

August 17, 2012

The Honorable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty,

As you are well aware, Metrolinx is currently constructing an Air Rail Link (ARL) between Pearson Airport and Union Station. The rail is scheduled for completion by 2015, after which diesel trains will make 140 new trips through our communities every day.

This summer, the World Health Organization (WHO) reclassified diesel exhaust as a Group 1 carcinogen, in the same league as mustard gas, arsenic and asbestos. Within one kilometre of the ARL tracks, there are 30,000 children attending local schools, 96 daycare centres and four long term care facilities, including a respiratory illness care centre. The fumes from these trains pose a serious health hazard to our communities.

Since the plans for the ARL were first discussed, residents have advocated for immediate electrification of the rail to protect the health of our communities. Their concerns have been ignored.

This is unacceptable.

Minister Chiarelli recently stated that the decision to electrify the ARL will only be made after 2015 and refused to commit to a timeline or funding for electrification. The Minister claims that the "train has left the station" on this matter. As representatives of over 300,000 Ontarians who live near the rail, we can assure you that our constituents are not on board, and neither are we.

At a Metrolinx public meeting on June 27, 2012, the Director of Electrification explicitly stated that decision making power over the ARL stood with the Premier. If your provincial government had listened when our communities first raised concerns, the ARL could have easily been electrified by now. This is clearly a question of political will and you have yet to demonstrate that the electrification of the ARL is a government priority.

The electrification of the ARL is of vital importance to residents who live, work and go to school near the tracks. As their municipal, provincial and federal representatives, we are writing to invite you to a town hall to listen to our communities.

We leave the time and date open to your choosing. Given the urgency of this matter, however, we request your office selects a date by September 7, 2012. We are happy to arrange the details of the meeting, if you simply offer a few hours of your time.

Sincerely yours,



Jonah Schein, MPP
Davenport



Andrew Cash, MP
Davenport



Mike Layton
Councillor Ward 19



Cheri Di Novo, MPP
Parkdale-High Park



Peggy Nash, MP
Parkdale-High Park



Mike Sullivan, MP
York South-Weston



Sarah Doucette
Councillor Ward 13



Rosario Marchese, MPP
Trinity-Spadina



Olivia Chow, MP
Trinity-Spadina



Gord Perks
Councillor Ward 14



Frances Nunziata
Councillor Ward 11



Adam Vaughan
Councillor Ward 20



Ana Bailão
Councillor Ward 18