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# *News Release Communiqué*

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For Release  
January 2, 2009

## **DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL CROSSING STUDY TEAM FILES ONTARIO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

WINDSOR— More than 12,000 jobs could be created in the Windsor area if an Environmental Assessment Report (EA Report) filed with the Ontario Minister of the Environment December 31 receives approval this year.

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and Transport Canada (TC)-led Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study team is recommending a new end-to-end border transportation system for the Windsor-Detroit Gateway. The recommended plan responds to the urgent need to address border congestion, promote investment, retain existing jobs and bring new jobs to the region. About 12,000 jobs would be created with the construction of The Windsor-Essex Parkway. Additional jobs would be created with the bridge and plaza construction. Subject to the approval of this Environmental Assessment Report, construction of The Windsor-Essex Parkway could begin as early as the fall of this year.

“Over the past three years, many citizens and stakeholder groups have contributed their time and energy to the development of this plan by participating in public consultations,” said Dave Wake, the DRIC study team lead in Canada. “The DRIC study team once again thanks the community for this participation.” Most recently, community residents attended the seventh round of public information open houses for the DRIC Environmental Assessment study on November 24 and 25, 2008. In addition, members of the public and stakeholders provided feedback on a draft of the DRIC Environmental Assessment Report.

The DRIC studies in Canada and the United States were coordinated to allow for the development of an end-to-end border transportation system. The Governments of Canada, the U.S., Ontario and Michigan are committed to an efficient and secure Windsor-Detroit Trade Corridor. The development of additional border capacity is a national priority in both countries to support trade between Canada and the U.S.

Initiated in 2005 by the Canada-U.S.-Ontario-Michigan Border Transportation Partnership, the DRIC study involved extensive technical studies and public consultations. The DRIC study team participated in more than 300 meetings with stakeholders and citizens, including school, community and advisory groups. These consultations included seven rounds of public information open houses, and helped to shape the recommended plan. The DRIC study team identified The Windsor-Essex Parkway, along with a new customs plaza and international bridge in the Brighton Beach industrial area of West Windsor as the recommended plan.

-2-

As required under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act, the Environmental Assessment will be available for public review and comment from Friday, January 9, 2009 to Friday, February 27, 2009. Comments must be submitted in writing and/or by fax to the Ministry of the Environment by Friday, February 27, 2009.

-30-

A backgrounder on the recommended plan, as well as the environmental assessment process is attached.

For more information on DRIC, visit [www.partnershipborderstudy.com](http://www.partnershipborderstudy.com)

This news release may be made available in alternative formats for persons with visual disabilities.

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# Backgrounder

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## DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL CROSSING STUDY TEAM FILES ONTARIO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Overview

The Canadian Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study team has completed the Ontario Environmental Assessment Report (EA) for the DRIC study. The Terms of Reference approved by the Minister of the Environment on September 17, 2004 required the study to submit an Environmental Assessment Report as required under section 6.2(1) of the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act*. The study team met this requirement by submitting its Environmental Assessment Report to the Ontario Minister of the Environment on December 31, 2008 for review and approval.

The Windsor-Detroit border is the busiest commercial land border crossing in North America, and trade moving through this corridor is expected to increase well into the future. The governments of Canada, the United States, Ontario and Michigan recognize the importance of the Windsor-Detroit Gateway and formed the Border Transportation Partnership (the Partnership). The purpose of the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study is to provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods across the Canada-U.S. border in the Detroit River area to support the economies of Ontario, Michigan, Canada and the U.S. — in other words, to construct a new end-to-end transportation system that will link Highway 401 to the U.S. interstate system with inspection plazas and a new river crossing in between.

Through extensive technical studies and public consultation, the DRIC study team has identified The Windsor-Essex Parkway, along with a new customs plaza and international bridge in the Brighton Beach industrial area of West Windsor as the recommended plan. The DRIC study is a bi-national planning study being conducted in accordance with the requirements of the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* in Canada, and coordinated with the U.S. *National Environmental Policy Act* in the United States. The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO), in coordination with Transport Canada, led the Environmental Assessment study in Canada, and retained URS Canada Inc. to assist in this undertaking.

