



SEHC / COPE



News Update: June 2012

Since the Ontario Provincial Election in October 2011, SEHC has been working to gain a clear picture on where we stand on the highway issue. We have come to realize that

It Isn't Over

The Stop the Escarpment Highway Coalition (SEHC) is now 13 groups and 8000 people strong.

Thank you for your continuing support of SEHC. We appreciate your involvement in trying to find a transportation solution for the GTA that preserves livable communities, air quality, rural lands and also proposes ways to fix congestion in the GTA. Citizens groups *Sustainable Vaughan* and *Concerned Citizens Against Superhighway in Halton Hills (CRASHH)* have aligned with SEHC and have provided additional insight into the views of our neighbours closer to the heart of the GTA. A complete member group list is available on the website at: www.stophighway.com Our groups recently attended a transit planning session in Markham, where we met with the many other concerned citizen groups from the East end of Toronto who share our point of view.

Fight congestion by funding Metrolinx, not by building new highways

SEHC members and COPE have been fighting new highway construction across the Niagara Escarpment for a decade now. During this fight, we've come to realize that it's not enough to oppose a highway in a single region. Congestion and transportation is a challenge for everyone in the GTA and, with 2.5 million new people moving in over the next 20 years, it is going to get worse. So – we've made two big changes to our approach.

First - we realize that the fundamental factors driving growth require a transport solution – and we are supporting Metrolinx, an Ontario Government agency that is planning an integrated transit strategy as the solution. Preserving the livability of the GTA will require the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) planners to back off their “roads first” approach and start fully funding Metrolinx. The SEHC wants Premier McGuinty to give the money being spent on the NGTA and GTA West highways to Metrolinx to help fund the badly needed and short changed, transit projects in the GTA.

Second, we need to fight the whole highway - not just our portion. We are trying to highlight that the NGTA escarpment highway is just a portion of a much longer 400 series highway that will run from Fort Erie to Highway 400 north of Toronto.

SEHC believes that new highway corridors are the wrong solution for the congestion problem. Metrolinx has mapped congestion now and 25 years. The map is on the website at www.stophighway.com. The congestion is exactly where anybody familiar with the area would expect it to be: Starting in Burlington and increasing Eastward in the GTA. The

NGTA highway skirts the congestion in the West. The culmination point, whether it be at the 407 in Burlington or further North, will only add additional pressure to the severely congested area. It clearly will do nothing to help the problem.

SEHC Calls on the Ontario Liberals to keep their commitments on the NGTA Highway

In July 2011, prior to the Provincial election, the MTO's Minister, Kathleen Wynne, promised that the NGTA highway would not be built. Despite this clear statement, that influenced the voting of many, the Ministry of Transportation has continued with planning. The latest map released on their work shows the very clearly defined routes being looked at for a highway that would rip through Flamborough / North Burlington. The high definition map is on the website at www.stophighway.com.

Planning for a highway across Flamborough / Burlington continues. It now looks as if Minister Wynne's pre-election promise not to build the Niagara GTA was empty.

GTA- West Highway:

The MTO is now recommending the expansion of Hwy 401 to twelve (12) lanes along with a highway running from Vaughan, through Caledon and Brampton, and terminating in Milton at a 407/401 interchange. The MTO referenced tremendous impacts to agriculture, wetlands and wood lots as well as construction costs as factors in the decision making process for this project. It was also indicated that widening the existing Hwy 401 would have less impact on wildlife since the highway is already in place. The full presentation deck from the recent PIC is available at: www.crashh.org.

Our Bureaucrats are Limited by Politician's Orders

We've heard at many information sessions and council meetings that bureaucratic staff is simply following the orders that the politicians have given them. This comment is true, and is the reason we need to pressure our politicians to set up a system to incorporate rail and transit planning into their road plans.

Rail is a Federal responsibility, and the MTO teams have not done any analysis of how it can be used to divert freight from the roads. SEHC asks "**Where is the Federal Government?**" They have yet to participate in a meaningful discussion on rail expansion which leaves a highway as the ONLY option for Flamborough / Burlington. Part of the solution includes rail. But with our Federal government's lack of a national transport policy and mute approach on this issue, it hasn't been considered. They are needed at the table.

Upcoming Milestones:

- Presentation on the current status of the NGTA project to Halton Region is scheduled in the morning of July 4, 2012, at 1151 Bronte Rd., Oakville.
- Environmental Assessment Part Two will come out this fall and then it's on to route planning for the NGTA. Now is the time to comment to our politicians and let them know the road is not needed and that they need to fund transit.
- The Ontario Government recently announced a \$1 billion investment in the Ambassador Bridge at Windsor. Construction on a six-lane twin-span bridge is

ready to start. The Windsor-Detroit border crossing also includes the tunnel and has historically been the busiest land border crossing in Ontario for both freight and people. The work to increase capacity at this crossing further negates the need for a NGTA highway to Niagara Region border crossings.

What You Can Do:

1. Talk about it. Comment on it when transportation is in the news.
2. Tell the Hon Dalton McGuinty, Premier, and the Hon Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Transportation, what you think.

dmcquinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

bchiarelli.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Things we think are important include:

- The Ontario Government made a promise not to build the NGTA highway in the West Study Area. Keep it. Tell the MTO to stop working on it.
- Base transportation plans on CURRENT data and needs. Highways don't work anymore.
- Check a map. Congestion is between outlying areas enroute to downtown Toronto. The NGTA and GTAW do nothing to solve this problem.
- Take money being spent on highways and give to transit. Our GTA neighbours are desperate for transit. Give it to them. Roads have received the lion's share for too long.
- Stop playing funny with the facts. Roads aren't the only way to create jobs. The increasing cost of gas is increasing the need for transit. Climate change is real; ignoring it won't make it go away.
- Don't pave our food land. Save it so we can feed ourselves. With increased gas costs, imported food costs more. With global drought, global food supply is already a concern. We need to plan for decades to come.
- We need a national transport strategy. Something that was also noted in the Drummond Report. We expect our provincial and federal governments to talk, especially when dealing with issues that have far reaching impacts.

Interesting facts from Metrolinx' GTHA Urban Freight Study:

- 17% - decline in average speed at rush hour between 2001 and 2006
- 56 % - increase in road capacity between 1986 and 2006
- 18% - increase in transit capacity in the same period
- \$6 billion / year: estimate of productivity lost to Hamilton-Toronto area businesses every year because goods or people are tied up in traffic

Thank you for your continued interest in this increasingly important issue.

Geoff Brock, Spokesman, Stop Escarpment Highway Coalition

Sue McMaster, Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment