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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Thursday 23 April 2009

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 23 avril 2009

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Greater Toronto
and Hamilton Area
Transit Implementation Act, 2009

**Comité permanent des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Loi de 2009 sur l'aménagement
du réseau de transport en commun
de la région du grand Toronto
et de Hamilton

Chair: Pat Hoy
Clerk: William Short

Président : Pat Hoy
Greffier : William Short

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Thursday 23 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Jeudi 23 avril 2009

The committee met at 0901 in room 151.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will now come to order. I would ask that the report of the subcommittee be read into the record. Ms. Aggelonitis?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Your subcommittee on committee business met on Wednesday, April 8, 2009, to consider the method of proceeding on Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006, and recommends the following:

(1) That the committee hold two days of public hearings in Toronto, at Queen's Park, on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.; and on Thursday, April 23, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., as per the order of the House dated April 7, 2009.

(2) That the clerk of the committee, with the authorization of the Chair, post information regarding the committee's business once in the following newspapers as soon as possible: Toronto Star, Hamilton Spectator.

(3) That the clerk of the committee, with the authorization of the Chair, post information regarding the committee's business on the Ontario parliamentary channel and on the committee's website.

(4) That the deadline for receipt of requests to appear before the committee be 5 p.m. on Friday, April 17, 2009.

(5) That, following the deadline for receipt of requests to appear on Bill 163, the clerk of the committee provide the subcommittee members with an electronic list of all requests to appear.

(6) That, if required, each of the subcommittee members supply the clerk of the committee with a prioritized list of the witnesses they would like to hear from by 12 noon on Monday, April 20, 2009. These witnesses must be selected from the original list distributed by the committee clerk.

(7) That groups and individuals be offered 10 minutes for their presentations, followed by five minutes for questioning by committee members.

(8) That the deadline for receipt of written submissions be 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, 2009.

(9) That the research officer provide a summary of presentations prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

(10) That the deadline for filing amendments be 5 p.m. on Monday, April 27, 2009, as per the order of the House dated April 7, 2009.

(11) That the committee meet for clause-by-clause consideration on Thursday, April 30, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and that the committee be authorized to meet beyond the normal hours of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration, as per the order of the House dated Tuesday, April 7, 2009.

(12) That the clerk of the committee, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to commence making any preliminary arrangements to facilitate the committee's proceedings prior to the adoption of this report.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Any comment? Hearing none, all in favour? Carried.

GREATER TORONTO
AND HAMILTON AREA
TRANSIT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009 SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT
DU RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
DE LA RÉGION DU GRAND TORONTO
ET DE HAMILTON

Consideration of Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 /
Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto.

TRANSPORT 2000 ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Now we can move to our first presenter of the morning, Transport 2000 Ontario. Would you come forward, please? Good morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There could be up to five minutes of questioning following that. I would just ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard, and then you can begin.

Ms. Natalie Litwin: Yes, good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Natalie Litwin. I am president of Transport 2000 Ontario. We are a sustainable transportation advocacy organization, of course non-profit. We have been active since the 1970s and we are the Ontario region of a network of Transport 2000 regions across the country, with a national office in Ottawa. Some of you may be familiar with our group.

You all have copies of my presentation, but I'll go ahead, mostly reading it to you.

Our concern is mainly the new composition of the board recommended in Bill 163. We have been aware—and I'm sure you are aware as well—of musings by the media, with criticisms of the current board. We have found no evidence that there's any reason for those criticisms. They have been criticized for being overly parochial and for there being a lot of friction among board members. We have found no evidence of that at all. We consider the idea of replacing elected officials by appointees to be a very regressive step.

In the introduction to the bill by the Minister of Transportation, he gave no reasons for firing—which is what the bill does—the entire board of Metrolinx. We feel that the present board did an excellent job, showing minimal parochialism and producing a regional transportation plan from scratch in two years. The current structure has rapidly produced business cases and detailed designs for shovel-ready projects.

Comments that the board will be able to move faster on implementation do not ring true. Metrolinx was created on June 22, 2006, and published an enlightened, progressive and sustainable plan in November 2008. That is hardly what we could call taking many years, as Christopher Hume in his Toronto Star column claimed. This is two years, which I think is a remarkable achievement.

A study of Bill 163 has led us to the conclusion that the replacement of the existing board by appointees is nothing less than a power grab by the province. The elected officials who make up the present board represent their constituents and are answerable to them. It's a democratic system. The new appointees will be answerable to the Ministry of Transportation and to the cabinet.

