

January 4, 2011

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

Re: Follow up on the Mid Peninsula (Niagara to GTA) Trade Corridor

Dear Minister:

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 and from every area of the province. The OCC's mandate is to advocate strong policies on issues that affect its membership throughout Ontario's business community.

Pursuant to our letter dated August 3, 2010, the OCC is again writing to you in regards to the Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and EA Study's *Transportation Development Strategy*, which is being finalized for release by your Ministry.

As you know, the OCC has long advocated for the development of a Mid Peninsula (Niagara to GTA) Trade Corridor. The development of a Mid Peninsula (Niagara to GTA) Trade Corridor would not only address capacity deficiencies but would also complete a multi-modal system for port, airport, and US border crossings - including connections from east to west as well as to the north. This project would be an effective trade and transportation corridor between the border crossings on the Niagara Frontier, Southwestern Ontario and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, as well as a vital link with the proposed "Continental One" Highway in the US. The OCC has advocated for the Ontario government to build the Niagara-Frontier to Hamilton area portion first, prior to proceeding with the Hamilton to GTA portion of the roadway. In addition, we have recommended broadening the study area to include viable connections from the Niagara-Hamilton highway to the Brantford, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Cambridge areas.

The Mid-Peninsula Trade Corridor would serve as an inter-modal trade corridor for goods and people movement, and as an enabler for long-term sustainable economic development and international trade opportunities with the US. Our borders in fact are an economic hub for Ontario and Canada. For instance, in 2008, Ontario alone provided for \$303.2 billion of the total \$602.7 billion worth of two-way trade between Canada and the US. The Canadian-US border facilitates over \$1 million in trade each and every minute between our countries. Nearly one million trucks per year use the Niagara border to haul freight into the US from Canada.

The OCC understands that the Ministry of Transportation's plans for the next decade preclude the establishment of a Niagara to GTA Trade Corridor. Rather, the OCC understands that the Ministry's preferred solution on increased road capacity has three key components:

- a) Extending Highway 406 from its current location west of St. Catharines to rejoin the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) near Ft. Erie, providing a bypass of Niagara Falls and St. Catharines;
- b) Widening the QEW from St. Catharines to the Highway 407 Freeman Interchange at Burlington, including widening the Burlington Skyway to 10 lanes; and,
- c) Building a new multi-use corridor for Highway 403 running from Ancaster, across the escarpment to connect with Highway 407 in Burlington.

The OCC supports the Ministry's work in these areas. However, the OCC believes that simply widening existing infrastructure to accommodate new corridors constructed at either end of the NGTA does not fully capture the significance or intent of the mid to long term need for a new mid-peninsula trade corridor.

A new NGTA Trade Corridor would not only address long-term capacity deficiencies but would, most importantly, act as a multi-modal system for port, airport, and US border crossings including connections across Ontario. The Corridor would foster economic development opportunities not only for Southwestern and Central Ontario, but the broader provincial economy. It will bring about new employment, generate new development, increased population and in turn lead to new business development. It would expand westerly growth for the Montreal-Windsor corridor to allow for easier movement of goods and people, while increasing the Niagara-Upstate New York border accessibility to allow for expanded movement of goods and people.

Therefore, the OCC requests the Ministry to immediately begin the process to establish the NGTA Trade Corridor while continuing to move forward on its current plans in the Niagara Region. We see this as a logical compromise that will not jeopardize the Ministry's current infrastructure improvements in Niagara, while at the same time providing the Ontario government the opportunity to seamlessly build the NGTA Trade Corridor at the appropriate time. Perhaps there are current synergies that can be exploited by concurrent environmental assessment and planning processes in this region.

This dual process is appropriate as we believe the Ministry must consider economic development and trade opportunity forecasts beyond the present 2031 framework when conducting this additional series of needs assessments as part of the EA Study and planning process.

The present maximum 20 year needs assessment is too limited in scope for such a significant legacy project. The scope for assessing need should be based on at least 30 year targets, which emphasize the importance of goods movement, transportation and logistics to support economic growth and renewal for the GTHA, Southwestern and Central Ontario, and the broader provincial economy. The Ministry should consider alternatives to the undertaking, such as commercial vehicle-only lane(s) along the new trade corridor, and broadening the study area to include viable connections from the Niagara-Hamilton regions to the Brantford, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Cambridge areas.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter. If you have any further questions or comments, you may direct your staff to call Stuart Johnston, Vice President Policy and Government Relations at 416-482-5222, extension 232, to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Len Crispino
President & CEO

ccs: The Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Carol Layton, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation
Patricia Boeckner, Director, Transportation Planning Branch, Ministry of Transportation
Mr. Tim Hudak, PC Leader, Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Frank Klees, PC Party Critic, Transportation and Public Infrastructure
Ms. Andrea Horwath, NDP Leader
Mr. Gilles Bisson, NDP Critic, Transportation
OCC Membership