



6 JUN 2006

Mr. Mike Sullivan
Chair
Weston Community Coalition
72 Church Street
Weston ON M9N 1N3

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

Thank you for your correspondence of March 27, 2006, to the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, regarding the proposed air-rail link between Union Station and Lester B. Pearson International Airport (LBPIA). The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

Minister Cannon appreciates receiving your comments on the proposed air-rail link. The federal government recognizes that an efficient transportation system is key to sustaining the quality of life of Canadians and believes that improved access between Canada's two busiest transportation hubs, Union Station and LBPIA, would play a significant role in achieving this goal.

As you are aware, an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act* is underway that will study service expansion along GO Transit's Georgetown South Rail Corridor and an express transportation link between LBPIA and Union Station. The EA process will evaluate, in a fair and open manner, numerous alternatives to the proposed express transportation link and recommend a project that addresses the long-standing desire to improve access to the airport, while taking into consideration the concerns and issues of affected local communities.

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This project is also subject to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA). As this type of project is not identified in the Comprehensive Study List Regulations under the Act, it will undergo a screening-level assessment. Screening-level assessments can vary widely in their complexity and level of detail. Screenings must meet all of the requirements of the Act, including a complete assessment of the potential impacts of the project on the environment. In keeping with the Canada–Ontario Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation, the requirements of the provincial and federal EA processes are being coordinated. The goal of a coordinated process is to achieve the most effective use of resources when an EA is required by more than one jurisdiction. Coordination helps ensure that a project only goes through one EA process, which minimizes duplication and helps to properly identify all of the necessary studies as early as possible in the planning process.

The provincial EA process will include an extensive public consultation program that will consist of public open houses, regular meetings with stakeholders and the establishment of a public liaison committee. Furthermore, the public will have an opportunity to review the draft terms of reference before the assessment is submitted for formal approval. Federal and provincial officials will work together to ensure that the public is aware of any additional opportunities to contribute to the federal assessment as the process unfolds. For additional information about the CEAA process, I would invite you to consult the Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry listing for the project at the following address:

www.ceaa.gc.ca/050/Viewer_e.cfm?SrchPg=1&CEAR_ID=18302.

Participant funding is not available for screening-level assessments under the CEAA. However, Transport Canada is confident that the coordinated EA process will provide many opportunities for public involvement. I would encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities.

With regards to your comments concerning transit infrastructure funding, I am pleased to note that Budget 2006 renews existing federal infrastructure programs and announces funding for new infrastructure initiatives, including the following:

- \$2.4 billion over the next five years for a new Highways and Border Infrastructure Fund;
- an additional \$2 billion to renew the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund;
- \$2.2 billion over the next five years to renew the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund;
- and
- \$900 million over the next three years to establish a Public Transit Capital Trust.

In total, federal support for provincial/territorial and municipal infrastructure will reach \$16.5 billion over the next four years. This is an unprecedented level of support for infrastructure in Canada. Over the coming weeks and months, the federal government will, in discussions with its partners, define how these programs will operate, identify priorities for funding and negotiate the necessary agreements.

I trust that the foregoing has addressed your concerns. Again, thank you for writing.

Yours truly,

Andrew Walasek

Andrew Walasek
Special Assistant – Ontario

c.c. Office of Mr. Alan Tonks, M.P.
Office of the Honourable Donna Cansfield, M.P.P.
Office of Mr. Joe Cordiano, M.P.P.