Then there is the issue of expertise. The Honourable Mr. Bradley stated in his introduction to Bill 163 that he wants "a board comprised of people with a range of professional and corporate experience, people with backgrounds in customer service, planning, law and financing large capital projects." Apparently, the knowledge of transportation and the mobility needs of people in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area that the current board has in spades is not required.

If you need an example of how dysfunctional an appointed board can be, look no further than the Toronto Port Authority, which is of course a federal agency, and the Ontario Municipal Board. The port authority has nine members, seven of whom are members of the Conservative Party. Its decisions have been in conflict with the city. In order to maintain partisanship on the board, the federal government recently added two new members to the original seven after Toronto named its own representative to the board. As many of you are aware, the decisions of the Ontario Municipal Board have proved unpopular, and I'm sure you are aware of some recent press reports. I think of John Barber's column yesterday that there was a move to name a city street in Toronto OMB Folly. That is an example of how unpopular the

municipal board is, and there have been calls for it to be disbanded.

0910

Many clauses in Bill 163 confirm our suspicion that the main purpose of the bill is to shift power from the municipalities to the province—from the government closest to the residents of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area to the government one step removed, the provincial government.

Many clauses remove current powers from the Metrolinx board. For example, currently the CEO of Metrolinx is appointed by the Metrolinx corporation, but if the bill is passed, the CEO will be appointed by cabinet on MTO's recommendation.

Another example: Currently, the minister may issue directives to the corporation, which is already a concern of Transport 2000 Ontario. The bill provides that a ministry directive may require the corporation to amend the transportation plan.

Transport 2000 Ontario is particularly concerned that MTO has a road-building culture, a culture that has created a lot of traffic congestion and related air pollution that Metrolinx now has to address. To be fair, we note that the ministry is moving in a more sustainable direction, but is still building too many roads.

Another clause in the bill provides that MTO may issue policy statements on matters relating to transportation planning in the GTHA and that those municipalities must adopt a transportation plan that is consistent with the ministry policy statement. T2 agrees that a transportation policy is needed for the entire province and federally as well, but the policy should not come down on stone tablets from the mountain. Rather, it should be a coherent policy, hammered out by public consultation with Ontarians and not by well-funded lobbyists.

There is also a concern that we have a lack of accountability and secrecy that is provided for in this bill. Section 9 provides for a board with a lack of critical expertise and combines it with arbitrary powers. For example, the clause states, "The corporation shall ensure that the transportation plan is available for public inspection in such manner as the corporation's board of directors considers appropriate." What is appropriate?

Another clause: That the board "consult with the relevant provincial ministers of the crown and provincial agencies ... and other interested persons and groups, as and in the manner that the corporation's board of directors considers appropriate."

That is a lot of arbitrary power, in our opinion. It has been the bane of our existence that advocacy groups, such as ours, are seldom consulted because the government agency has already made up its mind and wants to hear only from the powerful and like-minded. We would very much like to see a clause that provides that the board consult widely, as the current board has done, although some mysterious force shoved some of our recommendations aside. Some recommendations that appeared in earlier versions of the transportation plan disappeared from the final version, and we don't know why.

Transport 2000 acknowledges that although the current Metrolinx board has been a co-operative one to date, friction can develop as the plan reaches the implementation stage. Mediation, arbitration and strong, non-nonsense leadership are the solutions. To sweep a functioning board out of office and replace it with provincial appointees is to trade a set of potential solvable problems with much more serious ones.

Thank you for your attention. I will answer any questions, but I hope that you will allow my colleagues to answer any questions that I cannot answer.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Thank you. This round of questioning will go to the official opposition. Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you, Ms. Litwin, for your presentation. I'm sorry I was late getting here, but I had some other matters I had to deal with. I've had a chance to review what you said before I got here, and we certainly do appreciate the advice that Transport 2000 is giving us. Your presentation is very helpful with respect to Bill 163.

You focused on a number of specific concerns, and you've been very clear about them, in terms of the powers of the government, powers of the minister, usurping the power of the Metrolinx board, accountability and secrecy, and those sorts of issues. Would you say it's fair to characterize this as a partisan takeover of the Metrolinx board by the government? Would you use those words, or would you rephrase them somehow?

Ms. Natalie Litwin: I would not use the word "partisan." I would say that it is what I said before, that is, the provincial government has decided that it's in its best interests to have a board functioning with appointees rather than with elected officials. We are a non-partisan organization and we avoid the word "partisan."

