

From: Tyler Raponi
Sent: Monday, February 8, 2021 3:23 PM
To: Regional Clerk <ClerkGeneralLine@york.ca>
Subject: Opposition to GTA West Highway (413)

Dear York Regional Councillors and Mayors,

Cars are not the future. Communities are.

You cannot in good conscience support a new and hugely unnecessary highway and simultaneously say you are looking out for the residents of York Region, Ontario, or the rest of the world. We are all connected, and not by highways, but by a collective understanding that climate change and carbon emissions are making the planet inhabitable.

Nearly 50 municipalities across Ontario have declared climate emergencies, including some in York Region. While the number of cities is low, those municipalities represent nearly 90% of Ontario's population. It is overwhelmingly clear that voters and councils want to do something about climate change, but so far all efforts have been largely symbolic. Opposing development of the 413 would be a tangible, measurable step in the right direction.

As a York Region resident I am calling on you to oppose the Province's construction of the GTA West Highway (also known as Highway 413) at the upcoming York Regional Council meeting on February 11th.

This mega-highway will rip through our community with devastating impacts on our homes, our communities, our farmland, our wetlands, and will pave over many hectares of Greenbelt in Vaughan despite the Province's promises to protect the Greenbelt. It will also add more polluting cars and trucks to our roads and increase the region's greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite these impacts, York Regional Councillors voted to support the Province's GTA West Highway in December 2019, stating that "York Region supports the decision to resume the Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment and requests that the highway be constructed as soon as possible."

This endorsement came with no consultation, and it came at a time when many of York's municipalities like Newmarket and Vaughan have declared a climate emergency. This is a commitment to strong action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Endorsing the GTA West Highway directly conflicts with these commitments.

Since your 2019 endorsement of the highway, more than 10,000 people across the GTA West corridor have signed petitions asking their MPPs to reconsider this highway. More than 500 phone calls have gone to MPPs from concerned residents just in King-Vaughan. In the last 48 hours alone, almost 5000 people have asked the federal government to step in to perform a federal environmental assessment for this project.

On February 11th, I am calling on you to take action, and withdraw York Regional Council's support for this highway.

Agenda item E.2.1 “Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor Update” proposes further road widenings and harmful impacts to adjacent communities. Instead of adopting more road widenings, Council must move to withdraw its previous support for the GTA West Highway corridor, in light of the potentially devastating impacts to York Region residents’ communities, farmlands, wetlands, forests, and green spaces.

The Province has proposed weakening environmental assessments for the GTA West Highway to the point where they are essentially meaningless, allowing “early works” like bridges and waterways to be built before the environmental impacts are fully known. Your constituents could see devastating impacts to their farms, wetlands, and water sources that will not be known until it's too late. Your continued endorsement of the Province’s plans for this highway tells residents that York Regional Council does not support preserving the Greenbelt, prime agricultural land, wetlands and water sources, and urgent action on climate change.

The decision on whether or not to build the highway rests with the Province. But the decision on whether or not to declare your support for the highway rests with you. Halton Region, Orangeville, and Halton Hills have all chosen to oppose Highway 413 based on local opposition. I am asking you to do the same.

Enough is enough. Please listen to your constituents, and withdraw your support for the GTA West Highway.

Tyler Raponi