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## Metrolinx report on revenue tools due Monday

By Ashley Csanady

Metrolinx's long-awaited transportation investment strategy will land Monday, *QP Briefing* has learned.

The strategy will outline proposed funding tools to boost transit and transportation throughout the GTHA, where economists say gridlock is costing the regional economy billions per year. Premier **Kathleen Wynne** has pledged to make Toronto-area transit a priority of her new administration, but has said the province will wait for Metrolinx's final report before deciding which funding tools to pursue.

The report is expected to be released Monday at 11 a.m. following a Metrolinx board meeting. A media lockup is also said to be in the works.

Everyone from Transportation Minister **Glen Murray** to the Toronto Region Board of Trade have argued for increased transit and transportation funding beyond the current tax base. There's wide consensus that the region needs dedicated funding tools for transit, but little agreement on which to employ.

Metrolinx's report is expected to weigh heavily on that debate. Murray and Wynne have repeatedly punted transit funding questions by saying they await that report's recommendations.

Once the report is public, the province is expected to move on at least some of its ideas by autumn, though there could be some progress in the final weeks of the legislative session. The budget laid the groundwork for high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes but neither the minister nor the Premier has given much indication what other tools they might recommend.

In April, [Metrolinx released a shortlist of funding tools](#) its investment strategy will consider, ranging from payroll taxes to kilometre-based user fees for drivers to property tax increases. (Wynne has ruled out a property tax hike to pay for transit.)

Even that shortlist of 11 suggestions [drew heavy criticism](#). Wynne has spent much of the past few months pitching her transit vision and the need to pay for it, without explaining how she plans to do that.

"Reviewed literature suggests that the basket of tools has the potential to generate the \$2 billion needed annually to fund the capital and operational costs of Metrolinx transit expansion plan, but

gaining approval for these tools and implementing them quickly may prove to be difficult," a [new report](#) from the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) says. It highlights a regional sales tax, a parking space levy, a regional fuel tax and road pricing such as toll lanes as some of the most commonly suggested models.

President **Andy Manahan** said one option won't suffice, and it will take a combination of these tools to meet the GTHA's long-term needs. Dedicated funding will not only help "unlock gridlock" as the government puts it, but will offer the construction industry a bit of stability, Manahan said.

"Whatever the shortlist is, I think it has to be more than one," Manahan said in an interview. "If it's a few different tools, I think you're spreading the burden out among different user bases."

Some kind of road pricing could be especially effective, he said, because it could both discourage some people from driving and push them toward transit. That could free up existing roads for those who don't have alternatives, and provide money to expand transit to meet growing needs.