Mr. Ted Arnott: But obviously, the minister is trying to acquire more power so as to direct Metrolinx in its operations day to day, it would appear, and certainly its strategic planning and so forth as opposed to the existing structure, which allows for more independence from the board. Isn't that true?

Ms. Natalie Litwin: Yes, absolutely. The board, of course, will not represent anybody. It will be answerable to the province and will not represent anyone.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Probably to the cabinet, who appointed the individual members: That's what I would—

Ms. Natalie Litwin: Yes, and we think that's a very regressive step. They have offered no explanation as to why they consider this to be necessary, and that is very troubling. At least if we knew why—but we don't know why.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I think, if the minister were here, he would suggest that in fact the existing board members, representing their municipalities, have been, in the sense of representing their communities, somewhat unwilling to look at the larger picture. But you would disagree with that, obviously.

Ms. Natalie Litwin: I would disagree with that. The existing board has worked very co-operatively, so I don't think that's a concern.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Okay. How much more time do I have?

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Let's see. About three minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Oh, really? Okay. Thank you very much.

In terms of accountability and secrecy, you indicated that you would like to see greater consultation for your organization and you'd like to see, actually, an amendment in this bill to ensure that. How would you see that working out? How would that work in your mind?

Ms. Natalie Litwin: With consultation with us?

Mr. Ted Arnott: That's right, and others like your who have an interest in this.

Ms. Natalie Litwin: Okay. I'm glad you asked that question. There is in existence an advisory board to Metrolinx, made up of members of the public, a lot of them with a lot of expertise. But an official advocacy organization such as ours, that has been in existence for a long time and has considerable expertise in the transportation area, has not been invited. We would like to be a member of that advisory board, as would other advocacy organizations.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Should the meetings of the Metrolinx board be open to the public and the press so as to ensure that there is greater openness?

Ms. Natalie Litwin: Should it be?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yes.

Ms. Natalie Litwin: It is, but not on the rolling—what is it?

Mr. Peter Miasek: The five-year capital plan and the budget.

Ms. Natalie Litwin: Yes. That is a change, right?

Mr. Peter Miasek: Yes, that is a change.

Ms. Natalie Litwin: Yes. So they are not going to be as open. According to Bill 163, they will not be as open to the public as they have been in the past.

Mr. Ted Arnott: And that's obviously a serious concern of your organization and others like it, in terms of openness and accountability when the decisions are being made.

Ms. Natalie Litwin: Although it has been our experience, unfortunately, in the past that we appear at public hearings, we are listened to very politely, and then the branch of government goes ahead and does exactly what it wants anyways and what it has decided to do before. It is a source of great frustration for us.

0920

Mr. Ted Arnott: Your organization through the years has done important work on this issue, and I think the work that you've done going back to the 1970s is now being shown to have been correct. You were visionary in terms of the suggestions and ideas you were putting forward, and I think we're now finally in a stage where the government is going to be responding.

Again, thank you very much for coming here today and for the good work that you've done through the years.

Ms. Natalie Litwin: You're very welcome.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Thank you for your presentation.

TRANSPORTATION REGIONAL
ACTION COMMITTEE OF THE GREATER
TORONTO AND HAMILTON AREA

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Now I call on the Transportation Regional Action Committee to come forward, please. Good morning.

Mr. Peter Miasek: Good morning.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): As you've heard, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, and there could be up to five minutes of questioning. I would just ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard, and you can begin.

Mr. Peter Miasek: My name is Peter Miasek, and sitting next to me is Karl Junkin. We are both representing TRAC GTHA. TRAC is an acronym for Transportation Regional Action Committee. We are another NGO, and we're advocating for many of the similar facets as Transport 2000 Ontario. In fact, in December we affiliated with Transport 2000 Ontario and we're now a committee of T2K. So we support the comments made by Natalie Litwin of T2K, and I'm not going to dwell further on those relative to board composition.

We wish to make a few additional remarks on other aspects of the bill. There are many aspects of the original Metrolinx bill as well as this present revision that are positive, but we wish to draw your attention to four areas that should be strengthened or changed.

The first of these is amplification on the transportation plan approval and amendment process. The bill needs to clarify what the approval and amendment process is for the transportation plan. Today, the situation is extremely confusing, and unfortunately the new bill doesn't clarify it at all. It's very unclear right now how changes in the transportation plan can be made—and I'll give you a couple of examples. The plan that was approved by the Metrolinx board last December included a Finch Avenue LRT line that was running from the airport to Yonge Street. However, the provincial funding announcement on April 1 pushed that line an additional five kilometres east to Don Mills Road, and we don't know where this came from. This is an important decision. We're talking hundreds of millions of dollars of difference, and yet it appears to have been dropped into the approved Metrolinx plan without formal discussion, analysis or amendment. It may be a very good extension, but where did it come from?

