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TTC board could be public, private mix

Non-elected members, bring new skills: Stintz

By Tess Kalinowski

Adding some private-sector appointees could boost skills on the TTC board without reducing its accountability to the public, according to the councillor expected to chair the incoming Toronto Transit Commission.

Karen Stintz (Ward 16, Eglinton-Lawrence) supports appointing nonpoliticians to what is now an all-councillor board of nine but said ultimately it's the councillors who would continue to be accountable.

"That's why we want to have a mix (of politicians and private citizens)," she said. "We do need to keep city councillors as part of the board because city council is the primary funder.

"As it is now, the TTC operates very arm's-length from council and there's a sense, even with the current composition and the way it's designed, that it's not accountable enough to city council."

Private-sector members could contribute project management, financial and customer service skills, Stintz said.

Earlier this week a report by respected transportation expert **Richard Soberman** broadly recommended urban transit boards be made up of business and community leaders and of citizens who would apply for the job.

Transit blogger Steve Munro, however, fears that in Toronto this approach would mean the return of the cronyism that existed when all appointees to the TTC board were from the private sector.

"Anyone who wants to apply becomes a politician by virtue of their past record and opinions."

Stintz said changing the makeup of the board won't be the first order of business but is likely to take place early in the new council's term.

Stintz, whose appointment has not been announced officially, could not confirm whether there will be

nine councillors appointed initially.

Long time transit commissioner Joe Mihevc (Ward 21, St. Paul's) said he hopes Ford thinks hard before deciding on projects like the Sheppard LRT (light rail transit) line, the first of the Transit City routes slated for completion.

Ford campaigned on converting the proposed Sheppard route to a subway line that would run to Scarborough Town Centre. That would cost about \$2.5 billion more than the \$1.1 billion budgeted for the LRT, according to TTC numbers.

It took Mayor David Miller his entire term to get a shovel in the ground to extend the Spadina subway to York Region - and that was before the global economic crisis. Now money is tighter, Mihevc said.

"Why would we throw away a bird in the hand when the bird in the bush could be a generation away?" he asked.