

DEPUTATION REQUEST

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

Subject: Stop the GTA West Corridor Hwy 413

Spokesperson: Tony Malfara

Name of Group or person(s) being represented (if applicable): Communities Against the 413

Brief summary of issue or purpose of deputation:

Provide a verbal presentation regarding our community group's opposition to the proposed Highway 413. Letter that i will speak to with my alloted 5 minutes is attached for your review and distribution. Thank you.

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

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Good morning,

My name is Tony Malfara. I'm a long-time resident in York Region. I moved to Nobleton with my wife in 1989, where we raised two children. In 2007 we moved to Kleinburg and have been there since then.

Firstly, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today about the proposed GTA West Corridor, which is more commonly recognized as Highway 413. What I've come to understand and is not commonly recognized by the community is that the 413 is a mega-400 series highway, 170m wide with 6 traffic lanes, rail and other possible uses.

To say I was disappointed when I heard this Highway was back on the table would be an understatement. Typically, I'm not one who speaks up, but this situation concerns me enough to organize with others in the community and speak to York Region Council.

I'm here today not just as **one** concerned citizen, but as a voice for a community of concerned citizens in York Region and beyond, with numbers and awareness growing every day. A community group started in August 2020, working with a collective resolve and voice.

A voice with a common purpose which is to stop this Highway and ask you to reverse your support and endorsement for the GTA West Corridor.

In short order, we've become virtually and socially connected with a Social Media presence that is expanding at an exponential rate with 643 active concerned citizens across multiple communities in Vaughan, King Township, and beyond. We will continue to grow and strengthen as we increase awareness in our communities.

..... **The process is broken and biased**

You have voted to endorse and support this highway without considering or consulting with us, your constituents, without questioning the Province who blatantly choses to ignore any suggestion that the highway is not the best solution. The only concern expressed, and re-enforced, has been the preservation of future developable employment and residential lands.

We are the community members who will be negatively impacted by the construction of this Highway. Yet, there's been minimal, if any, concern expressed for us, the existing residents. Little attention was given to understanding what kind of impacts families will be forced to permanently endure from this major infrastructure project. This sentiment is echoed by community members across every municipality we speak with.

We've been unsupported, under-informed, and for the most part neglected and marginalized by the provincial government, our MPP's, and by you, our regional political representatives.

When we started, we reached out to inform our communities and neighbors. We were not surprised at the lack of awareness, information, and details amongst those residents most impacted by the proposed Highway.

When we reach out for more information, we do not get responses. The GTA west project email is like a black hole and non-responsive. We have been emailing our MPP, Minister Steven Lecce, without any response. Minister of Transportation Caroline Mulroney has been the same.

If you talked with those in the community most impacted, you would have been shocked and saddened by the sense of helplessness and anxiety felt by the citizens you represent as Regional Councilors and Mayors.

To tell us “this is the Province’s responsibility and you can do nothing” is unacceptable. To tell us not to worry because the highway won’t be built for a long time is unacceptable.

The Province does not want to listen to us and they are not listening to other stakeholders who may be viewed as slowing the approval process.

You should be ashamed by your failure for not acknowledging this and not acting in our best interests.

..... **This is wrong**.....

The residents you represent have the basic right, perhaps even a legislative right, to be proactively informed and engaged and it’s the responsibility of all of our elected officials to ensure there is an effective process with a means to participate and be heard. I’m not sure who you are representing, but it’s not me or the other constituents who make up our communities.

Regardless of its final location, this Highway will have a devastating impact on our environment and quality of life, no matter if you live in Nobleton, Laskay, King City, Kleinburg, or anywhere else along the path of this Highway. The proposed Highway will attract additional traffic and will create ongoing chaos for residents of all our communities and sadly do little to help alleviate traffic congestion elsewhere.

The previous provincial government listened! It put a stop to this highway after a comprehensive report concluded that a 400 series Highway would be destructive to the environment and was not the best solution for addressing current and future traffic needs. Instead of a Highway, the report provided clearly articulated and more progressive alternatives, including enhancements and increased use of existing infrastructure.

Climate change continues to become more prominent and many local municipalities in the Region have publicly declared Climate Emergencies. However, you've expressed no concern about supporting a project that is a known driver of Climate Change nor to understand the increase in pollution the highway will create and the negative affect on public health in Vaughan and King, as well as other communities near the proposed Highway.

The Provincial and York Region continue to support building Highway 413 and by doing so chose to ignore public input and more progressive and less destructive alternatives for managing existing and future transportation needs identified in independent comprehensive studies.

We are frustrated and want a reasonable researched explanation on why you continue to support the Highway? Especially when:

- There is underlying and growing evidence that it is not in the best interest of public
- It is a contradiction with many of your Official Plans,
- It is not consistent with your policies for addressing Climate Change and building healthy sustainable communities
- You have better and more cost-effective transit and transportation options, and
- You can protect and preserve the Greenbelt and prime farmland.

