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Modernism at a Crossroad: The Spadina Expressway Controversy in Toronto, Ontario ca. 1960–1971



Abstract: *The Spadina Expressway controversy in Toronto, Ontario, was sparked by a proposal to run an expressway into the heart of the city. The dispute was part of a broader movement against high modernist planning that swept American and Canadian cities in the 1960s and 1970s. Frustrated by unresponsive politicians and civic officials, citizen activists challenged authorities with an alternate vision for cities that prioritized the safeguarding of the urban environment by preserving communities, preventing environmental degradation, and promoting public transit. By the latter half of the 1960s, citizen activists were no longer fighting alone, as some politicians and civil servants also turned against more traditional modes of city planning. This politicization of urban planning and transportation schemes culminated in the defeat of expressway networks in cities across Canada and the United States, including the Spadina Expressway in 1971. A landmark decision and important precursor to the municipal reform movement that would follow, the legacy of the Spadina episode was nevertheless mixed.*

Keywords: municipal politics, citizen activism, urban governance, modernism, post–Second World War, transportation

Résumé : *La controverse de l'autoroute Spadina à Toronto, en Ontario, a éclaté après qu'on a proposé de faire passer une autoroute au cœur de la ville. La dispute s'est inscrite dans un mouvement plus vaste d'opposition à la planification inspirée du high modernism qui balaya les villes étatsuniennes et canadiennes dans les années 1960 et 1970. Exaspérés d'être ignorés des politiciens et des fonctionnaires municipaux, des activistes citoyens confrontèrent les autorités et proposèrent une autre vision des villes donnant priorité à la sauvegarde du milieu urbain par la préservation des communautés, la prévention de la dégradation environnementale et la promotion du transport en commun. Dans la seconde moitié des années 1960, ces activistes n'eurent plus à se battre seuls, car certains politiciens et fonctionnaires s'opposaient désormais eux aussi aux modes plus traditionnels de planification urbaine. La politisation des plans d'urbanisme et de transport culmina avec la défaite des réseaux autoroutiers dans les villes partout au Canada et aux États-Unis, y compris l'autoroute Spadina en 1971. Décision phare et important précurseur du mouvement de réforme municipale qui allait suivre, l'épisode de l'autoroute Spadina n'en a pas moins eu des répercussions mixtes.*

Mots clés : politique municipale, activisme citoyen, gouvernance urbaine, modernisme, après-guerre, transport

'If we are building a transportation system to serve the automobile, the Spadina Expressway would be a good place to start. But if we are building a transportation system to serve people, the Spadina Expressway is a good place to stop.'¹

Ontario Premier Bill Davis's decision to cancel the Spadina Expressway in June 1971 marked the end of one of the most contentious urban development disputes in Canadian history. The route originated in January 1948 with plans to widen Spadina Avenue and Spadina Road, and by 1953 the \$11.5 million Spadina Expressway was born. The design called for a depressed expressway combined with a rapid transit line running through primarily residential areas. At the end of the decade, official plans revealed Spadina was only the first link in a network of expressways planned for the city. As one of the many victorious battles against high modernist planning that punctuated the decade, the controversy over the Spadina Expressway remains a high-profile yet understudied chapter in Toronto's history.

The Spadina controversy was part of a broader movement that swept American and Canadian cities in the 1960s and 1970s. Urban residents objected to postwar auto-centric planning that was designed to encourage and promote growth. Frustrated by unresponsive politicians and civic officials, citizen activists challenged authorities with an alternative vision for cities that prioritized safeguarding the urban environment by preserving communities, preventing environmental degradation, and promoting public transit. By the latter half of the 1960s, citizen activists were no longer fighting alone, as some politicians and civil servants also turned against more traditional modes of city planning. This politicization of urban planning and transportation schemes culminated in the defeat of expressway networks in cities across Canada and the United States.

HIGH MODERNIST PROJECTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Transportation infrastructure projects were complicated by the historical power of the automobile as a symbol of progress and modernity.²

- 1 Transcript of Statement by the Honourable William Davis, Prime Minister of Ontario, on the Future of the Spadina Expressway in the Legislature, Thursday, June 3rd, 1971, 4, FO417-1975-013/003(05), Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University (YUA).
- 2 The advent of the automobile transformed the Canadian landscape. Dimitry Anastakis, *Car Nation: An Illustrated History of Canada's Transformation Behind the Wheel* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 2008); G.T. Bloomfield, "I can see a car in

Expressways and expressway planning represented aspects of what James C. Scott calls a high modernist urban vision. A doctrine found across the political spectrum, authoritarian high modernism aimed to harness the benefits of technical and scientific progress. In this view, scientific knowledge constituted a supreme authority, and politics were consequently downplayed or excluded altogether. There was a single, best solution to any problem – usually a large-scale project that required a public authority to fund and orchestrate the plan. According to Scott, high modernist plans proved most tragic where civil society was weak.³

In the 1960s, civil society was famously lively and engaged. In both Canada and the United States, the Cold War provided the political context for the ongoing Civil Rights movement, anti-Vietnam War protests, the rise of second wave feminism, campaigns for Native rights, the New Left and various students' groups, as well as the proliferation of numerous other countercultures. Politics north of the border were also further complicated by the Quiet Revolution and Quebec separatism.⁴ With many of the same movements growing in both countries, the influence of American activists reached beyond us borders. Protests against the Vietnam War were particularly important

that crop": Motorization in Saskatchewan 1906–1935,' *Saskatchewan History* 37, no. 1 (1984): 3–24; Gerald T. Bloomfield, 'No Parking Here to Corner: London Reshaped by the Automobile, 1911–61,' *Urban History Review* 18, no. 2 (1989): 139–58; Stephen Davies, "'Reckless Walking Must Be Discouraged": The Automobile Revolution and the Shaping of Modern Canada to 1930,' *Urban History Review* 18, no. 2 (1989): 123–38; Donald F. Davis, 'Dependent Motorization: Canada and the Automobile to the 1930s,' *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21 (1986): 106–32; Steve Penfold, "'Are we to go literally to the hot dogs?" Parking Lots, Drive-ins, and the Critique of Progress in Toronto's Suburbs, 1965–1975,' *Urban History Review* 33, no. 1 (2004): 8–23.

- 3 James C. Scott, 'Authoritarian High Modernism,' chap. 3 in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 89–101. Scott cites New York City builder and expressway promoter Robert Moses as a proponent of the approach, as does Marshall Berman, whose characterization of modernity as 'creative destruction' is compatible with Scott's approach. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). See also David War and Olivier Zunz, 'Between Rationalism and Pluralism: Creating the Modern City,' in *The Landscape of Modernity: Essays on New York City, 1900–1940*, 3–15 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992).
- 4 On the 1960s in Canada, see Dimitry Anastakis, ed., *The Sixties: Passion, Politics, and Style* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008); Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

in building links between American and Canadian activists, as thousands of draft resisters migrated north, and intellectuals and political activists fled the increasingly intolerable political climate. The most well-known American expatriate of the era was urban theorist Jane Jacobs, a leading critic of high modernist projects engaged in urban renewal battles on both sides of the border.⁵

Burgeoning environmental and urban reform activism animated urban politics in the postwar era. Heated debates over urban renewal and attendant concerns about public housing and transportation systems dominated the debates.⁶ In Toronto many renewal projects were the subject of protracted conflicts. The most notorious case, Trefann

- 5 David S. Churchill reports a net increase of 120,000 Americans immigrated to Canada between 1965 and 1976, a 'significant portion' of which was due to opposition to the war in Vietnam. The types of immigrants he describes – 'mostly young, healthy, middle-class, and well educated' – were the same kinds of people who often became leading activists. David S. Churchill, 'An Ambiguous Welcome: Vietnam Draft Resistance, the Canadian State, and Cold War Containment,' *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 37, no. 73 (2004): 1–26. See also David Churchill, 'When Home Became Away: American Ex-Patriots and New Social Movements in Toronto, 1965–77' (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2001). American expatriates were also influential in the creation of Greenpeace: Frank Zelko, 'Making Greenpeace: The Development of Direct Action Environmentalism in British Columbia,' *BC Studies* 142/143 (Summer/Autumn 2004), 197–239. Zelko stresses the importance of international events like the Vietnam War and nuclear testing in inspiring activism in this country. On the rise of environmental consciousness in the United States at this time, see Priscilla Coit Murphy, *What a Book Can Do: The Publication and Reception of Silent Spring* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005). Jane Jacobs was a high-profile reformer with an international reputation. Christopher Klemek argues that although the initial American response to her ideas was largely hostile, the fact that planners in Germany, England, and Canada embraced Jacobs's ideas shows they were 'not inherently antiplanning, antimodernist, or NIMBYist.' He further argues these different cultures produced different fates for the urban reform movements in New York City and Toronto, as the movement in Toronto was driven by a broad coalition of reformers that dominated the local government throughout the 1970s, while the movement in New York City was weakened by internal divisions. Christopher Klemek, 'From Political Outsider to Power Broker in Two "Great American Cities": Jane Jacobs and the Fall of the Urban Renewal Order in New York and Toronto,' *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 2 (2008): 309–32; and Klemek, 'Placing Jane Jacobs within the Transatlantic Urban Conversation,' *Journal of the American Planning Association* 73, no. 1 (2007): 49–67.
- 6 For example, in Vancouver: Arn Keeling, 'Sink or Swim: Water Pollution and Environmental Politics in Vancouver, 1889–1975,' *BC Studies* 142 (2004): 69–101; Hyung-chan Kim and Nicholas Lai, 'Chinese Community Resistance to Urban Renewal: The Case of Strathcona in Vancouver, Canada,' *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 10, no. 2 (1982): 67–81; Katharyne Mitchell, 'Reworking

