

Vaughan Committee of the Whole, September 13, 2011

Item #33: Concord Go Centre Secondary Plan Study; Approval Of Terms Of Reference

Deputation by Andrew Holownych, Sierra Club Ontario

Hello Vaughan City Council,

My name is Andrew Holownych, and I am a Greenbelt Campaigner for Sierra Club Ontario.

I am here today representing Sierra Club Ontario who stand together with the community of Concord West in a fight to save the Concord West Greenspace - a natural heritage land and ecological niche that has been enjoyed by the community for generations. This land, as you know, is now being targeted for conversion into a massive intermodal transportation hub.

This land is a natural habitat of many species of plants, birds and animals; at least two endangered species: Blanding's Turtle and the Common Nighthawk - have been sighted on it, as have some Special Concern Species at Risk, including the Great Blue Heron.

It also forms a central link in the Bartley Smith Greenway, where the Greenway is at its narrowest and winds down the West Don River.

For the Concord West community, surrounded on three sides by highways, fumes and concrete, this land is the only green breathing-space within a reasonable walking distance, and constitutes the only safe pedestrian connection between the Concord West community and the Bartley Smith Greenway/Langstaff Ecopark.

Yet this greenspace is being targeted for destruction, as the Ministry of Transportation is planning to locate there a giant intermodal transportation hub associated with the projected Concord GO Station.

The hub is supposed to serve a not-yet-existing assumed population projected to appear, in the future, north of Highway #7. Therefore it would be logical to locate the hub north of Highway #7. But instead, the MTO's present plan locates it south of Highway #7, where it is neither needed nor wanted by the existing Concord West community. As well, its construction and its presence will destroy the existing local natural greenspace and wildlife habitat as well as the cultural and social fabric of this existing community.

The construction of this hub on the SOUTH side would also directly affect the headwaters of the West Don River - a critical watershed for the area. Locating the hub on the NORTH side, would not cause this to happen.

The community's fight centers on three demands:

- 1) Transfer of the ownership of the Concord West Greenspace from its present owner (the Ontario Realty Corporation) to the TRCA, so that it can be incorporated into the Bartley Smith Greenway;
- 2) Re-location of the Ministry of Transportation's planned transportation hub to the NORTH of Highway #7, to the industrial/commercial lands where it belongs, away from the Concord West community and from the fragile ecological community of its sorely-pressed wildlife neighbours. The residents of Concord West, with the help of a professional town-planner, devised an appropriate alternative plan for the hub. The plan was unanimously approved in a general meeting of the community and has been submitted to the MTO; and
- 3) Restoration of the community's safe access, through the Concord West Greenspace, to the Bartley Smith Greenway/Langstaff Ecopark - access which the community has enjoyed for generations and which, in recent years, has been unlawfully curtailed by the fencing-in of the Greenspace.

Sierra Club Ontario will continue in its support for the Concord West community to keep important greenspaces in the Greenbelt safe from development.

Thank you for your time.