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St. Marys citizens' rail committee to Premier-Designate Ford: We're watching you closely

ST. MARYS, ONTARIO – The election of Doug Ford's majority Progressive Conservative (PC) government on June 7 is viewed as both good and bad news by the All Aboard St. Marys citizens' rail action committee.

"The good news is there is a handful of MPPs in this government who have shown concern – if not taken action – regarding the accelerating deterioration of our rail passenger and intercity bus services," says All Aboard St. Marys founder Chris West. "I'm thinking particularly of Interim Leader Vic Fedeli, who has always graciously and sincerely supported efforts to restore the rail passenger service to his hometown of North Bay and all the communities along the route of the *Northlander*, which the former Liberal government arbitrarily cancelled in 2012."

Although there is this small group of PC members in the new government who have been verbally supportive of practical solutions to our increasingly dysfunctional transportation system, there are far more whose views and past actions concern All Aboard St. Marys.

Says West, "In order to deal with this situation, we have asked rail consultant and government policy advisor Greg Gormick to rejoin the All Aboard St. Marys team as our strategic policy advisor. Having completed five major rail studies for Oxford County, including his forthcoming *SouthwestLynx: Integrated High-Performance Public Transportation for Southwestern Ontario*, he has agreed to assist us. Greg's unique knowledge of and experience in the rail industry, and his multiple dealings with all four provincial parties, will give us a clear edge in ensuring we know what's going on at Queen's Park and how we should deal with it."

While Gormick has great admiration for MPP Vic Fedeli, he is wary of many others on the PC team and within the opposition parties. He dealt with Premier-Designate Ford on the GO Transit rail electrification issue at Toronto City Hall in 2011 and he recently had a brush with the incoming government through an assignment he undertook on behalf of newly-elected Milton MPP Parm Gill.

"The assignment was not just revealing, it was chilling," says Gormick. "One of Gill's supporters commissioned me to produce two backgrounders for public circulation during the election campaign regarding the constantly-delayed expansion of GO Milton rail service and the CN proposal to destroy valuable Milton agricultural land for an intermodal freight terminal."

“These backgrounders were quashed on orders from unknown officials in the PC Central Party Office; they never saw the light of day. One has to wonder why.”

Both of Greg’s suppressed backgrounders for the new MPP for Milton are attached to this release.

Of some interest to All Aboard St. Marys is the presence of former Harper government cabinet minister John Baird on Ford’s transition team. He is currently serving as a director of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). This strikes us as a potential conflict of interest, as the CPR is a major supplier of trackage and other services to provincially-owned GO.

An overarching concern is the prehistoric transportation viewpoint expressed by Ford in the past when he and his late brother, Rob, set out to decimate Toronto’s streetcar system. They also unsuccessfully attempted to substitute unaffordable and totally unnecessary subways for every light rail transit (LRT) project then being proposed.

Says Gormick, “Our only glimmer of hope at the moment remains Vic Fedeli. He is a thoughtful and intelligent man who has tirelessly supported the efforts of our colleague, Eric Boutilier, the founder of All Aboard Northern Ontario, in his campaign to revive the Ontario Northland passenger service between Toronto, North Bay and Cochrane. Let’s hope he can influence and educate others within his party’s ranks.”

Unknown at this point is where the Ford government will stand on the former Liberal government’s pie-in-the-sky high-speed rail fantasy, which was the work of former Transportation Minister Glen Murray and a foreign-based consultant now on the provincial payroll. This scheme would destroy the current VIA Southwestern Ontario services at a public cost of more than \$20 billion, at a bare minimum.

Says West, “We’re watching closely. As we have demonstrated previously, we won’t be reluctant to call out any negative moves or misguided policies enacted by the new government. They’re starting in a neutral position in our book and it will be up to them to decide whether they go up or down.”

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INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS

The Only Thing Standing in the Way of All-Day Milton GO Train Service: Politics



Expanding the GO Milton Line by building more track on the existing right-of-way is the fastest and most cost-effective way to deliver the service Milton needs now. Photo by Stephen C. Host

Since the day it was launched in 1981, the way to provide all-day, two-way service every day on GO's Milton Line has been known: more tracks and more trains.

Numerous studies by GO and the line's owner, Canadian Pacific (CP), have shown what is required to boost service on a route that will generate massive economic, social and environmental benefits comparable to those already found on GO's continuously-improved Lakeshore Line. The answer remains simple: More tracks to handle more trains to carry many more passengers throughout the day, every day of the week.

Instead of following the advice in a long list of taxpayer-funded studies, Queen's Park has embraced a new "solution" that has actually become a roadblock. Called the Missing Link, this scheme would build a new line for CN from Bramalea to where its current north-south freight line passes over the CP east-west line south of Bronte Street and Steeles Avenue in Milton. This scheme would allegedly divert all the CN freight trains from the busy Bramalea-Georgetown section of its own line, which is used by GO's Kitchener Line trains. It would also take all of CP's freight trains off its line through Milton, supposedly allowing for more GO trains on both routes.

While Queen's Park says this would divert all the CP freight trains off the Milton-North Toronto-Scarborough line and allow for more GO Milton trains, it won't. What hasn't been revealed is that most of the promised benefits in the Missing Link are now missing in action.

