

## New subway line a catalyst for development

by Neil Sharma 10 Apr 2019



The Ontario government's announcement that it will build a new subway line and expand others is being hailed as a savvy infrastructure investment, and one that's long overdue.

The "Ontario" subway line, which is a more comprehensive version of the downtown relief line, will run 15 kilometres from Ontario Place to the Ontario Science Centre and cost \$10.9 billion. The government says it will be completed by 2027.

Overall, the Progressive Conservative government is committing \$28.5b to a transit plan that will also include additional stations on the Scarborough subway extension, extend the Yonge line into Richmond Hill, and add more Eglinton LRT stops.

"The government has only been in place for about seven or eight months, and in terms of the relief line, it's decades overdue," said **Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario**. "First and foremost, from the point of view of getting around, the now rebranded 'Ontario line' rather than 'relief line' is going north of Pape to intersect with the Eglinton LRT and it's a fantastic move."

Manahan also reckons that the subway extension could catalyze redevelopment in the surrounding environment.

“There are some older towers around the Ontario Science Centre and they have some green space around them,” he said. “They wanted to increase density, and I would think there’s potential for that area to see a catalyst of activity.

"Carlaw is where the alignment is supposed to go and there has been a lot of redevelopment there over the last several years, but now I'm sure there will be more, and that's a good thing."

The provincial government also intends to take control of subway stations and Manahan is convinced that could open the door to creative development strategies, like building towers on top of, and around, subway stations.

Michael Lindsay, who Premier Doug Ford appointed as an advisor on how to upload control of Toronto’s subway to the province, has spent months conducting consultations on how to proceed and may have a plan in place.

“You’re building high-rises on top of, and beside, the stations, and while it would be new for Toronto, Hong Kong and other cities have been doing it for a long time,” said Manahan.

“Michael Lindsay has been doing a lot of consulting since they brought him on last August. The government has been doing its due diligence and consulting transit specialists and others in land development.”

The exorbitant cost of housing has caused many Torontonians to leave for the region’s outskirts, but [DLC](#) Expert Financial’s broker-owner believes that better transit could buck that trend—especially considering how much money commuters end up spending anyway.

“We try to get these people to budget more because they could easily spend \$600 a month on ETR bills,” said Lorne Andrews. “A mortgage is closer to \$450 a month. They’re moving out of the city because of cost but a subway could instigate some new development, and with better options to get around the city, not to mention more places to live, it might stop the exodus.”