

# Milton Community Consultation Committee Meeting Summary

**Date:** February 6, 2025

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

**Location:** Zoom virtual meeting

**Facilitators:** Edie Thome and Terry Flynn

**Administrator:** Elizabeth Wells

## In Attendance:

Bianca Caramento, Milton Chamber of Commerce; Larry Chambers, Community Member; Allan Ehrlick, Halton Region Federation of Agriculture; Danielle Havelka Leen, Wilfrid Laurier University; Nancy Mott, Community Member; Lukas Reale, Great Gulf; Wendy Roberts, Sustainable Milton; Rita Vogel Post, Milton RAIL (Residents Against Intermodal Lines); Kelly Voisin, Community Member; Breanne Oliver, AVP Communications & Public Affairs, Darren Reynolds, CN Project Director for Milton Logistics Hub, Daniel Salvatore, CN Senior Manager Public Affairs, Incident Management & Safety; Manny Loureiro, CN Milton Project Manager; Ricky Wai Kei Chiu, CN Environmental Impact Officer

## Invited Guests:

None

## Regrets:

- Erin Caldwell, Conestoga College
- Stephanie Carruth, Minds for Matter

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## Meeting Summary

### Agenda Items:

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

- **T. Flynn** called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., welcoming attendees to the first CCC meeting of 2025 and confirmed attendance and noted the absences of Erin and Stephanie, who had provided prior notice.
- **B. Oliver** reintroduced herself to the group as CN's new Assistant Vice President of Communications and outlined her role in strengthening community engagement and public messaging around the Milton Logistics Hub project.

#### 2. Safety Moment

- As per CN's meeting protocol, a safety moment was presented by **T. Flynn**, focusing on winter driving safety and emergency preparedness:
  - Emergency kits: Keep a shovel, sand/kitty litter, blankets, food, and water in vehicles.
  - Tire safety: Ensure proper tread depth, and avoid driving on summer tires.
  - Visibility precautions: Keep headlights on in snowy conditions to enhance visibility.
- 3. Indigenous Relationships, Outreach, and Land Acknowledgement**
  - **Edie Thome** introduced the evolving approach to land acknowledgments, proposing a shift away from a verbal statement in each meeting. Instead, a written land acknowledgment will be included in the agenda, meeting notes, and the community newsletter. Moving forward, this agenda item will focus on discussion-based engagement, such as updates on the work of Indigenous monitors on-site, sharing information on Indigenous partnerships, and providing resources and reading materials on Indigenous issues.
  - The committee agreed to trial this approach and provide feedback.
- 4. Approval of Agenda**
  - The meeting agenda was reviewed and approved with no changes. Motioned by **A. Ehrlick**, seconded by **L. Chambers**.
- 5. Approval of October and December 2024 Meeting Summaries**
  - **T. Flynn** asked for additions or changes to the meeting summary.
    - October 10, 2024, meeting summary: Approved with minor corrections.
    - December 5, 2024, meeting summary: Motion to approve was made by **N. Mott** and seconded by **L. Chambers**, with an amendment to include the discussion about Historic Lumber's site visit and the evaluation of a heritage structure's salvageability. **D. Reynolds** was to follow up on whether demolition was an option for architectural salvage. This update will be added to the decision tracker.
- 6. CN Communications Outreach Discussion**
  - **B. Oliver** presented a draft signage proposal aimed at increasing community awareness of the Milton Logistics Hub project. Key elements:
    - Large-format 9x6 ft signs to be placed at key access points.
    - Proposed location at the project entrance on Tremaine Road to ensure visibility.
  - Participant suggested replacing "Planned Home" with "Approved Location" to avoid misinterpretation.
  - Participant suggested replacing "Milton Logistics Hub" with simpler terms such as "Truck-Rail Facility" to ensure accessibility to the public.
  - Participant suggested billboard rendering enhancements such as adding street names and a North arrow to improve understanding.
  - Participant suggested that signs should only be placed on CN-owned property to avoid public confusion.
  - **B. Oliver** acknowledged these suggestions and explained that CN is targeting early Spring 2025 (weather permitting) for sign installation and ad campaign launch within 6-8 weeks with data tracking. **B. Oliver** went on to outline a planned digital advertising campaign to increase community engagement and counter misinformation. Key messages include:
    - Job Creation: The hub will facilitate employment in transportation, logistics, and maintenance industries.
    - Environmental Responsibility: Highlighting wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, and sustainable site development.

