



No. 15

April 9, 2026



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Federal By-Election in Terrebonne

Kick the Liberals Out on April 13!

– *Geneviève Royer* –

The monopoly-owned media, the cartel parties and the Liberal government claim in one way or another that the problem in the by-election in Terrebonne is the courageous initiative of the Longest Ballot Project to present 42 candidates, all of whom stand for reforming the electoral system in a manner which empowers the people. The forces which represent the status quo of power and privilege have a visceral fear that the people will advance their initiatives to empower themselves.

In by-elections and general elections, Canadians and Quebecers have been registering as candidates as part of the Longest Ballot Project to reiterate the demand to end the first-past-the-post method of counting votes, a reform promised in 2015 by the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau. Since 2021, thousands of people have supported the initiative -- in two federal elections, six federal by-elections and one Ontario provincial by-election. They have done so by running as candidates, signing nomination forms for Longest Ballot candidates, acting as official agents for these

candidates as well as by voting for them. The abuses and attacks against the Longest Ballot Project are an attack on the thousands of people who desire change. But despite the attacks, the issue comes up in every election, and the Longest Ballot Project persists in raising the demand for electoral reform. It means that this demand is still on the agenda. It is the cartel parties and their candidates who must be held accountable for their actions, not the Longest Ballot Project.

The desperate demands of the cartel parties for state intervention to suppress the Longest Ballot Project, based on the claim that our democracy is in danger, are pathetic. Canadians and Quebecers across the country are uniting to publicly demand an end to the first-past-the-post system. Does this endanger Canada's democracy or only the system of unrepresentative democracy which is so corrupted by those in positions of power and privilege that it discredits itself? Propaganda claiming that the Longest Ballot Project is the destroyer of democracy is a blatant ploy to prevent discussion and rejection of the Carney government's restructuring of the state to push his war agenda and massive payments to the rich for infrastructure which the rich demand.



How to find one's bearings in the difficult circumstances surrounding this election? Voters don't choose their candidates, nor the platform MPs should defend. They don't determine which problems should be solved. They are silenced, pressured to vote, to name just a few of these challenging conditions. So what can be done?

To defeat the Liberals in Terrebonne on April 13 would be a very good start. The Liberals are the governing party. They are the ones expropriating the properties of the people of Lanaudiere of which Terrebonne is a gateway, and denying them the right to say *No!* to furthering the private interests behind the Alto high-speed rail project. They are the ones in power implementing a war economy, supposedly for a strong Canada, in the name of a people who have no say. The way elections are held prevents the people from having a say unless, of course, they make a statement such as by defeating the Liberals in Terrebonne on April 13.



We cannot allow the concerns of the 114,000 residents of Terrebonne -- men, women, children and seniors -- regarding their land, their livelihoods, their health, their education and their social

services to be swept under the rug by the Liberals in the name of a strong Canada. The Liberals act as they please, illegitimately and arrogantly. The Liberals' Alto high speed rail project is a very good example. It will cost the people in the corridors where it is being built much more than billions of dollars because it will dispossess them of their land, way of life and communities, as well as costing every family across the country \$9,000, while sham consultations are held even though everything has already been decided. It is yet another solid reason why the Liberals deserve to be defeated in the by-election in Terrebonne on April 13.

Kick the Liberals Out of Terrebonne on April 13!

Salesmen of Pay-the-Rich Rail Project Face Wall of Opposition
Local Communities Oppose Pay-the-Rich Schemes
Related to Alto High-Speed Rail Network

– Christine Dandenault –



Action in St. Augustin, March 7, 2026

All along the proposed route of the federal government's high-speed rail line (Alto), communities in Quebec and Ontario are organizing, informing themselves, supporting each other and making their voices heard in opposition to the project declared to be of "national interest." A constant stream of information exchange, questions, and meetings is growing daily. In Quebec, besides Terrebonne, people are organizing in communities like Mascouche, Lachute, Grenville-sur-la-Rouge, Brownsburg-Chatham, Mirabel, and Berthierville. In Ontario, groups such as Concerned Citizens Against the Alto Southern Route, Northern Route Discussion and Awareness, Save Stone Mills, Rideau Lakes Against Alto High Speed Train, Save South Frontenac -- No Alto Train, and Tyendinaga Citizens against Alto have been established.

Farmers, professionals, engineers, geologists, maple syrup producers, municipal officials, researchers, families and many others are closely following developments concerning the projected train network. Concerns are numerous. People are questioning the impacts



on communities (loss of road access, impacts on emergency services, water sources and recreational areas, expropriation and harm to local tourism economies). They are raising issues about the environmental impacts (obstacles to wildlife and water flow, loss of biodiversity and endangered species, and impacts on protected areas). Agricultural impacts are also matters they are discussing (expropriation, trauma and impoverishment of those potentially affected, loss of prime farmland, decreased land values, disruption of farm access and disturbance of drainage systems).

They question how serious the project proponents are about very cold winter conditions knowing the difficulties the Réseau Express Métropolitain (REM) faces during Montréal winters as has VIA Rail. Others reject outright the infrastructure decisions already made that prioritize speed, private interests and political opportunism.



