

Statement by
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Minister of Transportation

GO Transit & Public Transit Investment

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(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise in the house today with an update on the McGuinty government's ambitious and multi-faceted plan to make public transit more convenient and reliable across the province.

Our government has invested more in public transit in Ontario than any other government in the last decade. The Provincial Gas Tax program will pump \$1.6 billion into transit systems across the province by 2009 ... that's a record investment!

The McGuinty government has made good on its commitment to invest two cents of every litre of gasoline sold in Ontario into municipal transit systems across the province to increase ridership.

Very shortly I will announce the third year gas tax allocations.

And Mr. Speaker, tomorrow I will announce a major step forward for the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority – GTTA.

GTTA ... Gas Tax ... High Occupancy Vehicle lanes ... Move Ontario ... the Growth Plan - these are all important elements of our plan to ease congestion on some of the province's busiest roads and improve public transit so that more people leave their cars at home.

Mr. Speaker, the Greater Toronto Area occupies less than one per cent of Ontario's land area. But nearly half of the province's 12.5 million residents live in the region. Improving public transit services and increasing ridership is critical to easing congestion in the Greater Toronto Area.

GO Transit is the backbone of public transit in the area. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report GO Transit recently marked its one-billionth rider!

The original GO Transit train service carried 2.5 million passengers in 1967, its first year of operation. Today, the combined rail and bus system moves 48 million riders annually.

Mr. Speaker, that's the equivalent of taking 170,000 cars off of our roads every day.

In one hour on a typical weekday morning, some 39,000 passengers arrive at Union Station in downtown Toronto by GO train. If all of those people drove instead of taking transit, we would need to build four more Gardiner Expressways and four new Don Valley Parkways.

Mr. Speaker, the McGuinty government has invested \$1.6 billion in GO transit since 2003.

We have helped GO Transit add more than 4,000 new parking spaces at GO lots, ... build four new train stations, ... and order 31 new buses, 14 double-decker buses, 50 new bi-level passenger railcars and 27 more powerful locomotives.

GO ridership is expected to double within 20 or 30 years. Without our critical planning and key investments, such as the ones our government has delivered, we won't be able to handle the increase in ridership.

Mr. Speaker, we must also be mindful that convenient, reliable and safe transportation is vital to our quality of life and to Ontario's prosperity.

Sustainable transportation is also vital. As Minister of Transportation, sustainable transportation and the protection of our environment are among my highest priorities.

When we look at solutions to traffic congestion, ... keeping goods and people moving safely and efficiently, ... they must be sustainable solutions.

Mr. Speaker, this is what our plan is doing for GO Transit riders and for commuters across Ontario. We are making public transit more convenient and reliable. More people are choosing to leave their cars at home.

Fewer cars on our roads means we are all spending less time stuck in traffic, ... burning less fuel, ... and breathing cleaner air.

Mr. Speaker, starting with the 2004/05 budget, the McGuinty government has put \$ 3.5 billion into public transit. We have delivered better public transit - convenience,

reliability and accessibility.

I know the honourable members will support our public transit investments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.