



Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment

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For Immediate Release

Hudak's \$6 Billion Highway Doesn't Make Fiscal Cents

BURLINGTON, January 12, 2011

Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak's adherence to building a four-lane toll highway on the Niagara Escarpment baffles Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment (COPE).

COPE was formed almost a decade ago in opposition to the Harris government's original plan to build the Mid-Peninsula Highway. In 2002, the group's concerns focused on the need to protect the Niagara Escarpment from the massive highway project that would inflict irreversible damage to uncounted natural and human areas of ecological and cultural significance as well as the need to protect viable farmland. What was also of great concern was the amount of irreversible damage that would be inflicted at the cost of \$1.3 billion when the need for a highway had not been demonstrated.

After years of study the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has released the latest project report (draft) on the Mid-Peninsula Highway; now called the Niagara to GTA corridor.

According to information provided by MTO representatives at the Public Information Centres held this past summer, the cost for the corridor is now estimated at a whopping **\$6 billion**.

The original plan for a 130 km highway to run from the US border at Fort Erie and link up with highway 407 in Burlington has greatly changed. The MTO has concluded that a highway from Niagara ending at the 403 in Ancaster is not needed and that transportation needs can be met by increasing capacity through other means. Unfortunately, they have also concluded that a 4-lane, 37 km highway through Flamborough and North Burlington is needed. COPE maintains that this recommended section of highway is illogical given the location of the highway and areas of congestion in the GTA. "Taxpayers can't afford this corridor. If Hudak were successful in having the Niagara region highway portion reinstated, the cost would be even greater," said COPE Co-Chair Susan McMaster.

"Hudak is supporting building a highway that isn't needed, for highly questionable economic benefits, at a cost of \$6 billion plus. There has yet to be any cohesive cost benefit analysis that substantiates this level of investment. Especially when it necessitates destroying assets in the form of the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve and agricultural lands needed to feed us," said McMaster.

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Web Site: Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment, www.stophighway.com

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