Municipalities in Quebec and regional county municipalities (RCMs) along the Quebec City--Montreal--Laval corridor have expressed negative positions or deep concerns regarding the project. The spirit of these communities is to defend what is right, to oppose anything that undermines their knowledge and accumulated experience -- in the case of Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial and in the case of Quebecers and people of Ontario since settlement -- as well as the fruits of their labour and their sense of justice and social responsibility toward their peers and those

around them. All of it is invaluable and deserves everyone's support.

Municipal councils in Ontario, including those of Frontenac South, Rideau Lakes, Belleville and Tyendinaga, have adopted motions opposing the proposed route, its impacts on agricultural land, the environment and small municipalities, or calling for heightened vigilance.

Meanwhile, Alto has undertaken phoney public consultations which the people see as cynical marketing campaigns. These phoney consultations are conducted by the Crown corporation Alto created by the federal government in 2025 and mandated to consult the public on the proposed high-speed rail network Alto HSR.

The Alto website states: "What is a public consultation? A public consultation is a special opportunity for citizens to learn more, ask questions, and share their ideas about a major project. It is a space for dialogue between the public and decision-makers, allowing for the collection of community opinions, concerns, and aspirations before final decisions are made.

"In the context of the Alto project, this process aims to enrich the analyses of the corridor under study, ensure harmonious integration into living environments, and strengthen mitigation measures, particularly environmental ones."

This is typical of the consultations governments conduct today. The decisions have already been made. The goal of the consultation is to achieve social acceptability.

This was very clear during a virtual information session organized by Alto on March 15. Four specialists representing Alto were present: one for the environment, one for technological aspects, one for communications and public relations, and one for project management. There were four presentations on these topics, followed by a question period. Everything was well-prepared. The specialists were clearly knowledgeable.

However, important questions remained unanswered:

QUESTION: What will the cost of this train be? No answer. [In fact, on February 26, during the third reading of Bill C-15, *Budget Implementation Act, 2025* in the House of Commons, Scott Reid, MP for Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston, said he estimated the cost to be the equivalent of \$9,000 for every Canadian family. "How can this project be considered to be in the national interest if it risks harming so many people?" one of the contesting groups asked.]

QUESTION: What about relations with Indigenous Peoples?

ANSWER: We will discuss, respect their history, take note of their requests, and see what can be done.

QUESTION: What about farmers?

ANSWER: We will be as careful as possible not to harm them.

QUESTION: Will there be expropriations of land?

ANSWER: Yes, but as few as possible. But we can't be against progress.

Faced with such absurdity, people are organizing all along the proposed high-speed rail line between Quebec City and Toronto. Their questions aim to clarify what is happening. Who will benefit from it? What is the experience of such projects around the world? With our winters, is a high-speed train viable and reliable? Who will truly benefit? If land is damaged, people are displaced, the environment is affected, the noise becomes a nuisance, and the cost is unknown, isn't it in the national interest to reject this project?

The discussion is continuing and people are speaking out and taking their place in it.

