

Speech to the Toronto Board of Trade

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Thank you Carol and thanks to the Toronto Board of Trade, and to all of you, for being here today.

Speaking to the Board of Trade was my first public event after joining Metrolinx about two and a half years ago. I appreciated the warm welcome I received then, and I am happy to return today to provide an update on our real progress in transforming the region's transportation system, and set out some direction on where we are heading.

Let me just say at the outset what an important leadership role the Toronto Board of Trade has played on transportation issues.

Carol Wilding said something very important in the Globe and Mail just last month when she noted that, on regional transit and transportation issues ... we need to "drive discussion, drive debate, and drive a solution." I couldn't agree more and that's why I am here today.

But first, let's all take a moment to think about how we travelled here today. Did you drive? Take the Subway? Ride a Bus or Streetcar? Or maybe you rode the GO Train. Like you, I see and feel firsthand that we have a congestion problem.

When I ride the GO Train and the TTC, I am a simple transit customer. I am walking to the station and waiting for the train; I am trying to find a seat; I am getting ready for my first meeting of the day, in other words, I am just like everyone else.

I'm reminded of it when I have to allot an hour and a half to drive to Pearson airport. I hear about the challenges of traveling across the region from friends, neighbours and family members. I hear it from my spouse when she asks me why her 10-minute drive to the school she teaches at becomes a 30-minute trip on a regular basis.

I know all of you can relate to this.

We see that our transportation system is straining from a growing population, forcing the wheels of subways and trains, buses, trucks and cars to all but stop.

Over the course of the next 20 years, three million more people – the size of Montreal – will join the ride in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Depending on what we do to address the congestion we face today, we could, on average, end up spending as much as 109 minutes in traffic every day—that's the length of a Hollywood movie. And in this case, I think we can all agree that it would be a bad movie.

A solution is needed that's as simple as the wheel itself; a plan designed to get all of our wheels moving again.

We have that plan, and it's called *The Big Move*. It is the culmination of years of strategic thinking and planning by Metrolinx, in partnership with municipalities and input from the public and stakeholders.

The Big Move is the blueprint for a more sustainable transportation future. It reaches out twenty-five years into the future to guide and direct decision-making. It sets out a vision for a transportation system that is seamless, coordinated and efficient. A vision where all of our communities and neighbourhoods are served by more transportation choices.

It is where 75% of the region's population, not just Toronto's, lives within two kilometers of rapid transit and transit's share of overall travel in the region doubles. Where the amount of rapid transit, including subways, trains, light rail transit lines and bus rapid transit in dedicated routes, is tripled.

We all can agree that it is the kind of transportation system this region needs to get all those wheels moving again.

The Big Move also provides us with a roadmap for how to get there.

This roadmap is now well underway with \$16 billion in dedicated funding for transit and transportation priorities. Let me share some examples.

We're working with the City of Toronto and the TTC to revamp Union Station by 2015. This project will triple the size of the GO Transit concourses. It will make the Union Station subway station a more comfortable experience for customers.

We also now have a master agreement with the TTC for the four new LRT lines in Toronto that gives us certainty on our path forward. A path that includes new light rail transit along Eglinton, to the Scarborough Civic Centre, along Sheppard East and Finch West. In some places, this will reduce travel times by our customers by about 20 minutes each way. Just think what we could all do with forty more minutes in our increasingly busy days.

We've expanded GO train and bus service across the region. This has allowed ridership to grow by six or seven percent every year. And let's make no mistake, most of those people would be in their cars on the already congested roads and highways if they were not on the GO system.

You see other examples when you travel along Highway 7 in the Region of York or Eglinton Avenue in Mississauga, where dedicated bus rapid transit lines are under construction right now.

And here's another significant step in executing our plan. We've implemented PRESTO -- the regional fare card. With nine transit systems serving a population of more than six million people, implementing PRESTO is one of the most complex fare card projects currently underway globally.

Today, 400,000 card holders travel throughout the region with the simple "tap" of their distinctive green PRESTO card. We are adding 22,000 new PRESTO users each and every month.

As a regular user of PRESTO, I love how easy it is to pay for my transit. I have not had to buy tokens or tickets at a subway station for over a year. I have my card set up so that I can top up my card from my bank account whenever I need it. I have also given my two daughters PRESTO cards, one to travel to the University of Toronto on GO trains and the subway, and one to travel on GO buses to Wilfrid Laurier University. I never have to worry about them having the fare to get to school or to get home.

We have achieved another PRESTO milestone with yesterday's signing of the master agreement with the TTC. We now have an agreement on how the TTC and Metrolinx will work together to implement PRESTO across the rest of the subway, streetcar and bus systems in time for the Pam Am Games in 2015.

