

Statement by
The Honourable Donna Cansfield
Minister of Transportation

GTТА and Highway Construction Announcement

Legislature Building, Queen's Park, Toronto
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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 progress in easing traffic congestion in Ontario. We are creating a seamless and integrated transportation system taking into account road, rail and public transit.

We have made the biggest investment in public transit in the last decade - a record \$1.3 billion this year alone.

We have also made a record investment in our highways - \$1.4 billion this year alone.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking a sustainable and strategic approach - one that balances investments in highways and public transit.

We are balancing the needs of rural communities where roads and highways are a literal lifeline with large urban centres where traffic congestion threatens our prosperity.

And we are balancing the needs of thriving Ontario businesses that ship \$1.2 trillion worth of goods on our highways every year and commuters who simply want to get home to their families at the end of the day.

GTТА

For example, Mr. Speaker, the 400 series highways that pass through the Greater Toronto Area are some of the busiest in North America. Much of the \$900 million in two-way trade that crosses the Ontario / US border every day, travels on these roads. Delays threaten our prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, it is in the interests of all of Ontario to tackle traffic congestion in the Greater Toronto Area.

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.

Mr. Speaker, the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (or GTTA) is bringing a region-wide approach to transit and transportation in the region. One that meets the growing number and the growing needs of commuters.

We have laid the foundation and brought together the province, municipalities and local transit agencies to create a seamless and more convenient transportation system.

Earlier today I announced that our government has nominated Robert MacIsaac and Peter Smith as appointees to the GTTA Board of Directors. These appointments are subject to review by the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Once approved, I intend to designate Rob as Chair of the GTTA Board and Peter as Vice Chair.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. MacIsaac brings a wealth of experience to this new role. He has been described as a champion of sustainable planning. He played a leading role in projects that will shape Burlington and the province, including the greenbelt, Burlington's downtown waterfront and a new Burlington campus for McMaster University.

And Mr. MacIsaac will be able to call on his experience as Chair of GO Transit. He knows well the issues involved in running a region-wide public transit agency. Under his leadership GO's ridership has grown steadily.

Just yesterday Chair Smith and I congratulated GO Transit's one-billionth rider. I would like to, again, congratulate GO Transit on this significant milestone, and congratulate everyone who chooses to take public transit.

Mr. Speaker, their experience makes Mr. MacIsaac and Mr. Smith excellent choices to launch the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority.

Mr. MacIsaac will lead a board that includes representatives from Durham, Halton, Peel, and York Regions, the Cities of Hamilton and Toronto, and the province.

Fare Card

The GTA Fare Card System, once implemented, will be the responsibility of GTTA and will allow commuters to travel from Oshawa to Hamilton using a single card.

We are moving forward with the GTA Fare Card, which will be introduced on four Mississauga bus routes, two stations on the GO Transit Milton line and Union Station for both GO Transit and TTC by mid 2007. Implementation will begin in 2008 and be in use across GTA and Hamilton by 2010.

Construction

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that these improvements are being made in conjunction with key infrastructure improvements - for example, development of the first-ever Southern Ontario Highways Program.

The program is a five-year \$3.4 billion plan to build 130 kilometres of highways and 64 new bridges and repair 1,600 kilometres of highways and 200 bridges across Southern Ontario.

Under the program we are planning for future HOV lanes on the Queen Elizabeth Way through Oakville and Burlington.

Other key construction projects include:

Widening Highway 401 from four to six lanes from Windsor to Tilbury and Woodstock to Cambridge

Widening the QEW from four to six lanes through St. Catherines and Niagara Falls, and

Widening Highway 7 from two to four lanes from Highway 417 to Carleton Place

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, convenient, sustainable and safe transportation is vital to our economic success and quality of life.

The McGuinty government's infrastructure investments have delivered results for the people of Ontario. We have delivered better hospitals, schools, transit systems, borders, roads and bridges across the province - all necessary for future growth and prosperity.

I know the honourable members will want to continue to support the McGuinty government's balanced and aggressive plan to ease traffic congestion with a seamless and integrated transportation network.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.