

Justin Trudeau pledges \$595 million in GO funding

By Anna Cianni

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited the Maple GO station in Vaughan, to reveal plans for the GO expansion project. On Feb. 7, Trudeau announced the Canadian government is allocating \$595 million to improve service along the Barrie corridor.

The GO Expansion Project is part of the \$1.8 billion investment in GO Transit to use across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Metrolinx President and Chief Executive Officer, Phil Verster said this regional transit expansion project will include improvements to GO stations and transit service along the Barrie line.

King-Vaughan MP Deb Schulte, Vaughan-Woodbridge MP Francesco Sorbara, and King Township Mayor Steve Pellegrini attended the press conference to represent the needs of local residents. MP Schulte brought up traffic congestion and limited parking as two main issues that the Vaughan area faces with GO Transit.

The GO Expansion Project includes GO station upgrades like a parking garage and new bike storage spaces. However, the specific details of these improvements have not yet been made public. The Barrie Corridor project, which runs through Maple, includes the construction of approximately 51.2 km of new track between Union Station and Barrie, train layover facilities, and station upgrades. "Smart investments in public transit help connect communities, create good, middle class jobs, and protect our environment. They also make a real difference in people's lives, helping them get to work on time in the mornings, and be home with their families in the evenings. We will continue to work with and listen to communities, and invest in the infrastructure they need today and into the future," Trudeau said.

Verster said over the past year, Metrolinx has made a lot of improvements to GO Transit, including bringing hourly service to the Barrie corridor. According to Verster, Metrolinx has also doubled off-peak service on the Lakeshore East line, increased off-peak service on the Lakeshore West line by 50 per cent, increased Kitchener service by 25 per cent, and will introduce another express service this week. Additionally, Metrolinx rolled out an all-year-round Niagara service that came out four years earlier than originally planned.

Verster thanked Trudeau for the ongoing financial support to Metrolinx and investments in transit infrastructure. He said the GO Expansion Project has a benefit to cost ratio of 2.6, meaning that for every \$1 invested in GO Transit, the province will benefit \$2.60.

"Mr. Prime Minister, all I'm asking for (is to) keep funds rolling! Keep on supporting us, it's a good investment," said Verster.

The prime minister said he will be touring the country throughout the month of February in areas "where infrastructure projects are making a real difference in the lives of Canadians."

"For people who need to get where they need to go on time, there has to be good service. After all, it's frustrating to be crammed into an already full train or to miss your ride because you can't find a spot to park," Trudeau added.

More details should be expected in the future.

"I've been hearing your concerns and priorities at the doors and on the phones, that we need more access to transit and new infrastructure that will help grow communities like York-Simcoe," said Liberal candidate Shaun Tanaka. "I can't wait to work with the Liberal government to build on historic new investments in better roads, transit, and bridges to help cut commute times, and continue to create new well-paying middle class jobs in our community."

The announcement, she said, "highlights the Liberal government's commitment to building stronger communities, making it easier and safer for families to get around, and helping regions like York-Simcoe grow."