

Mississauga Matters

MISSISSAUGA *Mayor's Update* *Special Edition Fall 2007*

Table of Contents

Mayor's Message	1
Why it Matters	2
Questions for Party Leaders	3 – 5
A 21st Century Conversation	6

This update contains information on issues critical to the success of the City of Mississauga and of major importance during the upcoming Provincial Election on October 10, 2007.

Residents can review the information enclosed and also visit the City's website at: www.mississauga.ca under the heading *Mississauga Matters*.

Also, we are asking you to get involved in planning for the future. Council has asked staff to facilitate *A 21st Century Conversation* where residents and the community can share their ideas and vision for the next 30 years. Visit www.conversation21.ca

Message from Mayor Hazel McCallion, C.M.

As Mayor of the sixth largest city in Canada, I believe our city is entering into a critical stage of development. We have grown by approximately 480,000 citizens in the last 33 years and through the provincial government legislation called *Places to Grow*, we are identified for more growth. This means that Mississauga has a key role to play in the province and in particular the GTA. The success of the 905 and our city is tied to the success of the province.

With a Provincial Election on October 10, Mississauga City Council endorsed a report on June 20, 2007 to engage key stakeholders and provincial parties with the view to favourably influence policies on issues of major importance to our city. We feel strongly that in order to continue to succeed, we need to have commitments from our provincial representatives on four key topics.

- 1. Investment in Transit and Transportation**
- 2. Current Value Assessment, Airport Taxes and a New Method to Fund Capital Projects**

- 3. Underfunding of Municipal Services**
- 4. Status of The City of Mississauga Within The Region of Peel**

A report was presented and endorsed by Council on each of these topics. As part of our strategy, we distributed the series of reports to all official political parties and candidates registered in the October 2007 provincial election. Then we asked each official party and all local candidates of official parties recognized by the Legislative to answer three questions related to their position on these issues. For your reference, we have posted all the answers received up to the time of publication on our City's website at www.mississauga.ca under the heading *Mississauga Matters*.

Most important, we invited party leaders or designates to a town hall meeting on September 19th, 2007, held in the Council Chambers. The town hall meeting allowed each party to speak to the key issues as outlined in our reports, as well as an opportunity to clarify each party's stand on these issues through a moderated session. You may follow the entire town

hall meeting proceedings on our web site.

Finally, it is important to reach out to you, our citizens, in advance of the provincial elections. I'm asking you to do your homework. Ask your provincial candidates about these issues and where they stand. Ask them to tell you what they will do to build strong, vibrant and liveable communities. On October 10th, make an informed decision; make your decision count for our city and the Province of Ontario.



A stylized blue ink signature of Hazel McCallion, C.M.

Hazel McCallion, C.M.
Mayor



Why it Matters

Mississauga is Canada's sixth largest city with a population of more than 700,000. With well-established infrastructure and state-of-the-art facilities, the City is considered to be an employer of choice delivering quality municipal programs and services to its citizens. Mississauga is a dynamic, diverse and progressive municipality known for its economic strength and for being Canada's safest city.

It's important for the Province of Ontario to support growing cities like Mississauga.

Province of Ontario	City of Mississauga
GROWTH <i>Ontario Places to Grow Act</i> will mean an additional 2 million people in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.	GROWTH Mississauga has grown by approximately 480,000 citizens in the last 33 years and under <i>Places to Grow Act</i> will see added growth.
TRANSIT Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) estimates that the new investments required just to stay afloat are almost as large as the entire sum currently invested in all transit capital projects.	TRANSIT Transportation (both traffic gridlock and the need for better transit) is number one issue amongst Mississauga residents (2006 Environics survey).
FUNDING The Association of Ontario Municipalities currently estimates the fiscal imbalance to be at least \$3 billion. Municipal property taxpayers in Ontario continue to shoulder the heavy burden of paying for health and social services.	FUNDING In 2007, Mississauga residents were responsible for funding 63% of the Region of Peel tax levy, which translates into \$190 million on the costs of health and social services. In addition, the City of Mississauga continues to pay a disproportionate share of the Region of Peel's taxes, over contributing by \$24million annually.
CURRENT VALUE ASSESSMENT In 2006, the Province deferred reassessment until 2008 for 2009 taxation to allow MPAC time to implement the recommendations of the Provincial Ombudsman. In 2007, the Province announced that reassessment would begin again in 2008 with updates every four (4) years. Further reassessment increases for residential properties would be phased in over each four year period, while decreases would be immediate.	CURRENT VALUE ASSESSMENT Mississauga Council has endorsed current value assessment (CVA) since it was legislated in 1998. CVA is the basis upon which property taxes are calculated. Fairness and equity in taxation has always been of concern to Council. We do not support suggestions for a "freeze til sale" assessment system which would tax some people at CVA and others at less than CVA. A four year reassessment cycle with the phasing in of reassessment increases and decreases would address tax volatility and predictability concerns cited by the public while ensuring tax fairness and equity.
STRONG CITIES Ontario's municipalities are the foundation of our local, provincial and national economies. Yet, growing responsibilities and shrinking resources are stifling our communities, large and small. Provincial investments in local communities have been made, and are appreciated, but a great deal more needs to be done if Ontario communities are to be liveable, sustainable, and competitive in the national and global marketplace. <small>(excerpt from AMO Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs January 2007)</small>	STRONG CITIES As the third largest city in Ontario and the sixth largest in Canada, Mississauga seeks the status and ability to make its own decisions like other cities in Ontario, including cities like London, Kingston, Windsor and Barrie, cities that are less than half our size.



Questions for Party Leaders

Each of the three Party Leaders: Howard Hampton (New Democratic Party- NDP), Dalton McGuinty (Liberal Party) and John Tory (Progressive Conservative Party) were asked to submit answers to three questions of importance to Mississauga residents. The answers as submitted are reproduced .

