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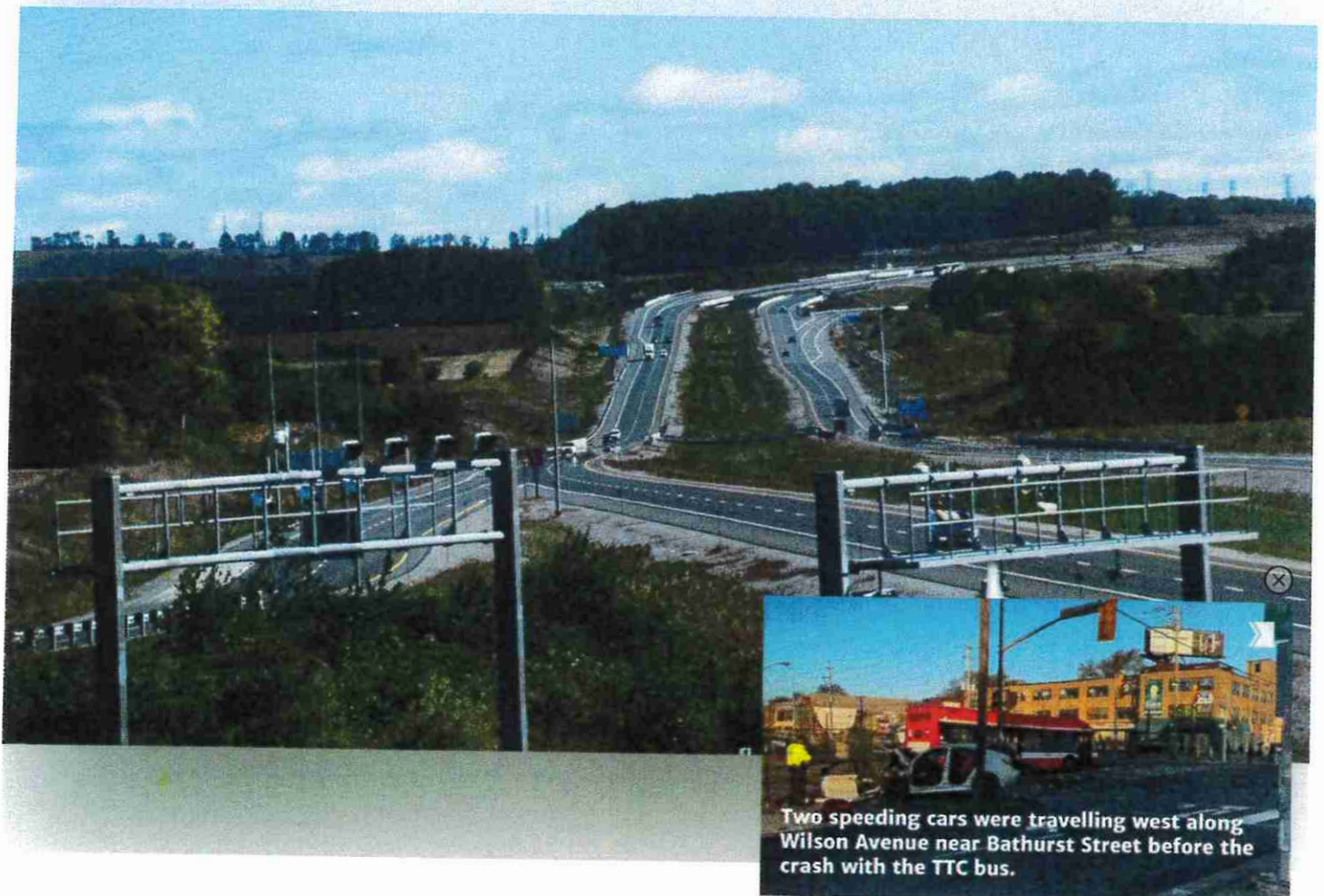
# Should Ontario buy back Highway 407 as Premier Doug Ford suggests to ease commuter pain?

The hot-button topic of ownership of Hwy. 407 is being served up, in addition to building a new highway with a tunnel through the most congested areas of the GTA. Tell us what you think by taking our poll.

By **Bruce Froude** Insidehaltoncom

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Susie Kockerscheidt Metroland file photo

Ontario Premier Doug Ford says buying back Highway 407 could help alleviate traffic congestion in the GTA.



Everybody in the GTA gets stuck in traffic, but Ontario Premier Doug Ford is thinking of an option that could ease commuter pain – buying back the tolled Highway 407.

“Wouldn’t it be great if we could even get over 50 kilometres an hour on the 401 in rush hour through the city?” he asked reporters during a press conference in East York on Wednesday, Oct. 2.

The hot-button topic of ownership of Hwy. 407 was front and centre, with buying it back served up in addition to building a new highway with a tunnel through the most congested areas of the GTA. When asked whether Ontario could purchase Hwy. 407 at a lower price to remove more cars from Hwy. 401, the premier quickly replied.

“All options are on the table – maybe both options,” he said. “We’ll do the feasibility study. We’ll look at the 407 and see exactly which way are we going.”



Highway 407 isn’t popular in Durham Region, or other areas, because of high tolls. The hope was the highway would serve as relief from the high traffic volumes on Hwy. 401, but that hasn’t been the case.

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Most days, drivers on Hwy. 401 are going nowhere fast, and the economy is bearing the brunt. According to a statement by Ford, the financial cost to the Ontario economy has been estimated at more than \$11 billion in lost productivity annually.

In September, the Toronto Region Board of Trade Ipsos poll revealed that 53 per cent of residents contemplate relocation due to traffic congestion, while 62 per cent are reluctant to travel to work.

### Does it make sense for the province to buy back Highway 407?

- Yes, it's too expensive to use
- No, it would be too expensive.
- Don't care because I don't ever take the highway

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"We basically have one route going east and west," said Ford. "The city is growing so quick, the region is growing so quick; it's (Hwy. 401) pretty well at capacity now. But the 407 will be at capacity in 20 years or so. We have to think 20, 30, 40 years down the road."



The Mike Harris government sold the toll highway in 1999 for \$3 billion.

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