On the other hand, ideas such as advancing the timing of a downtown relief subway line, which would save billions of dollars in forgone capacity and station expansion needs on the other two lines, have been discounted because they're not in the official, Metrolinx-approved plan. It seems that whoever we're talking to, the Metrolinx plan is either cast in concrete or cast in Jell-O, and we just don't know which.

The transportation plan is the key document to guide both the board and the minister. It needs to be carefully analyzed, carefully developed, and then it can't be changed willy-nilly. So we're asking that this new Bill 163 please amplify how this plan will be approved and how it'll be amended. It doesn't appear to have changed any from the original confusing situation.

The second item of four that I want to talk about is Metrolinx involvement in highway and regional road expansions. The current act, in section 6(2)(a), indicates that Metrolinx needs to take into consideration all modes of transportation, including highways. However, the work by Metrolinx on highways has been very disappointing. They've simply incorporated, without scrutiny, all of the various MTO highway projects, and they've also incorporated, without scrutiny, 5,000 kilometres of regional road expansions. We're talking the 407 east, the GTA west, the Niagara-GTA corridor, the 427, as well as 5,000 kilometres of regional roads.

Metrolinx did a great job with regional rapid transit planning. We would like to see a strengthened role for Metrolinx in the highway and regional road planning and approval process also. It's an important mode of transportation, it's recognized in the act, but they haven't been working on that piece of it.

The third component we'd like to talk about is very similar to what Natalie Litwin spoke about, and that is citizen involvement. We feel that open meetings of the new corporation continue to be very important, and they are enabled under a current section of the act, 13(1), that isn't being amended, so that's good.

Public discussion, including deputations, on proposed plan elements are clearly key to a superior final plan. In our opinion, there is no reason that the corporation's proposed five-year rolling capital plan and annual proposed budget cannot be public, as they are today. Right now, in section 11(3), that is part of the public discourse. For some reason, that particular section has been deleted from the proposed amendments, and we don't see any reason why.

Lastly, investment strategy timing: Obviously, the huge elephant in the room in all of these discussions on transit is, "How are we going to pay for all this?" We're talking tens of billions; \$50 billion has been tossed around.

The previous board was directed to defer an answer to this question until 2013. Of course, there has been a lot of concern with how far out this date is. In fact, one of the advantages of the earlier board, because it was made up of elected politicians, was that they were very concerned about sustainable funding, both local and regional transit funding and capital, operating and maintenance. In fact, that board requested that work commence now on developing an investment strategy.

This whole matter of the prolonged wait-and-see on the investment side also came out loud and clear during public consultation, and came out as advice from the citizens' advisory committee of Metrolinx.

We're very disappointed that Bill 163 perpetuates this 2013 date, and we urge that some sort of earlier dates be

put into the legislation. The investment strategy is key to implementing this plan, and the main reason we're talking about this bill is that we're now into the implementation phase. Why are we procrastinating on developing the investment strategy?

That ends my remarks. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Thank you. This round of questioning will go to the NDP.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much for coming in today and making this presentation. Natalie Litwin's comments and yours—after I look at your comments and I look at the bill, I ask myself, why have a board of directors at all? If you have a regional authority that draws in all of the local political decision-makers, or puts them at the table, that's one thing. But if effectively you have a board of directors that simply is a front for the Premier's decisions on transportation, why wouldn't you just go ahead and do it? It seems like this board is, in some ways, a shield for the Premier to deal with decisions that he wants to stand against, and where he wants to extend an LRT line that the board didn't approve, well, he just overrules them. Do you see a reason for an independent board when it actually won't have any political status of its own?

Mr. Peter Miasek: I would support what Natalie said. We liked the previous board. When you have elected politicians, they're accountable. They bring to the table—when David Miller speaks, in theory he's speaking for the TTC and he's speaking for 2.5 million people, which I like, personally, as opposed to a board.

Our sense was that the previous board was operating in a congenial fashion. They may have had dogfights behind the scenes, but they presented a unified public face, which is what is needed to reconcile all these competing demands.

I think you need a board; you need a strong board. But our preference would have been to keep the existing composition of elected representatives.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Are you familiar with the greater Vancouver regional transit authority? My understanding is that this very much reflects the direction that they've taken. Is that correct?

