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February 23, 2009

Mr. Simon Chamberlain
Secretary, Mount Dennis Community Association
71 Guestville Avenue
Toronto, ON M4M 4N4

Dear Mr. Chamberlain:

Thank you for your February 9, 2009 letter regarding the Metrolinx proposal for an Air-Rail Link.

Like your organization, Toronto Public Health (TPH) supports the Air-Rail Link and sees health and environmental benefits in encouraging rail travel in place of personal vehicle use. We share your concern, however, that using diesel-powered trains on the Air-Rail link could contribute to reduced air quality and negative health impacts. TPH is currently reviewing the potential health impacts of fuel options on this proposed Air-Rail link and will consider the need for further action.

Previous TPH reports related to air pollution identified adverse health impacts associated with diesel exhaust, including low-sulfur or "clean diesel." The following reports may be of interest:

- *Estimating the Health Impact of Exposure to Diesel Exhaust in Toronto (2002)*
http://www.toronto.ca/health/de_index.htm
- *Emissions from Transit Buses (2003)*
http://www.toronto.ca/health/hphe/pdf/boh_2003sept15_emissions_from_transit_buses.pdf

Over the years, TPH has supported decisions to decrease the allowable sulfur levels in diesel fuel and been instrumental in moving the City of Toronto into the purchase of low-sulfur ("clean") diesel fuel and vehicles, as well as alternatives such as diesel-hybrid engines. However, these considerations were made in a context that differed from the Metrolinx discussion: specifically, they have taken place primarily as part of considerations to reduce emissions from traditional diesel fuel.

At this time, I support the position of Toronto City Council taken at its January 2009 meeting, that Metrolinx employ electric vehicles. The full text of the position is as follows:

Item 30.14 Georgetown South/Air Rail Link Project - Moved by Mayor Miller, seconded by Councillor Nunziata
City Council on January 27 and 28, 2009, adopted the following:

1. City Council oppose any road closures along the route.
2. City Council support the addition of new stops, including a stop in Weston.
3. Public transit alternatives in the Georgetown corridor and serving the airport be a component of any service

improvements.

4. Metrolinx be requested to employ electric vehicles.

5. City Council reaffirm its strong interest in seeing the West-Toronto Railpath (bike trail) project accommodated adjacent to the tracks between Dundas Street West and Strachan Avenue.

Summary: Improving transit connections to Pearson Airport is a top priority for the City of Toronto, the Toronto Transit Commission, the Province of Ontario, the Federal Government and Metrolinx, the Province of Ontario's regional transportation planning agency. A direct rail link between Pearson and Union Station will form an important piece of the larger network of new transit connections to the airport, which, within the next 15 years, will also include electrified express rail service in the Georgetown corridor and light rail on Eglinton and Finch. However, the project will have environmental impacts along the route, and the City of Toronto supports measures to ensure that it respects and provides service to the neighbourhoods that are affected. The project includes a stop at Bloor GO Station (at Dundas West Subway) but other stops could be added. Responsibility for the project has recently been transferred to Metrolinx, and a new Environmental Assessment process will be launched shortly. <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-18500.pdf>.

Source: City Council minutes: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/decisions/2009-01-27-cc30-dd.pdf>.

I hope this information is helpful. If you require further information, please contact me at 416-338-7820 or dmckeown@toronto.ca.

Sincerely,

Dr. David McKeown
Medical Officer of Health

CR #9856