

16235 7th Concession
King, ON L7B 0E1

February 10, 2021

Steve Pellegrini – Mayor of King Township
Councillor for York Region

Re: GTA West - map of preferred route

I have had an opportunity to review the preferred route of the GTA West highway.

While it appears the planning team has been careful to avoid existing and planned urban areas, the route seems to target many significant environmental features along its length. This is a huge concern to me because there seem to be far too many future opportunities for 'in-filling' between existing transportation corridors and this new highway, following the same pattern of new developments that sprung up along Highway 407, as the 'building envelope' was extended beyond Highways 401 and the 403/QEW. **The GTA West corridor will spell the end of the Greenbelt, which many citizens of Ontario value highly.** The last thing congested Ontario transportation routes need is more of the same choking congestion.

Here are a few obvious impacts from this project – even before any in-filling is proposed:

1. The highway will require the creation of 17 interchanges, plus their land-intensive footprints.
2. The road cut from the Highway 427 interchange, inclusive of the Highway 27 interchange, would be located in a current large chunk of forest.
3. The link from the north end of 427 to the 413 would be almost entirely within a forested river valley of Robinson Creek.
4. The Highway 400 connection would be constructed within the East Humber River wetland complex.
5. There are approximately 53 river and stream crossings along the length of the proposed highway.

It is glaringly obvious the GTA West Corridor will create MORE car-dependent sprawl on an already over-congested landscape. While local politicians talk about compact, walkable, liveable communities, the province shows a distinct preference for the exact opposite. Consider the former Greenbelt, which former Conservative Premier Bill Davis

tried to establish in 1972. Mr. Davis wanted to place limits on urban conversion of greenspace and associated urban sprawl. His former Greenbelt is now known as Highway 407. Its construction was a HUGE cost to Ontario taxpayers, and some of those same residents now pay outrageous fees to use this road – and fees will continue to rise and gouge drivers until 2098. This unfortunate deal was negotiated by the Mike Harris government, in direct contravention of the public's interest. What an insult to the foresight of Bill Davis!

Now, let's consider the GTA West Corridor highway within the context of its requirement for aggregate materials. The Ministry of Natural Resources has revised Ontario's aggregate requirements between 2010 and 2030 from an average of 186-million tonnes per year to 192-million tonnes per year. 98% of this aggregate will come from within Ontario, according to the 'State of the Aggregate Resource in Ontario Study'. A large portion of these NEW aggregate materials will go toward this highway, and other roads, despite the province's proclaimed interest in 'reclaimed aggregate'.

Ontario (through the Ministry of Transportation) owns a total of 641 Pits & Quarries in the province, and it has issued itself licences to extract 'unlimited tonnages' (meaning in excess of 100-million tonnes) of aggregate from EACH of those locations. It owns an additional 20 pits & quarries through the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources. The total number of pits and quarries in operation across Ontario (as of 2019) total 5,963, and I note 2,410 of them are owned by numbered companies. Ontario appears to be the biggest purchaser of aggregate materials in the province.

This province continues to emphasize how important it is for aggregates to be mined 'close to markets' (extracted primarily from the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine) so transportation costs and dust will be minimized. And, what about the value of producing agricultural products close to markets, so they arrive fresh? Apparently, Ontario does not consider agriculture to be a real form of industry, despite the fact:

“In 2017, Ontario’s family farm and food processing businesses contributed \$39.5 billion in GDP and supported 822,483 jobs. Agriculture and agri-food processors are the Number One economic contributor to Ontario’s overall economy. Jeopardizing these stable, recession resistant businesses and jobs runs counter to an “open-for-business” mindset.” ~ Keith Curry, Pres., Ont. Fed. Of Agriculture, 19-Jan-2019

Yet, Ontario appears ready to continue this conversion of agricultural lands to more highways and other forms of development and in-filling. Between 2019 and the 1996 census, Ontario lost 1.5 million acres of farmland. Between 2011 and 2016, Ontario lost another 319,700 acres of agricultural land, the equivalent of 175 acres/day over that five-year period. The Conservatives are ready to continue the same unsustainable pattern of loss.

This new GTA West corridor will create the same type of pressures as Highway 407, which is now lined with warehouses, new roads, more subdivisions, and LESS

agricultural land, far fewer natural areas; all this new development falls under the classification of 'in-filling'. More highways, more congestion, more development, more pollution. Less locally-grown food while 'open natural space' dwindles again.

Ontario errs by claiming aggregates are 'produced'; aggregates are extracted and processed. This is NOT a renewable resource. Aggregate mining degrades one area through extraction activities so another area can be dug up, bull-dozed, levelled and made ready to 'accept' tonnes of aggregate from elsewhere. There is no conservation ethos involved in these activities. Aggregate mining involves the stripping of 'over-burden', which most of us would recognize as farmland or forests, along with predictable negative effects on associated species and aquatic systems, and on our own locally-grown food supplies. Once dismantled, those areas can never be restored to their former state. Follow-up rehabilitation efforts are usually inadequate, under-funded though costly, and never restore the original ecosystem. Land surfaces, groundwater, fisheries and natural terrestrial systems around worked-out quarries are irreversibly impacted and degraded.

