

## NATIONAL POST

Incoming Ontario premier Kathleen Wynne says she's eager to adopt new transit revenue streams

Natalie Alcoba | Jan 30, 2013 11:10 AM ET



TORONTO — With the city of Toronto set to launch public consultations on taxes, tolls and other ways to pay for transit expansion in the region, the premier-designate says the question is not if the government will adopt a money-maker, but which one.

Speaking to reporters at Queen's Park on Tuesday, Kathleen Wynne would not specify the revenue-generating "tools" she favours.

"I have said, it's not whether we're going to create a revenue stream, ... it's which of those tools we're going to use," said Ms. Wynne.

She called transit a “huge priority” and “the number one condition that we need to get right in terms of economic growth” across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Her comments came on the same day as a new report called for distance-based transit pricing, and made the case for tolls and taxes to help pay for new transit infrastructure in the region.

The topic will dominate public discourse in Toronto over the next month, as the city holds a series of public meetings to gather input on 17 possible revenue tools — everything from taxes and congestion charges to parking fees. The feedback will help Metrolinx, the regional transit agency, propose a strategy to the provincial government this summer.

Toronto chief planner Jennifer Keesmaat unveiled the “Feeling Congested?” campaign on Monday.

“Of course no one wants to pay more, but I think there is a dawning realization on all of us that we’re going to have to pony up if we want to see investments in transportation and, in particular, transit infrastructure,” she said.

Mayor Rob Ford has said that he does not support new taxes for transit.

The report commissioned by the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario** said officials should consider implementing a regional fuel tax, a regional sales tax or a vehicle levy to raise money for transit construction. It called “time-varying tolls” the most attractive funding scheme, suggesting a network of high occupancy toll lanes and tolling all lanes on 400-series highways. The study’s author’s argued that transit fares should be based on distance travelled and time of use, an idea TTC chair Karen Stintz is open to.

“Once we have Presto [smart card] and it’s widely implemented across the system, that’s the time that we can talk about zone-based fares,” she said.