- Community Benefits: Partnerships with Wilfrid Laurier University, local businesses, and workforce training programs.
- Participant suggested that job creation claims should be reworded to avoid exaggeration. Instead of "creating jobs," use "enabling employment growth."
- Participant suggested that environmental messaging specify that sustainability efforts are Milton-specific, not general CN initiatives.
- Participant suggested the need to clarify CN's relationship with Wilfrid Laurier University to avoid the perception of undue influence.
- **E. Thome** suggested translating materials into multiple languages to better serve Milton's diverse community.

## 7. CN Economic and Sectoral Forecast Discussion

- **D. Reynolds** presented an in-depth analysis of CN's current economic outlook, focusing on macroeconomic trends, trade disruptions, infrastructure investments, and the revised project timeline for the Milton Logistics Hub. He provided insights into how CN is positioning itself within the evolving transportation sector and the impacts of recent economic shifts on its North American network.
- He explained that CN operates an extensive rail network spanning Canada, the United States, and Mexico, serving as a critical transportation link for industries such as consumer goods, automotive manufacturing, agriculture, and energy. The company's intermodal network moves freight efficiently across key trade corridors, reducing reliance on long-haul trucking and enabling direct access to major ports and inland terminals. With the growing demand for sustainable freight solutions, CN continues to strengthen its network's capacity to handle increasing volumes.
- Recent U.S. tariff announcements have created uncertainty around cross-border trade, particularly for Canadian exports like steel, aluminum, and manufacturing goods. If implemented, these tariffs could disrupt existing supply chains and increase costs for businesses reliant on CN's transborder rail services. In response, CN anticipates that companies may shift their freight movements towards Canadian ports, such as Halifax and Montreal, for overseas trade, potentially reducing the volume of goods transported through U.S. supply chains.
- Supply chain disruptions, including labor shortages, port congestion, and changing consumer demand, have led to increased reliance on rail transportation. CN expects continued growth in e-commerce-related freight, boosting intermodal shipments between Toronto and Western Canada. Additionally, a persistent shortage of truck drivers has made rail an increasingly attractive option for shippers seeking reliable and cost-effective freight solutions. The need for inland distribution hubs like Milton is expected to grow as companies prioritize supply chain resilience.
- Extreme weather events, including wildfires in British Columbia and flooding in Eastern Canada, have caused temporary rail service disruptions and exacerbated infrastructure congestion. CN's Western Canadian corridor remains a critical bottleneck, as increasing export demand for agricultural commodities and raw materials places additional pressure on existing rail capacity. In response, CN is prioritizing infrastructure improvements in high-traffic areas to ensure the continued efficiency of freight movements across its network.
- CN is investing \$3.5 billion in 2025 to enhance its rail network, focusing on intermodal expansion, rail infrastructure upgrades, and the acquisition of fuel-efficient locomotives. While the Milton Logistics Hub remains a strategic priority, CN is adjusting its timeline to align with current market demand. The original full-capacity target of Q4 2026 has been revised to a

phased opening in mid-2027. This approach will allow CN to gradually scale up operations while ensuring efficient capital allocation. However, the Lower Baseline Underpass Project remains on track for completion in July 2026.

- CN continues to invest in double-track rail expansion, sidings, and terminal upgrades to enhance overall network efficiency. Key projects include additional track capacity in Western Canada to support grain and bulk commodity exports, increased intermodal handling capacity in Toronto, and upgrades to CN's U.S. network to facilitate smoother cross-border operations. These investments are aimed at improving transit times, reducing congestion, and maintaining CN's competitive position in the freight transportation sector.
- Over the next decade, CN expects sustained growth in e-commerce logistics, energy exports, and agricultural shipments. Increased demand for rail transportation, particularly for refrigerated (reefer) intermodal containers, will drive further expansion in food and perishable goods logistics. Additionally, CN's strategic investments in automation and emissions-reduction technologies will position the company for long-term success in a rapidly evolving freight market.
- Participant raised concerns regarding potential U.S. trade restrictions and their impact on CN's operations. **D. Reynolds** assured the group that CN's significant U.S. presence and extensive rail partnerships reduce the likelihood of direct regulatory challenges.
- Participant inquired about job creation at the Milton site, with CN confirming that a phased approach would still result in local employment growth, though at a more gradual pace.
- **D. Reynolds** concluded his presentation that reiterating that CN is committed to the Milton Logistics Hub while balancing investment priorities across its North American network. The revised phased opening in mid-2027 will align with projected freight demand, ensuring efficient use of resources.