At the same time Ontario pledges to ensure there will be vast amounts of aggregate materials to support more and more development (with no recognition of the need for stabilization of communities and services), the province claims it is protecting those exact SAME areas through Greenbelt legislation, the Niagara Escarpment Act, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Act. Cognitive dissonance, anyone?

Consider the above paragraphs within the context of this planned GTA West Corridor, another multi-laned 400-series highway to ensure vehicles can zoom across this increasingly congested part of the massive development zone, quaintly identified as the Greater Toronto Area, subsumed within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Recent history shows the addition of more road space NEVER creates a reduction in traffic congestion in Ontario.

And what about the additional greenhouse gas emissions (GGEs)? Don't forget to consider the CO2 emissions from producing/laying new asphalt, as well as large emissions from mining aggregates, then producing and curing of concrete and cement.

In order to understand GGEs, we have to consider the cradle-to-grave costs of all development, including vehicle production and associated infrastructure and services, not just the CO2 content of gasoline or diesel fuel. Domestic vehicle emissions already have a deleterious effect on health, especially when pulverized sub-micron sized particles from tire and brake wear are added into the same 'breathing space'. Hundreds of new townhouses continue to be built right alongside Highway 400, north of Highway 401. One has to wonder what the effects of all that direct pollution and inhaled particulate matter will be on adults, and especially young children, who live there. Why don't politicians bother to consider the health problems associated with all their mega-projects for increased congestion?

THINK carefully about obvious respiratory and related health risks from airborne sub-micron sized particulate matter produced by the wear on (or mass lost from) brakes and tires on ALL roads. These particles lead to lung diseases and associated medical costs.

50-70% of total 'wear materials' are released as airborne particles. Inductively Coupled Plasma (ICP) spectrometry shows average loss rates of tire and brake materials are 97 and 9 mg/vkm respectively. (vkm = vehicle kilometre) Tiny particles are inhaled deep into lungs. These particles are rich in certain transition metals (i.e., zinc, copper, iron) adding to air toxicity. Heavier vehicles create more brake and tire wear particles than lighter vehicles.

If Ontario wanted to promote 'compact liveable walkable' and 'BREATHABLE' communities, while reducing GGEs to curb climate change, then **this anachronistic highway** should NOT be built. This GTA West highway really represents another unnecessary 'tribute' to car dependency and the mid-20th century. It should NOT be built, ESPECIALLY when it will be rammed right through the Greenbelt, the conservation of which has massive support among members of the public.

Finally, while discussing 'breathing space', it should be necessary for each municipality to develop an 'oxygen budget'. York Region Forestry (with the assistance of Toronto Region Conservation Authority) did some preliminary investigations into oxygen production in the growing cities of Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan, which was presented at the LaTornell Symposium on November 2014: "There is enough urban forest today to produce oxygen for 203,000, or 26%, of the 775,551 residents" within the combined populations. I'd like to think we might 'budget' some oxygen for native species for whom breathing is also a necessity, but this study is comprehensive and well-presented. Ontario was premature in 'axing' the 50-Million Trees Program, particularly in light of many of its recent 'proposals' for accelerated development and MORE busy roads.

Like everywhere else in the world, Ontario has finite space and finite resources. The natural landscape, resources and associated native species are being stressed enormously by the political mania for never-ending 'growth'. The growing human population is also affected by the stresses of its own unsustainable growth patterns.

Politicians are mesmerized by increases in GDP figures which are presumed to reflect social benefits associated with growing costs of products and services, always interpreted to be a 'good thing', and a sign of 'growing wealth'. There is no recognition of the fact that increasing costs are also associated with scarcity and losses created by disasters such as wild fires, flooding, chemical spills and other human disasters. In fact, the Insurance Bureau of Canada said 'flooding is the new fire' in southern Ontario, following disastrous flooding in Spring 2018, noting "the amount of land people cover with buildings, parking pads, parking lots and more, is linked to the costly rising tide of urban flooding that is expected to worsen in coming years." And what does the provincial government intend to do about this? More paving.

This area is already heavily populated and congested; now, the provincial government says we need more of the same. The federal level is on the same track, too. There is no support at any level of government for 'taking a breather' and reviewing the big picture in terms of the overall environment, valuable ecosystem services that will be lost -- and what about native species?

If Ontario wants to address the major problems faced by this province, it needs to focus on solving the unsustainable pace of 'forced growth' and development – instead of exacerbating the problem.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Hotte', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Vicki Hotte