Mr. Peter Miasek: That is my understanding also. It's TransLink. I believe they are an independent board. And depending on whom you talk to, you hear horror stories about things like the Cambie Street line, where they immediately—at the 11th hour, they changed digging technologies and upset everybody. That's the kind of stuff that you worry will happen if you have non-elected representatives: They're going to be less sensitive to public concerns.

I noticed in Mayor Miller's presentation—I hadn't seen it until this morning—that he talked about the debate that's occurring on the Georgetown GO line, and all of the concerns. His opinion—and he may well be right—is that if this had been handled by a political board, there would be more sensitivity to public concern than there is by a more distant board, which is the way it's playing out now. I've heard the same thing with

TransLink, that they ram things through and don't take public concerns into account.

0930

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The last question I have is about this investment strategy. I note that 2013 is two years after the next provincial election, so that in fact if you're bringing forward an investment strategy, you really won't have it as part of the next provincial election if you have it come forward two years after. Can you see any rationale for it taking five years to develop an investment strategy?

Mr. Peter Miasek: The rumours have been that it's related to election timing. I can't address that. I see no rationale. It doesn't make any sense. The previous MetroLinx board saw no reason for it. These are major, major questions, and MetroLinx should be out there right now floating ideas, doing little pilot trials of things, getting a public discourse going. It makes no sense to us why 2013 was picked. One can speculate, though.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: One does speculate.

Mr. Karl Junkin: On that note, could I also add, in relation to election dates, we're currently in 2009, and there is going to be a provincial election in 2011. There would also be a provincial election in 2015, which would be the same distance from 2013 as the 2011 election is from today. So are we going to have a rerun of this in the future?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I don't usually get to answer the questions posed by witnesses, but in this case—

Mr. Karl Junkin: My apologies. It was a rhetorical question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No, no; I appreciate the opportunity. Yes, you really have to ask that question as to whether or not they'll try to punt it past the 2015 election as well.

I find this bill very troubling because it removes public accountability, it removes transparency, it serves the Premier's office well in terms of eliminating a political problem for investment and essentially gives them a free hand to cherry-pick whichever project looks best politically and drop it in, whereas for projects that are problematic politically he can have the board stand in his stead and take whatever public heat comes along. I don't have further questions but I appreciate what you brought forward today.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Peter Miasek: You're welcome.

TORONTO BOARD OF TRADE

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Now I call on the Toronto Board of Trade to come forward, please. Good morning. I am compelled to tell you, once again, that you have 10 minutes for your presentation. There could be five minutes of questioning. I would just ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. Brian Zeiler-Kligman: Good morning. Thanks for taking the time to hear me today. My name is Brian

Zeiler-Kligman. I'm the director of policy at the Toronto Board of Trade. My president and CEO, Carol Wilding, was originally scheduled to appear with me. Unfortunately, due to commitments she had following this deputation and the delays that we were expecting as a result of the protests expected today, Carol wasn't able to join us this morning and she sincerely sends her apologies in that regard.

But I am very pleased to be able to present today. Certainly, those of you who are familiar with the board of trade and our advocacy efforts will know that we are very encouraged and pleased with this bill. Many of the reforms embodied in this legislation are things the board has called for since 2003 and before. We were among the first to call for a regional transportation authority for greater Toronto, and when we first advocated for its creation, we also argued that it should operate under a framework similar to the one now proposed under Bill 163.

Of course, for the last few years Metrolinx has operated under a different governance model. We recognize that the Metrolinx board has done stellar work in developing a regional transportation plan, but as they were doing their good planning work, congestion in the Toronto region has only worsened. In fact, we're now living in the fourth-most-congested city in North America and it is getting worse.

The reforms contained in Bill 163 will speed the transition of Metrolinx from a planning body to an implementation body—to an organization that puts shovels in the ground and delivers new infrastructure rapidly and effectively. Those reforms are more urgently needed than ever.

Just over two weeks ago, the board of trade released the first of what will be an annual report of research findings into the state of the Toronto economy. It's called Toronto as a Global City: Scorecard on Prosperity. We simply call it the scorecard. The scorecard ranked the performance of the Toronto census metropolitan area against 20 other global cities across 25 economic and social indicators. It also broke down these results for those 25 indicators between the city centre and its surrounding region. A number of the findings are relevant to our discussions here today.

