

The Honourable John Wilkinson
Minister of the Environment
77 Wellesley Street West
11th Floor, Ferguson Block
Toronto ON
M7A 2T5

26th November 2010

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Concord West Seniors Club, The Concord West Ratepayers Association and the Ad Hoc Committee to Save Concord West, to apprise you of our community's unanimous opposition to the August 26, 2010 Notice of Commencement of Transit Project Assessment Process, which proposes a Concord GO/Metrolinx facility to be located **on what is currently greenbelt, ORC land, south of Highway #7, between Baldwin St. and the 407 Highway**. We will henceforth refer to this land as "the Concord West (or CW) greenspace".

Our community and the Glen Shields community petitioned Hon. Ministers Duguid and later Chiarelli to transfer this land to the TRCA. Recognizing it to be an important component of the Don River Watershed, Brian Denney, Chief Administrative Officer, TRCA, wrote to us and to the Honorable Brad Duguid in a letter dated July 7, 2010: "The subject property falls within Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) master plan for acquisition for the Don River Watershed. TRCA staff support your efforts in this matter and would be willing to recommend to our board that TRCA accept title to the subject property (...)." Brian Denney's letter, as well as others cited in the present communication, may be found at our Ad Hoc Committee's community website:

www.saveconcordwest.org .

The CW greenspace is also marked as being of 'high potential' value on the TRCA's 2009 Don River Watershed Plan - Cultural Heritage Report on Current Conditions. This natural parkland is a critical and precious ecological niche, having significant provincial and community importance. Development such as the GO/Metrolinx Transit Project must not be permitted to occur on this land.

The Blanding's Turtle, a threatened and protected landscape species at risk, has been discovered on the boundary of the petitioned Concord West greenspace, which lies along a critical corridor that is essential to the ecological and wildlife continuity of the Bartley Smith, Langstaff Ecopark and Marita Payne Park systems. Our community is currently working with the Toronto Zoo to study the Don River segment along the corridor. It is quite likely that there may be endangered Wood Turtles in this area as well, which will be a subject of our ongoing study of this area, come springtime. But this land is also home to many other wild species, which use it as an essential link to travel up and down the greenbelt. It is therefore a provincially-significant wetland/woodlands area, with areas of

natural or scientific interest, and is sorely in need of protection for its surface and groundwater.

*Our community received no proper forwarning of plans for the development of the CW greenspace, which residents, their children and grandchildren have walked in and used for access to the greenway corridor since at least 1954, and which stands as the last possible point of access to the greenspace for our community - surrounded, as it already is, by the high volume traffic road ways of Highway #7 to the north, Keele St. to the west and the 407 to the east. It was not until July 23rd, 2010, in a meeting with Peter Shurman, M.P.P. for Thornhill, and Rob Minnes, Project Manager, Ministry of Transportation of Ontario, that two of our residents discovered that the GO/Metrolinx project was being contemplated for this land! Construction of a transit hub in this area will be *the death knoll* for both our old, residential community - especially affecting seniors and children who cannot commute to parklands - and for the wildlife, so dear to our residents, which makes its homes within this fragile corridor.*

You should be made further aware, Honorable Minister, that *a general assembly of Concord West Residents, held on August 25th, 2010, unanimously voted to oppose, with any and all means available to us, the location currently planned for this GO/Metrolinx facility, and to **constructively present the OMT with an Alternative Plan for its emplacement north of Highway #7.*** The community created such an Alternative Plan, at considerable expense and with the assistance of a notable Toronto municipal and development planning service, and on September 14, 2010, our Ad Hoc Committee to Save Concord West held a meeting at which it presented the community's Alternative Plan to a group of invited officials. The invitees were: George Ivanoff, Senior Environmental Planner for the Ministry of Transportation; Gustavo Garron, Principal Senior Project Manager for Delcan; Dale Albers, Chief Communications Officer for York Region Rapid Transit Corporation; Mike Fenning, for TRCA and Noah Ng, Constituency Assistant to Peter Shurman, and representatives from Metrolinx. ***GO/Metrolinx failed to attend.*** At this meeting, George Ivanoff, for the OMT, ***promised that the OMT would conduct a technical assessment of our Alternative Plan.*** All materials and documentation of the presentation were, by request, immediately sent to these officials and to OMT overall Project Manager Robb Minnes. *On September 27, 2010, a formal electronic Submission was made to Mr. Minnes.* This submission, as well as the Alternative Plan, are also mounted on our website. ***So far, no technical assessment of the community's Alternative Plan has been forthcoming,*** but we were informed on November 23rd, that one should be expected sometime on the first week of December.

During the September 14th meeting, we were told that an Environmental Assessment of the petitioned ORC greenspace is ongoing. Mr. Ivanoff apprised us that ***the current Environmental Assessment of the Concord West greenspace is due before the end of the year, and more recently (November 23rd) informed us that the Environmental Assessment is also due on the first week of December.*** Apparently, both the technical assessment of our Alternative Plan for the traffic hub and the Environmental Assessment are being conducted by the same OMT private consultant (presumably Delcan). *Should the assessment indicate the OMT Plan will continue as currently planned, and thus entail*

*the destruction of our precious greenspace, we would like you to know that **our community will vigorously oppose such an outcome.*** And should the assessment be conducted in accordance with The Transit Projects Regulation – O. Reg. 231/08 – we would like you to know that we will be opposing such an outcome on the basis of both Community and Provincial Importance. We are currently working with numerous other groups, as well, to this end. Moreover, under section 9(10) of the same Regulation, the environmental assessment must contain a consultation record that describes the concerns of interested parties and the steps taken to respond to these concerns.

Finally, we would like you to know that we have written letters of support from all our elected local members of the Vaughan Council, including newly elected Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua, and all Regional Councillors and Local Councillor. All these letters and related correspondence are posted at our community website at saveconcordwest.org.

In view of the preceding, we are hereby requesting that you encourage OMT to seek an alternative location for its planned transportation hub - whether the location proposed in our Alternative Plan, or another location that is ***not on the south side of Highway #7*** - and that you support what has been our community's ongoing request for many years now: to transfer title of the Concord West greenspace from the ORC to the TRCA, to restore and safeguard our community's proper access to its local greenspace and to the Ecopark with which it is continuous, and to protect this vital greenspace corridor as one of the very few remaining natural treasures of Vaughan. Hereby, we also **request that a notice of completion of the environmental assessment be sent to our community**, according to section 11(1)(a) of the quoted Regulation.

Hoping that you may help us to promptly correct this grave situation, we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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cc. Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Transportation
Robb Minnes, Project Manager, Ministry of Transportation
George Ivanoff, Senior Planner, Ministry of Transportation
Brian Denney, Chief Administrative officer, TRCA
Hon. R. Chiarelli, Minister of Infrastructure
Robert Prichard, Chair Metrolinx/GO
Bruce McCuaig, President & CEO Metrolinx/GO