

A **Public Stakeholder Orientation Session** was held Thursday May 3, 2007 at the Royal Canadian Legion in Welland (383 Morningstar Ave.) from 6:30 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. This Session was the last of three, with the first held in Hamilton (April 26, 2007), and the second held in Halton (May 1, 2007).

An original invitation to RSVP for this event was distributed to all members of the public and interest groups (over 2,200 individuals) on March 19th, 2007. A follow-up notice (dated April 18th, 2007) was distributed to those that pre-registered for this event to provide additional meeting details. Fifty-four individuals attended this event.

Representatives from the Study Team included the Ministry of Transportation (John Slobodzian, Terry Hilditch, Frank Pravitz, Will MacKenzie, Robin Ashdown and Darlene Proudfoot), URS and Ecoplans. Sally Leppard facilitated the meeting, with assistance from independent facilitators from Lura Consulting.

Purpose of the Public Stakeholder Orientation Session

The purpose of the Session was to provide an update on study progress since the approval of the Terms of Reference, outline the planning, technical and public consultation approaches being proposed by the Study Team, and to obtain feedback and advice from stakeholders.

The Public Stakeholder Orientation Session involved a presentation regarding:

- The Study Team
- The Broad Context Overview
- The Overall Process
- The Study Plan
- Consultation: Principles, Events, Notification Tools and the CAG
- Roles in Decision Making
- Measuring EA Success

Input and comments resulting from the presentation included:

- Given the political complexity of Niagara Region, are 7 people from across the Region adequate for the Community Advisory Group?
- One orientation session in Welland is inadequate. There should be additional sessions in other municipalities like Niagara and St. Catharines.
- The Terms of Reference are ill-considered, since there is no knowledge yet about the densities in the growth areas. There needs to be an alternative approach to the undertaking that takes this “floating” target into account.
- Concern regarding the validity and meaningfulness of this process. Several participants noted their hope that a decision has not already been made. People will participate, and the Study Team needs to reach out to them and talk “with” them, not “to” them. People want to influence and inform the results, not just satisfy EA requirements.
- There is a long gap between each stage. Is this necessary? Once the technical work is done, could the time be shortened between each stage?
- One individual noted that he/she felt somewhat reassured by the presentation.
- There is a need to understand travel migration numbers across the border, particularly in light of post-9/11.
- There is a need for clear, jargon-free information to be provided to the public. Timely feedback needs to be provided to those who provide input.
- The validity of the Schedule 6 of the Growth Plan was in question. Have the Growth Plan maps been changed? Have additional lines on the map been drawn? Significant features appear to be missing (e.g. Niagara Central and Niagara District Airports).

- Have the rules of procedure for the CAG been determined? Will there be voting/consensus?

A breakout session on the Consultation and Outreach Program was held after the Q&A session.

Summary of Comments Reported

- *Public Consultation and Outreach*
 - Principles are generally sound and will endure over time;
 - Develop a goal for the consultation program;
 - Reflect knowledge of citizens, not just “input”; reflect “interactive” dialogue between Study Team and public.

Consultation Mechanisms:

- Consider more meetings – advise dates/locations in advance. Consider using libraries for meetings; consider holding some joint public meetings across the three regions to enable sharing of views;
- Add workbooks to the web to encourage stakeholders to participate remotely;
- Consider a Referendum;
- Use multiple mechanisms – e.g. town halls, coffee clutches, going to stakeholder meetings, Rotaries, etc.;
- Engage all groups and each local community – seniors, farmers, youth, non-drivers, people with disabilities, universities, high school students;
- Post minutes in libraries for others to access;
- Consider incentives for participation – e.g. stipend, travel costs, etc.;
- Public Information Centers could be extended to include staffed kiosks, more locations, libraries, shopping centers, mobile locations.

Outreach Mechanisms:

- Provide clear, accessible information on need, intent, etc.;
- Use lay terms;
- Use media – advertising, articles, radio, TV (e.g. “Straight Talk”, “Niagara Express”);
- Distribute information through libraries, interest group newsletters, direct notification through mail/stakeholder lists;
- Consider webcasting meetings so people can participate remotely;
- Ensure adequate review time (e.g. publicize recommendations and allow time for feedback);
- Do not rely on the web – rural people may have dial-up;
- Consider a page in the newspaper (e.g. clip-out surveys/comment forms);
- Ask stakeholders to identify groups and communications networks;
- Remove acronyms and minimize jargon, use interesting advertising;
- Open local information offices throughout the Regions.

- *Community Advisory Group*
 - CAG needs to evenly represent municipalities throughout the Region – 7 from each presents an imbalance;
 - Ensure CAG has adequate background information to participate effectively;
 - Consider sectoral groups within CAG (e.g. agriculture, environment, etc.);
 - Concern that the study area is not a “community”; suggest three CAGs, with interaction opportunities - need good cross-section of people;
 - Publish results of CAG meetings;
 - Rotate meetings between locations;

- Publish names and short bios of CAG members;
- Minimize political involvement - use ad hoc/independent group to recruit members to avoid “stacking”.

Overall observations:

- Based on past experience, many participants are skeptical of this process; however, several noted that they are generally encouraged with the openness of the new process.