Actions Against High-Speed Rail Network





Berthierville



Chute-à-Blondeau



Lanauidière



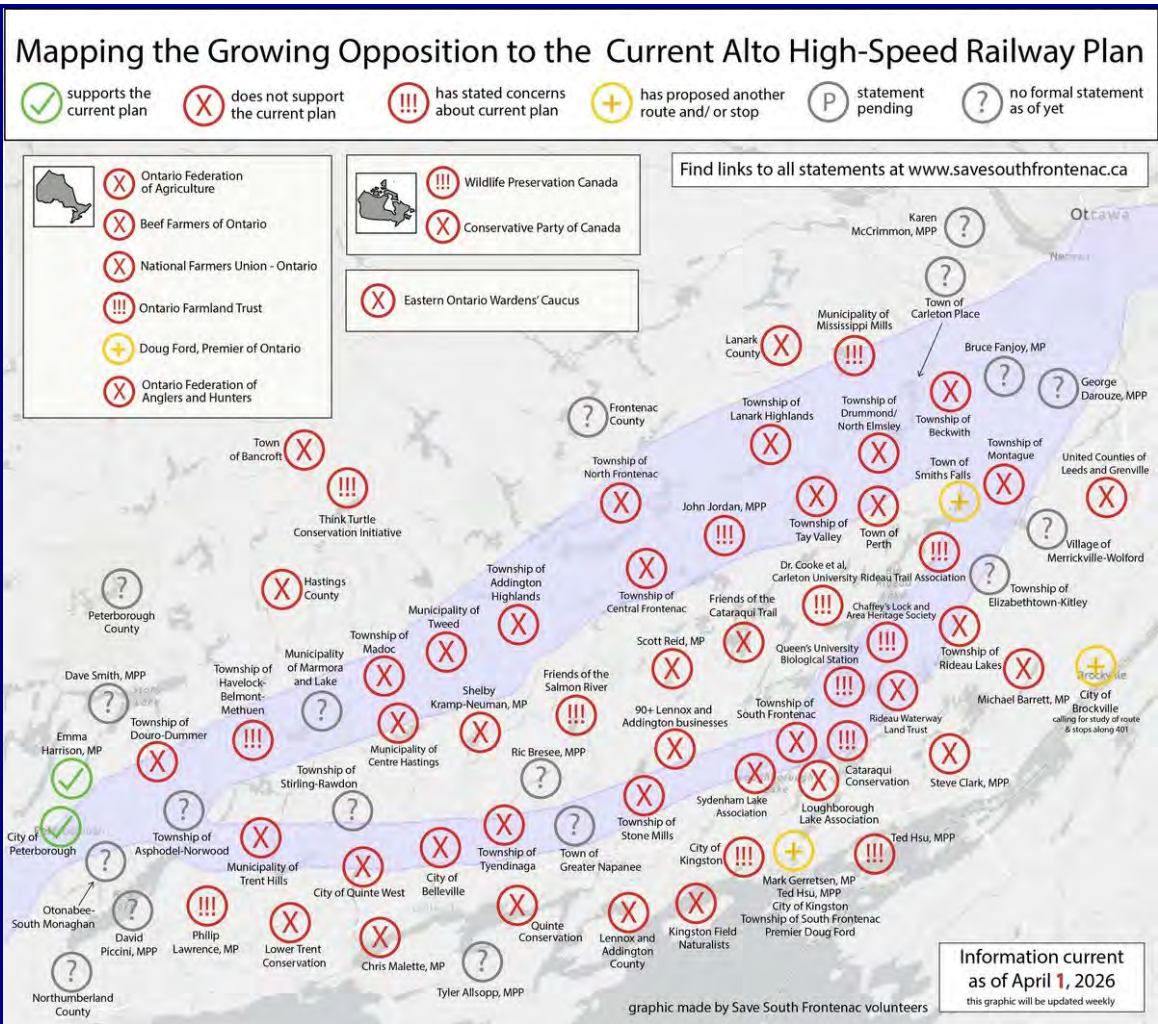
Mirabel



Tyendingaga



Camden East



Human and Financial Costs of Alto's High-Speed Rail Project

– *Fernand Dechamps* –

Last September 11, Prime Minister Carney announced that, besides the first five projects of "national interest" to be reviewed by the new Major Projects Office (MPO), "there are several strategies for projects that could be truly transformative for this country, which are at an earlier stage and require further development."

Amongst those named was the Alto High-Speed Rail (HSR) described as "Canada's first high-speed railway, spanning approximately 1,000 km from Toronto to Québec City and reaching speeds of up to 300 km/hour to cut travel times in half and connect close to half of Canada's population." The statement issued that day by the Prime Minister's office said that "The MPO will work to accelerate engineering, regulatory, and permitting work to enable construction of the project to start in four years, cutting the original eight-year timeline in half."

What Carney had in mind was to streamline the environmental regulations and land expropriation through Bill C-15, *An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget* tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, adopted on February 26 by the House of Commons, with Liberals and Conservatives voting in favour.

By modifying the *Expropriation Act*, Omnibus Bill C-15 eliminates the most owner-protective steps (negotiation attempt, public hearing, independent inquiry) specifically for HSR land acquisition. The consultation process for land expropriation is thus shifted from a hearing before an independent public board to the Minister of Transport, while adding a two-year deadline for the government to "use it [the expropriated land] or lose it."

Now, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is having second thoughts about the whole HSR project and on March 31 he held a press conference in Peterborough, Ontario where there is a proposed station for the Ottawa-Toronto section. "Carney Liberals will confiscate farmland and private property, disrupting communities and harming the quality of life of local residents who will not even get to use the train because it won't have any stops near their homes," said Poilievre. "This \$90 billion Liberal boondoggle does not make sense and it does not make dollars," he added, highlighting existing issues with Via Rail delays, and said the funds could instead be used to lower debt, taxes and inflation.

"In terms of the Conservatives, they used to think big," Liberal Transport Minister Steven MacKinnon told the host of *CTV's Question Period* on April 5. He said "You know, Brian Mulroney used to think big," adding "Heavens, John A. Macdonald used to think in terms of building an intercontinental railroad."

What seems to escape all these cartel party representatives is the growing and organized opposition amongst farmers, private landowners and citizens from all walks of life along what would become Alto's Quebec City-Toronto HSR corridor.

Alto Has its Own "Recipe" for Getting Things Done

Martin Imbleau, Alto CEO, gave an interview on January 25, to *La Presse* that is very revealing on who will pay for the HSR multi-billion dollar experiment, i.e., the Canadian people, and who will profit, i.e., the private consortium chosen to build the HSR. Here are some excerpts from that interview:

Question from *La Presse* journalist: How will the Alto team manage to plan and build this massive infrastructure project, currently the largest rail project in the West?

Answer from Martin Imbleau: Alto intends to follow the approach of Professor Bent Flyvbjerg, a specialist in megaproject management who co-authored [with Dan Gardner] the book *How Big Things Get Done*.

For decades, this professor emeritus at the University of Oxford has studied megaprojects around the world -- examining what worked well and what did not. A world-renowned expert, he also gave evidence last autumn to the Gallant Commission on the SAAQclac scandal.

His formula: instead of starting construction too quickly, study the project thoroughly, start slowly to learn from your mistakes, then pick up the pace. "Prepare, observe, test, take your time, roll out, make mistakes, learn, and replicate the whole process with greater agility," summarizes Martin Imbleau. "We invest between five and 10 per cent of the project's cost in engineering before breaking ground. This helps avoid surprises."

That is why Alto has decided to build the Montreal-Laval-Ottawa section first -- 200 kilometres out of 1,000 -- starting in 2030. Construction of the other two (more complex) sections is expected to begin in 2032.

