

Transportation Minister Ignores Safety Warning: Refuses To Order Independent Study

**Press Release issued by Frank Klees MPP
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(Queen's Park) PC Transportation Critic, Frank Klees today called on the Transportation Minister to immediately order an independent inspection of culverts underneath the Trans-Canada Highway, citing serious safety concerns.

At a meeting on April 6th, the Minister was presented with evidence that many of the culverts underneath the TransCanada Highway, west of Sudbury, are at risk of immediate structural failure.

The minister was warned in a letter signed by Gerrard Mulhern, P.Eng., Executive Director of the Ontario Concrete Pipe Association, that the deteriorating condition of these culverts would result in a "deadly failure" of the pavement overhead.

In May 2006, a teenager died in the city of Greater Sudbury after she drove her car into a crater created after one of the culverts collapsed. An engineering report into the failure of that culvert by an independent consultant identified many of the same problems that currently exist with Highway 17 culverts.

"The Auditor General called into question the integrity of the Ministry of Transportation's (MTO) inspection of Ontario's bridge infrastructure," said Klees. "I would hope the Minister will not continue to ignore the warnings he and his Ministry have been given concerning the deteriorating culverts under our highways. This is not limited to Northern Ontario. Culverts under Highway 407 in the GTA are showing similar structural failure."

"Having confronted the Minister and his staff with our serious concerns, we fully expected that at the very least, he would order an investigation conducted by an independent engineering firm," said Mulhern. "Not to do so, leaves the government of Ontario exposed should there be another serious incident resulting from the collapse of one of these culverts."

