

18 April 2021

To: The OPRE Project Team, Councillors, and the Mayor

Hello,

I have participated in 2 PIC's re: the proposed Oak Park Road Extension and I continue to have grave concerns about this process and the lack of community outreach for true transparency and broad community involvement in this process.

This seems like this is being rushed through and done during the Pandemic when it isn't possible to have proper and fulsome community engagement at 'town hall' type meetings where drawings and graphics are presented for viewing that demonstrate the height and breadth of this proposed expressway in true relation to, and the impact on, Brant Park; the surrounding grasslands/meadows, forests, Grand River, cemetery, trails, housing and surrounding areas that will be impacted during the construction process as well as permanently impacted moving forward.

This is a proposed roadway/expressway that not only impacts the immediate area of west Brantford but will affect the entire city of Brantford for generations to come due to the significant negative impacts to Brant Park, Oakhill Cemetery, the Grand River, and area trail systems as well as the environmental impacts on migratory bird habitat, mammal/amphibian and reptile habitat during a crucial time for habitat preservation in our history.

I implore you to delay the community 'consultation' process until the Pandemic has passed and meaningful public in-person meetings can occur with numbers representative of our citizenship. This process is too important to rush through under the cover of a Pandemic and having limited access to the process for our constituents across the entire city.

Specific Comments and Concerns about this project:

Environmental Concerns:

Wildlife habitat:

PIC's/Parson's continue to speak of enhancing or replacing habitat that is damaged or destroyed during construction - continually using the term 'mitigation'. With the footprint of the proposed expressway (will be closer to 6 road lanes wide on the ground with the angled berm proposed construction) there is no way for the grassland/meadow habitat to be restored. It will be destroyed and species like the Eastern Meadowlark (a threatened species since 2011) who breed primarily on the ground in grasslands in Southern Ontario AND inhabits the grasslands that will be destroyed beside Brant Park (witnessed and photographed this spring 2021), will be further pushed to the brink of becoming critically endangered. This is not just fragmenting wildlife habitat; this is the removal and permanent destruction of habitat which is the primary reason for the decline of 2.9 BILLION breeding adult birds in North America over the last half-century. Similarly the Snapping Turtle (a Provincially AND Federally protected species), which nests in

the sandy embankments of the current Gordon Graves Pedestrian Bridge, will have it's nesting habitat destroyed.

In the most recent PIC it was also mentioned that potentially bridge supports could be placed on the island rather than in the water/river bank to 'mitigate' one environmentally sensitive issue.....but that is just trading one environmental disaster for another. Beavers feed on the reeds that grow on that island (witnessed and photographed this spring 2021). Such is the same for the suggestion from Parsons to possibly re-route the proposed expressway a bit farther from the cemetery to stave off concerns about encroachment on the peace and tranquility of loved one's final resting places. Such 're-routing' will honestly do little to soften the impact on the cemetery while it will further destroy the deer wintering grounds and wildlife pathways to and from the Grand River. There is no 'mitigating' the destruction or 'enhancing' the habitat this proposed expressway will cause. I also strongly oppose the Parsons rating system that gives this proposed expressway a 25% net benefit score for wildlife - there is no benefit whatsoever for any living thing in the proximity/pathway of this proposed expressway - not during the construction process nor long term.

Tree Loss:

Brantford city council made a commitment to building our tree canopy several years ago. This has not been a priority despite ongoing scientific data that stresses the importance of mature trees to help combat climate change/global warming. We cannot continue to have a "destroy and build now and offset later" mentality where mature trees/forests are destroyed and replaced by twigs that will take 30-50 years to provide meaningful habitat and climate cooling benefits (incl. use as sound barriers).

Impacts on Grand River:

Water quality will be impacted with salt run-off from the roadway as well as vehicle emissions/oils, etc. Our drinking water intake is a short distance away downriver. There are already serious concerns about the amount of water being taken from the Grand River and how we will be able to provide drinking water/etc. to such a forecasted increase in the population. Needless to say our quality of water is of paramount concern and added pollutants affect the entire food chain.

There are many other negative impacts of this proposed expressway....and the documented projected benefits are only 4 - 6 % reduced vehicle kms over the next 20+ years! Are these benefits truly worth the price to be paid environmentally as well as the cost to the taxpayer? I hope each of you looks deep into your minds and heart, and into the eyes of your children/grandchildren, to decide if you want to be responsible for such an environmental disaster that will impact generations to come.

Thank you for your time,

Robin