When Critical Information Based on Scientific Investigation Is Brushed Aside

To follow the reasoning described by Flyvbjerg and Gardner as "Think Slow, Act Fast," organizations still have, in their words, to "Plan for Problems." In the case of the Montreal-Laval-Ottawa section, the Alto High-Speed Rail Citizen Research Initiative (ACRI) conducted a detailed scientific analysis of the proposed Ottawa-Toronto section. They found many critical issues related to engineering and environment, also present on the Montreal-Laval-Ottawa section, that were never answered by Alto in their public consultation process.

For example, Alto hasn't revealed the millions of cubic metres of plastic foam required to build high-speed rail through soft ground, both as thermal insulation under the track and as lightweight structural fill over unstable soils such as the Leda clay present along the Ottawa valley. Buried plastic foam leaches chemicals into groundwater over decades, including a potential human carcinogen and substances that harm aquatic life. At end of life, the foam must be dug up and disposed of, a liability because some of this foam may legally qualify as hazardous waste. [1]

Cost Estimate to Be Disclosed Before Starting Construction

In the January 25 interview given to *La Presse*, Martin Imbleau added that another lesson learned from Bent Flyvbjerg and Dan Gardner is to not publicly announce a project's cost estimate too quickly. Imbleau himself said that Alto does not expect to be able to provide an official cost estimate before 2028. The reasoning behind this is, he said:

"Canada often gets it wrong by releasing budget figures too early, when not enough engineering work has been done to know for sure. You cannot have a final budget until 30 per cent of the engineering work has been completed, and we haven't even done five per cent of the work yet."

Even so, what Imbleau forgets to mention is that it is the Canadian government which is taking all the risks by footing the bill for the selected private consortium building the HSR. Amongst the companies that make up the consortium is AtkinRealis, formerly known as the corrupt and discredited SNC-Lavalin.

However, he is quoted in that same interview as saying that "China has the world's largest high-speed rail network, operating under more challenging conditions than Canada." Someone should remind him that the Harbin-Dalian HSR in China, completed in 2021 and running in climate conditions similar to Alto's proposed HSR, exceeded its initial building cost estimates by 25 per cent.

Also, Imbleau doesn't want to talk about what ACRI revealed about the book *How Big Things Get Done*: "Bent Flyvbjerg has spent decades studying megaproject performance. His database -- the world's largest, covering more than 16,000 projects across 136 countries -- reveals a stark finding: nine out of ten megaprojects run over budget. Rail projects are among the worst offenders, with an average cost overrun of 44.7 per cent and ridership shortfalls averaging 51.4 percent." ACRI added: "Transport Action Canada has pointed out that the original 'high-frequency rail' concept studied in 2016 -- 170 km/h trains on dedicated tracks -- was estimated at less than \$5 billion (under \$10 billion in today's dollars). The escalation to \$60-120 billion reflects a fundamental change in project scope that has never been subjected to a publicly released cost-benefit comparison. [...] Alto's current estimate is already described by Transport Canada as an "early capital costs estimate" -- a category that historically represents the floor, not the ceiling." [2]

Notes

1. *What is foam doing under a railway?*

"Extruded polystyrene (XPS) is a dense, rigid foam board -- the same category of material as the pink or blue insulation boards used in building construction. In railway engineering, XPS boards are laid continuously under the entire length of the track to stop winter frost from penetrating the ground beneath. Without this layer, repeated freezing and thawing would heave and distort the track. Frost in the Montreal-Ottawa corridor can penetrate 1.2 to 1.8 metres into the ground in a cold winter. XPS keeps the subgrade above freezing.

"Expanded polystyrene (EPS) geof foam is the lightweight foam used to build up embankments over soft, unstable ground. It looks like the white bead foam in packaging, but comes in large moulded blocks. At 15-30 kg per cubic metre, it weighs roughly one to two per cent of what conventional gravel fill weighs. This matters enormously over Leda clay -- an unstable post-glacial soil found between Ottawa and the St. Lawrence -- which cannot support the weight of conventional fill without sinking by 0.5 to 1.5 metres. EPS geof foam dramatically reduces this load.

"Leda clay (also called quick clay or sensitive marine clay) is a post-glacial marine deposit laid down in the ancient Champlain Sea about 8,000-10,000 years ago. It is found throughout the Ottawa-St. Lawrence lowlands. When undisturbed it is weak but stable; when disturbed by construction loading or vibration, it can liquefy catastrophically. The 1971 Saint-Jean-Vianney landslide, in the Saguenay region, Quebec, which killed 31 people, was a Leda clay failure. High-speed rail cannot be built over it with conventional gravel embankments."

2. "What High-Speed Rail Really Costs," ACRI Cost Analysis

(With information from the Government of Canada, ACRI, La Presse, CTV)

Environmental Considerations in Planning High-Speed Rail – Fernand Dechamps –

The Alto High-Speed Rail Citizen Research Initiative (ACRI) is made up of community organizers and scientists with backgrounds in medicine, biology, geology, education and public policy. The organization is looking at proposed routes for the Carney government's Alto high-speed rail project to provide "freely available analysis for affected residents, advocates and decision makers." ACRI states that "communities deserve access to rigorous research before major infrastructure is decided." The ACRI website provides information about Alto on the following areas: community impacts, economics, engineering and the environment. It also aggregates notable opinions and analysis, government documents and other resources about the project.