1 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?

Liberal

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.

NDP

The NDP will take the following steps to improve transit funding for Ontario municipalities:

- 1) Maintain 2 cents/litre Gas Tax funding for transit.
- 2) Provide funding for the proposed Transit City and related transit projects
- 3) As of January 1, 2008, pick up 50% of the municipal contribution to operational funding for transit.

Progressive Conservative

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.'



2. 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?

Liberal

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.

NDP

The NDP would replace the current version of CVA with a "freeze-til-sale" assessment model that would work as follows:

- Rather than assess properties on their market value and then increase the property tax according to the difference between the assessment increase and the city-wide average increase, under the NDP approach there would be no re-assessment until the property is sold. In other words, the present assessment would stay the same until the property is sold (or has more than \$40,000 in renovations at one time).

Progressive Conservative

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'





3 • 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?

Liberal

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.

NDP

The NDP believes that the key to reducing pressures on property tax and to free up resources for municipal services is to upload downloaded provincially mandated programs that have no business being funded off the property tax base. Towards that end, the NDP has outlined an ambitious 4-year plan to begin to upload these services as follows:

- As of January 1, 2008, the NDP would ensure that the provincial government has assumed full responsibility for 50% of the operating costs of public transit in return for a two-year fare freeze.
- As of January 1, 2008, an NDP government would honour the provincial government's agreement with Ontario municipalities and assume its rightful share of administrative costs related to the original downloading agreement.
- As of January 1, 2008, an NDP government would pick up the full costs of security at courts; and
- In it's first term, the NDP would upload the Ontario Disability Support Program.

Beyond the first term, the NDP would begin to upload other provincially mandated programs.

Progressive Conservative

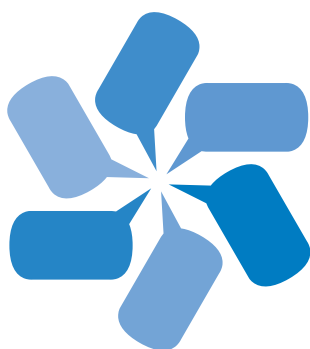
John Tory and the Ontario PC Party agree with the City of Mississauga that real action must be taken to address the municipal-provincial fiscal gap. We agree that GTA Pooling needs to come to an end. We also agree that all three levels of government need to forge better relationships.

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.





a 21st century Conversation

my future mississauga

How do you want to get around?

Where do you want to play?

What makes this a great city to live in?

What do you want to see in the Mississauga of the 21st century?

Let's have a conversation about your future Mississauga.

Mississauga is one of the most successful cities in Canada. We should be proud of what we have accomplished since our City was formed in 1974.

In just 33 years, we've built a world-wide reputation. We are the country's safest city, we have a strong economic engine, a diverse population, and beautiful parks and amenities. We've built a dynamic and urban downtown and still have maintained our strong, distinct and vibrant neighbourhoods.

Our success has been guided by clear, focussed strategic plans based on the values of public trust, enhancing community quality of life and delivering excellence in public administration. And your input in the decision-making process has made this a great city. But that's not enough. We have to have a vision for our children, and our grandchildren, and plan for the kind of city they want Mississauga to be in the future, in the next 20, 30 and 40 years. That is why this fall we're launching the largest community engagement initiative the City has ever undertaken, called *A 21st Century Conversation – My Future Mississauga*.

We want to involve you in forming a new strategic plan for Mississauga that will build on your ideas, hopes and dreams for our city. We'd like to have a conversation with you about the

Mississauga of the 21st century. Our future is full of many possibilities, and we've developed eight themes to focus our conversation in key areas of interest.

- Getting around in Mississauga;
- Going green in 905;
- Creating wealth in our community;
- Embracing our social diversity;
- Positively influencing our quality of life;
- Investing in creativity and knowledge;
- Creating a vibrant downtown; and,
- Realizing the opportunities of being part of the Golden Horseshoe

Our conversation kicks off this September with a Community Leaders Forum and the launch of an interactive website where we invite you to express your ideas about the future.

Here you will find more information about the free educational Speakers Series we have planned in October and November. International speakers, and experts, including **Stephen Lewis** and **Justin Trudeau**, will provide an opportunity to learn about best practices from around the world, and you will be able to share your ideas with them about what Mississauga can become in the future.

Our conversation will conclude in early 2008 with a charrette – a two and a

half day community visioning session. The charrette is the opportunity for everyone to bring what they learn in the fall to an exciting forum where ideas will be channelled into a meaningful action plan for the City.

I challenge you to get involved by talking with us about your City of Mississauga of the future. Let the conversation begin by attending the events, or in one of the following ways:

- Call the *21st Century Conversation* line for meeting/event information: 905-615-3200 ext. 2100.
- Visit our website at **www.conversation21.ca** where meeting dates will be posted.
- Book a "21st Century" presentation for your community or association meeting by calling the conversation line, or book a presentation online.
- Go to our website and register to receive email updates about meetings and forums.
- Send us your ideas through our website discussion bulletin boards.
- Fill out and drop off a "21st Century Conversation Idea Card" at the City facility or library closest to you, or fill in your card online.

**It's our city,
it's our future.....
Have your say!**

Information Sources

City of Mississauga Website

www.mississauga.ca under
Mississauga Matters banner

You can access

Council Corporate Reports



Elections Ontario's Website

www.electionsontario.on.ca

Click on:

Candidates and Parties to search for
registered candidates and

Frequently Asked Questions to find
your electoral district.

Town Hall Meeting on Wednesday, September 19, 2007

Watch Rogers Cable 10 or live
streaming on the City's website for
how the provincial candidates answer
questions that matter most
to Mississauga.