September 5, 2011

Deputation to Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, September 7, 2011

RE: Don River and Central Waterfront Project

My name is Meirav Even-Har; I am the Chair of the Ontario Water Campaign and Vice Chair of the Board for Sierra Club Ontario. I am also a 21 year resident of the City, a taxpayer and concerned citizen.

While I support the City addressing the grave issue of stormwater and sewage overflows, I have many reservations about the preferred solution identified, while remain supportive of some actions; below are specific comments I hope will be considered.

In Support:

1. Upgrading the City’s wastewater infrastructure where age and condition warrant it; and
2. Twinning the Coxwell Trunk line.

DR&CW Project to address the following:

1. There must be a commitment made to disconnect the stormwater sewers (road sewers) from the sanitary sewer. Disconnecting stormwater and sanitary sewers is the only long-term, permanent solution to ending the release of untreated sewage into Lake Ontario.
2. All Stormwater runoff must be directed into appropriate treatment trains prior to its release into the environment. Specifically, the use of stormwater management ponds. Although the main argument is the limited land available for aboveground solutions, recent studies have show that in many if not most cases that is simply not true. The City should therefore invest more effort into studying this solution.
3. More effort and money must be put into developing local rain and stormwater treatment facilities. Local, green solutions might require the direction of funds to more local solutions, but experience has shown elsewhere in North America that these solutions, when compared to the current massive pipe-oriented infrastructure can result in huge cost reductions.
4. High Rate Treatment (Primary Treatment with possibly Chlorination) is not a viable treatment option for Lake Ontario already suffering with severely polluted near shore. In other words, the potential increase of Chlorine (via treated stormwater and sewage waters) into the Lake is making already bad matters worse.
5. All new developments in the Toronto Sewershed region must demonstrate, zero release any untreated stormwater into the environment, prior to receiving approval.
   
a. The current plan doesn’t adequately address anticipated increase in wet weather events (specifically intensity) due to climate change. A 1.8 billion dollar project should certainly include climate change scenarios.

My comments are consistent with those presented by the Ontario Sierra Club, the Toronto Council of Canadians and most likely other members of the public, which, together we’ve stood firm on the opposition to an end of pipeline solution.

In the various public meetings held over the past couple of years it is clear that many Toronto residents, such as myself are concerned about infrastructure intensive solutions when the majority of recent global case studies, research and literature point us towards Low Impact Development and smaller, local solutions to “big problems”.

I urge the City to consider revising this project and seek to disconnect road sewers from the sanitary sewers, and implement small-scale, locally focused projects rather than a big “one-size-fits-all” project, which, in essence is not the solution.

Thank you.

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