Court, unfolded at the same time as the Spadina dispute and met a similar fate, as destructive plans to remake the residential area were defeated by sustained citizen opposition in favour of constructive rehabilitation.⁷

New ideas about citizen participation, technology, and the environment emerged from this activism. Growing numbers of people questioned their political representatives and no longer accepted city planners as impartial experts. These emerging citizen activists were typically upper-middle-class white-collar workers, often intellectuals, who possessed the necessary political and media savvy to advocate effectively. Many were university-educated baby boomers who were influenced by the rising student radicalism that helped define the

Democracy: Contemporary Immigration and Community Politics in Vancouver's Chinatown,' *Political Geography* 17, no. 6 (1998): 729–50. In Edmonton: Ron Kuban, *Edmonton's Urban Villages: The Community League Movement* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005); Jack K. Masson, 'Decision-Making Patterns and Floating Coalitions in an Urban City Council,' *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 8, no. 1 (1975): 128–37; Lisa Watson, 'The Edmonton Fluoridation Controversy,' *Alberta History* 38, no. 1 (1990): 15–24. In Winnipeg: David Burley, 'Winnipeg and the Landscape of Modernity, 1945–1975,' in *Winnipeg Modern: Architecture, 1945–1975*, ed. Serena Keshavjee, 29–85 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006). In Montreal: Kwok B. Chan, 'Ethnic Urban Space, Urban Displacement and Forced Relocation: The Case of Chinatown in Montreal,' *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 18, no. 2 (1986): 65–78; Pierre Filion, 'The Neighbourhood Improvement Plan: Montreal and Toronto: Contrasts between a Participatory Approach to Urban Policy Making,' *Urban History Review* 17, no. 1 (1988): 16–28; Timothy Thomas, 'New Forms of Political Representation: European Ecological Politics and the Montreal Citizen's Movement,' *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 3 (1995): 509–31. In Halifax: Susan Bugey, 'Halifax Waterfront Buildings: An Historical Report,' *Canadian Historic Sites* 9 (1975): 119–68; Donald H.J. Clairmont and Dennis W. Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars', 1987); Jennifer J. Nelson, *Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Robert Vaison and Peter G. Aucoin, 'Municipal Politics in Canada: Class and Voting in the 1968 Halifax Mayorality Election,' *University of Windsor Review* 5, no. 2 (1970): 68–78.

- 7 For detailed accounts of the events, see Graham Fraser, *Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972); John Sewell, 'Rejection of Modern Planning,' chap. 5 in *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning*, 136–71 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). Other contentious projects included Regent Park, Alexandra Park, and Donvale. Expressway controversies also sparked New Left urban reform movements that emphasized community organizing and community action in the United States and England. See Christopher Klemek, 'The Rise & Fall of New Left Urbanism,' *Daedalus* 138, no. 2 (2009): 73–82.

institutional culture of the era.⁸ These activists criticized planners for offering simplified solutions to complex problems, for the political implications of their planning decisions, and for claiming scientific objectivity to defend decisions that harmed already marginalized groups.⁹

Scholars have uncovered similar dynamics in expressway disputes across the United States, including Miami, Los Angeles, New Orleans, San Francisco, Washington, and Baltimore.¹⁰ Middle-class professionals organized to halt increasingly expensive expressway projects backed by all levels of government, from federal to city authorities. Protestors argued routes targeted underprivileged Black and Latino neighbourhoods, and advocated environmental protection, heritage and community preservation, and public transit alternatives. By the late 1960s

- 8 On the important role of young, urban professionals in the inner city in urban reform movements, see David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). John Sewell draws similar connections in his chapter on the Spadina controversy: 'Creating an Alternative to Modernism,' chap. 6 in *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning*, 173–98 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). On the role of the baby-boom generation, see Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Chapter 9, 'Youth Radicalism in the Sixties,' 216–47 focuses on post-secondary institutions.
- 9 Stephen Bocking, 'Constructing Urban Expertise: Professional and Political Authority in Toronto, 1940–1970,' *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 1 (Nov. 2006): 51–76. These activists did not draw attention to the similarities in training and status between themselves and the government experts they criticized. Mary Corbin Sies notes the connections between professional elites as agents as municipal authority and power in capitalist economies have been neglected by scholars. Mary Corbin Sies, 'North American Urban History: The Everyday Politics of Spatial Logics of Metropolitan Life,' *Urban History Review* 28, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 28–42.
- 10 There is a large body of literature on expressway disputes in the United States. Key works include Richard O. Baumbach Jr and William E. Borah, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: A History of the Vieux Carré Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1981); Gilbert Estrada, 'If You Build It, They Will Move: The Los Angeles Freeway System and the Displacement of Mexican East Los Angeles, 1944–1972,' *Southern California Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (2005): 287–315; William Issel, '"Land Values, Human Values, and the Preservation of the City's Treasured Appearance": Environmentalism, Politics, and the San Francisco Freeway Revolt,' *Pacific Historical Review* 68, no. 4 (1999): 611–46; Michael P. McCarthy, 'Baltimore's Highway Wars Revisited,' *Maryland Historical Magazine* 93, no. 2 (1998): 136–57; Raymond A. Mohl, 'Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities,' *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 5 (2004): 674–706; Zachary M. Schrag, 'The Freeway Fight in Washington, D.C.: The Three Sisters Bridge in Three Administrations,' *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 5 (2004): 648–73.

and early 1970s, these citizen activists achieved widespread success in halting freeways as their legal appeals were bolstered by the rising cost of the schemes.

Although expressway protests in Canada have received less scholarly attention, these controversies also dominated urban politics north of the border. In Vancouver, protestors opposed a 1964 plan for a Burrard Inlet crossing, Georgia Viaduct replacement, and several connecting roads. By the time 1967 plans to run an eight-lane elevated expressway through Chinatown were released, citizen opposition was in full force, and only the Georgia Viaduct replacement was ultimately constructed. In Edmonton, public opposition mobilized in response to the Jasper Freeway route, as protestors cited the detrimental impact on neighbourhoods and parks. Plans were subsequently shelved and City Council adopted a revised transportation policy in 1973.¹¹

Furthermore, these were not isolated cases: disputes also erupted in Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal, Halifax, in many smaller centres across Ontario, and of course, Toronto.¹² In disputes on both sides of the border, citizen activists mobilized against high modernist planning, but there were also important differences. First, Canadian cities were not as racially divided as American cities, and routes often threatened multiple, diverse neighbourhoods, not just lower-income areas occupied

11 Christopher Leo, *The Politics of Urban Development: Canadian Urban Expressway Disputes* (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1977), 43–62.

12 The largest study remains Christopher Leo, *Politics of Urban Development*, while participant-observer accounts detail Vancouver and Toronto. See David Nowlan and Nadine Nowlan, *The Bad Trip: The Untold Story of the Spadina Expressway* (Toronto: New / House of Anansi, 1970); V. Setty Pendakur, *Cities, Citizens & Freeways* (Vancouver: Transportation Development Agency, 1972). The Spadina case is also covered in a published student paper, Darryl Newbury, 'Stop Spadina: Citizens against an Expressway' (Mississauga, ON: Commonact, 1989), and touched on briefly in numerous histories of the city. Evidence of the disputes in these and other cities is also supported by my doctoral study of postwar expressway controversies across Canada, in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax. References to the many disputes across Ontario came from a memo that listed projects in London, Ottawa, Kenora, Sarnia, Brantford, and Brampton facing 'organized opposition': 'Implications of the Spadina Expressway Cancellation,' memo, W.G. Wigle (program engineer, Department of Highways, Ontario) to A.T.C. McNab (deputy minister), 21 July 1971, interim box 737, File: District No. 6 Toronto: [Spadina Expressway] 1971, Archives of Ontario (AO). The files from the Archives of Ontario are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Accordingly, I have written citations to avoid disclosing sensitive personal information. If letters were written by individuals in a public capacity, I have included the names, but I have not disclosed authors of documents who were not publicly active in the controversy.

by racial and ethnic minorities.¹³ Second, the federal government did not provide critical financial and administrative support to expressway projects in Canada. As a result, Canadian expressway protests were shaped by local–provincial government relations and the structure of urban governments, which varied across the country.

