

## Peel not pushing for work on Corridor to resume

By Bill Rea

Peel Region wants things to proceed with the GTA West Corridor, but councillors there are trying to avoid appearing pushy. Regional Staff had a motion ready for councillors last Thursday, calling on Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca to immediately resume and complete the environmental assessment (EA) study of the Corridor, in order to pick a preferred alignment for the proposed highway in the corridor, as well as interchange locations.

Councillors, however, took out those provisions. Instead, they called for a meeting with Del Duca and Regional Chair Frank Dale and the Mayors of Caledon, Brampton and Mississauga to discuss the importance of the Corridor and the completion of the study. The Province announced in December that it was suspending work on the environmental assessment of the GTA West Corridor that traverses Caledon as it runs from Highway 400 west, through town and south into Brampton and Halton Region. Staff reported the suspension was pending a review to be concluded by the spring.

Specific reasons for the suspension were not identified, the staff report stated.

Caledon councillors, earlier last week, did pass a motion calling for the study to resume and be completed immediately.

Brampton Councillor Michael Palleschi argued that calling for immediate action was premature, since the Province has indicated more information will be available in a few months. He added the government is make significant and long-overdue investments in emerging technologies. The GTA West corridor might reflect an out-of-date approach.

Palleschi urged waiting until the Transportation Ministry makes a decision, rather than applying pressure on the Province.

But Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson pointed out a lot of municipal money has been spent on the EA study. While most of the Peel component of the Corridor is in Caledon, he said the issue involves Brampton and Mississauga.

A lot of work has been spent and we have nothing to show for it at this end, he declared.

Brampton Councillor John Sprovieri couldn't imagine what new technology might be involved, as he stressed the need to move forward.

We need the roads, he remarked. There are going to be cars forever.

People have to move, he added. We're going to need this infrastructure. I don't know where the Minister's coming from; why he pulled the plug on this.

But Commissioner of Public Works Dan Labrecque was of a different mind. He said waiting a couple of months on a project like this is not a big deal.

Palleschi said he heard where Thompson was coming from, but warned against pushing the Province into making a rushed decision.

Labrecque said a letter could be drafted to the Province, expressing a desire to work with them, while stressing the importance on investing in the movement of people and goods.

We should be part of the conversation, working with the Ministry, he commented.

We've had lots of public meetings on this matter, Caledon Councillor Jennifer Innis said, adding stakeholder groups have spent hours discussing it. She too agreed with the need to move forward. She added a lot of land is involved, and many farmers sit wondering if they should be expanding their operations. She said it's only fair to ask the Province to move forward.

We've spent countless hours on this, Caledon Councillor Barb Shaughnessy declared, reminding everyone the Province suspended work on the EA at the last minute.

She also didn't have much faith that the Province will have anything to offer in a couple of months.

Caledon is most affected by this, she said. I just don't think we can wait for the province.

This is a pause; this is a sober second thought, observed Brampton Mayor Linda Jeffrey. This isn't a cancellation.

We're not in the driver's seat, she added, observing if the Region wants to work with the Province, the tone of the message is important. She said it's fine to ask for a meeting, pointing out a lot of money and energy has gone into this. Tone matters and respect matters, she said.