

Mid-peninsula highway update

BY DONNA DANIELI

Transportation is a key issue for everyone living or working between the GTA and the Niagara Peninsula. Approximately 120 million people live within 500 kilometres of the Peninsula, and about 16 per cent of all Canada/U.S. trade moves through the Peninsula to cross the border. Given these statistics and the limitations of the current transportation corridors, there is a need to address the question of how people and goods will

be transported throughout Ontario from the Niagara area in the future.

Long-range planning is essential to ensure that transportation investment is made where and when it is needed, and in the most cost-effective way. Since it can take eight to ten years to plan, design and build a new highway, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is now in the process of assessing various highway routes. Both

Conservation Halton and the Region of Halton fear that this step may be premature.

The MTO unveiled its draft Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference at the fifth series of Public Information Centres held in February. The Terms of Reference look at the building of a new mid-peninsula highway running from the QEW between Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, to the south of Hamilton International Airport,

and then around Hamilton and connecting to Highway 407 in Halton Region. Alternatively, this proposed highway might connect to Highway 6 near Caledonia, to Highway 403 or to Highway 401 west of Milton.

Conservation Halton has expressed serious doubts about both the need and the implementation of such a highway. "Our concerns are not with the highway but with the process and the fact that a

highway is already being proposed," complains Jennifer Lawrence, an Environmental Planner of Watershed Management Services for Conservation Halton. "Instead of just assessing a need, they went ahead to show how they could solve the need. I don't believe that a new highway is going to solve the problem." Ms. Lawrence also expressed frustration with what she feels is a narrow scope of recommendations

continued on page 4



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