While Vancouver and Edmonton were both governed by city councils, Toronto had a two-tier system with a regional Metro Council and a City Council. The rapid expansion of suburban areas by 1970 meant that two-thirds of the residents Metro Council served were suburbanites who wanted easy access to the inner city.¹⁴ Toronto councillors, meanwhile, represented downtown regions where residents often resented the intrusion of highways into their neighbourhoods. In Canada, high modernist planners relied on local state authority to implement their vision and fight critics; in Toronto, divided local authority gave rise to urban–suburban tensions.

THE SPADINA EXPRESSWAY AND ITS CRITICS

The Spadina Expressway was slated to run south from Downsview Airport, parallel to Bathurst, shifting east between Eglinton Avenue and St Clair Avenue West to align with Spadina Road at Davenport Road, then following Spadina Road south to the Gardiner Expressway. The expressway portion would stop between Harbord and College Streets, where the remainder of the road south to the Gardiner would be reconstructed as a major arterial road. The \$68-million Crosstown Expressway was added in 1957 to connect with the Spadina section,

13 There is some evidence that, despite continued discrimination and pressure to assimilate, Toronto's 'growing cosmopolitanism' was increasingly celebrated in the postwar period: Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 122.

14 Metropolitan Toronto, or Metro, was created in 1953 by provincial legislation and included the City of Toronto, the towns of Leaside, Mimico, New Toronto, and Weston, the villages of Forest Hill, Long Branch, and Swansea, and the townships of East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, York. Nowlan and Nowlan, *The Bad Trip*, 8–9. James MacKenzie, 'Spadina Opponents Plan to Switch Fight to Queen's Park,' *Globe and Mail* (*G&M*), 23 Feb. 1970. The suburban–urban divide was also exploited by Metro Chairman Fred Gardiner, who deliberately withheld full project details and provoked disputes to prevent urban and suburban council members from forming a voting bloc. Harold Kaplan, 'Metropolitan Toronto,' chap. 14 in *Reform, Planning, and City Politics: Montreal, Winnipeg, Toronto*, 683–739 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

running east through the city. By July 1959 plans for the \$25-million Yorkdale interchange at the northern end of the expressway were approved. The same year Metropolitan Council released its official plan for the region. The plan showed two expressway loops, one at the city limits and one circling the inner city, with both loops linked by the planned Richview and Spadina Expressways.¹⁵

In October 1961, the Metropolitan Planning Board adopted the Spadina Expressway, subway line, and Crosstown Expressway together.¹⁶ The board argued city streets could not accommodate projected traffic volumes and promised destroyed parkland would be recreated in new locations. They conceded that residents in communities bisected by the expressway 'may feel somewhat isolated,' but said such concerns were 'largely speculative and difficult to evaluate.'¹⁷ City Council wanted to postpone the scheme, advocating rapid transit instead, and forty-five ratepayers groups registered their opposition, but Metro Chairman Frederick Gardiner nevertheless approved the scheme.¹⁸

Metro Council defended Gardiner's decision with a report from the Planning Board that argued pollution could be prevented only by banning cars completely and insisting the expressway would improve efficiency, not exacerbate congestion. In response to concerns that downtown businesses would suffer as consumers were drawn out of the core, the board argued the exodus of middle-class families to the suburbs was the real culprit, not the creation of roadways increasing access between the suburbs and the inner city. They also maintained that expressways were essential regardless of rapid transit provisions, as each mode served different forms of traffic, and that the popularity of the automobile was uncontrollable. Opponents suspected developers of the Yorkdale Shopping Centre exerted undue influence over the plans, but the board denied the accusation despite earlier reports citing 'extensive discussions' with Eaton's representatives.¹⁹

15 James MacKenzie, 'How the 20-Year Political Nightmare of the Spadina Expressway Happened,' *G&M*, 20 June 1970.

16 Ibid.

17 'Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board: Report on the Proposed Spadina Expressway and Rapid Transit,' 6-13 Oct. 1961, FO417-1975-013/002(24), YUA.

18 'F.G.'s Three Votes Keep Expressways Alive,' *TS*, 6 Dec. 1961. Gardiner assumed that pushing the plans through would leave his successors with no choice but to construct the expressway. Timothy J. Colton, *Big Daddy: Frederick G. Gardiner and the Building of Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 179.

19 'Report on Spadina Expressway Brief and Ratepayer Presentations,' 1-9, ca. Feb. 1962, Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, FO417-1975-013/002(24), YUA. Report No. 24 of the Roads and Traffic Committee, Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, 1-2, 12 Dec. 1961, FO417-1975-013/006(05), YUA.

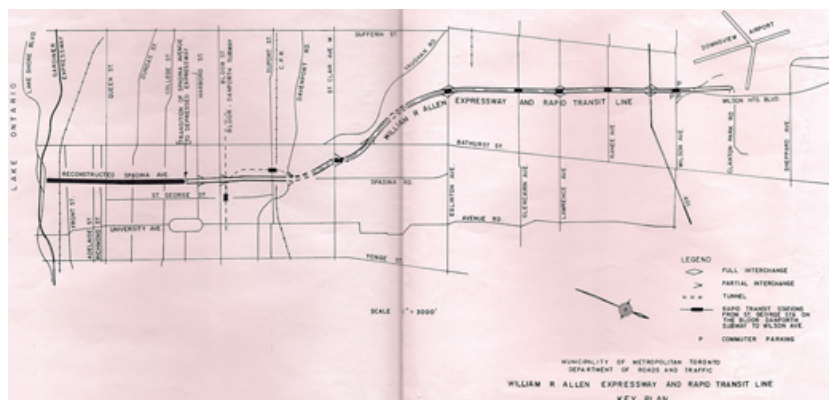


FIGURE 1 William R. Allen Expressway and Rapid Transit Line, c. 1970. Metropolitan Toronto, Department of Roads and Traffic. *A Planning Review and Appraisal: William R. Allen Expressway and Rapid Transit Line*. February 1970. Courtesy of the City of Toronto.

Despite these early concerns, Gardiner approved the plan in December 1961 at a cost of \$73.6 million for the expressway, and \$80 million for the subway. When the plan floundered at a subsequent Metro Council meeting, ratepayers groups from the Bathurst-Lawrence and Downsview regions – both suburban areas north of the inner city – demanded the plan be revived. At the same time, groups from inner city neighbourhoods including Forest Hill and York maintained their opposition. William Allen, who followed Gardiner as Metro chairman, supported Spadina without the Crosstown link, as did North York Councillor Irving Paisley. In March 1962 Metro Council revived the plan, and by August 1963 the Ontario Municipal Board approved it.²⁰

Over three years later in December 1966, Metro Council officially adopted the expressway network. At the same time, the first northernmost section of the Spadina Expressway opened from Wilson Heights

20 'Expressway Hearing: Value Doubted of Spadina Plan,' *TS*, 17 Nov. 1961; 'Form Group to Fight Spadina Expressway,' *TS*, 22 Nov. 1961; MacKenzie, 'How the 20-Year'; Paul Hunt, 'Angry Ratepayers Revive Spadina Plan,' *Toronto Telegram (TT)*, 12 Jan. 1962; Robert MacDonald, 'Allen Does About-face on Spadina,' *TT*, 22 Jan. 1962; 'Metro OKs 154 Million Spadina Thruway Plan,' *TS*, 7 Mar. 1962. Spadina opponents later publicized Frederick Gardiner's place on the Board of Directors for the Foundation Company of Canada, of which Fenco-Harris – involved in the development of Yorkdale – was a subsidiary. Refer to Nowlan and Nowlan, *Bad Trip*, 71–4.

