

Mississauga Matters Questions for Candidates: Responses from Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory

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?

John Tory and the Ontario PC Party agree with the City of Mississauga regarding the need for investments in transportation.

A John Tory government will:

- Spend gasoline and fuel taxes the way they are supposed to be spent: on our roads, bridges, highways and transit systems. By fiscal year 2011-12, 100 per cent of the funds collected from these taxes will be spent on transportation and transit building, repair, maintenance and improvement. This represents an additional annual investment of over \$1 billion.
- Expand GO Transit's network of intercity rail service to better reach unserved and underserved communities.
- Expand service on GO Transit's network of existing rail routes where possible – with a view to creating regular two-way service.
- Expand the network of inter-city bus routes to provide flexible and responsive service. We would support the creation of new lanes dedicated for bus-ways, wherever practical. We also need improved bus terminals with the parking facilities necessary to make them attractive alternatives to commuters.
- Plan for a new east-west inter-regional rapid transit line to relieve pressure on Union Station.
- Support the investments of local transit authorities in initiatives along their high-volume corridors.
- Make transit easier to use. Hubs have to be true "commuter gateways" that offer easy fare payment, seamless connections and improved options for cycling and car park-and-ride. Together, we need to create a culture of service and reliability that makes public transit 'the way to go.'

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?

Our tax system has to be fair, and it has to be administered by people who are respectful of the taxpayers they serve. It has been obvious for several years that Ontario's property tax assessment system fails on both counts.

Dalton McGuinty has dithered on the issue for years and continues to reject calls to cap assessment increases. Only when the Provincial Ombudsman released a devastating report, putting in writing the arrogance and unfairness that taxpayers had already experienced, did McGuinty even acknowledge that there was a problem.

Dalton McGuinty's so-called solution of 4-year assessment cycles and assessment averaging simply gives people four years to pack their bags before they are forced out of their homes. This approach amounts to nothing more than tinkering with the system and has not provided

changes that will offer protection to Ontario homeowners against massive assessment (and tax) increases.

A John Tory government will implement a 5 per cent cap on annual assessment increases for as long as an individual owns their home and this protection will be transferable to a spouse. This will preserve the principle of market value assessment, while shielding property owners from sudden, unexpected assessment increases.

This item and the other parts of our plan are laid out in our 'Plan for a Better Ontario'

Will you make the commitments outlined by the City of Mississauga regarding the underfunding 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?

John Tory and the Ontario PC Party agree with the City of Mississauga that real action must be taken to address the municipal-provincial fiscal gap. We agree that GTA Pooling needs to come to an end. We also agree that all three levels of government need to forge better relationships.

When Dalton McGuinty cynically pushed the financial issues of the municipalities beyond the next election we expressed our opposition. There was and is no need for the review to take so long and property tax payers and the municipalities are the ones that suffer. We have called for the final report of the review to be submitted this year – not next. As well, we have committed to begin addressing these very real issues in our first budget (2008). No other party has made the financial challenges of municipalities a greater priority.

Unfortunately, Dalton McGuinty chose not to address the issue of GTA pooling and the unfair burden it was placing on GTA property taxpayers until the dying months of his government. GTA pooling is unfair, it should be put to an end, and we will do just that.

The people of Mississauga want all of their representatives to work together because ultimately there is only one taxpayer. We agree that we must do better. Dalton McGuinty sees the federal government as a ready-made excuse and a convenient place to pass the buck. We see them as a partner and we will foster a more positive and collaborative relationship with them.