First, there's the issue of population growth. The Toronto region was the third-fastest-growing region out of the 21 that we studied. That means the Toronto region is growing faster than places like Vancouver, London, Los Angeles and Hong Kong. In fact, the Toronto region is growing even faster than Shanghai. Of the 21 urban centres that we studied, only Calgary and Dallas were growing faster. Simply put, the Toronto region is a magnet for people.

We are all familiar with the benefits of this state of affairs in terms of cultural diversity and the enhanced richness it brings to our landscape and our community life. We're also familiar with its drawbacks. The region's steadily increasing population exerts tremendous physical pressure upon our transportation infrastructure. We feel it as we stand cheek by jowl in crowded commuter trains or stop and go in gridlocked bumper-to-bumper traffic.

We also surveyed the 21 cities in terms of the percentage of the population that chose not to take their cars to work, essentially non-auto commuter choices. Overall, the Toronto region ranked seventh, with about 30% of the population choosing some option other than the car for their commute.

When we broke those results down between the city centre and the surrounding region, the contrast was surprisingly pronounced. In the city centre, approximately 44% of people take an option other than their car to get to work in the morning. In the rest of the census metropolitan area, the surrounding region, only 13% choose that option.

Together, these findings should spur a sense of urgency in all of us. The region's top challenge is merely to keep pace with its own success: to finance and build new transportation and transit infrastructure so that we can continue to grow. Though the economy may have slowed, our population will keep growing. The demands for travel space and for shorter travel times are not likely to abate. The region must find a way to keep pace by providing better supply. Otherwise, if infrastructure stands pat while the population continues to grow, this region risks choking on its own success.

Time is of the essence, and we believe that Bill 163 contains the kinds of reforms needed to meet this pressing challenge by moving Metrolinx's focus from planning to implementation and delivery.

First, the bill's proposed structure for the Metrolinx board is what's needed to make that organization more effective. As the board of trade has long argued, for Metrolinx to be truly effective it must be an independent body, focused on long-term transportation planning and infrastructure investment. Metrolinx needs a board of directors that comes to the table at every meeting with knowledge and experience in finance, planning, engineering and other issues. It needs a board with the ability to question its staff knowledgeably and expeditiously on the matters at hand, and it needs a board that is less dependent on election cycles and changes in political agendas.

Second, the new powers envisioned for Metrolinx and for the province will give it the tools needed to be effective. The GO system will become one of Metrolinx's key operating brands. Metrolinx will be able to own new transit infrastructure. It will also be allowed to amortize its owned assets, which will help in implementation. As part of these powers, Metrolinx will also have a voice in planning matters through the Minister of Transportation's planning policy statements. A key hurdle to Metrolinx's effectiveness is the need to deal with multiple planning regimes across numerous municipalities.

This legislation, by directing municipal master plans to be consistent with provincial policy statements, creates a system for coordinated regional planning.

In the same vein, we agree with the draft legislation's emphasis upon the implementation of the Presto unified fare card. This is just the sort of customer-focused

initiative that languished under the old governance model and that we hope Bill 163 can expedite.

Finally, and as has already been referred to, there's the all-important matter of sourcing and managing the funds necessary to implement Metrolinx's \$50-billion regional transportation plan. We believe that Bill 163 contains a number of important reforms in this regard.

All provincial funds for public transit in the region will flow through Metrolinx. Also, Metrolinx's ability to own its infrastructure will give it the ability to enter into commercial arrangements and otherwise leverage its assets to generate revenue.

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We're glad to see that Bill 163 requires Metrolinx to report on an investment strategy by 2013. Indeed, the board of trade would like to see that timeline shortened. A properly structured Metrolinx board will need, and will surely want, to begin planning ahead almost immediately. Recent funding announcements from this government, which the board of trade welcomes, will keep Metrolinx busy with shovels in the ground for the next few years, but there still remains a funding gap of about \$40 billion, or nearly 80% of the total cost of the regional transportation plan. If Metrolinx is to keep shovels in the ground and see its regional transportation plan to a timely and successful conclusion, it needs approval on a long-term investment strategy sooner than currently envisioned. The board believes it is important that Bill 163 recognizes the importance of an investment strategy and sets out a timeline for its delivery.