Shockingly, this unworkable proposal was accepted and endorsed by Milton and other local councils without any independent analysis. Milton's review may be found online at: <https://www.milton.ca/MeetingDocuments/Council/agendas2015/rpts2015/ENG-020-15%20The%20Missing%20Link%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Originally pegged at a cost of \$5.3 billion in 2015, the Missing Link has already grown to at least \$8 billion and it will require eight years or more to construct. Furthermore, the tough terms that were set by CN led CP to opt out because it would actually harm their freight operation. Therefore, the promised track capacity the Missing Link was going to free up on the CP line for more GO Milton trains won't be freed up at all.

The answer to this classic example of political foot dragging is what CP and the highly-qualified GO management teams of the past proposed: Build two more tracks on the existing right-of-way all the way from West Toronto to Milton. This option was quickly discarded in the Missing Link study that has now become the provincial government's gospel. The cost of the Milton Line track expansion project in 2015 was estimated to be \$3.5 billion. Doing the same on the GO Kitchener Line to increase that service was \$1.5 billion. In total, this would be \$5.0 billion.

To put this in perspective, adding two tracks to the GO Milton Line would be \$1.3 billion less than the cost of the proposed Gordie Howe Bridge at Windsor (not including the connecting highways) and roughly the same as Toronto's proposed one-stop subway in Scarborough.

Furthermore, adding the two new tracks alongside the two existing ones to provide the all-day GO service to Milton is the only way to also extend some of the trains to Campbellville and Cambridge. Without the expanded capacity between West Toronto and Milton, and additional infrastructure investment west to Cambridge, this service cannot be launched.

As for more GO trains, they're on the way. At a pre-election photo-op event in Burlington on April 30, the Kathleen Wynne and Justin Trudeau governments announced the purchase of 53 additional GO bi-level coaches. More can be easily ordered and built here in Ontario at Thunder Bay for the overdue and urgently-need GO Milton service.

This political game of offering up more studies, alternate plans and nothing but empty promises needs to be stopped dead in its tracks. GO's Milton Line is second only to the Lakeshore Line in terms of ridership. It is bulging at the seams and it needs to be expanded. The way to do that is well known and nothing but politics is standing in the way.

Greg Gormick is a nationally-known rail consultant and public transportation policy advisor. His clients have included CP, CN, VIA, Metrolinx and elected members of four political parties, as well as numerous government agencies across Canada.

INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS

CN's Milton Intermodal Terminal: The Wrong Yard in the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time



Industry experience demonstrates that many rail/truck intermodal terminals, such as the one CN's proposing for Milton, may start small, but they inevitably get much larger.

Rail-based intermodal freight is a modern, innovative and environmentally superior form of transportation – but not when it is used as a means to build a company's real estate profits at the expense of a community, its residents and their visionary official plan.

CN's proposed Milton terminal fits this category to a T, despite what the railway says publicly. While the community has been promised that this truck-to-rail terminal will only serve four Halifax-Chicago freight trains, this is just a foot in the door. Unstated is the fact that CN's Brampton Intermodal Terminal is a poorly designed and poorly located holdover from the 1970s that no longer fully meets its operating needs. On the other hand, it would yield a real estate bonanza if it could be replaced by a more efficient terminal elsewhere – such as Milton.

A question that must be asked is why CN has acquired 405 hectares for its Milton terminal when it says it only requires 162. That massive cushion of extra land could easily swallow all of the current Brampton intermodal operation, which sits on 81 hectares of valuable real estate that has rising redevelopment potential.

As well as violating the land use planning objectives of the Town of Milton and Halton Region, an intermodal terminal on the site CN has assembled will ultimately fail to even meet its own objectives, if it intends to be an efficient and shipper-responsive rail service provider.

From a railway operating perspective, the Milton site works reasonably well. The extra-long intermodal trains of today would smoothly enter and depart this yard, which is not the case at the current CN Brampton terminal. It is a cramped, stub-ended yard that cannot provide for easy train access or container loading and unloading. And it can't be expanded.

But CN's Milton site is badly flawed for another and more serious reason.

Ideally, new intermodal terminals must be built beyond the road congestion generated by the large urban regions they serve, allowing the trucks carrying the containers to move in and back out of the core as easily as possible. Putting a new terminal this close to the worst of the region's congestion on a frequently-gridlocked highway corridor is doomed to failure.

CN is avoiding the fact that it actually requires two intermodal terminals, one on either side of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. One should be built just east of Oshawa – which it has investigated – adjacent to the 401, close to the 407 and alongside CP's Toronto-Montreal main line, where it could be shared advantageously by the two railways.

CN's western terminal should be built farther west on its main line, close to the junction of the 401 and 403 near Woodstock, on land zoned for industrial use. This has been recommended in a soon-to-be-released report on improved rail service in Southwestern Ontario.

Also weighing against the proposed CN Milton terminal is its impact on local road congestion and costs. While it would be close to the 401 and 407, it will generate heavy truck traffic that will inflict substantial damage on the local roads leading to those main highways. The cost will come out of the citizens' taxes.

Furthermore, emissions and noise from these terminals have become major issues in many other locations. An intermodal terminal project in Los Angeles was rejected recently under the strict requirements the state and local public agencies are now applying to these operations. CN's plan falls far short of meeting these California environmental standards or those of various other public agencies across North America.

In short, CN has either not done its homework or is not telling Milton residents the real impacts of its proposed terminal and the alternatives available. A full and transparent environmental assessment that addresses all these issues is an absolute necessity before it proceeds.

Greg Gormick is a nationally-known rail consultant and government policy advisor on transportation issues. In 1989-1991, he was CN's assistant manager of intermodal research. From 1998 to 2001, he advised CN on strategic communications, including its first attempt to build the Milton Intermodal Terminal.