

TOWNSHIP  
OF WILMOT

December 21, 2017

The Honourable Steven Del Duca  
Minister of Transportation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Ferguson Block  
77 Wellesley Street West  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z8

Dear Minister Del Duca:

**Re: High Speed Rail Project  
Environmental Assessment Peer Review  
Municipal Advisory Group**

The Townships of Zorra, East Zorra-Tavistock, Wilmot and the Municipality of Thames Centre are aware the Province is moving ahead with an environmental assessment on a high-speed rail system (HSR) based on recommendations in a report filed by a Special Advisor. The Special Advisor's report suggested the new corridor parallel the existing Hydro One right-of-way which runs through the corridor impacted municipalities. It has since been learned this route has not yet been determined and may not necessarily follow this corridor. Notwithstanding this fact, an HSR corridor will dramatically impact these four municipalities in many different aspects irrespective whether it follows the Hydro One right-of-way.

At this time, the four municipalities have two requests; funding of a peer review and establishment of a Municipal Advisory Group.

### **Peer Review**

The Environmental Assessment process is very complex and highly technical in nature. The fact this project will be the first of its kind in Canada will only add layers of complexity. In order for impacted municipalities to fully and completely participate in the Environmental Assessment in a meaningful way, a technically sound, independent professional peer review of both the Terms of Reference (ToR) and Environmental Assessment (EA and CEA) will be required.

The Township of Zorra has undergone a similar peer review process for a private landfill undertaking and the review has been fully funded by the proponent. This is in recognition that a private undertaking which will not result in a direct benefit for the host municipality should not negatively impact local taxpayers.

Given that this project is deemed to be provincially and federally significant, it is not fair to have taxpayers from four local municipalities fund a peer review. It is therefore requested that the Ministry of Transportation fund a full comprehensive peer review for the corridor impacted municipalities. The sphere and scope of the peer review is open for negotiation and can be determined at a later date.

We understand the EA Notice of Commencement will likely be issued early this spring. It is imperative that the municipalities have expert advice at their disposal as soon as possible to provide guidance to the respective Councils during preparation of the Terms of Reference. It is suggested that an EA Project Manager be retained to assist in determining the scope of the required peer review. With reference to Zorra's peer review of the Southwestern Landfill Proposal, the EA Project Manager was invaluable in providing guidance and advice for the breadth and scope of the peer review team.

### **Municipal Advisory Group**

Municipal staff met with Jennifer Graham Harkness, Director of High Speed Rail and other Ministry staff on December 15, 2017. A wide range of issues were discussed and there was excellent dialogue with MTO staff.

Ministry staff noted this project has similarities with other highway corridor projects that MTO has undertaken in that Environmental Assessments were required. MTO has worked closely with impacted municipalities through creation of advisory groups at the political and technical level. It was felt the HSR project is similar and the creation of a Municipal Advisory Group (MAG) comprised of the CAO's and a Council representative to act as the political group. Further along the process there would also be merit in a separate Municipal Technical Advisory Group (MTAG) which could include Public Works staff and other technical municipal staff.

As noted above, preparation of the ToR will be commencing shortly and the corridor impacted municipalities would like to begin a dialogue with MTO. There was general agreement this approach would be advantageous and there are no impediments to starting up early in 2018.

Thank you for your consideration of these two requests.

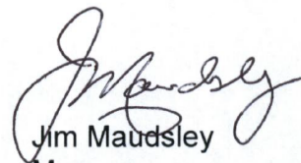
Sincerely,



Margaret Lupton  
Mayor  
Township of Zorra



Don McKay  
Mayor  
Township of East  
Zorra-Tavistock



Jim Maudsley  
Mayor  
Municipality of  
Thames Centre



Les Armstrong  
Mayor  
Township of Wilmot

Copy to: Jennifer Graham Harkness, Director of High Speed Rail  
John Slobodzian, Team Lead, Environmental Policy Office, Transportation Planning Branch  
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Sara Patterson, Issues Coordinator, High Speed Rail Team