

Regional councillors are asked to pledge to cut commute times

By Matt Bradley

Greater Toronto Area (GTA) commute times average 82 minutes and are the longest of Canada's big cities.

With the provincial budget looming on the horizon, citizens are looking for active steps to improve the transportation network.

Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance Vice-President of Initiatives Linda Weichel appeared before Peel Regional council recently to encourage bold leadership in transportation initiatives. She reported 6,618 citizens and 167 elected officials have taken the CivicAction Your32 pledge, promising active interest in improving traffic congestion around Toronto. All five of Caledon's Regional councillors, including Mayor Marolyn Morrison, have signed the pledge.

Nevertheless, council expressed widespread disappointment in both the federal and provincial powers who have not demonstrated a similar commitment to transportation infrastructure around Canada's cities, particularly the GTA. At the provincial level, many members of the NDP and governing Liberals have signed their pledges, but no members of the official opposition can say the same. At the federal level, only two members of the governing Conservatives have signed the Your32 pledge.

Mississauga Councillor Pat Saito stated her disappointment:

"I am absolutely appalled by those who did not sign (the pledge), because they are letting our citizens down," she declared. "It shows a lack of understanding of the problems in the major cities across the country. Those two levels of government (provincial and federal) need to step up."

Fresh from the Big City Mayor's Conference in Ottawa, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion called for a better response from the federal government.

"The federal government just ignores the transit needs of Canada's cities, and they all need that funding in a big way," she commented.

Council continues to support the CivicAction campaign and encourages greater pressure on both the provincial and federal governments until an appropriate response is received. More information on the Your32 campaign is available at your32.com