attended a community meeting in early September to try and understand what was happening and see if any of my questions could be answered as to what sort of effects this may have on our community and our drinking water. Debbie Crandall from STORM (a coalition group that protects the Oak Ridges Moraine) showed several maps of the groundwater system and explained that it is a very complex system. Groundwater can run in one direction and the surface water can run in another direction; therefore, no one can really predict where contamination

(if in fact there are any toxic substances in the fill that could leach into the water system) will go. I still have not had any assurances in the form of reports from experts (i.e. a hydrologist, environmental agencies etc.) that have alleviated these concerns. I ask the deputy mayor and councillors to share the information that led them to make their decision.

3. I believe there are many questions and even

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more concerns that need to be addressed around this situation. We cannot be too careful with such a precious resource and extreme safeguards must be put in place. We must be exceedingly cautious to ensure that no possible harm can come from this. I have yet to see any documentation that would give me this reassurance and I very much look forward to having the proof that our water supply is safe. Therefore, I would like this bylaw to be reopened ASAP, not in six months, so that this open dialogue can occur. If there is nothing that we need to worry about, then I see no reason why this can't happen. I look forward to a response from the deputy mayor and councillors who were in favour of this bylaw.

Carrie Perruzza
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