

June 29, 2011

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Transportation
3rd Floor, Ferguson Block
77 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z8

Re: GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment Transportation Development Strategy

Dear Minister Wynne:

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is a federation of 160 local chambers of commerce and boards of trade in the Province of Ontario, representing 60,000 businesses of all sizes, in all economic sectors covering every area of the province. The OCC's mandate is to advocate strong and effective policies on issues that affect its membership.

Transportation will play an important role in Ontario's growth and economic development in the next 30 years. Studies report that future growth is expected to reach over one million new residents and over 400,000 new jobs in the west end of the study area. The draft GTA West Transportation Development Strategy indicates that the demand for travel will exceed the capacity of the existing regional transportation network by 2031. The results would be increased congestion, economic constraints, higher fuel consumption and air pollution, and a lower quality of life.

As an initial point, the OCC believes that communities like Brantford, Cambridge, and Kitchener-Waterloo be included in the geographic boundary of the study. Inclusion of these areas would provide vital linkages that would not only address capacity and structural deficiency in the broader region, but would strengthen the region's ability to act as a multi-modal system.

The OCC supports the Ministry's economic development efforts through the provision of transportation infrastructure optimization and expansion. While the OCC is encouraged by the Ministry's strategy to lend support to transit initiatives such as Metrolinx RTP, and GO 2020, we believe more can be done to address future capacity needs, and foster greater economic development and opportunity.

For example, the Ministry is working in cooperation with Metrolinx, which acts as the transportation authority designated to undertake a variety of public transit and transportation projects in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Metrolinx's mandate is to improve the coordination and integration of all modes of transportation in the region. However, Metrolinx does not act as the single transportation authority in the GTHA. Each municipality has its own network authority, whereas in Vancouver, British Columbia's one body "Translink" has the sole designation to expand and maintain South Coast British Columbia's transportation network.

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The OCC encourages the government of Ontario to examine such possibilities in the GTHA, and begin evaluating the benefits and positive impacts of consolidating the GTHA's transportation and transit networks into one GTHA transportation authority.

As part of these efforts, the provincial government should seek to analyze the positive economic impacts of coordinated public transportation efforts.

A legacy project as large as the GTA West strategy requires the government to take an economic development approach. This includes incorporating planning and investment activities from surrounding communities over a long-term time horizon. The current 20-year assessment is too limited. A more complete and detailed long-term plan should look at a 30-year target, which emphasizes the importance of goods and people movement, transportation and logistics, economic development and trade forecasts beyond 2031.

The provincial economy has endured a significant loss in output due to the inadequacy of existing transportation infrastructure. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce believes that the planning for a long-term, multi-modal transportation network, complete with the new GTA West corridor, should begin immediately in order to mitigate existing and unforeseen delays to the efficient movement of goods and people within the province. With that in mind, the OCC recommends that the Government of Ontario:

- 1) Expand the geographic boundaries of the study to include surrounding areas such as Brantford, Cambridge, Guelph, and Kitchener-Waterloo.
- 2) Consult with regional and municipal transportation authorities located within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and undertake an independent review of the benefits and impacts of consolidating the GTHA's municipal public transportation networks under one regional transportation authority.
- 3) Acknowledge the strategic importance of the GTA West Corridor to the creation of a multi modal transportation hub through immediately commencing with a long-term (30 year) plan for the region. The plan should be based on an economic development vision achieved through coordination and consultation with civic leadership, policy-makers, and planners from all surrounding communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important issue. If you have any questions or comments, you may direct your staff to contact Angie Brennand, Vice President Policy and Government Relations, at (416) 482-5222, extension 232, or angiebrennand@occ.on.ca.

Yours sincerely,



Len Crispino
President & CEO

ccs: Frank Klees, MPP, PC Critic, Transportation
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