

# DEPUTATION REQUEST

REGIONAL COUNCIL  
FEBRUARY 25, 2021

**Subject:** GTA West Corridor

**Spokesperson:** Irene Ford

**Name of Group or person(s) being represented (if applicable):**  
Stop the 413

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**Brief summary of issue or purpose of deputation:**

Support Federal EA Request



Irene Ford  
Woodbridge, ON  
L4L 3W8

York Region Council  
1725 Young Street,  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Feb 10, 2021

## **Re: Agenda Item E.2.1 GTA West Transportation Corridor Update**

Regional Chair Emmerson, Mayor and Regional Councillors,

The purpose of this letter is to express concerns about York Region Council's (Council) support for the proposed GTA West Corridor/Highway 413 (the highway). Today I am asking Council to consider two requests.

- 1) Reverse support and endorsement for the highway**
- 2) Officially request the Federal Government conduct an Environmental Assessment of the proposed highway as has been done by Ecojustice on behalf of Environmental Defence and the Town of Halton Hills<sup>1</sup>**

### **Public Consultation, Awareness and Feedback**

As residents learn more about the proposed highway, they are starting to fully grasp the size of scale of what Council is supporting on their behalf. It is not a corridor and it is misleading of Council and the Province to call it such. It is a mega-400-series-highway equivalent if not larger in width than the existing 400, 401 or 407 with multiple interchanges comparable, possibly larger, in size<sup>2,3</sup>.

Community members are extremely disappointed that Council choose to support such a large infrastructure project without asking, consulting or informing the community. I understand that this is a Provincial project, I understand that Council is not able to undertake public consultation on all issues. This issue is not minor; it's a multi-billion-dollar project that will fundamentally change the local character of communities, bring more traffic and air pollution into and through Vaughan, destroy prime farmland and environmentally sensitive lands, fragment and isolate our community, farms and wildlife. There are members of the community that are only finding out now; they were completely unaware and many are still ill informed. Continually our elected

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Defence, News Release: Groups request the federal government conduct environmental assessments for two proposed Ontario highways on environmentally sensitive land. 3 Feb, 21. See: <https://environmentaldefence.ca/2021/02/03/groups-request-federal-government-conduct-environmental-assessments-two-proposed-ontario-highways-environmentally-sensitive-land/>

<sup>2</sup> Community Value Plan Meeting #2 Nov 3, 2020 see Slides 11, 16-20: <https://www.gta-west.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CVP-Meeting-2-Presentation.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gta-west.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Technically-Preferred-Route-By-Section\\_Aerial-Photography-Background.pdf](https://www.gta-west.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Technically-Preferred-Route-By-Section_Aerial-Photography-Background.pdf)

representatives promote the importance of community engagement, accountable and transparent government. You can imagine why some of these residents feel like these are only words and not reflected in actions<sup>4</sup>. Our MPPs are absent they have been continually emailed but the community has not even been given the courtesy of a response. The province's GTA Project West established email has not sent a single communication update since the release of the preliminary design last August and does not respond to emails. To put your hands up in the air and tell us it is the Province's project and you have no choice is not true. The Province may still construct the highway but that does not mean you have no choice to support or not support the highway.

Support for the highway is not consistent with public feedback received through the ongoing municipal comprehensive review. Residents are not asking for mega-highways, they are not even asking for new roads they are asking for better transit, to utilize infrastructure we already have (road, rail), to make transportation healthier, more climate friendly and for walkable communities that promote active transportation<sup>5,6</sup>.

### **Local Traffic & Public Health**

How will this highway support and alleviate any of the traffic woes experienced by Vaughan residents? Major pain points are nowhere close to the highway. It seems more likely to create traffic congestion and negative community impacts. Current local and regional roads adjacent to the route are not able to accommodate large volumes of traffic or heavy vehicles. Regardless, the City of Vaughan is proceeding like the highway has been approved by choosing to endorse a MZO for a Walmart Distribution Facility that will bring 100s of trailers daily to our community<sup>7</sup>.

