

MINUTES OF THE MEETING WITH MTO
March 30, 2010

PRESENT: Council – Reeve Rydholm, Councillor Spithoff, Councillor S. Hunt, Councillor Arnold, Committee – Paula Hughes, Harold Spithoff, Brenda Burke, Bob MacMaster, Kevin Holland, Fire Chief – Aime Spencer, MTO – Rick Inman, Dawn Talarico, Lisa Winter

1. Welcome

Bob Rydholm welcomed those present and thanked the MTO representatives for attending. Reeve Rydholm then turned the floor over to the MTO.

2. Mr. Inman began a powerpoint presentation on the steps to be taken by MTO in this study. He noted the MTO does long-term planning to protect their corridor for future development, even though construction may be 25 years away. Once a corridor is designated as protected, development is curtailed.

Mr. Inman noted that the 1979 study on this issue ended at Kakabeka, as the team felt there was no need to go further at that time.

Mr. Inman presented a slide on “what’s changed” since the 1979 study. He noted that obviously existing conditions have changed due to development. The method of doing environmental assessments has changed, legislation has changed and even the highway design standards have changed. Mr. Inman noted that the MTO is held to the highest level of scrutiny regarding the environment and the consultation process.

Mr. Inman advised that MTO would be meeting with EMS, fire departments and police services for their input. Chief Spencer questioned the access for the Emergency Services as they need to be able to respond quickly. Mr. Inman advised that it would certainly be taken into consideration. He noted that public access is usually provided every 8km, however that may change in our area as there is no secondary highways that could be used as an alternative. He also noted that MTO could work with EMS to ensure emergency access points were provided.

Mr. Inman advised that the proposed timeline was that in March of 2010 they would screen the routes to eliminate unfeasible routes and to refine their 110 metre route within the large (1/2km wide) corridor. He also advised that the evaluation will probably not be done before June, which will push back their next public meeting.

Council member Brenda Spithoff asked when we would know which routes have been eliminated so that we don't spend time on ones that MTO is not considering.

Lisa Winter felt that the Committee was already wasting their time, and advised that we should just wait until MTO came up with their numbers. Committee member Kevin Holland noted that the MTO concerns with this project would not be the same as the Township's concerns. Councillor Arnold also noted that the Council's view of the project would not be the same as MTO's.

Mr. Inman was asked if he felt that the Committee was wasting their time and he advised that he was impressed with the fact that Conmee has a Committee in place as he usually does not see that level of interest until the route construction begins.

Mr. Inman advised that Stantec is currently evaluating the routes. He showed a chart with the "weighted criteria" for route selection. Councillor Hunt asked if MTO would provide a copy of the chart.

Mr. Inman was asked if this new route would mean that Highway 102 would be closed to truck traffic. Mr. Inman stated that he was not aware of any plans to do so.

In response to Mr. Inman's statement that MTO was consulting with local businesses, Committee member Kevin Holland replied that he was sent a survey that asked how the project would impact his business. Mr. Holland noted that until he knew which route they were talking about, he could not answer the questions and that he felt this consultation was premature. Mr. Inman advised that he should respond to all the corridors.

Lisa Winter noted that she agreed with Mr. Holland and that he should be telling Stantec this. Mr. Holland advised that he had.

Committee member Bob MacMaster asked if there was a new study. Mr. Inman replied that there is no new document or study available right now, but this is what Stantec is working on. Mr. Inman was asked how much of the old study would be considered. Mr. Inman was of the opinion that less than 50% of the previous study would be valid today. He noted that the 1979 study was good background information, but a new study will be forthcoming.

Lisa Winter questioned how the Committee had arrived at the financial information. The Clerk advised that each of the routes had been manually transferred to individual Township maps with underlying lot structure. She advised that an estimation was made of the corridor's impact on a particular lot, with 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% being the scale of impact. If a property was apparently impacted 25%, the assessment on that property was divided by 25%,

and this was the “loss in assessment” that was used. Although the Township is aware that these are estimated numbers, and can be refined as we receive more detailed information, it was felt that by applying the same criteria to all the corridors we could get a sense of what each corridor would cost financially to compare the corridor impacts. Mr. Inman noted that financial impact to the Township would be addressed in the social study part of this project and stated that they would have contacted the municipal office. Mr. Holland asked the Clerk if there had been any contact and the answer was no.

Committee member Brenda Burke asked Mr. Inman about the construction period. She noted that although the MTO has said there is no money for construction allocated at this time, this could change. Mr. Inman replied that the Ministry needs to plan at least 25 years ahead for projects.

Committee member Harold Spithoff noted that some people have said they would withhold their property taxes on property that was “protected”. Lisa Winter stated that she had never come across anyone who did not pay their taxes. Lisa Winter then advised that property owners within the protected corridor could still use and improve their land during the protected period, they would just have to have MTO permission before doing so. She used the example of a person wanting to put a carport on their house and stated they would probably be allowed to do so. It was stated that people felt they would not be able to sell their property. Lisa Winter questioned why you would tell a prospective purchaser about the highway project, at least until you got them interested. She also noted that if anyone tries to sell their property and is unable to do so, the MTO would purchase it, provided they could prove that the sale fell through because of the MTO project.

The Clerk then noted the loss in assessment in such a situation would be immediate for the Township, not 25 years away, since MTO does not pay taxes. Lisa Winter noted that MTO makes Payments in Lieu (PIL), but only on excess property, not the roadbed itself. She also stated that if construction of the highway was still a number of years away from the date they purchase a house, they would probably rent it out. Lisa Winter seemed to feel that this would benefit the Township in some way.

Mr. Inman then resumed his presentation, noting that it is MTO’s intention to select their preferred route sometime between June and December, 2010. He noted that currently they are looking at numerous routes within each corridor, and they would apply their criteria to each of them. He noted that they are reviewing current traffic conditions, screening the evaluation criteria and gathering environmental information from secondary sources.

Kevin Holland noted that the Township is not against the highway improvement as such, but that we needed to ensure that the Township’s interests were protected. Committee member Bob MacMaster noted that the Committee is

responsible to Council. Mr. Holland noted that the Committee is looking at all options and outcomes in order to provide information to Council. Mr. Inman noted he welcomed the Committee and Council input as he finds that municipalities may not be active enough in this process and he welcomed the co-operation and timely input from the Township.

Reeve Rydholm noted that people are frightened about the highway construction and its impact on their property, as it is the unknown. Chief Spencer noted that the idea that the highway could come close to their homes is frightening. Lisa? Noted that MTO guaranteed the purchase if hardship could be shown.

Mr. Inman noted that the route evaluation phase would culminate with the protection of the route. The whole corridor will not be protected, only the chosen route within it. Mr. Inman noted that he will ensure that a property representative from MTO is at the next public meeting.

Reeve Rydholm thanked everyone for attending.