The partnership reached an important milestone with the December 31, 2008, filing of the Environmental Assessment Report to the Ontario Minister of the Environment. The completed Environmental Assessment is the result of three years of technical studies and analysis by the DRIC study teams on both sides of the border, undertaken with the benefit of significant community input through hundreds of information sessions in Canada and the United States.

## The Recommended Plan

The Windsor-Essex Parkway provides a six-lane, below-grade freeway that will connect Highway 401 to the Canadian inspection plaza. Its many community-friendly features include 300 acres of green space, 20 kilometres of recreational trails and a series of tunnels that provide new connections for communities on either side of the transportation corridor.

If the EA is approved construction of The Windsor-Essex Parkway, the Canadian access road, is expected to start as early as 2009. It will take four to five years to design and build the bridge and the inspection plazas.

The recommended Canadian inspection plaza is bounded by Broadway Street on the south side, Chappus Street on the north side, the Detroit River on the west side and the Essex Terminal Railway line on the east side.

The plaza will be designed to shield the host communities from cross-border traffic. For instance, the Canadian plaza will include 43 acres (17 hectares) of buffer area. The plaza will also include state-of-the-art inspection facilities to promote the flow of traffic. The final plaza design will be determined in consultation with the Canada Border Services Agency.



The final design of the Windsor-Detroit bridge will be determined after discussions with prospective builders. Given the span required to cross the Detroit River, there are two bridge design types that could be used: a suspension bridge, which is recognized by its elongated “M” shape, or a cable-stayed bridge, which has more of an “A” shape. The Ambassador Bridge, Mackinac Bridge and the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge are suspension bridges. Examples of cable-stayed bridges include the Sunshine Skyway Bridge in Tampa and the Vancouver Sky Bridge.

Cable-stayed bridges may look similar to suspension bridges in that both have roadways that hang from cables and both have towers, but the bridges support the load of the roadway in very different ways. The difference lies in how the cables are connected to the towers. In suspension bridges, the cables ride freely across the towers, transmitting the load to the anchorages at either end. In cable-stayed bridges, the cables are attached to the towers, which alone bear the load.



Suspension bridge (illustration only)



Cable-stayed bridge (illustration only)

### **The environmental study process — a co-ordinated approach**

This international transportation improvement project will require approvals from governments on both sides of the border. The Partnership developed a co-ordinated process that enabled the joint selection of a recommended river crossing location that meets the requirements of the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act*, the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and the U.S. *National Environmental Policy Act* in an effective and efficient manner.

A key principle of the process was that all affected and interested parties have been and are being given the opportunity to participate and provide input throughout the study. The Partnership proactively sought community and stakeholder input during the study.

#### **Requirements of the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (OEAA)***

As required under the OEAA, a Terms of Reference was prepared and received approval prior to commencement of the DRIC environmental assessment study. The document outlined the framework that the DRIC study team would follow in completing the environmental assessment, including key opportunities for public participation.

Upon completion of the DRIC study, the EA report was submitted to the Ontario Minister of the Environment for approval. The formal review process provides further opportunities for public comment.

#### **Requirements of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA)***

The CEAA applies to certain projects that require a decision by the Government of Canada. In the case of this study, Transport Canada has partnered with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to conduct the Canadian portion of the study. The requirements of the OEAA and CEAA are being co-ordinated in a manner that will ensure the most rigorous EA standards are met.

A project description was prepared for the DRIC study, and federal agencies with an interest in the study have been identified. The project was listed in the Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry in March 2006, and federal agencies have been participating throughout the study.

As part of the co-ordinated EA process, the federal draft EA guidelines and the public consultation plan were provided for public review. These documents are available to be downloaded or viewed online at the Partnership website ([www.partnershipborderstudy.com](http://www.partnershipborderstudy.com)). Information on the federal environmental assessment process is also available at [www.ceaa.gc.ca](http://www.ceaa.gc.ca).

A CEEA screening report identifying project impacts and mitigation needs will be prepared, drawing on the technical work that has been carried out throughout the study.

### **Requirements of the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

In the United States, NEPA is the umbrella environmental law that provides for a decision-making process relying on interdisciplinary analysis, as well as consultation with and comments from the public, stakeholders and regulatory agencies.