There has been no acknowledgement of the public health burden Council will facilitate and force upon residents by supporting the highway. Minister Caroline Mulroney was

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<sup>4</sup> The Regional Municipality of York, Code of Conduct for Council Members, 18 Apr, 19: [https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/70c4d0c7-0196-4e6e-9819-2fc97319f327/Code+of+Conduct\\_Council+Members.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mLVV0xf](https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/70c4d0c7-0196-4e6e-9819-2fc97319f327/Code+of+Conduct_Council+Members.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mLVV0xf)

<sup>5</sup> York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review [What We Heard](#)

- Transit is the top Regional service that residents indicate they will rely on most in the future and York Region should continue to invest in public transit
- Residents want compact, walkable communities that offer employment opportunities, community facilities, local services, stores and places for social connection
- Affordable housing is one of the most important components of building complete communities, however, many of us are facing housing market challenges
- Residents want our communities to reduce emissions and are aware of the impacts of climate change in York Region
- Residents want to protect our forests, parks, trails, agricultural lands and green spaces
- Residents want a variety of Employment Opportunities within their community

<sup>6</sup> Province of Ontario, Ministry of Transportation Public Survey Results: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/greater-golden-horseshoe-ggh-transportation-plan#section-2>

<sup>7</sup> Mayor Bevilacqua's Members Resolution entitled: "REQUEST FROM CONMAR DEVELOPMENTS INC. & FENLANDS VAUGHAN INC., DG GROUP AND LORWOOD HOLDINGS FOR MINISTER'S ZONING ORDER FOR THE DECLASSIFICATION OF PROVINCIALLY SIGNIFICANT WETLANDS IN BLOCK 34 EAST" Mar 9, 2020: <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=30449>

quoted saying the highway is expected to support 300,000 trips per day<sup>8</sup>. What does that mean for local air quality and pollution? Especially in context of climate change, which will worsen local air quality. At any time has Council expressed concern for the health of their residents or requested the province complete a Health Impact Assessment? Did you not care to ask or are you not aware that there has been no analysis of potential health impacts completed by the province<sup>9</sup>?

## **The Justification for the Proposed Solution is Fundamentally Flawed**

The EA process has been heavily criticized for good reason. In 2017, an Advisory Panel concluded that the EA was fundamentally flawed on needs and alternatives and did not demonstrate that it was the only option to address regional transportation needs<sup>10</sup>. All of the information and studies supporting the highway, including the demand analysis are dated more than ten years<sup>11</sup>. On top of this, as a result of the pandemic our lives have changed dramatically, people have been forced to embrace working from home and telecommuting. We do not yet know how this may impact transportation habitats and needs. The province has not addressed or acknowledged any of these concerns.

In May, 2020 a presentation to Ontario Ministers from industry groups representing the Residential and Commercial Construction Industry contained a recommendation to accelerate approvals of the GTA West Corridor and other key pieces of York Region infrastructure, in order to 'unlock housing supply' and create more certainty of future housing supply<sup>12</sup>. In July, 2020 the province released legislative changes to fast track the EA approvals under the guise of economic recovery from COVID-19<sup>13</sup>. The development pressure on local governments will be insurmountable and local Councils will not be able to resist, especially in the absence of provincial support. Speculation has already commenced based on a Commercial Real Estate analysis<sup>14</sup>, suggesting prime agricultural land is and will be developable around the highway 27 interchange.

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<sup>8</sup>Toronto Star Article, Noor Javed. "This is a Stupid Place to Put a Highway" 27 Jan, 21.

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2021/01/27/this-is-a-stupid-place-to-put-the-highway-doug-fords-government-has-fast-tracked-a-new-gta-freeway-during-covid-19-sparking-local-opposition.html>

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Minister Caroline Mulroney to Michael Chong. 20 Jan, 20

<https://www.haltonhills.ca/en/residents/resources/Documents/MTO---GTA-West-Update-2020.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> May, 2017 - GTA West Corridor Advisory Panel Report

<https://web.archive.org/web/20190618163558/http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/publications/gta-west-report/executive-summary.shtml#conc>

<sup>11</sup> Pg. 16: <https://www.gta-west.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GTA-West-Travel-Demand-Backgrounder-v1-red.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Residential and Commercial Construction Industry Government of Ontario's Post COVID-19 Recovery Construction to Kick Start Ontario's Economy - Proposed Liquidity and Recovery Measures. 19 May, 20

<https://bildgta.ca/Assets/BILD%20OHBA%20CHBA%20Final%20OJRC%20-%20June%202020.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Proposed regulation for a streamlined environmental assessment process for the Ministry of Transportation's Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor project.

