

**Text of Remarks Delivered in the Ontario Legislature by  
Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017.**

Madam Speaker:

Since the provincial riding boundaries were changed in time for the 2007 provincial election, creating many new Ridings, it has been my privilege and honour to represent the people of the Town of Halton Hills here in the Legislature.

I assumed this responsibility directly from our former colleague Ted Chudleigh, who served here with distinction for many years. In addition, I am very cognizant of the fact that I serve as a successor to former MPPs who represented Halton Hills communities, like Noel Duignan, Julian Reed, Jim Snow, and George Kerr, all of whom are well-remembered for their many years of public service in the Legislature.

While my family and I live in Fergus, it is my pleasure to spend a significant portion of my time in Halton Hills, as their Member of Provincial Parliament.

Within our municipal boundary in Halton Hills, the larger communities of Georgetown and Acton are surrounded by pastoral countryside and a long list of smaller but distinct communities. As part of the Region of Halton, we are officially considered to be part of the Greater Toronto Area, or GTA.

But we are not Toronto. We are unique. We have our own issues, challenges and opportunities that are different than those faced by the City.

We may be *in* the GTA, but many of us would say that we are not *of* the GTA.

The Standing Orders limit my remarks on this resolution this afternoon to 12 minutes, but I could readily fill 12 hours of the Legislature's time just talking about the community organizations I've encountered and supported, the people I've heard from and met, the businesses which create the jobs, the farms that feed us, the non-profits which support those in need, the cultural activities that nourish our collective spirit, the churches which inspire us and give us hope, the sport and recreational activities that abound: In short, the dynamic life of the Town of Halton Hills.

In presenting this Resolution, I am glad to be working with Mayor Rick Bonnette, and the Council and Staff of the Town of Halton Hills, as well as Regional Chair Gary Carr, and the Council and Staff of the Region of Halton.

We are proud of our past and forward-looking to the opportunities of the future. It is that foresight that motivates this Resolution we debate today.

And while it is absolutely true that our Party has been the Official Opposition in recent years, it is also true that I have sought to work with my colleagues in the PC Caucus *as well* as reach out to MPPs in the other Parties in order to get things done. I do this again today. Now, let's look at the wording of our resolution.

We are asking the Minister of Transportation to partner with the Town of Halton Hills on what we call a "long term transportation study" for the Town.

A simple, straightforward request, and really a relatively modest proposal.

In our news release a few days ago, announcing that our Resolution had been tabled and this debate would be taking place today, I said this: "Transportation issues have emerged as urgent challenges in our Riding, in part because of the planned growth that has been imposed upon us by the Province's Places to Grow strategy. Mayor Bonnette and Town Council have done a great job of looking to the future, and together we're asking the Provincial Government to partner with us in this process."

Mayor Bonnette stated this: "Responsible planning means it's important that the Town's transportation agenda is advanced so as to best meet current and future needs. I'm pleased that our local provincial representative recognizes and supports our efforts to meet and manage the impacts that accompany designated growth targets."

And Regional Chair Gary Carr wrote to me yesterday to add his voice in support. "We really need the Minister to act," Mr. Carr wrote.

When Gary Carr and I were first elected to this House in 1990, it was not uncommon for MPPs to ask that a Ministry do a study of a specific problem in their Ridings or areas, seeking to quantify the depth and scope of the problem, and identify possible solutions. If the request was sensible and reasonable, in many cases Provincial staff would be assigned to the task, a study would then be commenced and undertaken, possible solutions would be identified, and a course of action would be charted.

This is the kind of support we need from the Minister of Transportation today.

But this isn't the first time we've asked.

On numerous occasions in the past, the Town of Halton Hills Council and Staff have made the point that the Province needs to look at the traffic situation on Highway 7 through the Town, especially given the fact that this highway seems to be the preferred east/west trucking route for aggregates between provincially identified aggregate resource areas and the high growth areas of Brampton and north Toronto. As Member of Provincial Parliament, I too have heard many complaints about the volume of truck traffic, most notably in Acton and Norval.

Almost two years ago, Town of Halton Hills Council passed a resolution on November 30th, 2015, asking the Province to partner with it on a long term truck strategy, as they called it at the time. I supported their position, and I went to work seeking a meeting with the Minister of Transportation on their behalf.

After a few weeks, the meeting was set up, and on January 20th, 2016, we met with the Minister at his Queen's Park boardroom and put the case for a partnership before him.

The Town offered to budget approximately \$100,000 for the study, and asked that the Ministry do likewise.

Other issues raised with the Minister that day included the likely need for an Acton bypass because of extremely heavy traffic through downtown Acton, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the GTA West Corridor Study, and the resulting implications for Highway 7 and its associated connecting links through Acton, Georgetown and Norval.

While the Minister received us politely, seemed to listen and assured us he would review the concerns we'd raised, he did not commit to helping pay for the needed study.

We were disappointed, but we were not deterred, for we in Wellington-Halton Hills never, never, ever give up.