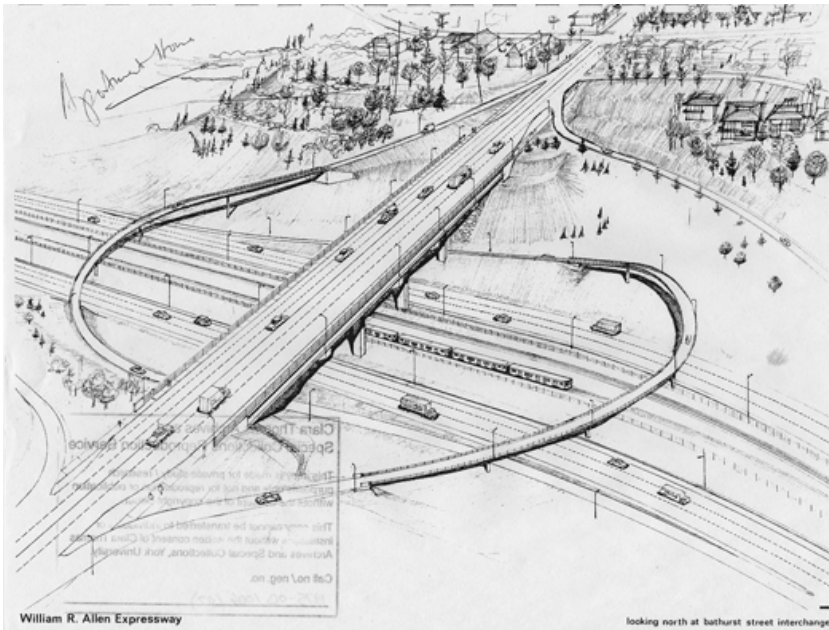


FIGURE 2 William R. Allen Expressway, looking north at Bathurst Street interchange. Metropolitan Toronto, Department of Roads and Traffic.
Functional Design Report South from Eglinton Avenue:
William R. Allen Expressway and Rapid Transit Line. February 1970.
Courtesy of the City of Toronto.

to Lawrence Avenue, including the Yorkdale interchange. Frustrated by the slow pace of construction, Metro Council postponed the Scarborough Expressway in favour of hurrying progress on Spadina in the spring of 1969. Metro Traffic Commissioner Sam Cass – who regarded Los Angeles’s infamous freeway networks as ideal – encouraged the move.²¹ In September 1969, however, mounting protests triggered City Council’s call to temporarily postpone construction while reviewing the project. The tensions between the City and Metro Councils were evident, as City Council prioritized public transit, arguing expressways should be for ‘commercial and industrial traffic and for those people for whom the use of the automobile [was] essential.’

21 ‘Cass: Give Them More Expressways,’ *TDS*, 13 Dec. 1966; MacKenzie, ‘How the 20-Year’: Peter Thurling, ‘O’er Stout Spadina, Clouds of Discord Loom,’ *TT*, 1 Mar. 1969.

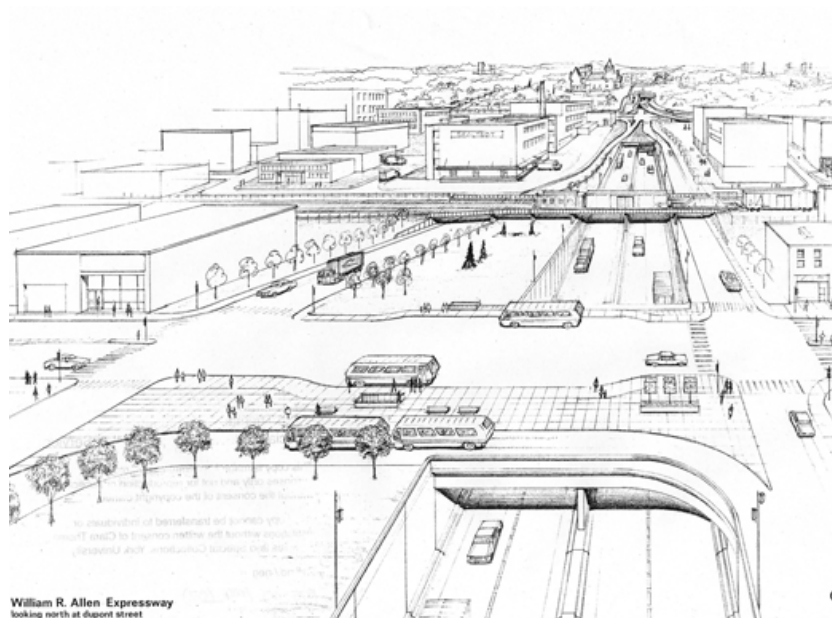


FIGURE 3 William R. Allen Expressway, looking north at Dupont Street. Metropolitan Toronto, Department of Roads and Traffic. *Functional Design Report South from Eglinton Avenue: William R. Allen Expressway and Rapid Transit Line*. February 1970. Courtesy of the City of Toronto.

The city also rejected Metro's expressway network and refused to consider the Crosstown Expressway without a study proving its necessity.²²

The sporadic opposition of the early 1960s developed into serious, sustained protests in the latter half of the decade. Formed in October 1969, the Stop Spadina Save Our City Coordinating Committee (sssoccc) was the largest and most active group. Members were primarily middle-class professionals who were familiar with local and provincial processes and knew how to articulate their objections effectively. Key sssoccc members included Chairman Alan Powell, a University of Toronto sociology professor; David Nowlan, a York University economics professor; John Sewell, a Toronto alderman and later mayor of Toronto; and architect Colin Vaughan. Powell

22 *Official Plan for the City of Toronto Planning Area*, City of Toronto Planning Board, 40, Oct 1969, FO417-1975-013/006(04), YUA.

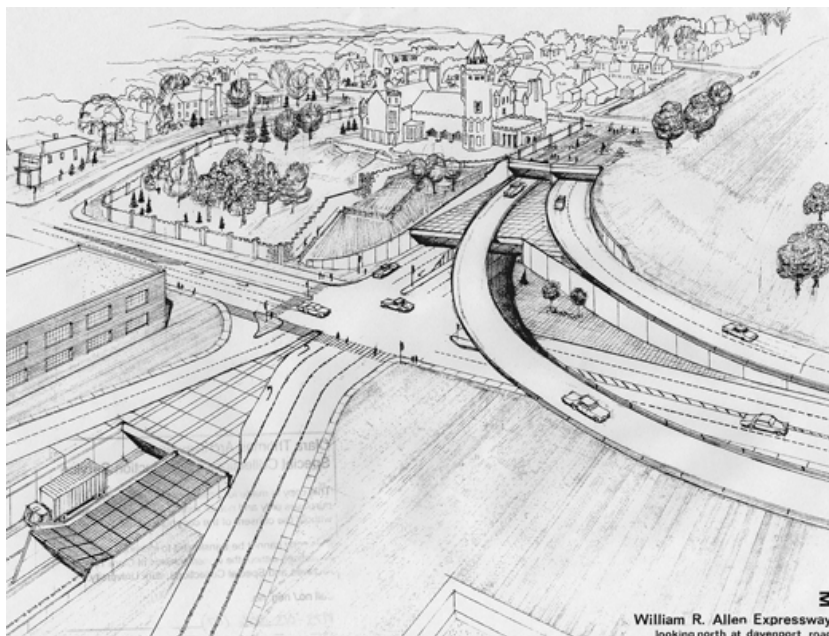


FIGURE 4 William R. Allen Expressway, looking north at Davenport Road. Metropolitan Toronto, Department of Roads and Traffic. *Functional Design Report South from Eglinton Avenue: William R. Allen Expressway and Rapid Transit Line*. February 1970. Courtesy of the City of Toronto.

admitted that the group was ‘distinctly middle-class’ but also noted its broad membership of over 1,500 active citizens.²³ Journalist James Mackenzie described the group’s core succinctly: ‘Twenty-four are university academics and the rest are professional people like librarians, architects, writers, stockbrokers and planners. There are no labour leaders on the leadership rolls, and few working-class people in the general ranks. Few are suburbanites or, if they are, they are generally York University students or staff.’²⁴

sssoccc had a distinctly theatrical style that both helped and hindered the group, capturing the media spotlight but also limiting their appeal.

23 Powell to M.P. Collins (professor, University College London), 14 May 1970, FO417-1975-013/002(08), YUA; Powell to Paul Hellyer (MP), 25 Mar. 1970, 1975-013/001(4), YUA.

24 James MacKenzie, ‘If Nothing Else, Stop Spadina Members Learn Hard Politics,’ *G&M*, 14 Mar. 1970.

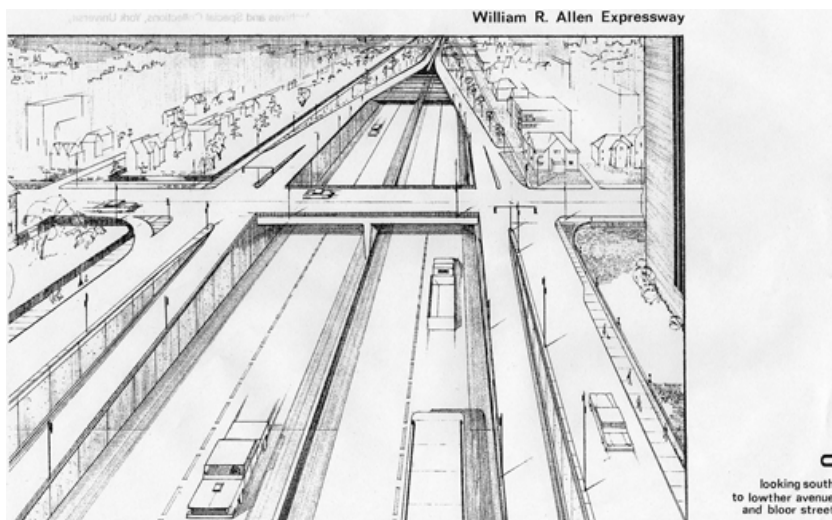


FIGURE 5 William R. Allen Expressway, looking south to Lowther Avenue and Bloor Street. Metropolitan Toronto, Department of Roads and Traffic. *Functional Design Report South from Eglinton Avenue: William R. Allen Expressway and Rapid Transit Line*. February 1970. Courtesy of the City of Toronto.

