

For fewer politicians

November 28, 2010

A proposed injection of private-sector expertise on the Toronto Transit Commission's governing board should be welcomed. Currently, only city councillors sit on the TTC's nine-member board. Councillor Karen Stintz, who is expected to be the commission's next chair, has indicated that private-sector appointees will likely be added to the mix.

It would be a mistake to rid the commission of all politicians, as some have suggested. City councillors are directly accountable to the public in a way that no independent, outside appointee can ever be.

But the country's largest transit system could benefit from replacing some of the politicians with smart and skilled outsiders: people with specialized knowledge that could be especially useful in TTC decision-making.

Given the transit authority's need to improve rider satisfaction, the appointment of a customer service expert seems especially in order. A commissioner with a transit engineering background would also be useful, as would someone from the construction sector.

Under the City of Toronto Act, city council has the power to make such changes on its own. It should not hesitate to do so.