

**Remarks for
The Honourable Donna
Cansfield,
Minister of Transportation
at the
Sustainable Transportation
Conference**

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Thank you and good morning.

I am delighted to see all of you here at a gathering that is unprecedented.

We have never done anything like this before in the province of Ontario.

The Ministry of Transportation is dedicated to probing the various issues surrounding transportation, and more recently this has included a focus on environmental sustainability.

However, to have an entire conference dedicated to looking at doing transportation in a sustainable way – a conference attended by leading thinkers in the field from across not only Ontario, but also Canada, North America and Europe...

...well that speaks to a pretty radical shift in focus, and a dramatic change in the way we think about transportation.

And that's a good thing.

We need to take our thinking about transportation to a whole new level if we're going to solve the challenges we currently face.

And we face some pretty serious problems. Anyone who has spent any time driving around this part of Southern Ontario knows that.

I don't know how many of you drove to this conference this morning, but if you did and if you came from very far, then you know what I'm referring to.

We have a congestion problem.

Our roads and highways are busy and slow. Sometimes they're not even slow – they're stopped.

That gridlock costs our economy billions of dollars every year.

Costs associated with pollution.

Costs associated with the slow movement of goods and services.

And let's not forget the social costs.

People spend hours in their cars, those are lost hours they will never get to spend with their children, or their spouses, or their friends.

Hours spent in gridlocked traffic are the worst kind of lost hours, because they are the kind you know could have been avoided. And the thing is, if we don't deal with this problem today, we're going to have a much worse one tomorrow.

Over the next 25 years here in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe, we are expecting another 3.8 million people.

That's not, in and of itself, a bad thing. There is great economic potential there. But I don't think I need to explain to people here just how important it is that you plan for that level of growth. Because while the potential positive impact of that kind of growth is enormous, the threat to the environment is serious.

We'd be looking at a 45 per cent increase in average commuting times arising from increased traffic congestion. Hand in hand with that, there would be a 42 per cent increase in car emissions.

And that kind of growth is not the type we are looking to encourage.

What we want is the kind of growth that is environmentally sustainable, brings new investment and more jobs.

And that means delivering a transportation system that is environmentally sustainable.

We must apply a different level of thinking to the issues surrounding transportation.

What we're dealing with here is years of underfunding and neglect of the transportation infrastructure in this province.

This is combined with the fact that the old way of thinking about transportation was focussed too heavily on roads and highways, and not enough on alternatives to roads and highways...

Our government understands that increasingly, the best solutions to the challenge of congestion must be found in linking our roads, highways and transit with other modes of transportation such as rail, air and marine.

Our approach must be a multi-modal transportation network.

Rail plays an important part in this network. That's why we've created the Ontario Railway Advisory Panel – to see how we can build on this resource.

This panel represents a broad cross-section of national, local and regional transportation companies. These are the organizations that can help us further develop rail transportation in a way that maximizes its potential.

As part of this multi-modal approach, we're also working with the Ontario Marine Transportation Forum – a coalition of marine carriers, ports and related interests – to review Ontario's marine transportation policies and strategic priorities.

The marine industry has great potential for transporting manufactured goods to many ports along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway, also known as Highway H2O.

The Seaway is expected to handle 45 million tonnes of cargo this year, but the surprising fact is that it is operating significantly below capacity. At the same time, Ontario faces bottlenecks in freight transportation.

I'm told that 900 transport trailers can fit on one Great Lakes ship.

And of course, a multi-modal system would not be fully realized without recognizing the importance of air transportation and supporting this vast industry that carries close to \$235 million worth of Canada's daily world trade.

We are looking at what role we can play and how we can work together, where appropriate, to utilize air transportation in our network.

Our vision for a sustainable transportation system is grounded in an approach that maximizes all of our resources – they are all critical to economic success, and in turn, our quality of life.

And we need to be clear. This is a vast province, and cars and trucks are an integral part of the transportation mix that keeps the province moving. And so does our air, rail and water resources.

And that's fine.

But what we as a government have to do – and this is something we share with governments in almost every other jurisdiction in North America – is to find a way of integrating and promoting different transportation modes so we can ease the strain on our roads and highways, and in the process ease the strain on our environment.

Because in this day and age, we as a government, have a responsibility to be mindful of our effects on the environment and how we can minimize our impact.

The natural resources in this province, North and South, are an integral part of what makes Ontario unique. They are key to the quality of life we have come to associate with living in this province.

And Ontarians have come to understand that anything that threatens our environment also threatens our quality of life.

Our government has made great strides in protecting the environment, but we know more needs to be done. That's why our next step will be the announcement of a climate change plan in the very near future – a plan that will help all Ontarians do their part to make our province cleaner and greener... while keeping our economy strong.

And something that makes me particularly proud as Minister of Transportation in this Province is how much we have done, and continue to do, to support those goals while building the kind of transportation system we need for today and for tomorrow.

Public transit is the backbone of our plan.

We know – everyone here knows – that it's not enough to simply encourage people to get out of their cars.

We need to give them attractive alternatives, and that means a public transit system that is four things:

Accessible, convenient, reliable and safe.

