

ONTARIO ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES INITIATIVE

Canadian Physicians for the Environment • Citizens Environment Alliance • Canadian Environmental Law Association • CPAWS Wildlands League • David Suzuki Foundation • Earthroots • Ecojustice • Environment North • Environmental Defence • Ontario Nature • Great Lakes United • Greenpeace • LEAF • Local Food Plus • Ontario Clean Air Alliance • Ontario Sustainable Energy Association • Pembina Institute • Sierra Club Ontario • Toronto Environmental Alliance • Sustain Ontario

Oct. 25, 2013

Dear Members of the Transit Investment Strategy Advisory Panel,

We are a coalition of 20 of Ontario's leading environmental groups and have a keen interest in both transit expansion and operations, including affordable fares and improved service. We understand that the Advisory Panel is focusing on new revenue sources to fund the Metrolinx Big Move Plan. We are writing to urge the Advisory Panel to also review and advise the Premier on ways to:

- Effectively resource transit operations in Ontario through provincial contributions as part of an investment strategy.
- Immediately improving existing transit service and operations

There are three reasons we ask for this.

First, there is a strong need to demonstrate to the public that any new transit taxes will have a concrete benefit to them immediately, not 5 to 10 years later. Earmarking new revenues for immediate improvements to existing transit operations will do this.

Second, the province needs to encourage more Ontarians to take transit. Taking transit to work shouldn't mean making a financial sacrifice. Yet every year, transit fares keep climbing in most Ontario cities. While previous provincial governments made substantial contributions to transit operating costs, the province now puts almost nothing in the operations fare box.

Third, a recently released report by the International Agency for Research on Cancer called *Air Pollution and Cancer* notes emissions from motor vehicles contain chemicals known to be carcinogenic to humans. Improved transit would also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. The best way to help people keep their cars at home is by improving transit services and making it more affordable.

We acknowledge that the province must ensure that long-overdue transit expansion

gets rolling, but it is also time for the province to once again pay its fair share of operating costs and stop penalizing transit riders for doing the right thing.

That's why we have asked the Ontario Government to:

- Contribute provincial funds to cover roughly 50% of transit operating costs as part of any new transit funding mechanisms being explored by Metrolinx.
- Recognize that transit benefits everyone, through improved air quality and reduced congestion, by restoring broadly based support for transit operations.
- Work with local transit providers to ensure new provincial funds lead to better services and more accountable transit systems for transit users across the province.

The Advisory Panel is engaged in extremely important work to help advise the Premier on the appropriate revenue tools to fund transit expansion in the GTHA. This work presents an excellent opportunity for the Panel to consider and advise the Premier on how to solve the transit operations challenge facing transit systems and users across the Province.

Ontarians need a solution to the transit operations and capital funding crisis we all face. We cannot afford to continue paying the mounting economic, environmental and health costs associated with the status quo. That is why we urge you to include funding for transit operations in your deliberations.

On behalf of the Ontario Environmental Priorities initiative, we thank you for your consideration.



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The logo for Greenpeace, featuring the word "GREENPEACE" in a bold, green, sans-serif font.