

HIGH-SPEED TRAIN ROUTE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Weston is a vibrant community in the city of Toronto, but today the community of Weston is at risk. The McGuinty government is about to rubber-stamp the terms of reference for an environmental assessment process that could result in the community of Weston being cut in two by a private high-speed train route.

Premier, Weston residents were promised a full and meaningful environmental assessment of the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of alternative routes. Before any environmental assessment can go forward, your government has to set the terms of reference. My question: Will the McGuinty government listen to the Weston residents and reject the narrow terms of reference that are before your government today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I thank the member for the question. The province is committed to hearing from all sides with regard to this particular issue. In fact, I've met with the Weston folks myself. The terms of reference will be for a full environmental assessment. I believe that there are a significant number of alternatives that will be addressed in a full environmental assessment and that there are options that are available that are out there and which will come to light in terms of a full environmental assessment. So we are committed to hearing from a wide range and a full variety of folks on an environmental assessment that will look at all forms of options and alternatives in terms of looking at a broader transit strategy.

Mr. Hampton: I still didn't hear an answer to my question. What we know now is that the terms of reference before the McGuinty government are rather narrow. The people of Weston do not want to see their main street chopped in half and shut down. They don't want to see 144 trains blasting through their community at 75 kilometres an hour every day. The Environmental Assessment Act requires a thorough examination of alternatives, yet the terms of reference before the McGuinty government now barely look at alternative routes.

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My question is very specific. Are you going to ensure that the narrow terms of reference that are before you now are rejected? Are you going to ensure that there is meaningful consideration of alternative routes from a socio-economic perspective and an environmental perspective? Yes or no?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: The member simply doesn't understand the word "full." "Full" means that it looks at the entire impact on the community. Also, obviously the member hasn't been listening throughout the last few months when we've speaking about the whole concept of sustainable transportation, where we're now talking about inter-modal transportation, about broader strategies of transportation, that we're not looking at just one specific but at a broad context with respect to how we deal with transportation in this province, which includes public transportation, rail transportation, marine transportation and land transportation. So when we say "a full environmental assessment," of course it includes everything. Again, I just say to the member, what part of "full" does he not understand?