## 8. Committee Business

### a. Heritage Committee Update

- **W. Roberts** provided an update on the ongoing discussions between CN and Milton Transitional Housing regarding the feasibility of converting a heritage home at 5381 Tremaine Road into transitional housing for homeless men. The project aims to house five to six individuals who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk. A feasibility study, funded by CN, is currently being prepared to assess renovation costs and necessary modifications to make the home livable. If the project is deemed viable, a lease agreement will be drafted between CN and Milton Transitional Housing to formalize responsibilities and operational details.
- Participant acknowledged CN's commitment to community support and the potential social benefits of the initiative.

### b. Website Update

- **T. Flynn** provided an update on CN's community engagement website, emphasizing the need for more accessible and engaging content.
- Participant suggested incorporating video testimonials from CN employees, Indigenous partners, and community members to highlight key aspects of the Milton Logistics Hub project.
- There was also discussion on ensuring that the website contains accurate and up-to-date project timelines, clear environmental initiatives, and an easy-to-navigate interface for community members seeking information.

### c. Annual Feedback Discussions

- **E. Thome** encouraged committee members to actively gather feedback from their organizations and community stakeholders on the project's public messaging, signage, and Indigenous engagement initiatives. She stressed the importance of hearing local perspectives to refine CN's outreach strategy and ensure that concerns are addressed proactively. Feedback collected will be discussed in future meetings, helping CN tailor its communications and improve transparency.

## 9. Project Update

### d. Site update

- **R. Wai Kei Chiu** provided an update on CN's environmental compliance efforts and the annual reporting process. Two representatives from the IAC conducted a site visit to review environmental mitigation measures on December 18, 2024. No concerns were raised, confirming CN's adherence to regulatory conditions and environmental commitments.
- The 2025 Environmental Compliance Report is being finalized and will be submitted to IAAC and relevant authorities by the end of March. The report will be available on the CN Milton website and the IAAC public registry for transparency.
- The construction update highlighted significant progress across key infrastructure projects. At the Lower Baseline Grade Separation, the bridge deck waterproofing has been completed, and preparations are underway for future track shifts to facilitate work on the east side of the tracks, keeping the project on schedule for Q2 2025 completion. Work on the Truck Access Road and Britannia Overpass is also advancing, with rebar installation and grading work ongoing, while stripping and grading have been completed north of Louis St. Laurent to Dairy Road. In terms of security and wildlife protection, CN continues installing security fencing along the northern section of Britannia Road and ensures that wildlife exclusion fencing is reinstated at the end of each workday to prevent animal encroachment into active construction zones. Additionally, wildlife monitoring efforts have identified deer and coyote footprints near Indian Creek, demonstrating that wildlife is actively using the newly enhanced wetland areas. CN remains committed to ongoing environmental monitoring to assess the effectiveness of these conservation efforts.

### e. Decision Tracker Review

- **E. Thome** led the review of outstanding action items to ensure continued progress on key discussions and commitments.
- The next committee site tour is planned for June 2025, coinciding with the completion of major overpass and roadwork milestones.
- CN will continue working on signage, banners, and digital communications to improve public understanding of the project.
- Committee members reiterated an outstanding inquiry about traditional medicinal plants present on the site. CN has reached out to Indigenous groups and is awaiting further guidance on how to document and share this information.
- CN was asked to provide clear data on the volume of trucks expected to enter and exit the facility daily. This information will be added to the decision tracker for discussion at the next meeting.

## 10. Other Business

- Participant asked for an update on the Halton Region's leave to appeal.

- **D. Reynolds** confirmed that all legal materials from both CN and Halton Region have been submitted, and the case is now under judicial review. A decision is anticipated by mid-2025, although court schedules could lead to potential delays. The possible outcomes include a denial of the appeal, which would close the case with no further legal recourse, or an approval to proceed, triggering a more extensive legal process involving detailed written submissions and a formal hearing, which could extend the case by another year. CN committed to keeping committee members informed via email notifications if any updates emerge before the next scheduled meeting.

#### **11. Adjournment**

- **T. Flynn** called for a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was unanimously approved.
- **E. Thome** thanked all attendees for their participation and contributions. She reminded the committee that the next meeting is scheduled for April 3, 2025, and encouraged members to submit any agenda items or discussion topics in advance.