

Parsons takes a run at top GTSB position

By JOHN STEWART
Staff

*Peel Bio.
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Lou Parsons sees many parallels between his quest to be chair of the Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB) and the role he played as Peel Region's founding chair 25 years ago.

"It's a very like challenge," Parsons said in a phone interview from Halifax, where he was visiting his daughter. "You're dealing with many unknowns. It's the start of something new and something very, very important."

Parsons and former Metro Toronto Chairman Alan Tonks will be the main contenders when the GTSB elects its first-ever chair, Jan. 22 in Richmond Hill.

The GTSB will co-ordinate GO Transit services across the GTA, as well as taking on a number of other responsibilities, depending on what its board of directors — politicians from GTA municipalities — have in mind.

One thing Parsons and Tonks agree on is that the GTSB should not become a new level of government.

Then-Premier Bill Davis appointed Parsons the first Peel chair, July 31, 1973.

"We put together a police force in six months — the finest in the country," said Parsons. "Peel's finances are in wonderful shape and we have a AAA credit rating, which is better than Toronto's."

"This is a very exciting challenge for me," said Parsons, 64. He admits the competition for the job between him and Tonks will likely be perceived as the 905 candidate versus the 416 candidate.

A former Ontario Transportation Person of the Year, Parsons entered the world of politics when he was elected a Town of Mississauga councillor in 1967.

He believes his 19 years of experience with GO Transit, 13 of them as chair under three different political regimes at Queen's Park, uniquely qualifies him to take on the new role at the GTSB.

The GTSB's primary responsibility in its formative years will be to operate GO Transit.

He'll said he would urge Ottawa and Queen's Park not to abandon GO financing.

Parsons is currently director of corporate affairs for Orion Bus Industries, a company that manufactures transit buses. In that role, he has sparred periodically with Toronto politicians over their complaints about some Orion products.



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