To sum up, Bill 163 is an important piece of legislation. Above and beyond all of the reasons I have listed before you today, the reason the board of trade welcomes this legislation is because it directly addresses the long-term prosperity of the Toronto region and the well-being of everyone who lives within it. We are all familiar with the statistics. We know that congestion and gridlock cost our economy more than \$6 billion per year, but beyond the economic costs, there are the social and ecological costs. Traffic jams and long commutes eat up precious hours of time. They have detrimental effects upon people's sense of accomplishment at work, their sense of happiness at home and the environment in which we all live. Time truly is of the essence here. For all of the benefits this legislation may bring to business and the regional economy, it will also bring benefits to people in their daily lives, and it's for all of these reasons that the board of trade recommends expeditious passage of this legislation. That concludes my deputation, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): This round of questioning will go to the government.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: Good morning, and thank you very much for being here this morning. I'm really glad you brought up the scorecard in your report. When I heard you were coming, I went back and read the press release, because I wondered what your thoughts were with regard to some of the indicators. Although there wasn't one specifically, there was one on travel to work

and transit which I think kind of addressed what we were talking about this morning. My question was specifically—maybe you could flesh it out a little bit more; I didn't read the report in that particular indicator—how you think the legislation might assist in changing the balance of downtown being the living place and the outside of Toronto being the magnet for economic development. Do you see this as being helpful to changing that balance?

Mr. Brian Zeiler-Kligman: Certainly. As I mentioned in our comments, two indicators that we felt were quite important were the population growth indicator, where the Toronto region was third out of the 21 we studied, and then also the commuter option indicator, as you spoke to, where the Toronto region was seventh out of the 21. There's quite a strong difference in terms of the percentage of people choosing to take options other than their car to work between the city centre and the regional municipalities. Partially, we believe that that's a reflection of the intensification that takes place within the city centre compared to the intensification levels that you see in the regional municipalities, which we believe the planning elements spoken to in this legislation will help address so that we will see greater concentrations of people around transportation hubs themselves, but it also speaks to just the general supply of transportation options. We believe that Metrolinx, with the structure that's being put forward in this legislation, will be a more effective body to be able to implement many of the plans that are already in place, to actually see not just plans on paper but also physical infrastructure built, which will provide many options to people within the region.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: In the course of reading the release that you put out, you said there would be two upcoming policy development round tables forming the basis of a report of recommendations. Will those recommendations still be on those indicators? Is there any way you can speak more to transportation issues so that you could provide guidance to the Metrolinx board? Is that a possibility?

Mr. Brian Zeiler-Kligman: We feel that we have a good relationship with Metrolinx and would like to be of assistance in any way that we can, be it through this policy recommendations report or through other means or other reports that we have made, such as the submission we made on the draft regional transportation plan back in November. The reason we didn't have further indicators speaking to transportation issues specifically was just the lack of data available at the city level that allowed for a comparison. So we are hoping in future iterations of the report to be able to address that in a greater fashion.

Our report of recommendations will be looking at the entire broad suite of elements that are required to really improve the Toronto region's performance on a global basis, and that speaks to everything from the infrastructure that is available to the economic development and the liveability of the region generally. While we're looking to tie our recommendations to the results on the scorecard, we will be exploring all of those elements.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: Do I have more time?

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): A minute.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: Okay. We've heard from two earlier delegations that they feel that the Metrolinx board will be hampered by not having political representation on it. You are coming at this issue from a slightly different perspective. Could you just elaborate a little bit?

Mr. Brian Zeiler-Kligman: Certainly. As I said in my deputation, we feel that we need to have a board of directors that is independent but also not dependent on political cycles or political agendas. So we see it as necessary to have a board made up of experts. Accountability is an important issue, and we believe that the legislation provides that accountability in terms of the oversight that is provided by the Minister of Transportation. But as well, what is very key is to have a board of directors that is knowledgeable in the subject matter such that they can ask the pertinent questions of the staff that are put to them. We believe that the structure put in place in this legislation allows for that to make the organization that much more effective and certainly be more expeditious in its implementation.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Thank you for your presentation.

HAMILTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ONTARIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Now I would ask the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to come forward, please. Good morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. There could be up to five minutes of questioning. I'd just ask you to identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard.

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: Thank you. My name is Dan Rodrigues, and I'm with the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, here today on behalf of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and our president, Ruth Liebersbach. If I have 10 minutes, I'll try to speak very slowly, because I don't have a lot to say, so I'll try to hold it all within that time frame.

I'd like to thank you all for this opportunity to speak on Bill 163. I am a volunteer. I chair the transportation committee at the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. Our transportation committee, just to give you a little background—as was mentioned earlier, we worked with the Toronto Board of Trade in the very infancy of Metrolinx, as it is today, because we recognize the importance of a regional transportation system.

We support and applaud the government for its initiative with Bill 163, as it clearly addresses the need to create a seamless transportation planning process within the GTHA. I always like to throw Hamilton in there; it's very important.

