

Brampton Turns Down Free Money for the LRT

by Ashley Newport on November 4, 2015



The province of Ontario was Fry and Brampton refused the fistful of sweet, sweet infrastructure lucre.



As you might know (or should know), Brampton city council recently [voted to reject](#) the province's offer of \$400 million to fund their proposed portion of the controversial Hurontario-Main LRT project.

The decision, though puzzling, came as no surprise. Several members of council have been opposed for months, citing concerns about hurting the look of the downtown core, needing the line elsewhere and too little funding. Mississauga, on the other hand, has been in favor of the project for quite some time. When the province pledged to fund the project in April, Mayor Bonnie Crombie welcomed the news.

It's also important to note that, despite confusion in Brampton, Mississauga's portion of the LRT shouldn't be affected.

So, why has Brampton rejected a project that Mississauga supports?

While it was certainly within their rights to refuse the funding, it was risky -- perhaps even foolish -- to do it outright. It's especially confusing considering the fact that the city does, indeed, want light rail transit. They just don't want it where Metrolinx wants to build it, even though studies have shown that the corridor is in need of relief.

According to *The Star*, Councillor Jeff Bowman, who has long been opposed to the project, said the city could seek even more money from the federal government because it's now "[Liberal party headquarters](#)." *The Star* editorial questions whether or not it's wise to mix politics -- it appears some councillors think it's wise to leverage the city's support for Liberals at the federal and provincial levels to garner more funding -- with basic infrastructure investment. While it's normal to think that shared ideologies put a city in a good position with higher-ups, it could be short-sighted. Governments can and do change.



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What's odder still is the fact that Mayor Linda Jeffrey -- a long-time proponent of the project -- voted against the funding. While the mayor says she [voted "no" in error](#), some say her move might have been strategic in nature and could allow her to re-open the debate in time.

While Brampton is making a huge gamble -- they want more money and they want more control over the route -- the payoff could be disappointing.

According to another [Star article](#), Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca says that Brampton might not be able to hold onto the pledged money to do with what it pleases. The money will be re-invested in infrastructure and might not end up in Brampton at all.

"We will proceed with the plan to build the LRT from the Port Credit GO station to Steeles and the balance of the funding in question will flow back into the (province's) Moving Ontario Forward plan to be invested in priority transit projects in the region, which in theory could be a project or more than one project in Brampton but is not necessarily going to be Brampton," *The Star* reports.

When substantial funds are on the table, it's risky to turn them down. While there's plenty to criticize regarding transportation in Toronto's downtown core, the problems facing the GTA suburbs are increasingly dire. While the LRT will present some hiccups and complications, it will get the city moving and change how people see and use public transportation outside of TO. It's a step forward (and a well-funded one).

It was wise of Mississauga to accept the route and funding. Although there's more desire for an east-west train, the construction of a north-south one could spur the creation of grander and more ambitious transit projects in the future. We're also lucky we're being spared weeks or months of arguments over better routes and funding opportunities.



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