<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1882>

<sup>14</sup> Avison Young, GTA WEST Multimodal Transportation Corridor, Factsheet

<https://www.avisonyoung.ca/documents/56635302/56647756/GTA+West+Multimodal+Transportation+Corridor+F+act+Sheet/475acaa9-7667-41f3-bca9-e0b9ebada2bc>

## Council's Support for the Greenbelt & Climate Change is Compromised

Preservation of prime farmland is continually advocated by government yet we are still losing 5 farms/week to development in Ontario. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has not opposed the highway but has requested that an Agricultural Impact Assessment be completed. This has not been addressed by the Province.

The value of Natural Asset Management, the ability to provide ecosystem services and enable climate resiliency (natural cooling, source and storm water protection, carbon sequestration) for free, is increasingly recognized; the highway weakens and undermines this free asset<sup>15</sup>. This will translate into costs borne by municipalities to pay for engineered treatment of drinking water and storm water protection, not to mention increased public health burdens (extreme heat, poor air quality). **The largest loss of forests from the proposed highway will occur in Vaughan; a 1.5 km stretch around the twin valleys of the Humber and East Humber Rivers**<sup>16</sup>. Conservation Authorities will not have any oversight or be involved the permitting and approvals for construction over environmentally sensitive valleys and water crossings.

In the context of a Provincial government that has changed almost every piece of Ontario's environmental legislation to its detriment **local governments must be stronger**. Reliance from the province for leadership on environmental protection and climate change is meaningless and it is foolish to think or advocate otherwise. Council cannot say they are committed to strong and urgent action on Climate Change, preservation of the Greenbelt and prime agriculture and support the highway without question. It is a contradiction and **if Council continues to support the highway then the statement you're making to your constituents is that you don't care about Climate Change or the Greenbelt or prime agricultural land**. I am not advocating to you when I speak about Climate Change. I am reminding you of the truth based on scientific fact, governments need to act urgently and take decisive action.

Council's continual unwavering support for a questionable mega-400-series highway combined with continual attempts to rezone and redesignate greenbelt land and certain local councils endorsing excessive and unnecessary developer requests for MZOs **forces me to question whose interests you're representing; your communities or developers?** I do not believe that the majority of your constituents want a meg-400-series highway that will pave over farmlands, wetlands, forests, drive climate change and impede meaningful climate action. I do believe residents want better transportation options through improvement of regional and local roads, more walkable communities and better transit.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.watercanada.net/feature/a-few-more-steps-understanding-the-economics-of-low-impact-development/>

[Opinion: It's time to reveal the hidden value of Canada's natural assets](#)

<sup>16</sup> AECOM, GTA West Natural Environment Existing Conditions Map <https://www.gta-west.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/11/Section-04-Natural-Environment-Existing-Conditions-Map.pdf> Also derived from MNR Natural Heritage Mapping tool: [https://www.gisapplication.lrc.gov.on.ca/mamnh/Index.html?site=MNR\\_NHLUPS\\_NaturalHeritage&viewer=NaturalHeritage&locale=en-US](https://www.gisapplication.lrc.gov.on.ca/mamnh/Index.html?site=MNR_NHLUPS_NaturalHeritage&viewer=NaturalHeritage&locale=en-US).

Please consider my request today to reverse support for this destructive and controversial highway. If you still want to proceed with your support at a minimum request the Federal government conduct a thorough and comprehensive environmental assessment to facilitate a transparent and accountable process for York Region residents. This would also support York Region's ability to meet all of your strategic goals, rather than weak justification of economic benefits that discount environmental and community impacts<sup>17</sup>.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Irene Ford

Note this letter will be forwarded to applicable Provincial MPPs, Federal MPs and local Vaughan Councillors

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<sup>17</sup> York Region. 2019-2023 Strategic Plan: [https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/e9612765-7323-40bf-904c-715cd0c21d6b/18453\\_CorporateStrategicPlan-Approved.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/e9612765-7323-40bf-904c-715cd0c21d6b/18453_CorporateStrategicPlan-Approved.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

**From:** IRENE FORD

**To:** [regionalclerk@york.ca](mailto:regionalclerk@york.ca) <[regionalclerk@york.ca](mailto:regionalclerk@york.ca)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 23, 2021, 11:58:51 a.m. EST

**Subject:** Feb 25 Agenda Items F3 & F4

Please add the below as a communication to Agenda Items F3 and F4.

