

As a Vaughan and York Region resident for 36 years I am asking York Regional Council to:

- 1. reverse endorsement for the GTA West Corridor/Highway 413; and,**
- 2. support the request for a Federal Impact Assessment.**

There has been very little public support for this highway so it would be extremely concerning if York Region Council choose to continue to endorse the GTA West Highway. Especially, when Vaughan, Peel Region, Halton Region and the City of Toronto have all passed motions withdrawing support and/or opposing. These motions represent the will of the residents that you serve. They represent a desire to grow in a manner other than car dependency. The Official Plan Update, Forecasted Growth and Land Needs staff reports before you today are asking you to plan based on the highest growth scenario and would force the expansion of urban boundaries at the expense of prime farmland and natural heritage. The agenda has been structured to justify and rationalize that the highway is needed because of the provinces inflated and questionable Growth Projections. Why is there such a rush on something this important in the middle of a pandemic, why is this a priority?

Vaughan residents are highly concerned about how our interests are and will be represented today. Vaughan Council passed a motion on Mar 10 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 are here today to represent us only our regional representatives who all voted against the motion. On top of this staff have not documented Vaughan's decision in their response to the federal government nor do they express concern with the provinces ongoing EA stating:

"The Provincial EA process provides for the highest level of environmental assessment and stakeholder consultation. York Region is satisfied with the current Provincial process and would be negatively impacted by a lengthy delay in constructing the Project which would be likely if the GTA West Project were designated for the purpose of commencing a new Federal EA process."

How can staff tell Council that the Provincial EA process is sufficient when there are so many gaping information holes and the current provincial government has shown such a clear and utter disregard for environmental protection; they are quite literally willing to rewrite provincial laws to do as they wish? At Peel Region Council last week there was at least a [staff report](#) that acknowledged what was happening in other jurisdictions and conducted an analysis in response to public concerns. York Region residents have not been given this same courtesy. It seems like Vaughan residents' concerns are not being treated in a fair and ethical manner, as well as the decisions of Vaughan local Council.

The provincial government and Council have not acknowledged or addressed the concerns in the [Advisory Panel Report](#), which concluded the EA was flawed because:

- The EA did not demonstrate 'need'
- 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 and future technology of alternate transportation modes).

- Other transportation infrastructure solutions recommended in Phase 1 have not been fully developed or utilized; such as better utilization of the 407.

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 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.
- Hwy 413 is very close to the already functioning and underutilized Hwy 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.*"¹.
- 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.

The public understands that growth will continue however, York Region Council cannot build mega-highways and you can't support sprawl on prime farmland, these lands that are important stormwater protection for all of the GTA. Climate Change is here and demands urgent action by all levels of government in the next ten years. Before you today are decisions that must be acted upon in the face of the realities of Climate Change.

Thank you.

Elena Zeppieri

¹ TRCA Letter Re: Proposed regulation for a streamlined environmental assessment process for the Ministry of Transportation's Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor project (ERO #019-1882), refer to pg. 3: <https://pub-trca.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=6249>