

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: A highway...by any other name

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The Ministry of Highways (Transportation) wants to rip apart the rural fabric of our community to build a highway linking the 403 from Ancaster to the 407 north of Waterdown. Why? To support economic development in Hamilton and provide an alternative route to the congested Hwy. 403 through the Dundas Valley.

This recommendation was the brainchild of the multi-year Niagara to Greater Toronto Area (NGTA) study completed by transportation and environmental consultants. It was unveiled on June 21 at the Ancaster Fairgrounds.

The consultants are now recommending a second study to determine the precise route for the highway, now defined as a wide swath of countryside from the Hwy. 52 Interchange at the 403, rounding Peters Corners, and connecting to Hwy. 407 after passing north of Waterdown and descending the Niagara Escarpment in the vicinity of the Lake Medad Forest.

The logic for this idea: it is too complicated to add lanes to the present 403 cut of the Niagara Escarpment down into the Dundas Valley and widening the highway in the King and Main Street area "could have a major impact on approximately three residential properties and two three-storey apartment buildings."

The solution: build 35 kilometres of new highway right through the heart of our rural community and destroy a critical section of the Niagara Escarpment, a World Biosphere Reserve.

When commenting on the potential impacts of this plan, the study documents state, "...the corridor has some potential to change or affect the rural character" of our community. Some? It is frustrating to listen to these consultants, who are paid with taxpayer dollars to downplay the significant impacts of this highway.

This highway would destroy the rural character of our community, permanently eliminate prime agricultural lands we need to feed ourselves, degrade local air and water quality, destroy critical ecosystems, and add 35 kilometres of new highway to the Greenbelt. A Greenbelt supposedly designed to preserve farmland and protect our rural environment.

The ironic part: it was the same McGuinty Liberals who created the Greenbelt several years ago. Inside the Greenbelt, a farmer can't sever a building lot. But the provincial government can build 35 kilometres of new highway?

It is time to stand up and protest! In an era of peak oil, climate change and environmental degradation, we must demand a freeze on all new highway construction and look to alternatives for moving people and goods, including expanded rail networks, extended GO service and enhanced marine transport.

I expect more from our provincial government and Ministry representatives than falling back to Depression Era planning ideology. Please write to Premier Dalton McGuinty and the MTO to express your concerns. The future health of our rural community depends on it!

**Pete Zuzek,
Flamborough**