

Expanded GO service is a priority

The trains that take us to work every day are critical to our economy, environment, and quality of life. Yet, in far too many communities, GO Transit services are simply inadequate to sustain future demand and even current demand.

For this reason I was pleased this spring when GO Transit announced it would commence an environmental assessment to extend rail service from Georgetown through Acton to Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo. I publicly expressed my support for this study in May. In July, I wrote to my former legislative colleague and now Canada's Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, to look into possible avenues of federal infrastructure funding for GO Transit.

In my letter to Mr. Flaherty, I explained the need for improved rail services in partnership with the Government of Canada. I asked the minister if he plans to pursue renewed discussions with the provinces to provide more federal dollars through the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, with a particular focus on regional transit projects.

While federal financial support would obviously be welcome, and might expedite the project, regional transportation remains the primary responsibility of the Government of Ontario.

Notwithstanding Ontario's weakened economy, the need for this service extension is well established due to continued local population growth pressures as mandated under the provincial govern-

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ment's Places to Grow policy. Fairness and common sense demand that provincial growth mandates under Places to Grow be accompanied by new provincial support for critical infrastructure, including trains.

Commuters are already faced with worsening traffic congestion and the high cost of gasoline. Improved rail transit would address these quality of life issues while, at the same time, help to meet our environmental obligations to future generations.

I believe that we need to reduce smog. I also believe that global warming is a fact, and that the preponderance of scientific opinion today demonstrates that human activity and excessive greenhouse gas emissions are contributing to it. Getting serious about energy efficiency and energy conservation are fundamental values we should all embrace.

Wellington-Halton Hills is home to a large and growing population of commuters who routinely travel into Toronto and other GTA communities to go to work. Transit services must be made accessible in commuters' home communities in order to be effective.

That is one very important reason that any GO Transit extension through Halton Hills must include a stop in the Acton area.

On October 9, I convened a meeting at my Queen's Park office with representatives from GO Transit, along with Town of Halton Hills representatives Mayor Rick Bonnette, Councillor John Duncan, and Chris Mills, Director of Infrastructure Services. They capably conveyed the need for this initiative and the support of their communities.

Plans underway at GO Transit cannot, however, be completed without a firm commitment from the Government of Ontario.

Last week I wrote to the Minister of Transportation to call on him to support the GO Transit extension through Wellington-Halton Hills. I look forward to continue working with local officials as we urge the government to make this a top priority.

I want to congratulate MP Michael Chong and his staff, who will continue their work on behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills. I look forward to working with them in the coming years.

If you have ideas or concerns about the issues facing the province, please don't hesitate to contact me at 1-800-265-2366, or by e-mail at ted.arnott@pc.ola.org. My website is www.tedarnottmpp.com.

—Ted Arnott is the MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills

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