

The Hamilton Spectator Editorial/opinion, Thursday, July 11, 2002, p. A10
Province should look at alternative routes; Mid-peninsula highway: Burlington fears justified The Hamilton Spectator The provincial government has a decision to make about the **mid-peninsula highway**. It can pay lip service to smart planning, and fast-track a route in an environmentally sensitive area of north Burlington. Or it can return to the drawing board and explore alternatives that will not be as detrimental to the quality of life in one of the most attractive areas of Ontario. In all likelihood, the **mid-peninsula highway** will be required to accommodate the relentless growth of car and truck traffic in the Golden Horseshoe -- at least in the absence of a massive investment in high-speed rail transportation. But if the need is clear, the project planning has been anything but fair to Burlington. What kind of process would allow transportation officials to advocate a single route across Burlington, connecting the new superhighway to Highway 407, without so much as consulting the city? Burlington residents had every reason to pack the Brant Hills Community Centre this week to bolster the city's campaign for a full evaluation of other routes. There isn't any doubt about what is at stake for Burlington. The proposed corridor, passing close to Waterdown's built-up area and entering Burlington north of Dundas Street, is certain to create pressure to extend the city's urban boundary. It would undermine efforts to preserve the treasured rural environment of north Burlington and promote sustainable development. The route would cross the Niagara Escarpment, damaging several ecologically sensitive areas. Much, if not all, of this damage could be avoided if the province were to reconsider other routes that would take the highway northwest of Burlington, for a possible link with Highway 401. Some of these routes, including one close to Highway 6, have quietly been rejected. That's unacceptable. As demanded by Burlington and Halton officials, the transportation ministry must publicly demonstrate why these alternatives are not feasible. The wisdom of selecting a route in close proximity to the urban periphery of Burlington and Waterdown is an added concern. Government planners see the mid-peninsula project as easing commuter traffic on the QEW and Highway 403. But Burlington officials question the idea of linking it to an already clogged network of highways. They favour a ring road configuration, farther away from built-up areas. Some people believe it's no coincidence that the proposed corridor links with Highway 407, Ontario's only toll road. Building the mid-peninsula project as a tollway would expedite construction, to be sure. But it would be inexcusably short-sighted of the province to decide a project of this magnitude on the lowest common denominator of potential toll revenues. A complete, open review of every alternative to the proposed route is imperative. If Conservative MPPs Cam Jackson and Ted Chudleigh are on the job, they will move swiftly to alert Premier Ernie Eves of Burlington's concerns and the shabby manner in which the city has been treated so far. -- Gord McNulty **Category:** Editorial and Opinions **Uniform subject(s):** Public transit; Regional politics and governments