

Are we done yet?

Almost exactly one year ago, as the future of the Dalton McGuinty-led Ontario Liberal government teetered precariously on the edge of being toppled, then Minister of Transportation Kathleen Wynne promised Halton politicians the province wouldn't allow a new highway to cross the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO world biosphere reserve.

For Halton residents who had been fighting against any highway plan that might cut a swath across the Niagara Escarpment, Wynne's words evoked a huge sigh of relief.

But last week, Halton regional councillors were shocked to learn from Ministry of Transportation (MTO) project co-ordinator John Slobodzian that a new highway corridor running through north Burlington to connect Hwy. 403 to Hwy. 407 is still on the books. The highly-contentious route is one of a number of possibilities being considered as part of an Environmental Assessment (EA) planning process looking to add highway capacity between Niagara and the GTA, he said.

Slobodzian explained his department has never been formally directed to remove any of the options for a new highway that pre-dated Wynne's promise that Halton escarpment land would be preserved.

"There has been no change in direction," the MTO official told flabbergasted regional councillors, some of whom are vowing to get last fall's promise in writing from the province.

"How can a minister make a commitment to people and you guys not hear about it?" an incredulous Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr asked the MTO official.

How, indeed. It's a worrisome development for Halton Hills.

In May, Mayor Rick Bonnette received assurances from new MTO Minister Bob Chiarelli that plans for the highway have been cancelled.

In June, Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott pushed for that assurance to be put in writing.

"In my experience, cabinets often get shuffled over the summer," said Arnott. "If Mr. Chiarelli is assigned to another Ministry and we don't have anything in writing, we could very well find ourselves back at square one."

While the Town received Chiarelli's letter on June 28, the Minister did not completely shut the door on 4-3, writing: "Although 4-3 is no longer recommended by the Study Team, the recommendation will be subject to review and approval by the Minister of Environment once the EA study process is completed, including Stage 2 of the EA, which involves route planning."

Simply put, we're not done folks. Residents should continue to monitor and comment on the GTA West Transportation Strategy until the final T's and I's have been crossed and dotted.

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Letters to the editor

Chong is a nice guy, but should we elect him?

Dear editor,

No one in Wellington-Halton Hills can claim we don't know how to elect great representatives. Our MP Michael Chong in many ways does his job impressively and you will find agreement across partisan lines. He responds to our emails in a timely, respectful and informative manner, he attends events of concern to the community, contributes to our local dialogue, and beyond all of that he is such a nice guy!

Unfortunately, this riding suffers from a sort of "Nice Guy Syndrome," we see a nice guy who sends us those emails and attends events and speaks on principles and values we respect and we think "Wow that sounds great for us!"

In reality, however, we have a Parliamentary system in this country whereby the leaders of parties control the votes of our MPs. While Mr. Chong may have principles and values we can relate to, and while they may respond to our questions and concerns, when it comes to the important business of making laws and policy, it is actually Stephen Harper who is representing us as a Conservative riding.

So long as Michael Chong is led by Harper, he will vote how Harper tells him to (because he won't risk being

punished or told he can't run for re-election!).

While I have had nothing but excellent encounters with Chong, and while he is an exceptionally nice guy, votes such as the present Federal budget remind us of how we are stuck in this "Nice Guy Syndrome" and how this nice guy is forced to vote with his leader.

We must try to remember that every time we tick a box on a ballot for Mike Chong we are really choosing Stephen Harper as representative of Wellington-Halton Hills.

I can't speak for everyone in this riding, but I for one do not believe that Stephen Harper is the right man to represent the interests of this riding, and the recent attacks on Canadians' retirement savings and the environment are more proof of that. Every vote for Mike Chong is a vote of confidence in Stephen Harper— sometimes nice guys need to finish last.

Michael Carlucci, Georgetown

Park P.S. thanks its community partners

Dear editor,
 Park Public School has had another very successful Fun Day Family BBQ due to the outstanding Georgetown parent and business community. This much enjoyed annual event is due to the great team effort demonstrated by

so many Park families, community members and businesses. Juli Potter, Jen Harwood and Leigh Whiting were the exceptional team that planned Park's Fun Day, Norine Lillycrop organized the entire Silent Auction, Christine Coleman organized the Kid's Raffle and Christine Thrush organized the bake table. Many parents contributed countless hours canvassing, planning, organizing and running the event. Thank you to all parents who helped to make this event a success. The support of the Georgetown business community was also greatly appreciated. Local businesses donated many items to the silent auction and the friendly Prosperity One Credit Union staff (Rosa and Bella) along with Landscape Creations even volunteered staff to help during the event. Their support is greatly appreciated. What a fantastic community we have in Georgetown!

Toni Marlow, Principal
 Park Public School

WEB POLL RESULTS

(Go to www.theifp.ca)

Canadian auto sales in 2012 will challenge the all-time mark of just over 1.7 million units set in 2002, according to BMO Economics. Do you plan to buy a car this year?

1. Yes (9%)
2. No (91%)