

Gina Ceci

Vaughan, Ontario

March 16, 2021

**RE: Meeting of Council for the Region of York on March 18, 2021**

**AND RE: Proposed Highway 413**

Dear Council Members for the Region of York,

My family resides in the area of Highway 27 and Kirby Road in Kleinburg. We purchased this property because of the natural beauty, it lies next to TRCA lands with a dense forest and ravine and the Humber River runs only a few hundred metres from our home. The proposed Highway 413 will run less than a kilometre north of our property, on the opposite end of the TRCA lands that are next to our property.

It is extremely disappointing to hear that the Provincial Government is proposing to proceed with constructing Highway 413. It is extremely disappointing that you have shown support for this Highway.

**There has been little to no public support for this Highway and it would be extremely concerning if Council for the Region of York chose to continue to endorse this Highway especially in light of the City of Vaughan, the Region of Peel, the City of Mississauga, Halton Region, the Town of Orangeville, the Town of Halton Hills and the City of Toronto having decided to oppose this Highway!**

Vaughan residents are very concerned about how our interests are and will be represented your meeting on March 18, 2021 with respect to this Highway. As you are aware, less than a week ago on March 10, 2021, Vaughan Council passed a motion to reverse endorsement for support of Highway 413. This has not been acknowledged or presented in any staff communications at the time of writing and none of the Vaughan Council members who voted to support this motion will be present at your meeting on March 18 2021.

How can staff tell Council that the Provincial Environmental Assessment process is sufficient, when the opposite is true. For a staff report to take such a perspective is of deep concern since it runs entirely contrary to the TRCA being stripped by the Provincial government of its powers. In fact, the TRCA has now openly commented that it is operating "**under duress**" from the provincial government. It is clear the Provincial government isn't even listening to the TRCA, it is dictating to the TRCA what it should do, and that's certainly the case with Ministerial Zoning Orders and the recent example of the Duffins Creek Wetland. Amazon recently pulled out of looking to build a facility on those Wetlands and the company stated that "environmental concerns" played a large role in its decision.

If Amazon can come to that decision, our elected officials should take better note of such actions and the very vocal concerns of the citizens that Councils represent. We have seen other Councils do that, including the Region of Peel a few days ago. Apparently, even the Pickering Mayor is now reconsidering the provincial government's push for development of these Wetlands as noted in a recent Toronto Star article entitled: **"Pickering mayor calls for 'pause' in wetlands development fast-tracked by Doug Ford government after Amazon loses interest"**.

The Provincial government and Council have not acknowledged or addressed the concerns in the [Advisory Panel Report](#), which concluded the EA was fundamentally flawed for the following reasons.

- The EA did not demonstrate 'need' rather 'opportunity'
- The two Phased EA approach has allowed the highway to proceed without properly evaluating impacts to Greenbelt lands to avoid key natural heritage and hydrological features making it unclear if it conforms to the Greenbelt Plan.
- Modeling scenarios did not adequately account for future uncertainty (travel demand assumptions, self-driving cars, growth forecasts – pandemics?).
- Other transportation infrastructure solutions recommended in Phase 1 have not been fully developed or utilized; such as better utilization of the 407.
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As a resident and taxpayer of Vaughan, I urge the following at your Council Meeting on March 18, 2021:

**Council must withdraw support for this Highway for the following reasons:**

- Destruction of precious farmland, a finite resource.
- The highway cuts through agricultural, natural heritage and environmentally sensitive lands - bisecting 85 streams (10 of which are ecologically high priority) destroying seven entire wood lots, including 5.95 km length of forest, significantly fragmenting valley lands, disrupting 1000 ha of land significant to wildlife movement, paving over 8.8 million square metres of surface.
- The streamlined EA allows for pre-construction and expansion of bridges and other infrastructure which renders the Provincial EA meaningless and if such infrastructure is found to be detrimental to the environment, it will remain.
- The new highway encourages more vehicles and more pollution and the Provincial EA is not looking at the alternative of more public transit such as the construction of the many new GO stations that were approved in 2018.
- The Highway is very close to the already functioning and underutilized Highway 407 therefore a new highway is neither needed nor worth the destruction of the environment and farmland.
- The highway is fiscally irresponsible and takes away resources from our immediate transportation needs and priorities to address traffic congestion where it exists.

**Council must support the request for the Federal Impact Assessment for the following reasons:**

- The streamlined EA allows for pre-construction which renders the Provincial EA meaningless and if such infrastructure is found to be detrimental to the environment, it will remain.
- The TRCA has stated: "*As MTO is exempt from the regulatory requirements of the CA Act, TRCA has significant concerns there is no mechanism in place for the protection of life and property or the management of natural resources...which fails to fulfill the objects of the EA Act.*"<sup>1</sup>.
- The Provincial governments weakening of environmental legislation with unclear regulations and outcomes is no longer equivalent to Federal legislation.
- Proceeding under the current regime will cause irreversible destruction to farmland, wetlands, forests, natural hydrological features and put endangered species at further risk.
- No public health or agricultural impact assessment has been completed.

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