

When we announced the Ottawa-Ontario deal last March, Premier Ford and I agreed we would continue to talk about the future of public transit in Ottawa.

My request to the province, both privately and publicly, has been consistent: to treat Ottawa the same way as other cities such as Toronto, Hamilton, Mississauga, and Brampton.

In those cities, the province pays for the cost of construction and lifecycle maintenance of light rail projects.

*Dans ces villes, la province paie le coût de la construction et de l'entretien du cycle de vie des projets de train léger.*

In Ottawa, as I've said many times, the city pays costs that other municipalities don't.

That has been costing us literally hundreds of millions of dollars.

My campaign for fairness has not just been about money.

It's been about Ottawa, as the capital of Canada and the second-largest city in Ontario, being treated equitably.

It's been about fixing a historic imbalance and elevating Ottawa to the same level as other cities.

*Il s'agissait de corriger un déficit historique et d'élever Ottawa au même niveau que les autres villes.*

I've had many conversations about that with the Premier and his team over the course of the last few months in particular.

I'm grateful that Premier Ford, Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy, Transportation Minister Prabmeet Sarkaria, and others were receptive to this message.

They all asked me what would have the greatest impact on Ottawa's transit system.

They were clear that they didn't just want to provide a band-aid solution for our transit challenges; they wanted to help in the biggest way possible.

They also wanted to correct this historic imbalance and provide a permanent, sustainable solution.

The commitment from the Premier today will ensure Ottawa is treated like other cities in Ontario.

*L'engagement pris aujourd'hui par le premier ministre permettra à Ottawa d'être traitée comme les autres villes de l'Ontario.*

It will have an enormous impact on our financial situation, to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars.

It will close a significant portion of the multi-billion shortfall in our long range financial plan.

It will free up resources that we can reinvest in transit and other priorities.

*Cela permettra de libérer des ressources que nous pourrions réinvestir dans les transports en commun et d'autres priorités.*

It will also apply the expertise and the scope of Metrolinx to the present and future challenges with light rail construction, while allowing OC Transpo to focus on running an improving bus and train service to residents.

There are still a lot of details to sort out, but if this were to proceed, at a high level it would mean that the Province would be responsible for capital costs and lifecycle maintenance costs for light rail.

OC Transpo would continue to operate the service and would have more resources and capacity to improve service for Ottawa residents.

I'm grateful to the Premier and his team for listening and for acknowledging that this is the right thing to do, for Ottawa and for Ontario.

With this announcement, the province has responded to our request, and is committing to an outcome that will be an absolute game-changer for Ottawa transit users and taxpayers.

This is, quite simply, the single biggest move we could make to address the fairness issue, to improve our financial picture, and to improve light rail and public transit.

Obviously, there are a lot of details to discuss, and we are a long way from a final agreement, but I'm hopeful that this will be a big and historic win for our city.