



## **Tolls and taxes won't fix gridlock**

The Toronto Sun

Tue 22 Jan 2008

Page: 16

Section: Editorial/Opinion

Column: Editorial

Since road tolls and higher gasoline taxes are coming to the Greater Toronto Area, imposed by provincial and municipal governments claiming they want to reduce gridlock, some words of warning for our politicians.

First, imposing these added costs on motorists, as recommended in a study released yesterday by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, is pointless unless they are simultaneously offered with realistic public transit alternatives.

Extorting money from people who have no choice but to drive to work because public transit isn't available to them isn't a plan to reduce gridlock. It's blaming the victims.

The urban sprawl and gridlock which exist today throughout the Greater Toronto Area and the Golden Horseshoe didn't happen by accident.

They were the direct result of decades of deliberate policies by provincial and municipal governments which were more interested in generating new sources of tax revenue through economic growth, than in ensuring roads and public transit kept pace with development.

Why should commuters, who did what politicians and planners encouraged and indeed often compelled them to do to in order to encourage growth across the GTA -- live in one community while working in another -- be punished today?

Before we approve road tolls on existing highways or higher gasoline taxes, let's see a realistic and co-ordinated plan to reduce gridlock from the body the provincial government has designated to do that job -- Metrolinx, otherwise known as the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority.

Such a plan must do more than simply extract cash from motorists and throw it at public transit. It must take a balanced approach that invests in repairing and expanding roads and highways as well.

Finally, any tolls and new gas taxes must be specifically earmarked for transit and road improvements, not thrown down the black hole of general government revenues.

Without these conditions first being met, any government which hikes gas taxes and imposes tolls on roads our taxes have already paid for, should be consigned to electoral oblivion.