

July 20, 2009

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PREMIER

Subject: **Prioritize the Electrification of Georgetown South /Union-Pearson Rail Corridor**

We are writing to you today on behalf of the Clean Train Coalition (CTC), a group comprised of Toronto-area residents and representatives from several communities concerned about the proposed diesel rail expansion in the Georgetown South/Union-Pearson Rail Corridor.

Like you, Premier, **we support the expansion of public transit**; but, we are deeply concerned with this **particular plan, which, due to its reliance on diesel-powered locomotives, will endanger the health of residents of the GTA**. We are especially concerned about the effect this plan will have on our children, who are sensitive to pollution of all kinds and who cannot speak for themselves.

Diesel emissions contain harmful toxicants that are established threats to public health. A **growing number of professional and public associations**, including the Toronto Board of Health, The Toronto District School Board, the Canadian Environmental Law Association and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, **have expressed concern that the use of diesel-powered trains for this particular public transit expansion will have significant averse effects to the health of people who live and work in the GTA**.

This corridor is set to become the most heavily-travelled line in GO Transit's network. It **passes through one of the most densely populated parts of Canada**. Nearly 300,000 people live within one kilometre of this line along with 76 public schools, 96 daycare centres and 4 long-term care facilities, including a chronic respiratory care hospital. Moreover, Toronto's Chief Medical Officer of Health stated that the **health effects of living in close proximity to major transportation corridors "include increased prevalence and severity of asthma and other respiratory diseases, diminished lung function, adverse birth outcomes, childhood cancer, and increased mortality."**

Exposing residents to the adverse health effects associated with the greatly increased diesel emissions proposed by this particular plan is unacceptable. There is an alternative that would realize our shared vision for improved quality of life, a cleaner environment and a thriving economy: the answer is, electric trains.

Metrolinx concedes that electric trains are preferred in densely-populated urban areas and it has proposed to electrify this line within 15 years. Metrolinx has also committed to studying the electrification of GO Transit's entire system. The CTC welcomes these moves, but we remain extremely concerned that, in the interim, **Metrolinx intends to expand services on this corridor using diesel trains.**

It is, in our opinion, unconscionable to unnecessarily expose residents, especially children, to 15 years of diesel exhaust.

Given the clear superiority of electric trains and the serious and irreversible health impacts associated with diesel exhaust, we **urge you, Premier, to ensure that this rail expansion uses electric trains from day one.**

Please, for the sake of our children's health: Go Electric.

Sincerely,
Keith Brooks
Carina Cojeen

On behalf of the Clean Train Coalition

cc: Hon. Jim Bradley, Minister of Transportation
Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure
Hon. Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance
Hon. John Gerretsen, Minister of the Environment
Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education
Colleen Bell, General Manager, Community Relations, Metrolinx