

Editorial ? Regional gas tax will never fly

We share Mayor Marolyn Morrison's indignation over the announcement this week from Metrolinx that there should be a gas tax of five cents per litre imposed in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) as one of the methods of financing a massive transit scheme for the region.

Such a tax will have limited benefits for a place like Caledon, where motorists can go and get their gas cheaper in a place like Orangeville, and will carry lots of financial consequences for the town.

On the other hand, we would submit that this tax, which along with the other tools put forth by Metrolinx has to be approved by the Province, has still got a lot of hoops to get through before it becomes reality.

No matter how much the New Democrats are supporting the latest Liberal budget at Queen's Park, the fact is we could well have a provincial election in the next 12 months. That means a tax like this is going to have to be sold in vote-rich Toronto and Hamilton, along with other places; like Caledon.

True, nobody likes gridlock, and Metrolinx is trying to come up with a way to deal with it. It's also reality that such solutions don't come cheap. But to get people in the GTHA to pay the entire tab is not realistic, and likely to be a hard sell at election time.

It's been said repeatedly that GTHA represents a major component in the financial well-being of Ontario (and the whole country, for that matter). That's something that the government at Queen's Park, regardless of party, has to keep in mind.

There are some who would ask why people in Thunder Bay should have to pick up the cheque for Toronto's traffic problems. The answer is Ontario's financial health depends on it.

A province-wide tax on gas would be a more productive way to finance Metrolinx's plans.

We also like Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones's call for the government to find money for this work from its existing revenue stream. All the necessary funds might not be there, but there should be some. And when it comes to the taxpayers' burdens, every little bit helps.