In characteristic prose, Powell condemned local politicians ‘who are clearly capable of stopping the rape of our city by big merchants and greedy corporate interests – only our vow to defeat the worm-eaten trouts [*sic*] of the Old Guard at the next election can Save Our City. Citizens arise you have nothing to lose but your city!’²⁵ Protests included group members in Victorian costumes parading horse-drawn carts through the city to suggest the expressway proposal was an archaic solution to transportation problems, planting saplings in an unpaved roadbed on Earth Day, and delivering heart-shaped cards to pro-expressway politicians on Valentine’s Day.²⁶

Behind these displays was a strategically organized group. All members were assigned clearly defined tasks such as political and legal lobbying, garnering publicity, and educating Toronto residents on the impact of the expressway.²⁷ They targeted suburban areas

25 Press release, text of Chairman Powell’s Report to sssoccc members and supporters at Convocation Hall, 15 Oct. 1970, FO417-1975-013/006(03), YUA.

26 ‘Press Release from: sssoccc,’ n.d., FO417-013/007(05), YUA.

27 sssoccc untitled memo, n.d., FO417-1975-013/007(02), YUA.

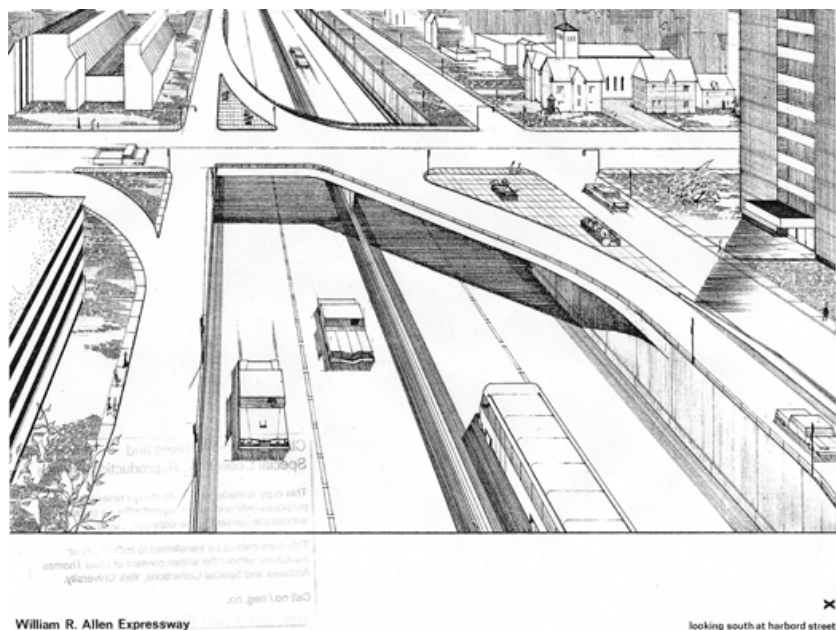


FIGURE 6 William R. Allen Expressway, looking south at Harbord Street. Metropolitan Toronto, Department of Roads and Traffic. *Functional Design Report South from Eglinton Avenue: William R. Allen Expressway and Rapid Transit Line*. February 1970. Courtesy of the City of Toronto.

where pro-expressway sentiment was strongest. In a handout for North York residents authored by John Sewell, for example, readers were told the expressway would cause congestion, that it was the first step in realizing the 1964 Metro Plan's expressway network estimated at \$2–3 billion, and that funding should be redirected to buses, rapid transit, housing, pollution prevention, parks, and education.²⁸ sssoccc also solicited support for their anti-expressway work from prominent Torontonians like Jane Jacobs, University of Toronto president Claude Bissell, author Pierre Berton, Toronto General Hospital chief surgeon Robert Mustard, theorist Marshal McLuhan, architect Ray Moriyama,

28 sssoccc untitled pamphlet draft, John Sewell, 25 Feb. 1970, FO417-1975-013/002(20), YUA. The adopted plan proposed 175 miles of expressway and 29 miles of rapid transit, while the alternative outlined 81 miles of expressway and 88 miles of rapid transit lines.

and Royal Ontario Museum director Peter Swann.²⁹ Their largest event employed their influential allies to maximum affect, combining the premiere of Marshal McLuhan's short film *The Burning Wound* with a Jane Jacobs talk at the University of Toronto in October 1970. Jacobs had already declared the expressway 'the single greatest menace to this city,'³⁰ while McLuhan's film attacked the expressway as a symbol of the ills of urban life and governance.³¹

sssoccc members further strengthened their forces by networking locally and internationally. In Toronto, they worked with groups such as Pollution Probe (PP). Rallying against 'the Spadinosaur,' PP members reiterated concerns about the impact on inner-city parks and neighbourhoods, including the Kensington-area garment industry, and the suspected influence of corporate interests. Outside of the city, sssoccc supported anti-expressway activists in Canadian cities like Montreal, QC, and Coquitlam, BC, and American cities including Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, DC. As Co-chairman Paul Reinhardt explained to Baltimore's Movement against Destruction, sssoccc members believed that the defeat of the Spadina Expressway would establish a Canadian precedent in the midst of a North American movement, where each victory strengthened protestors' collective power.³²

Despite sssoccc's strengths and protest savvy, their inflammatory rhetoric and sensational protests also alienated some potential supporters. Group members understood the polarizing nature of their approach, noting of their fundraising efforts, 'Most of the money came from concerned upper middle class people – academics, professionals, ratepayers, teachers, etc.... student organizations were very generous.

29 'Press Release, sssoccc,' 16 Dec. 1969, Fo417-1975-013/007(01), YUA.

30 Jane Jacobs, 'A City Getting Hooked on the Expressway Drug,' *G&M*, 1 Nov. 1969; 'Author Says Spadina Expressway Is City's Single Greatest Menace,' *G&M*, 5 Feb. 1969.

31 Brian Johnson, 'A Macabre Insight,' *Toronto Citizen*, 24 Sept. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/007(11), YUA.

32 The committees' files included a letter from a Coquitlam resident requesting BC premier David Barrett cancel plans to relocate the Lougheed Highway through the area – Coquitlam resident to David Barrett (premier of British Columbia), 17 Apr. 1973, Fo417-1975-013/001(06), YUA – as well as a congratulatory letter to Allan Powell from a Montreal activist referring to the city's 'similar struggle' in opposing an extension of the Trans-Canada – Montreal resident to Powell, 10 June 1971, Fo417-1975-013/001(06), YUA. In the United States, see Paul Reinhardt to Movement against Destruction, 3 Feb. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/003(11), YUA; untitled promotional literature from the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis, Washington, DC, 26 Nov. 1969, Fo417-1975-013/002(08), YUA. Paul Reinhardt, sssoccc letter (distributed with *The Bad Trip*), Fo417-1975-013/001(3), YUA.

The upper class – Rosedale and lower Forest Hill – was useless. We lacked restraint and good breeding.’³³ At the same time, the movement might have seemed inaccessible to working-class Torontonians, and their stalwart defence of the inner city exacerbated existing tension between urban and suburban residents. As journalist James MacKenzie noted, ‘They hadn’t noticed that most of the group’s spokesmen have British or American accents; that their use of the word city in their “Save our City” slogan smacks of arrogance or selfishness to suburbanites; that too many leading members sound elitely upper middle class, that [some think] the movement is simply unreal.’³⁴

Criticism of activists on both sides of the protest reveals the ideological struggle that lay behind the expressway controversy. Some comments were simply inflammatory, such as Liberal MPP Vernon Singer’s description of anti-expressway protestors as ‘hairy, snaggle-toothed academics.’³⁵ More commonly, expressway supporters urged politicians not to yield to the ‘unreasonable demands of what is without question a very small, but vocal, minority.’³⁶ Critics also called protestors selfish, immature ‘kids,’ focused more on the preservation of their own communities than supporting more broadly beneficial transportation infrastructure.³⁷ Protestors were routinely characterized in this manner, whether they were ‘a small band of a noisy selfish group,’ ‘romantic, Quixotic fool[s],’ or just ‘selfish idiot[s].’³⁸

33 ‘Informal Observations about sssoccc Finances,’ Bob Tennant, n.d., F0417-1975-013/004(06), YUA.

