

York Region to receive funding for transportation

By Mark Pavilons

Ontario's government is helping 107 municipalities across the province expand or improve their public transit systems with Ontario's gas tax program.

Funding for York Region will help enhance and expand transit systems.

Jeff Yurek, Minister of Transportation, along with King-Vaughan MPP Stephen Lecce, announced the funding last week.

"We are investing in public transit to make it a more convenient travel option and attract more riders," said Minister Jeff Yurek.

"More public transit will cut through gridlock and get people moving."

This year, the province is investing \$364 million in gas tax funding to 107 municipalities providing public transit service to 144 communities across Ontario. These communities represent over 92 per cent of Ontario's total population.

In York Region, the government of Ontario is granting an additional \$16.7 million of investment into the local transit systems, resulting in funds to upgrade transit infrastructure, increase accessibility, purchase transit vehicles, add more routes, and extend hours of service.

"Thanks to our government's significant investment, residents of Vaughan and King Township will be served by an improved and more reliable public transit system, which will help them cut down on their commute times and allow them to spend more time with their loved ones," said Lecce, who's also Deputy Government House Leader, and Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier and Minister of Infrastructure.

Funding for Ontario's gas tax program is determined by the number of litres of gasoline sold in the province. The program provides municipalities with two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenues. Municipalities receiving gas tax funding must use these funds towards their public transit capital and/or operating expenditures, at their own discretion.

The share that each municipality receives under Ontario's gas tax program is based on a formula of 70 per cent ridership and 30 per cent population. These funds serve both the needs of large and small municipal transit systems.

Municipalities that contribute financially to public transit services are eligible for funding. Municipalities not currently providing transit can become eligible for funding if they start up fully-accessible transit services.

Funding for Ontario's gas tax program is determined by the number of litres of gasoline sold in the province. The program provides municipalities with two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenues. Municipalities receiving gas tax funding must use these funds towards their public transit capital and/or operating expenditures, at their own discretion, including upgrading transit infrastructure, increasing accessibility, purchasing transit vehicles, adding more routes and extending hours of service.

According to Allan Evelyn, King's treasurer and director of finance, the first five years (2014-2018) of gas tax allocation were outlined within the Municipal Funding Agreement for the Transfer of Federal Gas Tax Funds.

"In April 2018, we received communication from AMO advising that the Government of Canada has yet to confirm gas tax allocations for 2019-2023, but criteria for determination of the allocation would be influenced by population growth between 2011 and 2016, per 2016 Census population data."

The recent announcement, he pointed out, relates to separate and targeted funding in support of transit initiatives. The Region of York, as the sole transit delivery agent in York Region, is the only recipient in York of the announced transit funding.

Municipalities also receive funds through gasoline taxes and Evelyn said he expects the general announcement regarding base line Gas Tax Funding will follow shortly, and this recent announcement is not the total extend of funds forthcoming.