



## SEHC / COPE



### **News Update: September 2011**

With a Provincial Election set for October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the Niagara to GTA highway remains an important issue. Political parties have taken up positions. They are provided at the end of this newsletter.

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**As the highway issue gains momentum we are looking to our members to help take action.**

#### **What you can do coming up to the election:**

Although we have made gains in the fight to stop a Niagara Escarpment Highway, there is strong support to lay pavement and develop the area. The time leading up to an election is prime for getting our candidates to state their position on this important issue. **We are looking to our members to help by keeping the issue in the forefront:**

- 1) Ask political leaders and candidates in your riding for their stand on the NGTA highway.
  - a. Do they support funding transit and MetroLinx before highways?
  - b. Do they understand the economic impact of climate change, the need to factor it into planning and the role of highways in this equation?
  - c. Do they recognize that the NGTA highway does nothing to ease congestion in GTA?
  - d. Do they understand that highways actually bring more congestion?
  - e. Do they support rail as a viable transportation choice?
  - f. Would they advocate for the inclusion of the Federal government to create a national transportation strategy that includes rail?
- 2) Attend all-candidate meetings and pose some questions if you can.
- 3) Talk to your neighbours. Many people don't realize this issue is on-going.
- 4) When you see news coverage on the highway – write a letter to the editor. It doesn't have to be long and it adds strength to our voice.

#### **About the *Stop the Escarpment Highway Coalition (SEHC)***

The Coalition of 11 groups was formed in February 2011 with 7,000 members. Last month it added two new members: Sustainable Vaughan and Concerned Citizens Against Superhighway in Halton Hills. SEHC members represent community, agricultural and environmental groups from the entire length of the mega-highway from Fort Erie to Vaughan. SEHC is also working closely with Municipal and Regional governments who are aligned in their opposition to a new 400 series road corridor across the Niagara Escarpment, over prime agricultural lands and through significant natural areas.

#### **The Natural Capital Study**

One of SEHC's achievements this spring was commissioning a Natural Capital Study (June 2011). This professional report, researched by economic / environmental consultants who used the Ministry of Resources own data, demonstrated the environmental services that would be endangered by a highway in the NGTA West Study Area (Burlington/Flamborough) have a value of almost **\$1 billion annually**. Watersheds provide goods and services for free but they must be

protected. These services include Flood Protection, Clean Drinking Water Supply, Air Pollution Abatement, Heat Mitigation, Recreational Opportunities and Habitat for endangered species. The Natural Capital Study highlighted a gap in analysis in infrastructure planning as the value of the loss of these services are never factored into the government's transportation planning.

**A big thank you to all who helped make this report happen.** We believe it played a roll in Transportation Minister Wynne's announcement backing away from a highway in this area (see political position section at the end of newsletter). We also believe it is an important first step in more sustainable transportation planning for the benefit of all.

The Natural Capital Study (June 2011) is available on our website: [www.stophighway.com](http://www.stophighway.com)

### **Coalition Group Members working in Concert with Halton Regional and the City of Burlington**

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| <b>Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment (COPE)</b> | <a href="http://www.stophighway.com">www.stophighway.com</a>   |
| <b>Oakvillegreen Conservation Association</b>           | <a href="http://www.oakvillegreen.org">www.oakvillegreen.org</a>   |
| <b>Lowville Area Residents Association (LARA)</b>       | <a href="http://www.welcometolowville.com">www.welcometolowville.com</a>   |
| <b>BurlingtonGreen</b>                                  | <a href="http://www.burlingtongreen.org">www.burlingtongreen.org</a>   |
| <b>Coalition of the Niagara Escarpment (CONE)</b>       | <a href="http://www.niagaraescarpment.org/">www.niagaraescarpment.org/</a>   |
| <b>Protecting Escarpment Rural Land (PERL)</b>          | <a href="http://www.perlofburlington.org">www.perlofburlington.org</a>   |
| <b>Milton Green Citizens Group</b>                      | <a href="http://www.Miltongreen.info">www.Miltongreen.info</a>   |
| <b>Environment Hamilton</b>                             | <a href="http://www.environmenthamilton.org">www.environmenthamilton.org</a>   |
| <b>Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society</b>       | <a href="http://www.pals@becon.org">www.pals@becon.org</a>   |
| <b>Cedar Springs Community</b>                          | <a href="http://web.me.com/thomassimpson/CedarSpringsCommunity/Home.html">http://web.me.com/thomassimpson/<br/>CedarSpringsCommunity/Home.html</a> |
| <b>Sidrabene Latvian Camp</b>                           | <a href="http://www.sidrabene.org">www.sidrabene.org</a>   |

