

Mississauga Matters Questions for Candidates: Responses from Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty

Do you commit to the measures outlined by the City of Mississauga regarding the need for investments in transportation and specifically, what additional measures and investments will you make in transportation in the next four years?

Mayor McCallion:

I'm pleased to answer your question in detail. I first want to take a moment to thank you, the city and people of Mississauga, for working with me and our Mississauga caucus, these past four years. Please watch for the release of our election platform which will include new initiatives of benefit to Mississauga and all Ontarians.

Overall, our government will be spending \$4.9 billion on transit in Ontario in our 4-year term.

We are the first government to dedicate 2 cents of the gas tax to public transit. That alone has meant more than \$15 million a year for transit in Mississauga.

Our government has committed \$65 million as our 1/3 share for the new Mississauga Transitway rapid bus project. For GO Transit, our government has invested more than \$1.8 billion in service improvements, new vehicles and stations — resulting in better, more frequent service.

Even with these significant improvements, we realize more needs to be done. That's why we launched MoveOntario 2020, a \$17.5 billion rapid transit plan for the GTA. John Tory's plan will cut \$100 million a year from provincial funding for municipal transit. Our plan includes 16 projects totaling over \$6 billion in new investment in Mississauga. Our government will also cover the municipal share of cost for these projects.

These include the:

- Eglinton LRT (Renforth-Kennedy)
- Dundas West LRT (Kipling-Hurontario)
- Lakeshore GO Rail electrification (SuperGO)
- Lakeshore West GO Rail capacity expansion
- Milton GO Rail capacity expansion
- Airport link to Union Station
- And the GO 407 BRT Transitway Peel segment (401 to 427).

Like you, we're dedicated to public transit, because it fights gridlock, reduces greenhouse gases, and keeps our economy moving. But, perhaps most importantly, it means more time together for hard working families.

Will you make the commitments outlined by the City of Mississauga regarding current value assessment, airport payments in lieu of taxes and tax incremental financing?

We are committed to a fair and predictable property tax system based on current value assessment. In our 2007 Budget we introduced a number of reforms to property taxes that will

improve predictability and stability of the system. Moving to a four year cycle, phasing in assessment increases and improving the fairness of the appeals process form the foundation of our reforms. As a result of our reforms, property owners will no longer see any sudden, unmanageable increases. We also once again raised the threshold for the seniors property tax credit so that more senior homeowners now qualify.

The Conservatives' promise to cap and freeze assessments is a bad idea. It will be complex, limit transparency and create inequities by switching property tax burdens to younger families with starter homes and those owning homes in slower growth neighbourhoods. It is ironic that the Conservatives now criticize the very property tax system they created.

On the issue of airport payments, we will continue to work with Mississauga and the federal government to ensure that Mississauga receives a fair share of tax revenues from the airport.

On tax incremental financing, we are proud that ours is the first government in Ontario to move forward with this new creative financing tool that will help trigger new development and strengthen our existing communities and their infrastructure. We will work with municipalities to review the effectiveness of our initiatives to date and explore broadening these tools.

Will you make the commitments outlined by the City of Mississauga regarding the under funding of municipal services, including the uploading the costs of health and social services to the Province from the municipal property tax over the next three years and the phasing out of the GTA Pooling Program completely over the next three years?

The previous Conservative Government was wrong to download social service costs onto municipal taxpayers. Given the deficit they left us, it has been a challenge to reverse this downloading, but we have made significant progress. For example, we uploaded the provincial share for public health funding from 50% to 75% and moved to cover 50% of ambulance costs.

Our progress will continue. Our government initiated the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, which will set the stage for a sustainable approach for both orders of government to deliver and fund services in Ontario in the 21st century. The report from this Review will be released in spring 2008.

We recognize the GTA Pooling Program implemented by the previous Conservative Government is an unfair burden on property taxpayers in Mississauga. That is why in our 2007 Budget we initiated a phase out plan to eliminate pooling. Our plan will save GTA municipalities \$200 million a year once fully implemented.

Our government has achieved a level of cooperation with Ontario's municipalities that has never been seen before. Instead of downloading or arguing in the media, we see municipalities as equal partners. We have built constructive relationships resulting in stronger communities. We will continue this effort in the years ahead. And we'll have more to say on municipalities' fiscal arrangements in the weeks ahead.

Let me conclude by thanking you for this opportunity. The more we talk to each other, the more we can do for the people we serve together. Thanks, Madame Mayor.