

Hon. Donna Cansfield,
Minister of Transportation
Hon. Laurel Broten,
Minister of the Environment

April 24, 2007

Dear Ministers,

On behalf of the Weston Community Coalition, and the citizens we represent, we must protest in the strongest of terms the actions and conduct of GO Transit in the current Environmental Assessment process for the upgrading of the Georgetown Corridor for the use of GO and a potential Air Rail link.

As you know, we have been involved in this matter since late 2004, when GO first launched a class Environmental Assessment without giving consideration to alternatives. A full EA was commenced in the spring of 2006. We asked for and were granted a space on a public liaison committee (PLC), to facilitate consultations for the development of the Terms of Reference. All the EA experts we talk to agree that the Terms of Reference is by far the most important stage of the development of an EA. Once it is created and approved by the Minister, all the proponent need do is follow it, reach a traceable, repeatable, understandable conclusion, and the conclusion almost always is blessed by the Minister.

So we prepared ourselves for full discussion and consultation in preparing this Terms of Reference. The first PLC meeting was held May 2, 2006, with subsequent meetings May 24 and June 8. We were told at the first meeting that we were working from a clean slate, that we would not be attempting to change an already prepared draft. However, as I have indicated in previous correspondence, the PLC discussions were not very substantive. The first meeting was mostly taken up with discussions of courtesy and decorum. The second was not on the structure of the TOR, but rather on the number and structure of corridor options to be considered in the EA.

We were promised a draft of the Terms of Reference, and it was delivered to us on June 6, 2006, 48 hours before the last scheduled meeting of the PLC. We attempted to bring issues to the meeting, but were told to put the concerns in writing. We did that. A subsequent meeting was arranged for early July, but the proponent hadn't read our concerns by that time, and could not respond. A final PLC meeting was scheduled for late August, and some discussion was had on the Terms of Reference, although the agenda for the meeting was again heavy on other issues (originally only ½ hour was set aside for discussions on the Terms of Reference).

The impression left with many at the PLC was that the process was window dressing, and that meaningful discussion and dialogue (consultation) on the actual structure and make-up of the Terms of Reference was deliberately limited.

In my comments on behalf of the Weston Community Coalition on the submitted Terms of Reference, I suggested that it appeared to us as though the proponents had been working from a draft Terms of Reference document by their conduct and responses. GO's formal response to that allegation by me was to flatly deny it. They went so far as to assert that no document even resembling a Terms of Reference had been prepared until before the 3rd (June 8) PLC meeting.

So imagine my shock and dismay when I discovered, in the ministry file on the EA, a letter from Hayley Berlin to Imants Hausmanis, dated April 28, 2006, thanking him for delivering a draft of the Terms of Reference. I noticed there was no copy of this draft actually in the file, so I asked Ms. Berlin

to replace it into the file, which she did. It was remarkably similar in form and structure to the one we first saw just before the third PLC meeting, more than a month later. And the draft was dated February, 2006!

It's one thing to work from a hidden draft of a Terms of Reference, when that document is internal and truly a 'working document'. It's quite another to have a complete dialogue with the Ministry of the Environment about it, prior to having a dialogue with the public, and then on two separate occasions, including one in writing, deny its existence!

This kind of disregard for the integrity of the process, the people being consulted, and their time, as concerned citizen volunteers, calls into question the trustworthiness of the entire EA process. Can we now believe anything the proponents have said or will say in the future? Are their repeated assertions that their 'value' systems, which are not disclosed in the terms of reference, will be reviewed and can be rejected by the Minister of the Environment if they don't meet with her approval, to be trusted? Are you, the ministers responsible, to be believed when you tell us that all options will be studied and it will be an open and transparent process?

This kind of action warrants swift corrective action on the part of both your ministries, if the public's confidence in the process is to be restored. Therefore, we in the Weston Community Coalition ask that the Minister of the Environment appoint a mediator to work with the parties on drafting a Terms of Reference, in particular with the Weston Community Coalition and GO Transit. We also ask that the Minister of Transportation provide participant funding, as previously requested but never responded to, to the Weston Community Coalition, so that the coalition may employ independent experts in the course of this mediation and beyond.

Looking forward to your responses,

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cc Paul Ferreira, MPP
Alan Tonks, MP
Frances Nunziata, Councillor
Peter Smith, Chair, GO Transit
Weston Community Coalition members