### **Highlights of the SEHC's Formal Submission on the NGTA Highway / Corridor**

#### Recommendations:

- Create one overriding agency responsible for Transport Planning.
- Advocate for a comprehensive national transportation policy.
- Transportation planning to follow urban design and couple transport and land use planning.
- Protect the value and purpose of the Greenbelt Plan and the Niagara Escarpment.

#### Big Concerns:

- Need for data validation.
- In the Ministry of Transportation's NGTA study, the need for a highway is not triggered until 2029. This finding is based on suspect and incomplete data. We believe that when the data is expanded to include all factors and corrected for bad assumptions, there is NO need for a highway.
- Need to include Value of Ecosystems and Agricultural land in the equation.
- Fully fund MetroLinx.

The complete document submitted is available on the website along with the Natural Capital Study at [www.stophighway.com](http://www.stophighway.com). These documents formed our submission.

The MTO's report can be viewed at the NGTA Corridor official website: [www.niagara-gta.com](http://www.niagara-gta.com).

Together we are making a difference.

With thanks,

Sue McMaster, Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment  
Geoff Brock, Spokesman, Stop Escarpment Highway Coalition

## **Political Party Positions on the Niagara to GTA Highway as Announced to Date**

With a Provincial Election set for October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the Niagara to GTA highway remains an important issue. Political parties have taken up positions:

### **Liberals:**

- As announced by Ontario Transportation Minister Kathlene Wynne in July 2011, the provincial Liberals aren't moving forward with a 33-km highway that connects Hwy 403 in Ancaster to north Burlington. Wynne is quoted as saying "The fundamental thing I hear is that people in this community are very concerned about a road that will disrupt a sensitive environmental area that really is the basis of the quality of life in the area. That's why our government stepped back from this."
- The recommendations submitted by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) team for other areas of the project remain the same:
  - 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.
- A roundtable meeting with Transportation Minister Wynne was organized by Liberal candidates Karmel Sakran (Burlington), Indira Naidoo-Harris (Halton) and Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale MPP Ted McMeekin on the Niagara to GTA highway in Flamborough / North Burlington. The SEHC was part of that meeting.
- Over the past 10 years, MPP Ted McMeekin has played an important role in fighting the NGTA highway in the Flamborough/Burlington area and in moving the issue of sustainable transportation and the NGTA highway up on the Liberal agenda.

### **Progressive Conservatives:**

- Provincial PC leader Tim Hudak is a strong supporter of the Niagara to GTA highway and has said the highway will spur job creation in the Niagara region, Hamilton and the GTA. The SEHC has provided the PC party with our comments on the highway. Included is a section dispelling the myth that highways bring jobs beyond immediate construction related jobs. Donna Skelly, PC candidate in the Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale riding has declared her support for her leader and building a highway in the Flamborough / North Burlington area if elected MPP. She has recently stated in the Flamborough Review that the highway is a "much-needed artery" and "an investment in trade, tourism and safer, more efficient travel to help local families spend more time together and less time on the road." Having studied impacts and data on highways for 10 years, the lack of understanding on this issue demonstrated by candidate Skelly is worrisome.
- On September 13, 2011, the SEHC requested a meeting with Hudak and Skelly. No response received to date.

### **NDP:**

The SEHC has requested the NDP's formal policy position on this issue. Candidate Trevor Westeroff has stated that "the NDP has consistently opposed the Mid Peninsula Highway." (The NGTA was previously known as the Mid Peninsula Highway.)

### **Green Party:**

The SEHC has requested the Green Party's formal policy position on this issue. Candidate Eric Coverdale has stated the party's position as recognizing the "need to support the shift from automobiles to sustainable public transit. Proposals for new roads are based on inflated congestion numbers and an assumption that future growth will follow a business-as-usual model."

Political positions on the NGTA highway issue will be posted to our website as we receive more information.