34 MacKenzie, ‘If Nothing Else.’

35 Untitled Spadina protest flyer from the Annex Ratepayers Association, Apr. 1970, F0417-1975-013/007(10), YUA.

36 Toronto resident to William Allen (chairman, Metropolitan Transportation Committee), 19 Jan. 1962, F220-II-103225-6 William R. Allen Expressway: Miscellaneous Correspondence: Part I (1962), City of Toronto Archives (CTA). Toronto resident to Allen, 15 Jan. 1962, F220-II-103225-6: Part I (1962), CTA. Toronto resident to William Davis (premier of Ontario), 7 June 1971, F220-II-47193-3 Spadina Expressway: Miscellaneous Correspondence Re Provincial Decision (1971–1974), CTA. Toronto resident to Allen, 10 Jan. 1962, F220-II-103225-6: Part I (1962), CTA. Files from the City of Toronto Archives used in this paper are subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and are consequently cited in the same manner as AO files.

37 Anonymous letter to sssoccc, n.d., F0417-1975-013/001(06), YUA.

38 Toronto resident to W. Darcy McKeough (minister of the treasury, economics, and intergovernmental affairs), 18 Aug. 1971, file: Spadina Expressway, container b399467, RG 6-2, AO; Dennis Braithwaite, ‘Allen Expressway Will Save Toronto,’ TS, 23 Jan. 1970; ‘North Yorker Dreads Traffic Tangles on Every Trip Downtown,’ TDS, 21 Feb. 1970.



The fiery nature of the controversy only made the timing of the protests more puzzling to many expressway supporters. The plans were released in 1953, and construction commenced in 1962, so why did the most determined objections not arise until the late 1960s? *Toronto Daily Star* writer William Bragg asked pro-Spadina Metro commissioner of roads and traffic Sam Cass this question in January 1970. His response was, 'The only answer that I can give – and I don't think it's a satisfactory answer – is that in very recent years we have seen a tremendous change in the attitude of some people generally which has resulted in protests by primarily youth, but not necessarily, against almost every social and physical institution that has been accepted in the past.'³⁹ Cass was partially correct – a significant shift in attitudes was underway, but it was not just youth, and their objections were not as unfocused as he thought.

The expressway debates were not about fighting for or against progress; rather, they were over what constituted progress. Pro-Spadina advocates, such as Businessmen's League against Spadina Termination (BLAST) member R.M. Wilcox, argued that transportation systems must promote urban and suburban growth. In his view, the Spadina region needed a makeover to 'enable modern high-rise apartments and office buildings to replace out-dated and run-down stores and homes.'⁴⁰ Anti-expressway protestors vehemently rejected the notion that expressways were progressive, instead insisting corporate-driven auto-centric growth 'destroy[ed] the majority for the betterment (short term only) of the wealthy, powerful minority.'⁴¹ Politicians, meanwhile, were as divided as their constituents. Alderman and Metro Transportation Committee member Ying Hope, for example, condemned his colleagues for holding 'token hearings' and issuing decisions 'in the glazed thinking of previous councils.'⁴² Hope's comments spoke to the ongoing tension between City and Metro Councils and some protestors' feelings that the city would eventually inevitably be subjected to the Metro agenda.

Pro-Spadina advocates like Metro Chairman Fred Gardiner hoped this would be the case, claiming their version of progress was inevitable. Gardiner argued the city's 600,000 motor vehicles must be accommodated to ensure commercial and industrial growth and stressed it

39 William Bragg, 'The Unflappable Official at the Centre of the Spadina Expressway Row,' *TDS*, 17 Jan. 1970.

40 R.M. Wilcox (president, Do It International Plastics Ltd., BLAST member) to Powell, n.d., Fo417-1975-013/001(06), YUA.

41 Toronto resident to J.J. Young (clerk, Executive Council), 12 Mar. 1971, file: Spadina Expressway, 1976(2), box 474, B222119, RG 4-2, A0.

42 Ying Hope, "'Metro can't ignore the expressway hearings,'" *TDS*, 1 June 1970.

was impossible to force motorists to abandon their vehicles. Gardiner assumed unlimited growth was both inevitable and desirable – a view that was increasingly unpopular as the 1960s wore on.⁴³ Protestors countered that planning policy promoted auto-centrism and insisted people would relinquish their cars if extensive rapid-transit networks were available. As one protestor asked, ‘Who are the expressways for: the people or the cars?’⁴⁴

Protestors’ alternative vision of modernity was driven in large part by environmental concerns. As an editorial from the *Globe and Mail* noted, ‘The crux of the matter is that the Spadina was conceived and begun in an age much different from what the 1970s promise to become. Who cared about pollution in 1962?’⁴⁵ Many protest letters reflected this newfound concern. One objector, a biologist, lamented ‘the apathy of our society’ and concluded by condemning the automobile’s ‘unrivalled contribution to the destruction of our complicated, delicately balanced biosphere.’⁴⁶ Another writer urged Premier John Robarts to ‘put the motor vehicles under control before they choke the human race with their junk and poisonous gasses.’⁴⁷ Others voiced specific concerns about irritated eyes and heavy breathing due to the smog, while still others in the Annex neighbourhood complained older trees were decaying and many birds that previously inhabited the area had disappeared.⁴⁸ A sssoccc advertisement made clear the importance of environmental concerns in the anti-expressway movement, listing DDT, thalidomide, phosphates, cyclamates, carbon monoxide, and expressways as examples of ‘progress.’⁴⁹ Growing environmental concerns were also recognized by government engineer

43 Frederick G. Gardiner, ‘Gardiner: “We must finish the expressway,”’ *TDS*, 1 Nov. 1969. This argument was popular among pro-Spadina advocates. A.J. Dakin (professor, University of Toronto), letter to the editor, *G&M*, 27 Dec. 1969. Colton, *Big Daddy*, 174–9.

44 Anonymous letter to Archie Chisholm (alderman, Ward 2), ca. Mar. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/001(3), YUA; Scarborough resident to Powell, 26 Mar. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/001(4), YUA; Toronto resident to Metro Council, n.d., Fo417-1975-013/001(06), YUA.

45 ‘Creeping Concrete and How to Cut It,’ *G&M*, 17 Feb. 1970.

46 Rexdale resident to sssoccc, 3 Feb. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/001(3), YUA.

47 Toronto resident to John Robarts, 16 Mar. 1970, file: Municipal Roads – Spadina Expressway, April 1–31/70 – Highways, box 168, B280692, RG 3-26, A0.

48 Toronto resident to J.J. Young (clerk, Executive Council), 12 Mar. 1971, box 474, B222119(2), RG 4-2, A0; Toronto resident to director, Toronto Humane Society, 23 Apr. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/001(07), YUA.

49 sssoccc advertisement, ca. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/007(11), YUA.

W.G. Wigle. In a memo titled 'Implications of the Spadina Expressway Cancellation,' Wigle argued that continued citizen protests could render government transportation planners powerless. He noted the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) approved the original 1963 funding in two days, while the subsequent 1971 application required three weeks of hearings and resulted in a split decision due to 'intensely organized and extremely vocal' opposition. Wigle concluded, 'The fundamental fact to emerge from a study of the Spadina Avenue situation is the sudden emergence of "The Environment" as a popular planning consideration.'⁵⁰

LOCAL POLITICS AND THE EXPRESSWAY DISPUTE

In January 1970, the Metro Transportation Committee bowed to pressure from protestors and City Council, halting construction pending reviews by Metro Roads Commissioner Sam Cass and Planning Commissioner Wojciech Wronski.⁵¹ City Council ordered its own reports and simultaneously requested Metro's reports be submitted to municipal councils so residents could offer input before a final decision was made.⁵² At the same time, Metro halted land acquisition for the Richview Expressway, the planned link between Highway 401 and the planned Highway 400 extension.⁵³ Suburban officials including North York Controller Irving Allan Paisley and Scarborough Controller Karl Mallette expressed suburbanites' frustration, arguing that their constituents supported the expressway and maintaining that the common good must not be sacrificed to individual interests.⁵⁴ Renowned city planner and University of Toronto lecturer Hans Blumenfeld also supported the construction of both the expressway and rapid transit lines, reasoning that both were necessary to meet the needs of Metro citizens and businesses.⁵⁵

50 'Implications of the Spadina Expressway Cancellation,' memo, W.G. Wigle (program engineer, Department of Highways, ON) to A.T.C. McNab (deputy minister), 21 July 1971, file: District No. 6 Toronto: [Spadina Expressway] 1971, interim box 737, AO.

