

Province promises to gradually eliminate GTA pooling: budget

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

It's the much-anticipated news the Region has been waiting for — the Province has promised to eliminate GTA pooling.

In its budget released Thursday, the provincial government said it will do away with the much-bemoaned system that helps Toronto pay for its social service costs.

Pooling ends up costing Halton about \$41 million each year, or around \$180 for the average taxpayer.

"This is great news for our residents and our communities," said Regional Chairman Gary Carr.

"I applaud the Ontario government for listening to the advocacy efforts of myself, our four mayors as well as regional and local councillors by taking steps to eliminate GTA pooling."

Under the Province's plan, pooling will be reduced by one-sixth of its 2004 levels each year until the program is completely eliminated by 2013. The costs currently funded through pooling will be taken over by the Province.

Carr noted that through the recently launched Fairness for Halton campaign, regional council has strongly urged the Province to make funding models fair for communities.

"I am pleased that we are one step further to ensuring fairness for Halton," Carr said.

"It is important now to get the funding commitments we need to ensure that growth pays for itself and that the cost of growth is not on the backs of our current residents."

The Ontario government originally established GTA pooling in 1998 as a temporary stop-gap measure to offset costs for

the City of Toronto in providing social assistance and social housing to its residents.

Halton's pooling costs have steadily risen since 2003, going from about \$34 million then to the current estimated \$41 million. In fact, since pooling started the Region has contributed \$325 million to the City of Toronto.

"It simply is not fair that our taxpayers should be paying for Toronto's social assistance and social housing costs," Carr said, noting that when he was an MPP he voted against the notion of GTA pooling.

Halton has long been pushing for an end to pooling, with its most recent effort in protest to the system being a motion passed by regional council to freeze its 2007 pooling payment at the 2006 level.

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Transmission line proposed for service in 2011

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responsible," said Laura Formosa, Hydro One president and CEO.

According to the OPA, the current transmission line has the capability to transmit enough generation from the Bruce area to Ontario's electricity consumers

to meet today's needs. The new line will provide capability to deliver an additional 3,000 megawatts of generation capacity.

The line is planned to be in service by December 2011. The project will be subject to Environmental Assessment Act and Ontario Energy Board approvals.



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