

SCARBOROUGH TRANSIT **ACTION**

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Scarborough residents file complaint with the Ombudsman on TTC briefing note

Scarborough Transit Action (STA), a grassroots advocacy group that speaks up for Scarborough transit riders, and two independent activists are filing a complaint with the Toronto Ombudsman at 11 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 19 over the lack of evidence comparing the one-stop Scarborough Subway Extension (SSE) with the originally planned seven-stop Scarborough Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. The group filed the complaint to TTC CEO Andy Byford last week but he has not responded within five business days; this allows the co-complainants to approach the Ombudsman.

Group members and supporters will be available for comment at City Hall during Mayor John Tory's Executive Committee meeting. They also are demanding to know why the report on the proposed alignment for the SSE -- originally slated to be released in December -- has been delayed for a second time, possibly until March.

"When the mayor sold the one-stop subway on the basis of it creating a network with the Eglinton East LRT to U of T Scarborough campus, he called it 'evidence-based decision making.' Where's the evidence for a one-stop, \$3.56-billion subway extension? What we have instead is propaganda," said Brenda Thompson, STA Chair. "It's very clear there was political interference with the misleading briefing note that was used to justify the vote last July. The time for real evidence is long overdue.

That's why we are requesting an independent peer review by the American Public Transit Association comparing the two projects.”

STA members are alarmed by the fact that Council was supposed to approve a route for the SSE last July but probably won't until March. TTC CEO Andy Byford warned last October that delays will likely increase the subway cost; he's stated that every month of delay results in another \$13-million cost increase.

“As a someone who takes transit in Scarborough, I'm frustrated because the seven-stop LRT is a shovel-ready, fully funded project and they could be building it now. Instead we are told to wait for a one-stop subway that doesn't even have an agreed-upon alignment,” said STA member Vincent Puhakka.

“We can't help but wonder if this second delay of the SSE report means it'll contain more bad news about the cost,” said STA member Khalidha Nasiri. “There's been significant negative publicity about the city's budget and I strongly believe the mayor is trying to hide the facts to save face. Will the cost be even higher than the current \$3.56 billion? No one knows. And that's why we're doing this. Everyone in Scarborough and all of Toronto deserves the full evidence.”

“We're hearing a lot of rhetoric to justify the huge expense for this subway that will serve so few riders,” added Rosemary Frei, one of the non-STA complainants to Ombudsman Toronto and the person who initiated the complaint. “We need transparency and accountability about why this is happening -- especially at a time when there doesn't even seem to be enough money for the many vital programs in this city.”