51 'Halt Ordered on Expressway Work,' *TT*, 26 Jan. 1970.

52 'Spadina Expressway and Transportation in Metropolitan Toronto,' City Council Motion, 23 January 1970, FO417-1975-013/001(08), YUA.

53 'Spadina Row Forces Halt in Plans for 10-Lane Richview Thruway,' *TDS*, 6 Mar. 1970.

54 Irving Allan Paisley to Toronto resident, 17 Mar. 1970, FO417-1975-013/001(4), YUA. Karl Mallette to Toronto resident, 31 Mar. 1970, FO417-013/001(4), YUA.

55 Hans Blumenfeld, 'Spadina Expressway/Yes,' *TDS*, 19 Jan. 1970.

In March 1970 Metro Council released its review, recommending the completion of the expressway and subway line, estimated at \$143 million and \$95 million respectively.⁵⁶ The cost of Metro's transportation network totalled \$1.25 billion for rapid transit, arterial roads, and expressways. The council stressed that aesthetically the design was 'simple, contemporary and geometrically pleasing,' and that it included controlled crossings for auto and pedestrian traffic. Metro Council continued to emphasize growth but downplayed concerns that widespread redevelopment would follow, maintaining that high-density residential developments preceded the road plans.⁵⁷

While Metro stood firm, City Council was divided. Public Works Commissioner R.M. Bremner shared Metro Council's vision, but Planning Board Chairman Loren A. Oxley upheld the city's focus on public transit alternatives and unease that the expressway would spur high-density development. The board was also concerned about the impact of the expressway on the community, noting, 'Toronto is not proto typical of many North American cities. The poorer or modest districts that abut its Central Area at Spadina Road are not "problem" communities, but important ethnic populations playing a lively, varied and important role in the community. The role of the Central area as an important residential, as well as commercial core is growing, which requires a great deal of sympathetic and patient debate before change takes place.'⁵⁸

By this point, critics including the City of Toronto's Confederation of Resident & Ratepayer Associations as well as Liberal and NDP

56 'Report Urges Approval of Spadina,' *G&M*, 10 Mar. 1970.

57 Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, *A Planning Review and Appraisal: William R. Allen Expressway and Rapid Transit Line*, Feb. 1970, 12-13, 77-80, 93-116, FO417-1975-013/006 (05), YUA. Celebrated signs of growth included expanding offices, hospitals, housing resources, post-secondary institutes such as the University of Toronto and Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, and cultural centres like the O'Keefe Centre and the St Lawrence Centre for the Arts. In reality, the pressure for high-rise redevelopment along the expressway route had been public knowledge for at least a year, as residents in the path of the expressway learned whether they would be targeted by Metro for expropriation, or by construction companies offering far more money to redevelop the land. York University professor James Lorimer even went so far as to call high-rise developers the 'real' forces behind the expressway. James MacKenzie, 'The Spadina Road to Riches,' *G&M*, 13 Mar. 1969; James Lorimer, 'The Real Supporters behind the Spadina Route,' *G&M*, 13 Apr. 1970; and Lorimer, *The Developers* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1978).

58 City of Toronto Planning Board, *Evaluation of the W.R. Allen Expressway*, 10 Apr. 1970, 1, 9-10, 19-27, 35, FO417-1975-013/004(12), YUA.

provincial politicians were calling for Premier John Robarts to intervene, but he refused. Editorials in the *Globe and Mail* insisted the province was already implicated, as provincial authorities funded other highways and created the two-tier government many blamed for prolonging the debates.⁵⁹ Robarts maintained Spadina was under Metropolitan – not provincial – jurisdiction and insisted he was satisfied with Metro's studies.⁶⁰ Other provincial officials, notably Minister of Highways George Gomme and MPP Allan Grossman, were equally reluctant to interfere, eager to avoid establishing a precedent where expressway planning became a provincial responsibility.⁶¹

As part of the decision making, the Metro Transportation Committee held public hearings in April, where 230 applicants presented briefs. Coverage of the hearings highlighted the contentious atmosphere, including one *Toronto Daily Star* article that declared, 'Spadina Foes Call Controller "Pig," "Fascist."' ⁶² Journalist James MacKenzie captured the significance of the sessions, writing, 'The hearings point up to the conflict of generations, the struggles needed to reconcile the isolated Old Politics with the grass-roots New Politics. They show that what, in the broadest and vaguest terms, can be called The Revolution has filtered to Toronto.'⁶³

During the hearings, protestors often linked their concerns about the expressway to the persistent antagonism between suburban and inner urban communities. sssoccc advocated increased citizen participation in government while insisting Metro Council's jurisdiction

59 'Robarts Rejects Pleas to Step into Row over Spadina Expressway,' *TS*, 11 Mar. 1970; editorial, 'Queen's Park Is in This,' *G&M*, 11 Mar. 1970. The province funded the Highway 401 interchange at Yorkdale as well as Highway 403.

60 Robarts to Toronto residents, 21 Jan. 1970, box 168, B280692, RG 3-26, A0. Robarts to Toronto resident, 25 Feb. 1970, F0417-1975-013/001(3), YUA.

61 Allan Grossman (minister of correctional services) to Toronto resident, 28 Jan. 1970, box 168, B280692, RG 3-26, A0. Gomme took the same hands-off approach as Robarts and Grossman. For example, editorial, 'Your Man at Queen's Park,' *G&M*, 2 Mar. 1970; 'Gomme Says Spadina still Metro's Decision,' *TDS*, 3 Mar. 1970; 'Spadina Length Is up to Metro, Gomme Says,' *G&M*, 3 Mar. 1970; and George Gomme to Donald C. Macdonald (MPP), 20 Jan. 1970, F0417-1975-013/001(3), YUA; memo, 'Re: Spadina Expressway,' 7 Apr. 1970, box 168, B280692, RG 3-26, A0.

62 William Bragg, 'Taunts, Jibes and Name-Calling Mar Spadina Expressway Hearing,' *TS*, 25 Apr. 1970; 'Spadina Foes Call Controller "Pig," "Fascist,"' *TDS*, 27 Apr. 1970.

63 James MacKenzie, 'Spadina Hearings: First Test of Citizen Participation,' *G&M*, 4 May 1970.

over the inner city and the provincial government's authority over housing, transportation, and welfare were unjust.⁶⁴ Another brief co-signed by a large group of economists, architects, planners, and engineers argued the purpose of the expressway in facilitating north-south movement had been pre-empted by the development of suburban centres north of Toronto in the mid to late 1960s.⁶⁵ Still others condemned city planners who one protestor suggested must have been guided by a new version of Charles Darwin's 'survival of the fittest' – where success was symbolized by the symbols of 'middle America,' the suburban home, and car.⁶⁶ There were also those who remained suspicious of corporate influence over city planning, noting developers were 'reaping a golden harvest' while taxpayers funded 'the roads leading to their Yorkdale Plaza.'⁶⁷ In contrast, North York Alderman Robert Yuill wrote one of the few briefs supporting Spadina. Yuill said newspaper coverage exaggerated the opposition, giving readers the wrong impression. He argued expressways such as the 401 enhanced the surrounding communities and warned Metro politicians that 'the silent majority' supported the expressway.⁶⁸

In June 1970 an increasingly divided Metro Council voted to continue building the expressway and applied to the OMB for further funding.⁶⁹ Frustrated by waning support, Controller Karl Mallette argued former allies such as Councillor Anthony O'Donohue had withdrawn support only because of pressure from protestors. O'Donohue, however, insisted, 'I'm influenced by the new thinking on the environment, of the relationship of the automobile to people ... the new thinking of the 70's.'⁷⁰ O'Donohue's comments showed how the 'new thinking' had permeated council ranks, weakening the political resolve behind the project.

In January 1971 the OMB held hearings on Metro's funding application as well as a counter-filing for the cancellation of the Spadina scheme. The Spadina Review Corporation (SRC) represented anti-expressway advocates at the hearings but worked independently from

64 Paul Reinhardt, 'Brief on the "Goals, Objectives and Priorities of this City Council,"' 2, 10–11, Apr. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/006(02), YUA.

65 Ibid.

66 'A Brief in Opposition to the Spadina Expressway,' Apr. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/005(04), YUA.

67 Untitled brief, Apr. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/006(01), YUA.

68 Robert Yuill, 'Brief re: Allen Expressway,' Mar. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/005(04), YUA.

69 'Expressway Inquiry Refused: Spadina Plan Approved,' *G&M*, 2 June 1970; William Bragg, 'Metro Votes 23–7 to Resume, Spadina Foes Plot Next Move,' *TS*, 17 June 1970.