We're investing \$1.3 billion this year across Ontario to accomplish precisely that, and in the process encourage people to return to public transit. Here's how:

We've fulfilled our commitment to give two cents of provincial gas tax revenue to municipalities for transit. This is a way of ensuring that the right transit decisions are made by the people in the best position to determine transit needs.

Since 2004, this program has benefited over 104 municipalities, allowing them to buy new transit vehicles, and increase and improve transit service.

Since 2003 municipal transit ridership has increased by over 65 million passenger trips, removing 54 million cars from our roadways. That's a 10 per cent increase in three years!

We created Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTTA), to build a seamless transportation network across GTA and Hamilton.

Increasingly, transportation patterns in this part of the province are moving away from the "into and out of" downtown Toronto pattern that used to prevail. People are instead commuting right across the region, and we want them to be able to do so easily and conveniently.

The GTTA will integrate municipal and regional transit planning and co-ordinate fares and transit service to improve convenience for commuters. They will also coordinate the purchase of transit vehicles on behalf of municipal transit systems, and manage GO Transit.

We are creating an integrated fare card system for nine transit systems, from Hamilton to Oshawa. This means one fare card will take you from Hamilton to Oshawa and back. Passing the city limits will no longer mean having to buy a different bus ticket.

Again, it's about making it easy, convenient and reliable. The more we can do that, the more people will use public transit.

That means fewer cars on our roads and highways. It means less congestion and it means less pollution.

It means cleaner air and a better quality of life.

So we're also expanding GO Transit, Ontario's inter-regional transit system.

A single GO train moves as many people as 1,400 cars on a typical workday – the equivalent of seven-kilometres of traffic. GO Transit's 181 train trips and nearly 1,700 bus trips carry about 195,000 passengers on a typical weekday and more than 48 million riders annually.

Every one of those riders is a potential car we have taken off the road.

And we can see the results. We can see these investments are working – transit use in Ontario rose by 3.4 per cent between 2004 and 2005.

GO Transit ridership has increased by about 10 per cent in the past 4 years, the equivalent of 4.4 million more passenger trips.

However, as I said earlier, cars and trucks are an integral part of keeping this province moving, and so a strong, safe road system is

an essential part of Ontario's economic growth and continued prosperity.

And so we are undertaking the much needed expansion and repairs to Ontario's highway system. But in the interests of sustainability, we are also shifting the focus from creating more highways to using our highways better.

High Occupancy Vehicle, or HOV, lanes are a big part of that.

We have introduced HOV lanes on portions of Highways 403 and 404 to encourage transit use and carpooling. The latest HOV lane, on Highway 404 northbound, is set to open this summer. And, last Thursday, I announced our province's ambitious plan to add HOV lanes on most of the 400-series highways throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

HOV lanes provide a faster and more consistent trip to people as an alternative to driving alone. On Highway 403, HOV commuters are saving on average 14 minutes per trip compared to their pre-HOV lane travel times. On Highway 404 southbound, HOV lane users are saving on average 17 minutes per trip. Bus operators can offer faster, more reliable trips, and their customers can be more confident that their bus won't be stuck in traffic.

With HOV lanes, we're trying to change the way people think about how they get to work or to school. We're encouraging them to make choices – transit and carpooling – that are part of a more sustainable transportation system.

Moving more people in fewer vehicles means we're using our highways more efficiently and more responsibly, we're taking vehicles off the road, and we're managing congestion.

Now the things I have been talking about, expanding public transit and improving roads and highways...

...those are the big ticket items. There is a lot more going on than that. We're looking at every aspect of what our ministry does with an

eye to promoting energy efficiency, sound resource management and better pollution control.

I'm talking about things like converting to energy-intensive devices and more efficient technologies, and reviewing the road safety and environmental benefits of new vehicles.

We've converted nearly all ministry traffic signals to high efficiency LED bulbs.

Up to 90 per cent of the energy for one of our Truck Inspection Station buildings is generated through solar power.

We're also looking at more ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle. For instance, 100 per cent of reclaimed pavement is made available to ministry contractors who repair and build roads across Ontario. We reuse crushed glass, ceramics, and even roofing shingles!

For us, sustainable transportation is about developing a world-class transportation system across Ontario that will better support the needs of today, protect our natural resources and improve our quality of life.

And there is literally no idea too big and no idea too small to be considered in that light.

That's why we're here today.

One of the most important things I know is how much we can learn from a forum such as this one.

There are always going to be people with different perspectives, ideas we haven't considered, and approaches we haven't tried.

Bringing people together to talk these issues through is the very best way I know to generate the kind of creative thinking we want, and develop the kind of innovative solutions we need.

Before I finish up, I would be terribly remiss if I did not point out that this conference is a zero waste event.

It was extremely important to us that if we were going to host a conference about sustainability, then the conference itself should reflect that theme.

And so in cooperation with the Metro Convention Centre and Turtle Island Recycling, we are committing to ensure that no waste from this conference makes its way to a landfill site.

The entire event has been planned and designed with a focus on resource conservation, efficiency, reduced consumption and the maximum possible reuse and recycling.

For a great example of what I mean, you need look no further than the nametags we have provided. Not only can they be completely composted, but also if you plant them in the garden they will blossom into wildflowers. What a great idea that is!

Again, I am delighted to be here with you all and thank you for coming.

It's going to be an exciting, informative and thought-provoking two days.

Enjoy.