

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Monday 19 March 2007 Lundi 19 mars 2007

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I'm honoured to rise in this House for my maiden question to the Premier. Premier, I've been instructed by the voters of York South–Weston to send you a loud and clear message: The people of York South–Weston do not want your privately run, publicly subsidized Blue 22 air-rail link. Premier, the people of York South–Weston want to know: If you found the time to give yourself a \$40,000 pay raise, when will you find the time to stop the Blue 22 dead in its tracks?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm going to refer the question to the Minister of the Environment, but if I may, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member opposite, to welcome him to this Legislature and to offer him my very best and sincerest wishes as he assumes his new responsibilities on behalf of his constituents.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to clarify for the new member the process that is before the Ministry of the Environment with respect to the terms of reference. As I've been saying since I received the terms of reference in January, I share many of the concerns that have been raised by the community, and I very much value the input that they are giving to this very important environmental assessment process.

So let me assure you that I will be making a decision with respect to the terms of reference, and I will be doing so once my concerns have been satisfied. I've asked MOE to work closely and consult with GO Transit and the various proponents to ensure that if a project should go forward and a terms of reference should be crafted, the right decision is made for the community and for the environment.

Mr. Ferreira: This is very typical. The Premier passes the buck, but he takes the big bucks.

Premier, my constituents confirmed how important this issue is to the environment, the safety of their kids and the economic survival of local businesses. Your government acknowledged this in the by-election and clearly echoed my sentiments that the communities along the rail corridor will not benefit from nor do they want the Blue 22 air-rail link.

A month ago I wrote your Minister of Transportation, in my first act after being elected, to urgently address the implications for the community along the line. I have yet to get a response.

Premier, I repeat: Will you listen to the community and stop your plans for the privately run, publicly subsidized Blue 22 train?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Let me assure the member that I have been very actively engaged on this file. I have stood on the platform at the Weston GO train and talked to your community, standing alongside Laura Albanese. I have heard from Ms. Albanese on a number of occasions with respect to this issue. At the platform, I had an opportunity to hear directly and to feel first-hand the concerns that the community had about their safety, about a high-speed train going by. Those reflect many of the concerns that have come forward to the Ministry of the Environment, and all of that is what is taken into account in the context of the creation of the terms of reference of an environmental assessment that will examine all of these issues. It's the proper process to take place. All of those things will come forward, and when terms of reference are made in terms of a decision, the right decision will be made for the environment and for the community. That's my commitment.