For major federal actions, an environmental impact study (EIS) is prepared. A draft EIS explains the purpose of and need for the project, examines alternatives, discusses the impacts of the practical alternatives, and documents the public involvement and co-ordination that occurs. The draft EIS is released for formal comment and a public hearing is held. Subsequently, a decision is made on a preferred alternative, based on the comments received and any further analysis that is required to respond adequately to the comments. That decision is made available to the public and agencies through the formal availability of the final EIS (FEIS). When comments on the FEIS are addressed and the decision is to pursue an “action” alternative, a record of decision (ROD) is issued under NEPA. An ROD completes the process and allows a project to advance to the design stage and project implementation.

Preferred plazas and crossing location in Canada announced	June 2008
U.S. final environmental impact statement (FEIS) circulated	November 2008
U.S. record of decision (ROD) anticipated	Early 2009
Canadian submission for environmental assessment (EA) approvals	December 31, 2008
Canadian EA approvals expected	Fall 2009

### **Summary**

The DRIC study is following three legislated processes. These processes require that the DRIC environmental study be thorough, open, transparent and fully accessible to the public for scrutiny and evaluation. The DRIC study team is fully committed to working with the public, communities and interested groups in Windsor-Essex County, in consultation with the U.S. partners as we move forward in delivering this important infrastructure project to meet future transportation needs.

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Transport Canada are continuing to consider requests by owners wanting to sell their property that has been identified as required. Owners wishing to sell their property may contact the Ministry of Transportation, Windsor Border Initiatives Implementation Group at 519-973-7367 or 1-800-265-6072 ext. 4800 or email [Detroit.River@ontario.ca](mailto:Detroit.River@ontario.ca) if they are required for The Windsor-Essex Parkway. For properties required for the plaza and crossing, parties should contact Transport Canada at 1-866-636-3136 or by email to [Windsor-Detroit@tc.gc.ca](mailto:Windsor-Detroit@tc.gc.ca). After the Environmental Assessment (EA) study has been approved, MTO may initiate expropriation proceedings, if required.

As required under the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act*, the Environmental Assessment Report will be available for public review and comments from Friday January 9, 2009 to Friday, February 27, 2009 at the following locations and can be downloaded from the study website at <http://www.partnershipborderstudy.com>

**Ontario Ministry of Transportation  
Windsor Border Initiatives Implementation Group**

949 McDougall Avenue, Suite 200  
Windsor, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 973-7367

**Office of the Clerk  
City of Windsor**

350 City Hall Square West  
Windsor, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 255-6211

**Office of the Clerk  
Town of LaSalle**

5950 Malden Road  
LaSalle, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 969-7770

**Windsor Public Library**

**Central Branch**  
850 Ouellette Avenue  
Windsor, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 255-6770

**Ontario Ministry of the Environment  
Environmental Assessment & Approvals Branch**

St. Clair Avenue West, Floor 12A  
Toronto, Ontario  
Tel: 1-800-461-6290

**Office of the Clerk  
Town of Tecumseh**

917 Lesperance Road  
Tecumseh, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 735-2184

**LaSalle Public Library**

5940 Malden Road  
LaSalle, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 969-8992

**Windsor Public Library**

**Sandwich Branch**  
3312 Sandwich Street  
Windsor, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 255-6770

**URS Canada Inc.**

75 Commerce Valley Drive East  
Markham, Ontario  
Tel: (905) 882-4401

**Ontario Ministry of the Environment**

**Windsor Area Office**

4510 Rhodes Drive, Unit 620  
Windsor, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 948-1464

**Office of the Clerk  
County of Essex**

360 Fairview Avenue West  
Essex, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 776-6441

**Tecumseh Public Library**

13675 St. Gregory's Road  
Tecumseh, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 735-3670

**Windsor Public Library**

**Nikola Budimir Branch**  
1310 Grand Marais West  
Windsor, Ontario  
Tel: (519) 255-6770

**Ontario Ministry of the Environment**

**West Region Office**

733 Exeter Road  
London, Ontario  
Tel: 1-800-265-7672