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. I was a speaker at the February 11th Committee of the Whole meeting my communication is attached for your reference. at that time I and other residents asked you to **support the request for a Federal Environmental Assessment pursuant to s.9(1) of the Impact Assessment Act (I.A.A.) for the proposed GTA West Corridor. I am also asking that you support the same request for the proposed Bradford Bypass through the Holland Marsh.**

I can not express my disappointment that the recommendation from staff is to 'receive' federal governments communications, which is requesting input from York Region. At a bare minimum, after hearing from so many of your constituents last week combined with the mounting media attention and public outcry, I would expect York Council to ask for staff to review the request and provide feedback to Council and the Federal Government. The EA and approval for the Bradford Bypass is over 20 years old and the province is asking for an exemption to the Condition of Approvals, to do even less than was required 20 years ago. Quite frankly I can understand how this can be legal or condoned.

The Province is not listening or acting in a manner that is in the best interests of the people of Ontario, this has been proven time and again recently especially with regard to the bulldozing of development projects that are of questionable benefit to local communities and drive climate change. They have systematically weakened legislation surrounding planning and environment. These actions are actually compounding and worsening environmental and climate change impacts.

**York Region Council must speak up loudly and if you do not then you are complicit and complement in a pattern of development that is and will be detrimental to every aspect of York Region resident's lives. This is unacceptable not only are you not speaking up for your constituents you are not speaking up and compiling with your own policies and strategic goals. These proposed highways can not be supported without question.**

Additional information for your consideration is provided below. I hope further action will be taken tomorrow.

Thank you,  
Irene Zeppieri



## **GTA West Corridor**

- the Province is not asking 'if' the highway should proceed they are only asking 'how' the highway should proceed (i.e. the design and final route location); this means contrary to Commissioner Jankowski comments on Feb 11, that no other solutions or alternatives for this portion of the GTA West EA are being evaluated or investigated, the proposed corridor is the solution even though there are other viable solutions that were never fully explored e.g. better utilization of the 407 (refer to Advisory Panel Report)
- the Province has proposed to fast track the highway and allow early works prior to final approval of the EA, this makes no sense what are the asking to be approved they will start construction and be committed to the route prior to approval
- the Province has not given an updated budget but is committing to proceeding with early works and the entire project, does this seem fiscally responsible
- the highway does not connect with any planned major transit centers
- will drive sprawl and warehouse type industrial parks economic benefits from both are overstated and likely both will create cost burdens that will be borne by local and regional government and impacts forced upon local communities - neither of these are visions that

## **Bradford Bypass**

The current government is proceeding in a manner that is archaic, reckless, disregards public consultation/interests and will be detrimental to the environment. It behooves me to understand how so many individuals who are supposed to be representing the public are proceeding with a project that is clearly based on outdated data and modelling. The studies and approval was given at a time when the Greenbelt and Lake Simcoe Plan did not exist and climate change was not part of the conversation or evaluation. This project was started so long ago that the policy, social, environmental and economic environment is completely different and to suggest that a 20 year old approval for such a large infrastructure project is adequate is foolish and disrespectful to the people of Ontario.

The EA Notice of Approval is quite dated from 2002 and the EA was initiated in 1997. Upon reviewing the project files it would appear that only 3 public consultation sessions were completed during the late 90s on 'IF' the highway should proceed. To say that the Province completed public consultation is disingenuous, people impacted now were not old enough to be consulted or did not live there at the time.

The EA approval was given dependent on conditions of approval. Now almost 20 years later the government is trying to change legislation so that they can do even less than what was required then. To suggest this is red tape or duplication of process is misleading and simply not true. The outcome will be that the government eliminates obligations to consult and conduct further studies. How can the EA approval be valid if you do not fulfill all of the conditions? I don't think it can be valid. If you read the approval it clearly states that the conditions are included to address concerns raised during the study. To not fulfill the conditions therefore means non-compliance with the approval and provincial legislation.

The health of Lake Simcoe is not as well as the province would like the public to believe. The Province has not meet it's reporting obligations under the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan and the impacts from the Bradford Bypass would be impossible to understand since the EA report is so dated and we do not even know the current health status of the Lake but it is fragile I am sure. The Lake is under immense pressure from invasive species, urban sprawl, stormwater run-off and climate change. The Bradford Bypass would only amplify an already stressed aquatic eco-system.