

Mississauga hires new senior staffer to head City's transportation and works department

By Rachael Williams

rachaelwilliams@metroland.com

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Mississauga has a new senior staffer at the helm.

Geoff Wright is the City's newly appointed commissioner of transportation and works, responsible for overseeing critical transit and infrastructure projects. An employee with the City of Mississauga for nine years, Wright has a successful track record in transportation, traffic engineering and land use planning.

But his biggest test is still to come, as the city gears up for its largest transportation project to date - Hurontario light rail transit.

"Mississauga grew from smaller communities and that's created a lot of challenges from a transportation perspective," notes Wright.

"It wasn't always conducive to public transit. That's changing and important investments are being made along Hurontario with the LRT."

Wright credits his predecessor, recently retired commissioner Martin Powell, for ini-

tiating this transformation.

"Martin helped the department transition from road building to what's become an urban mobility department," he commented.

"Where you'll see us going is continuing with that transition, keeping pedestrians and road safety in mind and making sure our streets are designed more efficiently."

Wright was first hired with the City of Mississauga in 2007 as director of the transportation project office and business services. In that role, he was responsible for overseeing the bus rapid transit line, better known as the Transitway.

"I was involved with getting that project off the ground, putting together funding agreements between all three levels of government, forming staff teams. It was a big project," said Wright.

Heavily criticized for being delayed and over-budget, Wright told The News there were insolvency issues with the contractor that are still being worked through.

"Getting the Transitway file cleaned up is one of the top priorities for our department," said Wright.

Prior to the Transitway, the newly appointed commissioner worked for the Halifax Regional Municipality, as manager of transit planning and development. He also worked as an engineer for Marshall Macklin Monaghan Group.

"He has a successful track record and with his focus on customer service and innovation, he will be well positioned to oversee the challenges of a growing and urban city," said Janice Baker, City CAO.

Wright admits being commissioner is "a bit more taxing" than his previous positions. With arguably the city's most bold and transformative projects on his plate, Wright, a father of three, is working towards finding that work-life balance.

"The nine to five doesn't exist in this role. Anything can happen at any time."

But having the opportunity to be at the forefront of several massive city-building projects, most importantly the \$1.4 billion

LRT funded by the province, makes up for the demanding workload.

"Metrolinx has a lot of projects on the go. Our job will be to ensure that even though the province is taking the lead, we still achieve our city building objectives."

Wright said the financials are still being sorted out, including operational costs, maintenance and the possible construction of iconic transit stations.

"We are working to find that magic line between what we want and what the province will fund."

The new commissioner and his team are also working on stormwater infrastructure, replacing traffic signal controllers, building a traffic management centre, instituting traffic calming measures, creating a parking master plan and managing the changing regulatory environment, as disruptive technologies such as Uber continue to challenge the City's resources.

"I'm excited to have the opportunity to lead the transportation and works department as we continue to evolve and modernize our transportation network," he said.



Geoff Wright