§ 1216. Exemption from taxation and fees. It is hereby found, determined and declared that the creation of the authority and the carrying out of its purposes is in all respects for the benefit of the people of the state of New York and for the improvement of their health, welfare and prosperity and is a public purpose, and that the authority will be performing an essential governmental function in the exercise of the powers conferred upon it by this title. Without limiting the generality of the following provisions of this section, property owned by the authority, and property leased by the authority and used for any of its authorized purposes shall be exempt from taxation and special ad valorem levies. The authority shall be required to pay no fees, taxes or assessments, whether state or local, including but not limited to fees, taxes or assessments on real estate, franchise taxes, sales taxes or other excise taxes, upon any of its property, or upon the use thereof, or upon its activities in the operation and maintenance of its facilities or on any fares, tolls, rentals, rates, charges or other fees, revenues or other income received by the authority and the bonds and notes of the authority and the income therefrom shall at all times be exempt from taxation, except for gift and estate taxes and taxes on transfers. This section shall constitute a covenant and agreement with the holders of all bonds and notes issued by the authority. The terms "taxation" and "special ad valorem levy" shall have the same meanings as defined in section one hundred two of the real property tax law.