There is much more work to do, but I believe that we are making progress and moving forward towards a truly integrated system, with these and about two-hundred other projects that are underway right now. This represents the largest transit program in North America and will start the transformation, indeed start the renaissance, of a best in class transit system that matches the needs of one of the world's most exciting city-regions.

That brings me to the first piece of big news I have to share. As many of you know, building a fast and efficient route from downtown to Pearson International Airport has been a priority project of The Big Move. We are on schedule to launch this service in 2015, the year we host the Pan/Parapan American Games...

I am delighted to share with you today the news that we have launched the new name for this service -- the Union-Pearson Express... or UP for short.

Imagine when you have the option of avoiding that stressful drive in bumper-to-bumper traffic to make your flight on time.... With UP, you sit back, plug in your laptop, connect to wifi, check out your flight time on screen, or even check into your flight using an in-station kiosks -- all before you arrive at Pearson, relaxed and on time.

In addition to the great work on PRESTO and UP, today, I'm pleased to make another big announcement... We are going to update *The Big Move* and launch the next phase of our plan.

Since the launch of the *Big Move*, we've been speaking with stakeholders, and we've been conducting a technical review of the plan. *The Big Move* is now four years old and we need to make sure it is up to date.

The foundational vision, goals and objectives of *The Big Move* will not change... We are making the plan more relevant to today's – and tomorrow's – needs in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

We needed to define some projects in greater detail, such as two-way, all-day GO Transit service. We also needed to reflect all the relevant studies that have been completed since 2008.

As a result of our research, we have updated our list of priority projects and made some important changes to the timelines.

The one that many of you are eager to hear about is a new connector line on the subway, known as the Downtown Relief Line. It was originally identified in *The Big Move* for completion in the 15-25 year time horizon.

I'm pleased to announce that we are planning to make this a priority project over the next 15 years. This means we are advancing this project by up to 10 years.

We are reprioritizing this project because of a simple and stark fact. Our subway system just cannot manage the volumes of people trying to enter or exit the downtown core.

Our customers know this, as they try to squeeze into crowded subway cars.

We know this because we worked with the City and the TTC on a report called the Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study. We found that the already crowded Yonge subway is projected to experience a 25 per cent increase in ridership by 2031. Can you imagine that? Given what we know today?

We also found that if we extended the Yonge subway to Richmond Hill, which is also part of *The Big Move* plan, without a downtown relief line, the added demand would be too much for the Yonge subway line.

If we don't get this right we cannot address the pressures that exist in the rest of the system. We can't get those wheels rolling...

So while the relief line will be geographically located in the downtown area, its purpose is to open up possibilities throughout the region, such as the extension of the Yonge Line to Richmond Hill.

We don't yet have all the answers for the Downtown Relief Line. We need to complete more work with our partners on questions like the phasing, alignment and the different

approaches that can be taken to serve both Toronto's and the overall region's transportation needs. But we know that we have to get on with this work as part of our overall regional strategy.

We're planning for the whole region... This region has long passed the point where we can plan for our transportation system municipality by municipality. There are simply too many connections across our integrated regional economy. The key projects included in our next wave of projects are:

- First, Brampton bus rapid transit, which will bring at least another 10 kilometres of upgraded transit along Queen Street in that city, with a dedicated lane.
- Second, the Dundas BRT project, which will help link Toronto, Mississauga and Halton Region with another 40 kilometres of transit.
- Third, 36 new kilometres of transit to connect Scarborough Centre through Downtown Pickering to Downtown Oshawa, with the Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid transit.
- Fourth, the Hamilton Light Rail Transit, which will change the way people in Hamilton travel, by connecting key areas such as McMaster University and the downtown core.
- Fifth, the Hurontario Light Rail Transit project, with 23 kilometres of track, which will connect Port Credit through to Mississauga city centre to downtown Brampton.
- Sixth, a new extension of the Yonge subway from Finch subway station to Richmond Hill.
- Seventh, expanding GO Train service by introducing more two-way, all-day service, adding additional rush hour service across the entire network, and extending trains to Hamilton and Bowmanville
- Eighth, electrification of GO's Lakeshore and Kitchener lines, and Union Pearson Express.
- And, of course, these are in addition to the new subway relief Line I just mentioned a few moments ago.

We also need to make sure we are making improvements not just to the largest regional parts of the transportation system, but to the local bus that picks us up at the end of our streets, and to the roads that carry our buses, our cars, our bicycles and our trucks. As such, as part of the next wave of projects in *The Big Move*, we plan to allocate up to 25 per cent of our resources for local transit projects, for local roads and for highways throughout the region.

So what will your reaction be to the next wave of *Big Move* projects? How will your neighbors react? I think two things will happen: 1) people will ask the question 'how will we pay for these new projects?' and 2) is this real, or just the latest in a series of transit plans we've heard of that never materialize?

