

## ENVIRONMENT: TRANSIT NDP's green proposal would give the TTC \$840-million, Layton says

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JEFF GRAY - With an eye on potentially tight Toronto ridings if a fall election materializes, federal NDP Leader Jack Layton said yesterday that his green plan would deliver \$840-million over four years for the city's public-transit system, charging that the Liberals' proposed carbon tax would only ding the TTC with up to \$18-million in higher diesel bills.

Trying to distinguish the NDP's "cap-and-trade" plan from Liberal Leader Stephane Dion's Green Shift carbon tax, Mr. Layton held the latest in a series of small, cross-country press conferences on his plan in front of Toronto's Bathurst subway station. He was accompanied by his wife, NDP MP Olivia Chow, who rode up on her trademark bicycle decorated with plastic flowers.

Mr. Dion's Green Shift plan would not initially increase taxes on regular gasoline or hike taxes on diesel in its first year. But it would end up adding 7 cents a litre to the existing federal tax on diesel by the plan's fourth year. The Liberal plan suggests this tax would be phased in.

The NDP assumes the Liberals' diesel tax would immediately jump to 7 cents in the second year of Mr. Dion's plan, meaning the Toronto Transit Commission, already facing a sharply rising bill for the 87 million litres of diesel it expects to use in 2009, would pay at least an extra \$6-million a year for fuel over the next three years.

"We don't really think that plan was very well thought out," Mr.

Layton told reporters.

Toronto-area Liberal MP Joe Volpe acknowledged that the TTC would have to pay diesel taxes, but said the idea behind the Green Shift was to encourage conservation. He accused the NDP Leader of being in a "panic" over the attention Mr. Dion's green plan had received.

"Now he's engaging in fun-with-figures policy," Mr. Volpe said in a phone interview.

Mr. Layton said the NDP's plan to take 1 cent of the federal excise tax applied to gasoline and dedicate it to public transit across the country - distributed on a per-rider basis that favours big cities - would see Toronto receive \$452-million over four years.

Under his party's cap-and-trade green plan for businesses, in which "big polluters" would be forced to buy and trade carbon emissions credits, much of the proceeds would be put into public transit, Mr. Layton said, producing \$388-million over four years for Toronto.

An NDP press release says the money would buy 2,000 new buses and 380 new subway cars. But based on the TTC's most recent vehicle purchases, \$840-million would actually buy about 1,120 of the transit agency's new hybrid buses or 290 of its latest subway cars.

The NDP holds three downtown seats in otherwise Liberal-red Toronto: Mr. Layton's in Toronto-Danforth, Ms. Chow's in Trinity-Spadina and Peggy Nash's in Parkdale-High Park. Ms. Nash is expected to face a tough fight against former Liberal leadership contender Gerard Kennedy.

Adam Giambrone, the city councillor who chairs the TTC and a former president of the federal NDP, said Mr. Layton's proposal would mean a steady flow of new cash that the TTC could use for operating its system, not just for new lines or vehicles. He declined to respond to Mr. Layton's comments on the Liberal carbon tax.