In March, ACRI submitted 33 questions to Alto as part of the formal public consultation on Eastern Ontario route selection. Of these, ACRI informed that "one was reasonably answered, four were

partially answered, five were acknowledged but deferred, nine received only generic language that did not address the specific question asked, and 14 were completely ignored." ACRI's work is providing valuable information about potential consequences of Alto's construction that official sources are not providing to those affected.

Environmental considerations related to Alto are one of the aspects highlighted by ACRI. For example, one of the missing pieces of information that ACRI pinpointed was that "Alto has not released any lifecycle carbon assessment for the proposed Toronto–Québec City high-speed rail corridor." ACRI thus had to provide this information on high speed rail (HSR) itself, with an "independent research note [which] fills that gap using international HSR data, engineering first principles and published academic sources. It models three ridership levels and three electricity grid scenarios across a 50-year operating life." [1]

Issues of Cold Climate Construction

Under the heading "Three Cost Categories Alto Has Never Mentioned," ACRI addresses first the issue of cold-climate engineering whereby "Alto has made no mention of cold-climate subgrade requirements in any public document." "The only precedent for 300 km/h rail in cold climates is the Harbin–Dalian HSR in northeast China, which required a 3.1-metre reinforced subgrade, XPS foam insulation layers, cement-stabilized surface courses, and heated drainage across its full length," added ACRI, noting that Harbin–Dalian HSR "came in 25 per cent over its construction budget." [2]

Approximately 200 kilometres of the Ottawa–Montréal segment runs through Leda clay -- sensitive marine clay deposited when the Ottawa and St. Lawrence valleys were submerged by the ancient Champlain Sea. Under stress such as flooding it can liquefy instantly, causing some of Canada's most destructive landslides. This is the second issue that Alto made no mention of. ACRI states that "Building a 300 km/h railway over it [the Leda clay] requires deep pile foundations, a fully elevated viaduct, or extensive ground improvement -- all carbon-intensive options. No Alto document has acknowledged that the corridor passes through quick-clay terrain. The pessimistic estimate reaches 4.50 Mt, reflecting genuine uncertainty about the engineering solution required."

"A megatonne (Mt) is one million tonnes of CO₂. Canada's total annual emissions are around 700 Mt. Construction of this railway alone could emit 7 to 30 Mt."

Effects of De-Icing Chemicals in Winter Conditions

Keeping a high speed train moving in Canada's extreme winter conditions in the Quebec City-Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto corridor is a technological feat in itself. This is a train powered by electricity facing temperatures that can easily range over a year from –30 to +30 degrees Celsius, along with heavy snow accumulation and freezing rain that would affect the southern and northern proposed corridors in Ontario.

As the ACRI study states "High-speed rail needs its tracks, switches and overhead wires kept clear of ice all winter. Unlike roads, where a light sprinkle of salt is temporary, a high-speed rail line operates every day -- which means chemical de-icing is continuous, systematic, and large-scale across the entire length of the corridor from November through April."

"There are two main types of de-icing chemicals used on railways: glycols (similar to antifreeze) and chloride salts (similar to road salt, but applied in larger quantities and more concentrated forms). Both end up in the surrounding environment. Both cause serious harm to aquatic ecosystems. And on the southern Alto corridor, the geography makes that harm exceptionally difficult to prevent or contain." (see Figure 1)



Figure 1: Location of Alto's proposed Southern Corridor (red lines) between the Frontenac and Carleton Lake Provincial Parks, part of the UNESCO Frontenac Arch Biosphere Region (area bordered by green lines).

As reported by ACRI:

"Glycols (propylene glycol and ethylene glycol) are organic compounds -- essentially antifreeze. When they drain into water, bacteria start breaking them down. That breakdown process consumes oxygen. In large enough quantities, glycol runoff can strip all the dissolved oxygen from a receiving stream or pond, creating a dead zone where fish, invertebrates, amphibian eggs, and overwintering turtles suffocate."

"Winter Makes it Worse

"The de-icing season -- November to April -- is exactly when this is most dangerous. Cold water holds less oxygen to begin with. Under ice cover, ponds and wetlands have no contact with the atmosphere to replenish what the bacteria consume. Research shows ethylene glycol can persist in cold water for up to 60 days, causing prolonged stress to fish populations long after the original application."

"The Sweet Taste Problem

"Ethylene glycol smells and tastes sweet, which is why it attracts pets and wildlife. In the Frontenac Arch, this is a direct hazard to Gray Ratsnakes, Blanding's Turtles, and small mammals emerging from hibernation in spring -- just as meltwater pools collect near track infrastructure."

It can't collect on landscape underlain by limestone which has been eroded by dissolution, producing fissures and sinkholes.

"At airports, glycol-laden runoff is collected by engineered drainage systems. On an open track corridor over the Napanee limestone plain, this doesn't work: the glycol infiltrates through sinkholes and fissures into the karst conduit system before it reaches any collection point. It then travels underground -- unpredictably -- to springs, river baseflow, and wetlands far from where it was applied."

