



# Michael Thompson

Toronto City Councillor  
Scarborough Centre, Ward 37

October 6, 2009

The Honourable George Smitherman  
Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure  
Hearst Block, 4 th Floor, 900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 2E1

Dear Minister Smitherman,

The proposal to run over 450 diesel-powered trains - most of them GO trains - down the Georgetown South Corridor poses a serious health risk that will put an unethical burden on Toronto's well-being in many ways. Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David McKeown, reiterated his position against diesel expansion and in favour of expanded public transit as an electric service about a week ago, when Dr. McKeown took the unusual step of appearing at a rally in Sorauren Park. Yesterday, the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Gerretsen, issued conditions that require Tier 4 compliant technology for all vehicles operating as part of the corridor's expansion as part of his project approval. While Tier 4 diesel engines are not yet commercially available, electric vehicles are a commercially available technology that is more than Tier 4 compliant.

I am asking you, Minister Smitherman, to take the prudent step of making this project an electrified project, in line with Minister Gerretsen's conditions. Electrification will save on health care costs, save in energy consumption, save in operational expenses, save precious space at Union Station, and save the vibrancy of communities along this corridor through dramatically reduced noise and vastly cleaner air, allowing the corridor to intensify for the City to grow in a sustainable manner. Please consider the consequences of moving through with this as a diesel operation, and how negative impacts are avoided – or at least significantly mitigated - if electrified.

With the deteriorating health of communities caused by this project as identified by Metrolinx and Dr. McKeown, health-care costs will rise, tax revenue will decline through lower property values from the unhealthy quality of life along the corridor, economic activity will decline from deteriorating health, population and employment growth will be diverted away from a high-order transit corridor, and crime could rise as a result of this project to further compound problems as well, through the creation of large volumes of abandoned properties, possibly in clusters, which are a health risk from the perspective of illicit drug use, and a safety issue for other criminal activity.

The costs to the health-care system from respiratory impacts alone are staggering. A single asthmatic can cost the system hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, and the Georgetown South project as a diesel service could cause hundreds – even thousands – of children to become asthmatic. That's billions of dollars in potential health-care costs that can be avoided, annually. Billions of dollars, annually, wasted to let people suffer in poorer health than necessary. As a past Minister of Health, this should be a risk that you have a first-hand understanding of.

Electrification of the GO and Union-Pearson Rail Link services in the Georgetown South Corridor as a prerequisite for expansion can significantly mitigate – or even eliminate – the negative impacts. Past Metrolinx statements about what's involved in electrification don't line up with other studies made publicly available by Metrolinx that detail what is involved, including one that was even authored by Metrolinx. Metrolinx's own reports contradict their position on electrification in the Georgetown South Corridor.

Metrolinx has been insisting that the time involved for including electrification in the project would set it back 2-3 years, yet electrification of the Lakeshore Corridor would only require 14 months of design work according to a 2001 publication. Worth noting is that electrification provisions are being included in the

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Georgetown South project, meaning that some of the work has already been done, and should be a delay measured in months, not years. Most of the questions Metrolinx needs answers for to implement electrification are provided by Metrolinx itself in the Lakeshore Express Rail Benefits Case Analysis.

The economic perspective adopted for comparison between diesel and electric options is inconsistent. The capital cost of "billions" stated by Metrolinx do not line up with a study commissioned by Metrolinx just last year, in addition to the even more recent Lakeshore Express Rail Analysis. Those studies would suggest around \$300 million for electrification to Brampton, not billions.

Operational savings that result from electrification are not acknowledged by Metrolinx when it comes to the Georgetown Corridor. According to Metrolinx's Lakeshore Express Rail Analysis, the operational savings combined with higher projected fare revenue would pay off the additional capital in less than 10 years, and then continue to reap significant operational savings and higher fare revenues that can be put to better use, like other transit expansion projects. The Lakeshore Express Rail Analysis clearly states that it would be unadvisable to do an interim diesel expansion, as this would increase the capital outlay overall by purchasing fleet twice, and building maintenance facilities for that fleet that would only be used for a short period of time. There are also costs associated with air monitoring programs not yet specified.

These costs are significant given the service frequencies projected by Metrolinx for Georgetown South, especially when combined with the limited flexibility in lengths of trains possible with locomotive-hauled trains compared to electric multiple units, which would yield substantial fuel/energy savings, annually, as well as significant track maintenance savings from dramatic weight reductions causing less wear. These savings could be even more dramatic than projected if peak oil strikes in the near future.

Union Station is another element of serious concern that electrification has the potential to mitigate. Even with electrification, it will be challenging to fit other users besides GO during peak period into Union Station, as even some GO services might not fit. Metrolinx does not appear to recognize the magnitude of this critical issue in the Georgetown South EA, yet does recognize this in the Lakeshore Express Rail Analysis that something dramatic needs to be done. The feasibility of additional capacity at Union is not known. This could lead to very serious, very expensive problems later.

Electric multiple units have the fastest acceleration of any currently available and proven rail vehicle technology. Combined with additional stations in downtown Toronto to distribute the passenger load to reduce dwell times, it could help get more GO trains through Union Station during peak period.

The City and the affected communities alike have been extremely vocal, as have MPs and MPPs along the corridor, about electrification, as well as road closures and/or road-rail grade separation design issues. There are also conflicts with Toronto's Official Plan. Metrolinx has yet to resolve these issues with the City and communities, and – by extension – taxpayers.

These issues are resolvable if there's a will to make the project live up to its potential. This project is falling well short of its potential as proposed, but it is not beyond repair if we look at what is possible through electrification, and open the doors to how this project can be made great. We owe it to the taxpayers of this great city and province to get an exciting and efficient project we can all be proud of. Only electrification will see that realized, and that decision rests entirely with you, Minister Smitherman.

Yours truly,



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CC: Mayor Miller, Members of Council  
The Honourable Jim Bradley, Minister of Transportation