



www.stophighway.com

mail@cope-nomph.org

Niagara to GTA Corridor Report on Recommendations Just Released

Welcome to our new members. Thank you for joining us in our effort to save the Niagara Escarpment from a new highway and further degradation. Thank you to our long-standing members for your continued support on this important issue.

Updates

- 1) Formation of the **Stop Escarpment Highway Coalition**: COPE has united with like-minded groups that oppose building a new highway on the escarpment. We are proud to also work in concert with Halton Region and the City of Burlington. The coalition currently represents more than 5000 people. For a list of coalition members, see our website at www.stophighway.com.
- 2) The newly formed Stop Escarpment Highway Coalition (SEHC) is celebrating an early victory before refocusing efforts on the bigger fight of stopping an escarpment highway. In October 2010, the Ministry of Municipal Housing and Affairs directed Halton Region and the City of Burlington to include a section of highway in the official plan. This Regional Official Plan Amendment 38 depicted an extension of the Niagara GTA corridor that had not been presented in any Ministry of Transportation document throughout the 9 year study process of the highway / corridor. We have been successful in having this section of highway removed from the official plan. More details on this issue along with the political support we received is on our website: www.stophighway.com
- 3) **Report on Recommendations for the Niagara GTA Corridor Just Released.**
The report identifying the Ministry of Transportation's (MTO) recommendations has been released. There is a 90-day comment period before the report is finalized. COPE, along with the coalition, are reviewing the MTO's report to formulate a response.

The MTO's report can be viewed at the NGTA Corridor official website: www.niagara-gta.com. Once finalized, COPE's position on the report will be posted to our website.

As outlined in the report, MTO recommendations pertaining to highway(s) include:

- Additional focused analysis to assess and evaluate widening of Hwy 403 thru Hamilton, a new corridor from Hwy 403 to Hwy 401 and a new corridor from Hwy 403 to 407 ETR.
- Proceed to Phase 2 of the Environmental Assessment to identify a preferred route for connecting Hwy 406 in the Welland area to the QEW between Hwy 420 and Fort Erie.
- MTO to monitor growth patterns and transportation system performance to determine when a new transportation corridor between Hamilton and Welland will be required.

- 4) Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak has promised to build a highway from Fort Erie to Hamilton if elected this fall. **Twenty-two members – both COPE and Coalition – braved –17 degree weather to give Tim Hudak, and government representatives, a message: “no escarpment highway”.** See our website for details.

COPE's Concerns

A highway ripping through rural and escarpment lands will do nothing to ease the congestion in the GTA. It appears to be geared to open the environmentally significant rural area up to the developers with no regard given for the impact on the agricultural area and valuable eco-systems. It would cost billions of dollars. With ever-rising gas prices, the question remains: Who will use it?

COPE remains opposed to a new escarpment highway. As this issue gains momentum we are looking to our members to help take action.

In co-operation with our coalition partners, we are working to formulate our strategy.

What you can do:

- 1) If you can assist with this fight, please let us know. To those of you who have already done so – thank you. We are in the process of compiling a list of help and will be asking for assistance once we have finalized our strategy. We have a current need for expertise in the areas of eco-systems, transportation planning, air quality, statistics and research & analysis.
- 2) Talk to your neighbour. As we've participated in public meetings such as those held by Hamilton Councillor Robert Pasuta and by Burlington Councillors Blaire Lancaster and John Taylor – the number of people who are not aware of the highway is alarming. Please talk about it.
- 3) Submit a one-page story. We are posting personal perspectives on what is important about the Niagara Escarpment and why it should be protected. We want to hear from all regions: Niagara, Hamilton, Flamborough, and Halton.
- 4) **No Escarpment Highway** lawn signs. Will you put one up on your property? We will deliver. Send us an email at: mail@cope-nomph.org
- 5) When you see news coverage on the highway – write a letter to the editor. It doesn't have to be long and strengthens our voice.
- 6) Write a letter to Premier McGuinty and Transportation Minister Wynne. Tell them highway is not an option.

We are making a difference.

With thanks, your COPE Steering Committee

Sue McMaster and David Bailey (Co-Chairs)
Isabelle, Jim, Aline, Helene, Pete, Monte

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