Frontenac's UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Compromised on Alto's Southern Corridor

In the case of the southern corridor, Alto's HSR would run through the heart of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, at its most vulnerable point. The Frontenac Arch Biosphere Region (FABR) is situated on the homelands of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg Indigenous peoples. The FABR is Canada's most ecologically significant wildlife corridor -- a UNESCO-designated land bridge connecting Algonquin Park in Ontario to the Adirondack Mountains in New York State, a land bridge for wildlife moving across eastern North America. (see figure 2)



Figure 2: Map showing the location and extent of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Region (FABR)

As the ACRI study showed, Alto's HSR crosses at the worst possible point: the "Frontenac Neck" -- "where Sydenham Lake, Opinicon Lake, and the Rideau Canal compress every bear, wolf, turtle and songbird moving between Algonquin and the Adirondacks into a thin strip of Shield 26.5 kilometre long. There is no way around this geography. Any southern alignment creates the same absolute barrier at the same bottleneck.[...] there is no technically credible mitigation strategy capable of restoring the Frontenac Neck's wildlife corridor function once HSR infrastructure is built. The constraint is geographic, not engineering. The bottleneck is the landscape itself." An HSR corridor through the Frontenac Neck would introduce a sealed, fenced, 300 km/h barrier directly through the one place in the FABR where no bypass exists.[3]

Surface and Groundwater Contamination in Napanee Limestone Plain

Southwest of the Canadian Shield, Alto's HSR southern corridor crosses the Napanee Limestone Plain -- a karst landscape unlike anything else in the route. Karst is formed when rainwater slowly dissolves limestone over millions of years, creating underground rivers, sinkholes, caves, and fissures. In the Napanee Plain:

- 60 to 70 per cent of all stream flow comes from underground -- groundwater flowing through these caves and fissures emerges as springs and river baseflow.
- The soil cover is often less than one metre thick, sometimes absent entirely.
- A chemical spilled on the surface can reach the aquifer within hours to days -- not filtered, not diluted, just carried underground.
- Once contaminated, karst aquifers are essentially impossible to clean up.

Municipal drinking water for communities including Napanee and Deseronto comes from this aquifer system.

These are a few of the most known examples of contamination resulting from glycol de-icers Alto plans to use along their HSR corridors between Quebec City and Toronto. One can imagine the extent of the contamination on forests and farmlands the Alto HSR will cut through along its 1,000 kilometre stretch. From the irreparable damage it will cause to the natural and social environment, the Alto HSR has all the looks of a boondogle project.

Notes

1. "Consultation Accountability -- 33 Questions. Few Answers," Alto HSR Citizen Research Initiative, March 2026.

2. "When it comes to cold-weather innovations in passenger trains, China leads the way. The recently constructed high-speed line, capable of running at 217 mph [347 km/h], traverses some of the most uninhabitable climates on the planet. The corridor, running between Harbin and Dalian in northeastern China, sees temperatures ranging from +40 to -40 degrees Celsius. To meet this challenge China commissioned 22 reports and thousands of tests to guarantee the safety of the "ice-train" -- the only-high-speed train of its kind. Some of the distinct features of this line are special snow and ice removing facilities to keep the power supply and signaling systems safe. Furthermore, China has introduced specially designed train sets for this corridor capable of withstanding the extreme temperatures. The CRH5A trains are based on Alstom's Italian Pendolino trains, which can handle temperatures below -40 degrees Celsius."

See "Cold Weather Passenger Trains", High Speed Rail Alliance, January 7, 2014

The issue of HSR design speed vs operating speed :

"Northeast China: The Harbin--Dalian line is specifically engineered for extreme cold (down to around -- 40 degree celsius) and has a design speed of 350 km/h; in practice it runs a winter timetable capped around 250 km/h and a higher speed summer timetable with trains up to 300-350 km/h depending on service pattern." (source: [China Daily](#))

Scandinavia vs "classic" HSR: In Sweden, Norway and Finland, the current high speed offer is mostly 200-220 km/h tilting sets on upgraded legacy lines, plus one short purpose built 250 km/h ready link in Norway that is still capped at 200 km/h operationally.

Russia: The Sapsan is a true high speed trainset (Velaro family) but limited to 250 km/h by infrastructure and regulatory constraints on the Moscow-St Petersburg route, not by the rolling stock itself.

3. The Frontenac Arch is an ancient granite ridge more than one billion years old. It connects the Canadian Shield in Algonquin Park to the Adirondack Mountains in New York State, passing through the Thousand Islands where it crosses the St. Lawrence River. This is the last intact forest corridor in eastern North America, where five distinct forest types converge: Boreal, Great Lakes--St. Lawrence, Carolinian, Atlantic Coast, and Appalachian. The Haudenosaunee call it the 'backbone of the mother' -- the structural spine sustaining living systems across the region.

(With information from Alto, High Speed Rail Alliance, Alto HSR Citizen Research, TVO, SaveSouthFrontenac, Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network, Railway News)

What People Have to Say About Canadian Government's High-Speed Rail Project



Here are excerpts of comments, viewpoints, research, and questions circulating on social media and elsewhere regarding the high-speed rail project. And day after day, the discussion deepens.

Going Through the Motions of Public Consultations

Someone writes: "I just participated in a virtual public consultation organized by Alto. I left with far more questions than answers."

Another writes: "Hello, I am writing to ask Alto to organize more in-person public consultation sessions in the form of general assemblies in communities along the study corridor. Many people find the current open house format difficult to understand, uninformative, and inaccessible. Please consider organizing sessions with clear presentations and a structured question-and-answer period so that communities have a real opportunity to participate actively."

And another writes: "I would like to share a thought: If the outcome of a consultation is predictable before it even begins, is it truly a consultation, or simply an attempt to create the illusion of public support for a decision that has already been made? I think it is essential to pay attention to how these decisions are presented, and not just to the decision itself."