According to StatsCan 2006, one in four Canadians reside within the prescribed Metrolinx area. Bill 163 allows The Big Move, which has been identified, to go

forward from a planning stage to an implementation phase.

We've also entered a new behavioural shift. Municipalities previously operated in silos created by lines arbitrarily drawn on a map. We're now operating on urban development areas. GTHA being the largest area in Canada, if I'm correct—maybe in North America—it's very important that Bill 163 move forward.

Just to give you some idea of why it's important for Hamilton with respect to Bill 163 and the reliance on seeing it move forward and operating as an independent board, I'm going to give you a real-life example of what we're dealing with today. The real-life example that we're dealing with today is a truck route study in Hamilton. This truck route study is seeing roadblocks because we have municipal boundaries that bound us to only look at our truck routing within our municipality. We actually have an example of a road that borders our neighbouring region that is not a truck route in their region but is in our region. Consequently, residents along that road see trucks only go one way down that road. It really doesn't solve the transportation issue.

When we look at Bill 163 and we look at the implementation of giving Metrolinx, or the corporation as it is written, the ability to move things forward in a non-political realm, it actually aids in moving things forward quicker because you're dealing with people who are in the business, who know how to do it and they're not driven by votes.

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Through that, I believe, I've summed up everything I have to say. I do apologize that it was so short. I could have spoken slower, but maybe I'll get more questions. Thank you. I'll answer any questions, and I apologize for the quickness of it, but I wanted the message to be there.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Thank you. This round of questioning goes to the official opposition. Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much for your presentation. I'd like to ask you a few more questions about this truck route study that you mentioned. Where exactly is it? Which municipality does it—

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: For Hamilton—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Hamilton and—

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: We're only dealing with our Hamilton municipality right now with the truck route study.

Mr. Ted Arnott: But it's the boundary of Hamilton, you said?

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: It's the boundary of Hamilton.

Mr. Ted Arnott: And which other community?

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: We border Niagara and, I guess it would be, Halton to the one side and then Waterloo region—

Mr. Ted Arnott: And Wellington, at the top of end.

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: Do we border Wellington? I don't know. I think it's Waterloo.

Mr. Ted Arnott: We're just north of you.

So you really have unqualified support for this bill. Do you have any concerns about it or is it just the over-

whelming need to move forward and ensure that there's a more regional view of transit issues and transportation opportunities?

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: I don't know if it's unqualified. I'm not sure if that's a correct comment, but it certainly is something that we have looked at.

We've been dealing with the formation of Metrolinx right from the beginning and we've been watching it very closely. Our transportation committee is very active. We have a lot of members on our particular committee who come from or who are currently in the transportation industry from the ports to the airport, rail and roads with the transport business.

I don't know if you've ever heard of Mr. Frank Cooke, but Mr. Frank Cooke is about 95 years old and is one of the original folks who ran our Hamilton Street Railway. He speaks very passionately about the need to regionalize a transportation network.

When we look at the current governing situation as it is right now, Metrolinx has done a wonderful job with respect to the planning processes, but they've hit a bit of a roadblock with the implementation process, and there are some political drivers that impede that process.

So through Bill 163 and the way it's formatted, it helps remove some of those barriers to move it forward. It's much like a mortgage on a house. When you go to buy a house—and I might be stealing a quote from someone else. But when you buy a house, you don't think of the full 25 years of how you're going to pay for that house on your 25-year mortgage; you think of the

first few years of how you're going to do it and then you develop, as you're moving forward, on how you're going to keep that house going.

Mr. Ted Arnott: We've heard some concerns about the new powers that this bill will give the Minister of Transportation, the reality of the new appointments being cabinet appointments and the potential for partisanship in terms of the appointments. Do you have any concerns about that or do you feel that's all in the public interest?

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: Oddly enough, that's one point that has never been raised in our particular transportation committee. We have folks who wear all three colours, or four, I guess, as it were these days, and they are all in support of it because when you look at the concept of it, at the end of the day, whoever is in power, regardless of their shirt colour, they're going to look at what is important for the region and for the area. When you're dealing with folks in that business, they're also going to look at it from an economic—transportation is an economic enabler.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Okay, that's what I wanted to say. Thank you very much for your presentation.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): Thank you for appearing before the committee.

Mr. Dan Rodrigues: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Pat Hoy): I remind the committee members that the deadline for filing amendments is 5 o'clock Monday, April 27. We are adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0955.

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