

From: Sarah Buchanan

Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 10:41 AM

To: Regional Clerk <ClerkGeneralLine@york.ca>

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Subject: Council Item F3 and F4: Designation Request for the Proposed GTA West Highway and Bradford Bypass

Dear York Regional Councillors, Mayors, and Chair,

I am writing to call your attention to two important communications on the agenda for your Feb 25th meeting concerning the proposed GTA West Highway and the Bradford Bypass, items F3 and F4.

<https://yorkpublishing.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=19351>

<https://yorkpublishing.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=19350>

The federal government is requesting York Region's input on a request that is critical to the environmental protection of the region, and to the protection of local protected Greenbelt and farmland - the request for federal Environmental Assessments for both highways.

As many local York Region residents requested in your February 11th meeting, I am asking you to **support the requests for a Federal Environmental Assessment pursuant to s.9(1) of the Impact Assessment Act (I.A.A.) for both proposed highway projects** instead of simply receiving these items for no further action.

Ecojustice, on behalf of Environmental Defence, Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, and many local organizations and residents, has requested that the federal government designate these two 400-series highways for federal environmental assessments in light of their potentially devastating environmental impacts.

These impacts would threaten green spaces, local ecosystems, watersheds, wetlands, forests, farmlands and protected Greenbelt areas in York Region, and could significantly impact areas of federal jurisdiction like fish habitat and migratory birds (to name just a few). Significant public concern has been expressed about both highways, with tens of thousands of emails sent to local representatives about the GTA West Highway (Highway 413) alone.

The Province has proposed significantly weakening the existing EA process for these highways, and this could render the proposed project extremely harmful to York Region with little advance knowledge of the potential impacts. For example, the new proposed process for the GTA West Highway would aim to start construction on major bridges over waterways - some of the most sensitive ecosystems in the region - before the EA process is even complete and the impacts are fully known. This is inadequate and potentially devastating, and this is why we have asked the federal government to intervene.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or require any more information. Laura Bowman, the staff lawyer at Ecojustice who submitted this request on our behalf, has requested to speak on these items at your upcoming meeting. Her letters can be found enclosed in the materials for these agenda items and they clearly outline the case for federal designation.

Here is a blog with a short summary of our requests:

<https://environmentaldefence.ca/2021/02/03/the-federal-government-needs-to-stop-ontario-from-fast-tracking-two-gta-mega-highways/>

Please accept this letter as a submission for inclusion on the agenda for the York Regional Council meeting on Feb 25th.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sarah Buchanan

Ontario Climate Program Manager

Pronouns: she/her