



For Immediate Release

Province Should Save Taxpayers Money And Build Transit Says Coalition

Hamilton / Burlington: May 22, 2012

The Stop Escarpment Highway Coalition (SEHC) is calling on the Provincial Government to stop wasting money, especially on a highway they promised not to build: the Niagara to Greater Toronto Area (NGTA) highway.

Despite facing immense fiscal challenges, the McGuinty government is quietly spending money on the NGTA highway that local governments and citizens oppose in part because it will divert money from transit and make traffic congestion worse by dumping more traffic onto the already overloaded GTA highways. Moving ahead with the highway also contradicts a Liberal pre-election promise.

In August 2011, prior to the October election, then Transportation Minister Kathleen Wynne announced that Ontario's Liberal government would not build the western portion of the Niagara to GTA highway. "We were pleased that Minister Wynne saw the logic in our group's position: a highway isn't needed now and, with gas prices rising rapidly and congestion in the GTA, it certainly won't meet Ontario's needs in years to come. Evidently, that promise vanished after the election," says Susan McMaster of Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment (COPE).

Back in 2002 COPE, a member group of the SEHC, led public opposition to the NGTA, then known as the Mid-Peninsula Highway. Planned to run from Fort Erie, through Flamborough it would meet up with the 407 in North Burlington. "They said we needed a highway in the area, but their assessment and numbers didn't add up," says McMaster. "The GTA was and is experiencing significant congestion; anybody could look at a map and note that the highway is a bad idea." Public pressure forced the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to take a second look at the project and they conceded that no highway was needed – at least between the Fort Erie and Flamborough section, but the push remained to build a highway through the heart of rural Flamborough and Burlington – until Minister Wynne's empty pre-election promise.

"Going ahead with the planning for this highway after they said they wouldn't build it is pure folly" said Geoff Brock, Chair of SEHC. "An Ontario Government Agency, Metrolinx, has mapped future congestion in the GTHA. It is exactly where anybody in the GTHA knows it will be. Starting in Burlington and increasing Eastward on the way to downtown Toronto. This highway we're talking about – skirts the Western end of Burlington – culminating at Burlington and putting more pressure on an already severely congested area."

Brock notes that at a recent Transportation Forum organized by the Federation of Urban Neighborhoods (Ontario) in Markham the message was clear – congestion will not be solved by more roads. We'll be adding 2.5 million people to the GTHA in the next 20 years, and we won't solve our congestion problem with more expressways. "There was a lot of anger expressed at the lack of transit," he says. Clearly there's a disconnect between what the MTO is planning for transportation and what people want."

The SEHC is ramping up the pressure on the Provincial government to honour their promise and to build transit. The SEHC wants Premier McGuinty to give the money being spent on the NGTA

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<http://nohighway.blog.com>



highway to Metrolinx to help fund the 25 proposed transit projects in the GTA. “Give them the money. We don’t need it, they do,” Brock says.

Attachments:

Metrolinx’s maps of present and future congestion.
MTO’s map of the highway study area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

The Coalition was formed in February 2011 and has grown to 13 groups representing 8,000 members. SEHC members represent community, agricultural and environmental groups in Oakville, Milton, Burlington, Hamilton, Halton Hills, Niagara Region and Vaughn. SEHC is working closely with Municipal and Regional governments who are aligned in their opposition to a new 400 series road corridor across the Niagara Escarpment.

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

Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment (COPE)	www.stophighway.com
Oakvillegreen Conservation Association	www.oakvillegreen.org
Lowville Area Residents Association (LARA)	www.welcometolowville.com
BurlingtonGreen	www.burlingtongreen.org
Coalition of the Niagara Escarpment (CONE)	www.niagaraescarpment.org/
Protecting Escarpment Rural Land (PERL)	www.perlofburlington.org
Milton Green Citizens Group	www.Miltongreen.info
Environment Hamilton	www.environmenthamilton.org
Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society	www.pals@becon.org
Cedar Springs Community	
Sidrabene Latvian Camp	www.sidrabene.org
Concerned Residents Against Superhighway (Halton Hills)	www.CRASHH.org
Sustainable Vaughan	www.SustainableVaughan.com



About the *Niagara to GTA Highway (NGTA Highway)*

In 2002, the Mike Harris government unveiled plans to build the Mid-Peninsula Highway, slicing the Niagara Escarpment from Fort Erie to the 407 in North Burlington; cutting through Flamborough along the way.

In June 2003, Burlington and Halton Region opposed the proposal of the Mid-Peninsula Highway and requested a Judicial Review. This opposition led to its withdrawal and the province committing to a full environmental assessment (EA). In June 2006, under the new name of the Niagara GTA (NGTA) corridor, an EA commenced.

In March 2011 the Ministry of Transportation released the latest report on the status of the project. The report includes optimizing existing road networks, a new highway from Fort Erie to Welland and continued study on a highway commencing at the 403 in Ancaster and cutting through Flamborough on the way to toll highway 407 in North Burlington. The coalition maintains that this would irreparably damage Niagara Escarpment, agricultural land and eco-systems along the way.

In July, 2011, then Transportation Minister Kathleen Wynne announced that Ontario's Liberal government would not move forward with the highway.

In May 2012 the Ministry of Transportation released the latest work on the highway including well defined routes ripping through Flamborough and Burlington.