A participant in a consultation in Vankleek Hill, a rural village of 1,781 people about 100 kilometres east of Ottawa told CBC Radio on March 21 that residents were really disappointed in the whole process. She said the set up was to divide people into smaller groups with Alto representatives to lead them through the consultation, but there was no centralized presentation of information. She added that the onus was on participants to ask questions, but when they did, the Alto representatives had very few answers.

She said that it seems for Alto, the consultation is merely to check off a box, rather than actually listening to people. The way Alto is conducting itself is alien to her, when as a small business owner, to get a loan from a bank requires providing full information, she added. The onus is on Alto to prove to the Canadian people that they should be supporting this project, she concluded.

A resident of South Frontenac Township, just north of Kingston, also spoke to CBC Radio about how the community is organizing itself to "help our area residents understand this project, be educated about this project, and sort of bring a voice to their concerns through social media and other engagement. Because Alto's engagement process has really fallen short in rural areas."

She pointed that Alto's consultation process is primarily online, but this is problem for rural areas where there are people who still have unreliable internet service. She added that at first, Alto was "only going to have in-person sessions in the cities that would receive a station or a stop. And so

we had to fight and ask and plead through social media to have a session, an in-person session in the very area that's going to be affected, you know, that would impact people's lives and livelihoods. So now that was agreed to, and they were smart enough to host a session here. And we were invited as a committee to be present. And when a resident asked an Alto representative how are you recording all of our concerns? And they were told, 'We have excellent memories.' And that is not enough in a democratic process. We have had to become sort of armchair experts on all kinds of issues in the last three months in order to be able to participate in the consultation process."

An Alto spokesperson, Benoit Bordeaux, spoke to CBC Radio immediately after the residents of Vankleek Hill and South Frontenac. He said that Alto's main takeaway from the consultations is that "people were extremely curious about this project." He described the project as having "three realities." "There is an urban reality where people are basically the biggest question is where exactly is the station going to be located? There is a suburban reality where people are asking themselves and asking us, how am I going to get to the station? And there's this rural reality." When asked by the CBC Radio host about the lack of information or that the format of consultations was not informative or suitable, Bordeaux claimed that the lack of information is due to it being early going in the process, implying that things like a business plan simply do not exist at this point. Rather than assuaging anyone's concerns about the lack of information after one year, he said that the fact that the consultations are "already happening" shows that Alto is taking initiative. In the meantime, in-person consultations would continue until the end of the month, with the online aspect of that open until April 24. He did not commit to making any changes to the format of the consultation in the meantime. After reviewing the results of its consultations, Bordeaux said that toward the end of the year, Alto will come back to the communities to consult once again with more refined information to present.

The fact that even before the first round of consultations were finished, Alto had dismissively decided that Canadians and Quebeckers' concerns about the project should fit into three neat realities does not bode well for further consultations.

Community Safety

The same resident of Vankleek Hill spoke about how the community's safety concerns are yet to be addressed. She stated that "one of our big concerns as a community member is this train is high speed. At 300 kilometres an hour, it has no level crossing. You cannot have a road where it goes. So it's going to dead end roads throughout the community. They're not going to obviously be able to afford to provide an over or underpass for every community road that currently exists. So what is the interval that those over or underpasses are going to occur at? They couldn't tell us that. So what does that then mean for things like emergency services? How long is it? How long is it going to take EMS to get to a farm that is burning down or somebody who needs to get to a hospital, which already are far apart in a rural area?"

Environmental Impacts

Regarding environmental impact studies, residents of Vankleek Hill were told that "none of those studies are going to be done until once the route is actually chosen" which they found to be backwards. Furthermore, residents question, "Why do we need to have the environmental, ecological, social damage when we have a VIA Rail line that runs between Ottawa and Montreal, which is mostly owned by VIA?" Given that VIA is part of the consortium that makes up Alto, residents also pointed out that use of existing rail lines across the whole corridor should be looked into, such as twinning track, as well as passing legislation that provides passenger rail priority on tracks shared with freight trains, something that has been done in Europe and elsewhere. Presently, VIA operates its passenger trains on lines owned by CN, causing its trains to be constantly delayed in favour of freight trains.

The project crosses vast areas of wetlands and alvars (a limestone plain with thin or no soil that supports rare flora and fauna). These habitats are critical breeding grounds for endangered species, including the rare Loggerhead shrike. While local land acquisitions have protected small patches of these habitats, the overall landscape remains vulnerable. Approximately 75 per cent of Canada's Loggerhead shrikes live in this region.

In addition to habitat loss, this project will negatively impact the migration of small animals, birds, and even plants which are moving north due to climate change. Small birds will be particularly vulnerable to the degradation caused by this line. Deer, wolves, coyotes, fishers and cougars are just a few examples of other larger animals that will be affected.

Blocking this migratory corridor reflects exactly what will happen to people. If Route 41 is the only road in our district with a viaduct, it means that traffic will be completely blocked. Throughout the township, this will affect emergency vehicles and school buses, not to mention people doing their shopping.

Biodiversity Protection

The southern corridor of the Alto project would cross the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site -- one of only 19 in Canada -- which encompasses the country's most biodiverse region. Five forest areas converge there. The Frontenac Arch Biosphere is the last intact forest corridor between the Canadian Shield and the Adirondack Mountains -- a vital land passage for wildlife crossing eastern North America.