We do not want this highway and the public is not asking for another 400 series highway.

The externalities have not been valued properly or perhaps not at all. The highway will be a burden and not an asset. It will bring more outside traffic through our communities as they drive to access the highway.

.....**Our ask is straightforward**.....

We want you to step back and conduct your own independent assessment. You should have more than vague references to economic benefits and quality of life implications. We believe you will find that this it is not in the best interest of the communities you serve. If you do, we believe you will reconsider your position and choose not to support the GTA West Corridor!

You have a responsibility to all of us as taxpayers, that the benefits of this highway provide an appropriate return on investment. You are already contemplating spending more money on more environmental assessments and interchanges when there are so many other priorities and needs in the Region that require our scarce funds.

Why are you not asking that the Province to consider these more progressive options as the previous provincial government had concluded. Why are you ignoring options that are less impactful to your community and the environment and support the need for strong urgent climate action? Why is proceeding with the highway better for the

community when the research about negative impacts from major transportation corridors is so well established? **Why are we different?**

As your taxpayers, we require you to ensure:

- This highway provides an appropriate return on investment.
- That the alternatives presented in the independent study commissioned by the previous provincial government can be dismissed and are not the better option.
- That the costs of infrastructure to support the highway has been fully and fairly costed and understood, and
- That these costs are borne by those who benefit financially by the Highway and not by the taxpayer and our communities.

Ironically, this highway does not help our communities and only seems to foster uncontrolled growth for developers along mostly sensitive environmental lands. It is unclear how it will do anything to alleviate traffic. It seems more likely it will create induced demand that increases traffic and becomes major source of air pollution.

As a community, we are concerned the proposed highway is:

- Proceeding without appropriate governance.
- Proceeding without sufficient research on traffic and quality of life impact for the residents.
- Proceeding without proactively informing and engaging with the communities and residents impacted
- Creating irreparable damage on the large sections of sensitive lands
- Proceeding with decisions using outdated, incomplete, and biased information.
- Resulting in hidden or unplanned costs to the Region, beyond the grossly outdated and understated \$6 Billion provincial cost for the Highway itself.
- Under scoped to minimize opposition and facilitate quicker approval by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and once started will expand scope to allow additional interchanges and sprawl around the community.
- Creating enormous traffic disruption and congestion at Hwy 400 where the Highway ends and a municipal road system that is not sufficient to support the Highway.

At this point you're thinking this is a provincial Highway and the decision to proceed is not for the Region's to make.

Yes, this is a 400 series highway and ultimately the provincial government decides. It can be forced it on us, but it is disappointing to see how little opposition there's been and how easily this highway continues to be supported and endorsed by York Region. You have a voice. You can speak up. You can commission our own independent assessment in consultation with your citizens.

Ensuring your citizens are fully aware and adequately informed is your responsibility and not one you can defer to the MTO, the Provincial Government, or its consultants. We've had no voice.

In the eyes of your citizens, the Region cannot support a decision-making process that values and prioritizes speed of execution as a replacement for due process and stakeholder input. A Provincial government that is blinded by the desire to proceed “as fast as possible” and believes that soliciting and listening to meaningful community and stakeholder input is the enemy as it will slow us down.

Large scale, complex, and pervasive initiatives such as this Highway are by definition high risk. They will have a long-lasting environmental, quality of life and financial impact on our communities.

Before you continue to support the Provincial governments direction for this Highway, we expect you, as our elected representatives, to show evidence that collectively the Region and the Provincial government have:

- Acted in good faith and have proactively created the necessary community awareness
- Engaged with all relevant stakeholders and special interest groups requiring their input
- Considered the appropriateness and viability of the proposed location,
- Assessed the impact on traffic and our quality of life.
- Considered the impact on the environment, followed established environmental processes, and do not bypass established processes for the sake of expediency.
- Exhausted the alternatives to a highway as detailed in the previous liberal provincial government, and
- Fully assessed and analyzed the financial impact of building the Highway in addition to ongoing future costs

This Highway is going through our region and our communities. It is your responsibility to give yourselves every opportunity to make sure “we get it right”.

WHY? Because once you start you can’t go back. You have an obligation to us, your taxpayers and citizens, to ensure we are fairly represented and that you make the right decisions.

We strongly believe that conducting a thorough and independent assessment will result in the same conclusion as the experts, which is not proceed with Highway 413 and to make alternative investments to address transportation needs for today and the future.

If that were the case, would you change your position and consider bringing forward a motion to oppose the highway?

Going forward can we be more informed and involved? Will you commit to provide us with reasonable notice of staff reports and can you commit to giving us the opportunity to be heard before positions are taken and decision made.

I would like to end by recognizing and thanking Councilors lafrate, Jackson, and Rosati who have already spoken with our group.

On behalf of our community group, I want to thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak. We look forward to having the opportunity for further discussion and engagement with more of you.