



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2022

WILL MICHAEL FORD GET IT DONE IN YORK SOUTH-WESTON AND STOP METROLINX FROM DESTROYING EGLINTON FLATS?

Metrolinx is railroading a 1.5 km elevated LRT transit line through York South-Weston, sacrificing beautiful parkland, and destroying the habitat of threatened and endangered species while opting to tunnel below ground through a neighbouring, and more affluent stretch of Etobicoke.

Hands off Eglinton Flats, says local York South-Weston (YSW) community group, Stop the Trains in Our Parks. The Eglinton Crosstown West Extension (ECWE) line needs to continue, underground, through Mount Dennis. Mount Dennis is listed as a priority neighbourhood and is a less economically privileged and more racially diverse community.

“While we support transit expansion and the ECWE, we are opposed to Metrolinx’s plans to build an elevated guideway through Eglinton Flats and massive overhead passenger stations straddling both Jane Street and Scarlett Road,” says resident spokesperson Neiland Brissenden. “We demand that the proposed elevated section of the ECWE be fully tunnelled from Mount Dennis Station, saving our parks. We have read through the Metrolinx Business Case and the tunnelled option presents very low operational challenges compared to alternative options. It’s clear that a fully tunnelled LRT will provide fast speeds, less service disruptions and best cost benefit in the long term.”

Eglinton Flats is a designated greenbelt parkland, critical wetland and valued green space for the local and broader GTA community. The Flats are comprised of three large park quadrants around the busy Jane and Eglinton intersection and has a long and valued history within the community and city. The quality of the sports amenities make the parks a destination. It also has valued cultural heritage, hosting one of the few, purpose-built cricket pitches within the City of Toronto that recognized and responded to the city’s changing demographics and needs. Eglinton Flats is within close range of the Toronto Carrying Place Trail and an area of Indigenous archeological and cultural significance.

The elevated guideway is being proposed through an ecologically sensitive area of parkland. The entire south bank on both sides of Jane Street will be levelled for construction, clear cutting large swaths of mature urban forest. Accommodating this elevated proposal would destroy wildlife habitat and a critical wildlife corridor that connects the Humber River system to Eglinton Flats, Fergy Brown Park, Pearen Park, Topham Pond and Gladhurst Park. Species at Risk, both Threatened and Endangered, that are protected in Canada under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), have been identified in the project area.

In May 2021, the Federal government allocated 4.7 billion dollars to the ECWE. Stop the Trains in Our Parks Community Group believes keeping the LRT underground is technically feasible and financially viable.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/office-infrastructure/news/2021/05/largest-public-transit-investment-in-gta-history-will-create-jobs-and-kickstart-the-economy.html>

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The current plan to elevate the LRT through Mount Dennis is neither socially equitable nor ecologically responsible. It's comparable to running a Gardiner Expressway for LRT trains through local parks. The City of Toronto acknowledges the urgency to respond to the global threat posed by climate change. City Council declared a climate emergency on October 2nd 2019 and accelerated Toronto's Climate Action Plan. Metrolinx must revisit a below grade option from the February 2020 Business Case and continue tunneling the entire ECWE from Renforth Drive to Mount Dennis station.

On May 12, 2022, Ward 5 Councillor Frances Nunziata brought forward a motion that was passed at City Council requesting that Metrolinx undertake an assessment to run the elevated segment of the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension underground and identify any options that may exist to accommodate change.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-225808.pdf>

In response to presentations by Neiland Brissenden for STOP, Mike Mattos and Simon Chamberlain for the Mount Dennis Community Association at the June 8, 2022 Executive Committee meeting, Mayor John Tory told Metrolinx to speed up their response to the City's and community's concerns. "[Metrolinx] is not up to and accustomed to the standards [the City] set[s] for public consultations." Mayor Tory continued, "if Metrolinx doesn't want to be "left with a degree of uncertainty," on impending deadlines, they should "speed up the work" addressing concerns from the community and city council.

"Residents of Mount Dennis are tired of being treated like second class citizens and not having their concerns listened to and respected by Metrolinx. We urge Metrolinx to build better transit, prioritizing the well-being of our community and the protection of urban green spaces and the environment," says Neiland Brissenden. "The prospect of an urban oasis becoming urban blight is disturbing and alarming."

While campaigning as a candidate in YSW earlier this month, Progressive Conservative Michael Ford wrote to local residents stating that as MPP and part of a Doug Ford government he would be in the best position to advocate for the community's priorities on the Eglinton Crosstown West LRT issue. In a June 13 tweet, thanking Etobicoke North, Michael Ford cited one of his accomplishments in his riding as "Championing new transit connections for our community. Tunnelling Eglinton West in the south".

https://twitter.com/MichaelFordTO/status/1536399233695338497?s=20&t=-G2U7f2IVJlh0y_h746a4A

Now that Michael Ford is the current York South-Weston MPP, will he work with his new constituents and **Get It Done?**

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More information available at: www.stopthetrainsinourparks.ca