Let me face these two questions head on.

On the cost issue, we anticipate the cost of the "Next Wave" of projects as well as funding for local transit, roads and highways will be \$34 billion.

It is a significant investment that will generate substantial economic benefits. The construction is estimated to create 800,000 - 900,000 jobs. It will provide an infusion to our economy in the area of \$110-130 billion.

But to make this plan work, to make the single largest investment in infrastructure in Canadian history, we need to think differently about how we fund the infrastructure. We have benefitted over the past few years of generous levels of investment from all levels of government. Provincial investment in particular is driving the current transit construction program. It is important to maintain these record investment levels, but they are not enough.

At the same time, we can be fairly certain that expecting federal, provincial and municipal governments to dramatically increase their investment will not be a successful strategy. With all levels of government managing deficits, expecting more than current investment levels is not, in my opinion, particularly realistic.

As we move forward we can – and will – use partnerships with the private sector to build and operate the system where it makes sense and we can – and will – protect the public interest ... but we still have to pay for these services, whoever builds them.

We can also examine other funding options such as increased transit fares and efficiencies within the transit system; however, this will not close the funding gap. So, to make this happen, we need to advance the conversation with people and business about how we can invest in our future.

We need to discuss this because, in the end, we can't expect the money to come from anybody but ourselves....

The world's other leading city-regions have done this; Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, and Vancouver to name just a few examples....

In Los Angeles, for example, they have passed three different sales tax increases since 1980 that have allowed them to build their road and transit system to accommodate growing needs.

New York uses a mix of income sources, from a sales tax, to a gas tax, payroll tax and a corporate income tax surcharge.

London has used its congestion charge to dramatically change the way people use transportation in that region.

Paris uses payroll taxes to fund what many argue is the world's best transit system.

Vancouver uses a suite of gas taxes, parking fees, utility fees and property taxes to fund its system.

Now, I am not suggesting that any of these are the right solution for our region. In fact, there is no silver bullet, no perfect combination of revenue tools that we can adopt as our own. But we have found some common themes that we may want to consider as we think about the development of an Investment Strategy for this region. These common themes include:

First, dedicating the revenue to specific projects and outcomes. In other words, the public wants to see exactly what they are paying for so they can know that funds are not diverted to other priorities.

Second, fairness -- fairness in distributing costs to everyone who benefits. For example, everyone can agree that users need to contribute to infrastructure that will benefit them. But it is important to recognize that there are other groups and society in general who benefits from transportation infrastructure. We have to be fair in distributing costs and benefits.

Third, this sense of fairness needs to apply across the region. The entire region has significant infrastructure needs, and no part of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area can be left behind.

Fourth, transparency is critical in making decisions, administering funds and reporting on results.

This big conversation has already started around the region. And, this January, we'll be continuing that dialogue in a more formal way and we need each of you at the table. Our discussions will form the core of answering the question of how we fund our future transportation system. Let's find a consensus among ourselves and with residents across the region that is impossible to ignore.

We will continue to reach out and engage with our stakeholders. We will continue to work with CivicAction, whose "What would you do with 32?" campaign and Regional Transportation Champions Council is helping to raise awareness and push the discussion forward.

I would like to commend their work, and echo what John Tory, the Chair of Civic Action recently said: "It can be so much better, and we want people to talk about how they would benefit from greater investment to make it better."

To make it better, we'll continue to work with many of you in this room and the Toronto Board of Trade, as well as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, to tap into what the business community needs and wants from our transit and transportation system.

We need to have a dialogue on this and then turn it into action. Each and every one of you in this room has a real vested interest in this dialogue, and we know how much value you can bring to this discussion as we move forward, so we encourage you to be part of it --- to lead the conversation within your community.

We need to talk because we have a choice ahead of us... we need to make an active choice, if we want our transportation system to be better.

The great leaders and visionaries of this region from years past made some big choices....Big choices that built the Yonge Subway in the 1950's... expanded the 401 in the 1960s....the 1967 pilot project that lead to the creation of the GO train system.

Now is the time for our generation. We need to decide if we're committed to making the transportation system better across the GTHA region... if we are prepared to leave our mark on this great region.

The original *Big Move* was endorsed unanimously by all the GTHA municipalities four years ago. Now we again need your advice, your involvement and your leadership to help us develop the comprehensive funding plan we need to submit to the Province and municipalities by June of 2013.

Here in the GTHA, we too can choose a hopeful future that capitalizes on the pride that each and every one of us has for this great city, region, Province and country. Let us choose the path forward to tackle congestion and clear up our roads while building a strong economy, a healthy environment and a vibrant quality of life for you and your family.

Working together, we can keep the wheels moving forward.