70 Metro Council Transcript 1970, 16 June 1970, Fo417-1975-013/002(21), YUA.

sssoccc.⁷¹ SRC members emphasized the disparity between the original cost of \$73 million and the latest \$142 million estimate and argued that approving Spadina would open the floodgates to the Crosstown, Richview, Christie, Parkside, Scarborough expressways and the Highway 400 extension.⁷² The next month, the Ontario Municipal Board announced an unprecedented split decision granting additional funding. The SRC immediately appealed to the provincial Cabinet.⁷³ OMB members W. Shub and R.M. McGuire both approved Metro's application. Shub argued, 'It is necessary to brush aside some of the human and emotional factors [fuelling opposition],' and McGuire agreed that protestors' fears of 'a deterioration of their stable downtown residential neighbourhoods' were 'overstated.' The dissenting vote came from J.A. Kennedy. He worried about 'the cruel social cost' of noise and air pollution as well as the loss of residential areas and parks. He was also particularly put off by experts' predictions that the expressway would inevitably be congested in the future. Contrary to his colleagues, Kennedy did not think opponents were fuelled by 'emotion or lack of realism' and concluded by adopting activist rhetoric, stating, 'Machines are made to serve man, not man to serve machines.'⁷⁴

- 71 'Spadina from Start to Finish,' *G&M*, 4 June 1971; press release, untitled, Spadina Review Corporation, 5 Feb. 1971, Fo417-1975-013/004(02), YUA; Jeffrey Sack to Powell, 10 Nov. 1970, Fo417-1975-013/004(02), YUA. SRC and sssoccc did not form an alliance, according to sssoccc member Bob Tennant, because 'our style was quite different and would have conflicted. We went after the general public, whereas they went after their friends. Our rabble-rousing would have destroyed their attempts to create a responsible image.' Bob Tennant, 'Informal Observations about sssoccc Finances,' n.d., Fo417-1975-013/004(06), YUA.
- 72 'Press Release: Toronto's Spadina Expressway Costs All Ontario Taxpayers \$40 Each,' 11 Mar. 1971, Fo417-1975-013/007(05), YUA. Chris Leo also noted the shift from protestors' original emphasis on safeguarding the 'appearance and livability' of Toronto to highlighting escalating costs in an effort to mobilize as broad a support base as possible. Leo, *Politics of Urban Development*, 36. 'Spadina Review Corporation,' brochure, n.d., Fo417-1975-013/004(02), YUA. They also argued the Spadina question was about more than just one road – that the Crosstown, Richview, Christie, Parkside, Scarborough expressways and the Highway 400 extension would all be affected.
- 73 Claire Hoy, 'Municipal Board Approves Spadina Expressway,' *TDS*, 18 Feb. 1971. The OMB responded to the appeal by prohibiting further land purchases for the planned Scarborough Expressway. James MacKenzie, 'OMB Orders Halt on Scarboro Route,' *G&M*, 21 Apr. 1971.
- 74 *Ontario Municipal Board Decision on the Spadina Expressway*, 4–7, 10, 13, 15, 21–2, 6 Feb. 1971, repr. by Spadina Review Corporation, Fo417-1975-013/003(06), YUA.

Finally in June 1971, Premier Bill Davis surprised many by announcing the cancellation of provincial funding for the Spadina Expressway.⁷⁵ Acknowledging the precedent-setting nature of his decision, Davis stressed the importance of developing alternative rapid transit services. He justified his veto by referring to 'growing evidence and accumulative experience gathered elsewhere on this continent' against auto-centric planning for cities. Davis also voiced concerns about the growing price tag on a road that threatened the quality of life in urban neighbourhoods and seemed likely to increase pollution. Insisting transportation systems must be built to serve people, not cars, the premier acknowledged the widespread protests, noting, 'The streets belong to the people,' and concluded by declaring his decision 'both positive and progressive.'⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

The aftermath of the Spadina dispute produced a realignment of provincial and municipal politics. On the provincial stage, Bill Davis's decision helped define his image and administration as not just conservative, but progressive conservative. His particular brand of progressive conservatism was defined by the times: by cancelling Spadina funding, making environmentally conscious policy decisions, and creating new ministries for the environment and housing, he aligned himself and his government with the priorities of urban activists who were concerned about urban planning, transit, and the environment.⁷⁷ In Toronto, the defeat of the Spadina route meant the defeat of Metro Council's expressway network and the end of expressway

75 'Spadina from Start to Finish,' *G&M*, 4 June 1971. Although Davis cancelled provincial funding in 1971, the portion of the roadbed between Lawrence Avenue and Eglinton Avenue that was already fully prepared was subsequently paved in the mid-1970s. In February 1985, provincial authorities granted a ninety-nine-year lease on a three-foot strip of land directly abutting the abbreviated expressway at Eglinton Avenue to ensure the plan would not be revived.

76 Transcript of Statement by the Honourable William Davis, Prime Minister of Ontario, on the Future of the Spadina Expressway in the Legislature, Thursday, June 3rd, 1971, 2-4, 5-8, FO417-1975-013/003(05), YUA.

77 On Bill Davis, see Robert Bothwell, *A Short History of Ontario* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1986); J.M.S. Careless, *Ontario: A Celebration of Our Heritage* (Mississauga, ON: Heritage Publishing House, ca. 1991-3); Claire Hoy, *Bill Davis: A Biography* (Toronto: Methuen, 1985); Jonathan Manthorpe, *The Power and the Tories: Ontario Politics - 1943 to the Present* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974). Gerald Killan and George Warecki identified a series of Davis decisions that helped cultivate his environmentally conscious image, including stricter protections for provincial parks, the creation of new national parks, and

construction in the city. The landmark decision remains a highlight of the city's history, and the struggle, along with other development battles, served as an incubator for reformers. Reform activists David Crombie, John Sewell, Karl Jaffary, and William Kilbourn were all elected as councillors in 1969, and both Crombie and Sewell later served as mayors, from 1972 to 1978 and 1978 to 1980, respectively. These reformers' administration of city affairs were guided by their determination to increase citizen participation in planning and governance, their environmentally conscious outlook, and their desire to dethrone the automobile from its leading role in shaping the city.

As part of the larger challenge to high modernist planning that urban citizens across the continent launched in the postwar period, the defeat of the Spadina Expressway occupies an important place in Canada's urban history. Residents fought a long, hard battle to prevent the construction of a roadway they felt would destroy their communities. The conviction and zeal with which both groups pursued the issue was sometimes written off as unrealistic and utopian, or alternatively as excessively rigid and authoritarian. But the often furious nature of the battle must be understood as more than just a short-sighted or emotional clash over a road. The rejection of the high modernist planning ethos resulted in a fundamental shift in the relationship between citizens and government, bringing politicians in touch with the burgeoning desire to create a livable city, and replacing the old expert planners with more accessible civil servants who supplemented their training and expertise with community consultations.

In this respect, when Bill Davis delivered his dramatic announcement cancelling the Spadina Expressway, he struck a powerful blow on behalf of all activists in the battle against high modernist planning. The long-term legacy of the controversy, however, is less clear. The episode was undoubtedly a landmark battle, one that continues to occupy a central place in the city's mythology, even garnering anniversary celebrations marking the cancellation of the road.⁷⁸ The reality of

a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against an industrial company over mercury poisoning: 'The Algonquin Wildlands League and the Emergence of Environmental Politics in Ontario, 1965-1974,' *Environmental History Review* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 1-27. The Ministries of the Environment and Housing were formed in 1972 and 1974, respectively.

- 78 In June 2006 the anniversary of the Spadina defeat was marked with a reception dubbed '35 Years without the Spadina Expressway.' Less than a year later, 'The Spadina Expressway Affair,' an exhibit celebrating the defeat of the scheme, ran from March to July 2007. See '35 Years without the Spadina Expressway,' Upcoming, <http://upcoming.org/event/82219/>; 'Spadina Expressway Affair Exhibit at the Market Gallery,' 15 Feb. 2007, City of Toronto, <http://wx.toronto.ca/inter/it/newsrel.nsf/7017df2f20edbe2885256619004e428e/d5761075eb369017852572830056ba60?OpenDocument>.

Toronto post-Spadina, though, is not that of an expressway-free pedestrian paradise. The city is still very much shaped by the high-speed arteries that surround it. From the outskirts to the core, accommodating automobiles remains a key consideration in planning and development decisions as tensions between motorists, public transit users, cyclists and pedestrians arise. Ultimately, Spadina's legacy is mixed: citizen activists claimed an important victory in the battle to shape the city, but in the long term, planners and politicians declined to adopt protestors' vision wholeheartedly, rejecting many of the most important tenets of their philosophy that would have really transformed the city.

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