

August 31, 2009

The Hon. John Gerretsen
Minister of the Environment
12th Floor, 135 St Clair Ave. W.
Toronto, ON M4V 1P5

Dear Minister Gerretsen:

RE: Metrolinx' Georgetown South Service Expansion and Union-Pearson Rail Link Environmental Project Report.

On July 30th 2009 Metrolinx' published their Georgetown South Service Expansion and Union-Pearson Rail Link (GSSE-UPRL) Environmental Project Report (EPR), describing the environmental impact of the proposed GSSE-UPRL project. The publication of the EPR opened a month long public consultation process, during which the community of York South-Weston had the opportunity to provide comments and opinions regarding the project. Other interested parties, such as the Toronto Board of Health, the Toronto Medical Officer of Health and the Toronto District School Board, have also submitted their observations. Among these were concerns related to potential adverse health effects which lead to the formulation of a number of recommendations.

Given that conflicting perspectives regarding the associated health effects of the project have been submitted to your attention, we reiterate our request that all comments on and objections to the project be duly considered. Above all else, health considerations must be first and foremost satisfied before any decision is made to proceed with expansion within the corridor. Public health, present and future, cannot be a legacy that is abandoned by our generation of decision-makers.

Another issue of importance relates to the possible closures of streets along the corridor, including the conversion of John Street to a pedestrian bridge and the closure of Sam Frustaglio Drive. On this matter the surrounding communities have been consulted on several occasions, and the City of Toronto passed a motion recommending that no roads be closed. Various concerns were raised relating to the possible adverse effects of road modifications, including the issues of overall safety, traffic congestion and aesthetics. We request that possible alternatives to the ones included in the EPR, such as the ones proposed by local residents, be given full consideration. The unity of the neighbourhood should be preserved.

We also support the electrification of the corridor. Given the engineering challenges that this task entails, it is our hope that the electrification process be completed as soon as it is technically possible, and for this reason we look forward to the results of the electrification study commissioned by Metrolinx that will be released in December 2010. We acknowledge and appreciate that the proposal for the first-stage of construction supports electrification. However, we recognize the need for a commitment regarding the timeline of the electrification process.

Lastly, the Minister should receive a commitment from Metrolinx that through thorough analysis it can be guaranteed that the public transportation authority, Metrolinx, has studied the capacity within the corridor such that operations will not be compromised by the existence of the Union-Pearson Rail Link and freight operation.

While we are confident that your review will acknowledge all options and alternatives, we hope the voices of York South-Weston will be given due consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Handwritten signature of Alan Tonks in black ink.

Alan Tonks, MP
York South-Weston

Handwritten signature of Laura Albanese in black ink.

Laura Albanese, MPP
York South-Weston

Cc: Robert Pritchard, President & CEO Metrolinx