Plummeting Land Values

The route proposed by Alto is already causing problems by driving down land values in the area it has designated as a potential corridor. Land values are collapsing. A small farm in this area, near Ottawa, recently sold for approximately \$100,000 less than it did a few months ago. Consequently, there appear to be grounds for legal action against the Crown corporation, and this possibility is being considered.

Who Will Benefit from High-Speed Rail?

Someone says, "I recently joined this movement (against the high-speed rail line) because the installation of the rail will destroy farm land by appropriation and will be a cost to every family in Canada, while only serving patrons going to or from Montreal and Toronto. If the train is electric, it will be a huge load on the power network. Of the people paying for it, 99 per cent will gain zero for their contribution. I think the high-speed rail should be situated between the east and the west 401 highway lanes to prevent appropriation of private land. That or nothing!"

Project of National Interest?

Someone states, "Transport Minister Steven MacKinnon needs to hear from everyone about how the high-speed rail project, presented as a project of 'national interest,' will actually divide Canadians, not only because of the 3.6-metre fences and dead-end roads, but also by creating inequalities between those who can use the rail and those who cannot. There are only seven stops: Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Montreal, Laval, Ottawa, Peterborough, and Toronto. Please share this message with citizens of other provinces, because we are all paying for this project, but only some will be able to use it."

One person told CBC Radio that the enormous cost of the high-speed rail project has to be justified. "This is a project that, despite what they say, does not serve all Canadians. I would like them to

justify \$90 billion. It is \$2,500 per taxpayer, and it apparently is not going to break even for 44 years. So I would like them to justify that cost."

Possible Cost

One person points out: "On February 26, in the House of Commons during third reading of Bill C-15, Scott Reid, MP for Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston, estimated that the cost to every Canadian family of four would be \$9,000. If you don't live in one of these cities, you won't derive any benefit, and especially if you live in BC or the Maritimes. How can this be a project of national interest if it will actually harm many, many people and animals, too?"

Living Environment

From Ontario, one person writes, "The Township of Tyendinaga is not just our place of residence, it's our home. It's where nature and wildlife are an integral part of our daily lives. The idea of seeing the Alto high-speed train built so close to our home is deeply upsetting. It would forever alter the landscape we love and threaten the natural beauty and wildlife that make this place so precious to us!"

Dismemberment of Communities

A Quebecker raises the alarm about Alto, recounting their experience with previous government megaprojects: "Many are still unaware of the true danger. Perhaps the high-speed rail line will never materialize in its promised form. Perhaps it will be delayed, scaled back, distorted, or dragged out for years through studies, consultations, and political promises. But the real damage can begin long before the first train: through legislation, expropriations, the transfer of land to the state, the destruction of farms, the dismemberment of communities, and the reduction of the citizen to a mere bureaucratic obstacle. Once the state seizes land, it almost never returns it, except perhaps after decades of legal battles and humiliations, as the Mirabel story has already demonstrated. This is not progress. This is power. This is a state telling you that your sacrifice is 'for the public good' and that you are expected to shut up and pay up."

Steel for Railway Tracks Will Have to Be Imported

Someone writes, "Recently, in my research, I discovered that Canada does not have the steel needed to build railway tracks. The steel must be imported from the United States, Spain, South Korea, China, and several other countries. With tariffs, the costs skyrocket. This will certainly increase the cost of this project. Not to mention the carbon footprint generated by simply transporting the metal to Canada. Canada no longer manufactures steel for the railway sector and does not produce high-speed locomotives. In response to a question before the Senate Committee on National Finance on March 16, Transport Minister Steven MacKinnon said he has asked Alto to consult with Canadian steel producers to determine what would be needed to restart domestic production."

Need to Modernize Existing Rail Networks

Still another person comments, "Recent research has shown that high-frequency rail systems can be more efficient and cost-effective than high-speed rail systems for short distances. Our investments would undoubtedly be better spent modernizing our rail networks across Canada to improve access to transportation for all Canadians. Public transit should be prioritized. Door-to-door travel time matters, not just travel time from one station to another. Have you ever heard of high-speed trains staying within budget or on schedule? Toronto's last train cost \$684 million per kilometre."

Exhaustion by Government

"The government is exhausting us -- mentally, physically, and emotionally. We're fed up with this senseless spending of our hard-earned money. Don't hesitate to speak out against it."

Speaking in Our Own Name

"Say NO to Alto's high-speed rail. Mirabel has already suffered expropriations and large-scale government projects. Land has been lost, lives disrupted, and yet the project failed. This project will cause enormous damage to our region and everywhere it is slated to pass, from Quebec City to Montreal, continuing through Ottawa, Peterborough and Toronto. Roads cut off, rivers and streams blocked, farmland disrupted, homes blocked, wildlife blocked, travel to work, school, appointments, shopping, visiting friends and family blocked, emergency services blocked, municipal services blocked, mail and package delivery blocked: everything will be blocked. We will all be cut off from the world, physically, in one way or another. The railway is entirely elevated and fenced off. Nothing can pass through, only over or under, where they deem it necessary.



"And the benefit? Expropriation if your land is needed by them; Otherwise, you'll still suffer the negative consequences. There's no point in trying to sell. We already have bus, train, and plane connections between these cities. Improving or repairing this infrastructure would be a better use of taxpayers' money. Not this fiasco... No, no! No Alto!"

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