The Mayor of Halton Hills and senior Town Staff have also followed up with the Minister at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, or AMO as we know it, at the AMO conferences in 2016 and 2017, and at yet another meeting with the Minister on May 29th, 2017, just a few months ago. I too have raised the issue many times and in many ways, to support the Town's position.

We've been told in response that the MTO staff believe that there is no technical justification to partner with the Town on this.

Again, with respect, we disagree.

The Town is so serious that they decided to go ahead and commit its own funding for Phase 1 of a Truck strategy. The Town continues to request that MTO partner on at least Phase 2 of the work to study the issue through and around Acton.

This request was reiterated once again this past Monday night, in effect, when Town Council passed a motion explicitly supporting the Private Members' Resolution we are debating right now.

Once again, we ask the Minister of Transportation to listen to this request, and work with his staff to find a way to help.

It would seem appropriate at this point to mention that the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce has expressed written support for our Resolution.

On September 20th, the Chamber's General Manager, Kathleen Dills, wrote this: "As an urban community built on major highways, congestion and safety are becoming critical issues, particularly when these highways intersect such as in the Acton Downtown core.

Highway 7 is a major east west option for trucks and we have seen the traffic significantly increasing every year. Our businesses need to have effective access to major markets they are serving to be competitive and cost efficient, and access to the 401 Corridor is critical. Our employees also need to be able to get to work quickly."

The Acton Business Improvement Area, or BIA, has weighed in as well, in support of our Resolution.

Acton BIA Manager Sheena Switzer added this: "Downtown Acton is located at a major crossroads of Provincial Highways 7 and 25. Our downtown sees hundreds of large

commercial trucks pass through its core. Residential and commercial growth is adding to the congestion along Highway 7 especially with commercial vehicles - we are a major east/west corridor for those wishing to avoid the 401.

Safety of our patrons, residents and business owners is paramount, as is the economic vitality of our downtown. Our windows rattle, streets are dusty and dirty from gravel trucks, and patrons are unable to have conversations on the street due to the extreme loudness of the trucks passing through. Sidewalk sales are a thing of the past, and our retail sector is struggling."

The Acton BIA supports our resolution, calling it "much needed."

Good points, representing the views of our business community, and we see why an Acton bypass may be necessary, and why we should begin to plan for it.

There are other transportation issues in Halton Hills which need to be considered in the context of this debate.

We need new jobs, and last December, Mayor Bonnette announced that Futura Properties had committed to a \$30 million investment for a business development at the property known as "340 Main Street, Acton."

This 55 acre site had previously sat idle for 15 years, having been long designated for industrial uses. And remember Acton's development has been limited by proximity to the Greenbelt and a limited supply of water and sewage capacity.

The Region has sought to help, and has invested \$44 million in infrastructure.

This past summer, almost all the necessary approvals were in place to see the first tenant in a 150,000 square foot building by the end of this year, including the construction of a rail spur.

However, having been kept apprised of the development all along and appearing to have few concerns, at the 11th hour, the MTO pulled the rug out from under Town Council, due to, they said, issues associated with access to Highway 7 and the need for an Environmental Assessment study.

It appears that the length of time that would take possibly places the entire proposed development in jeopardy.

I understand that MTO staff and Town staff continue to meet to discuss this matter, and we are hopeful of a positive resolution. I urge the Minister to take an interest in this. Again, we need those jobs.

I need to mention the Halton Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study, which was endorsed by Town Council in 2010 and was to address the commuter and truck traffic capacity issues on Highway 7 through Georgetown and Norval.

A pause on the implementation of this study's recommended North-South and East-West corridors by the participating municipalities was agreed to, pending the outcome of the Ministry's GTA West Corridor Study, which had actually commenced around 2007.

But in December 2015, the MTO suspended the GTA West Study, supposedly to have a Panel review the progress to date and ensure it was consistent with other Government policies and objectives.

Almost 2 years later, we're still waiting for the public release of the Panel's recommendations, the traffic problems in Georgetown and Norval continue to worsen, while at the same time the development of Halton Hills 401 Employment lands are frozen. And again, the creation of jobs we need goes on hold.

We need the Minister's help with this as well, as I was reminded yesterday by Councillor Bryan Lewis, who has been a strong supporter of a Norval bypass.

I hope that during today's debate, the Government will update us on the progress they've made towards keeping their 2014 election commitment to all-day, two-way GO train service from Kitchener-Waterloo to Union Station, with stops in Wellington-Halton Hills, something I've supported as well.

I hope the Government will acknowledge the important role that the Town of Halton Hills had in the decision to widen 18 km of the 401, from Mississauga to Milton, announced on April 10th, which was a recommendation of the Hatch Mott MacDonald study the Town had commissioned, as a better option than building a new highway along the "Alternative 4-3" route, which the GTA West Corridor Study had suggested, and that Town Council and I had opposed.

I hope the Government will also respond to our request for traffic signals at the intersection of Guelph Street (Highway 7) and McFarlane Drive/Hall Road in Georgetown, near The Sands condominium building, another transportation issue we've been raising for some time.

And in closing, I hope the Government Members present here today will vote for our Resolution.

Thank you Madam Speaker.