

## Residents want train derailed

Rally at Queen's Park to demand halt to use of diesel engines on planned Union-Pearson rail line

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**About 200 parents and children gathered at Queen's Park to demand Metrolinx use electric trains along the soon to be expanded Georgetown Corridor.**

Thomas the Tank Engine may be useful, but he wouldn't have been welcome around Queen's Park yesterday.

The cartoon coal-burning steam locomotive would have received a rough ride from about 200 parents and kids who rallied on the south lawn for an end to GO Transit's planned use of diesel on the expanded Georgetown rail corridor.

They want the rail line to be electrified.

"It's a family-friendly way of getting the message to the premier that parents along the Georgetown Corridor -- where the Union-Pearson rail line is going to go -- are concerned about their children's health," said Sophia Wong, a volunteer with the Clean Trains Coalition.

"We don't want to see three or four hundred dirty, polluting trains going through our neighbourhood," Wong said.

Jeanne Davis brought her son James, 4, to the rally, billed as a stroller parade.

"It's been gentrified so much where we are, I think it will just set us back," the Brockton Village resident said. "This will drive families away. It won't bring families to the neighbourhood and I think it's a serious health risk."

The protesters want Metrolinx, the provincial agency in charge of GO Transit, to use electric trains on the route instead.

"We're calling for immediate implementation of electric trains, rather than study and then going electric," NDP High Park-Parkdale MPP Cheri DiNovo said. "That makes no sense."

GO trains are typically about 10 cars and can carry 1,500 passengers.

The Union-Pearson link will use smaller, two-car trains with room for 160 people.

Proponents believe expanding rail and transit service will get more cars -- the leading source of smog in Toronto -- off the road.

Right now all GO trains are diesel and while electrifying the entire system is being studied, it's just not possible to switch a single line over to a new power source.

"It's not practical to electrify this corridor immediately," said Brian Peltier, executive lead on the project.

"It wouldn't make any sense to electrify this corridor if Union Station wasn't electrified, for example."

The expansion is expected to see about 240 trains a day on the corridor by 2015, rising to 400 in another 15 years after that, Peltier said.

Metrolinx has studied the effect of increased diesel traffic on air quality for residents and is confident it won't be a health hazard.

"That analysis showed very clearly that the impacts being talked about are just not there," Peltier said. "I think it's really good news that we can do this rail expansion with very little impact on air quality."

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