

Province renews commitment to all-day, two-way GO Trains



By Brock Weir

All-day GO Train service to and from Aurora could become a reality as early as 2017, according to the Province of Ontario.

Premier Kathleen Wynne renewed the Province's commitment to two-way all-day service to Aurora last week in Barrie, joined by Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard, and Aurora Mayor Geoff Dawe.

"The government is working with its agency, Metrolinx, to bring Regional Express Rail to the GO rail network," said the Ministry. "Regional Express Rail is the province's 10-year initiative that will give people throughout the GTHA (Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area) new travel options with faster and more frequent GO rail service and electrification on core segments of the GO rail network.

"Construction of a new, second track on a section of GO Transit's Barrie line is part of the broader Regional Express Rail initiative. Grading and bridge and culvert work is already underway on this second track, with construction to be complete in 2017. Regional Express Rail will allow for 15-minute, two-way, all-day service to Aurora and new two-way hourly service to Barrie during the midday, evenings and weekends."

Commuters travelling the Barrie line currently have 70 weekly trips available to them. These plans, however, will increase those trips to over 200.

Funding for the rail expansion will come through the Moving Ontario Forward program, which will see a \$4 billion investment of public money through the sale of a number of public assets, including a large chunk of Hydro One.

"The government is expanding access to transit and building the necessary infrastructure for now and for the future," said Mr. Del Duca. "People using the Barrie GO corridor will benefit from more train trips and future two-way, all-day service. This is further proof of our government's commitment to making the daily commute and quality of life better for Ontario families."

Following the announcement, Mayor Dawe said this is a "great opportunity" for Aurorans to look at alternate ways to transport themselves into and out of Toronto. Parking is currently a challenge, and will remain so, but Aurora is advocating with the relevant ministries to find a solution, he added.

"[The Province] is well aware there are going to be challenges as they go forward, but they are taking that step, and it is a pretty bold step," said Mayor Dawe. "I certainly applaud them for doing that."