

March 9, 2021

Re: Motion to Reverse Endorsement for the GTA West Corridor/Highway 413 and Support the Federal Impact Assessment

Mayor Bevilaqua, Regional and Local Councillors,

I would like to thank all of the Local Councillors who voted to reverse endorsement of the proposed GTA West Corridor at the March 2, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting. I would also like to express extreme concern as to whom our Regional Councillors and Mayor are representing, not once did you express concern for your residents or what this highway means for the future vision of Vaughan. It remains unclear to me who you are representing, your primary job is to represent the residents of Vaughan, nothing more and nothing else. Your residents are speaking and ‘squealing’ loudly and deserve to be heard. Today we are asking council to:

- Ratify the motion to reverse endorsement for the proposed GTA West Corridor/Highway 413; and
- Support the request for the Federal Impact Assessment

Everyday I learn a new piece of information about the proposed highway and a different strategy the current provincial government will use to enable more sprawl on our farmland, green space and greenbelt lands. The northern part of Vaughan contains many unique natural and cultural heritage features that must be managed with great care. **It is where the Greenbelt starts and every time there is development, rezoning or redesignation on or near these lands it opens the door to further development that will push every further north into lands that are even more sensitive.**

The Walmart Distribution Facility, located at Jane and Teston Rd, justified paving over a provincially significant wetlands (for 200 trailer parking spots) in part, because the environmental integrity and ecological function had been damaged from construction activities on the adjacent Highway 400. **What will happen to the land surrounding the proposed 413 if the proposed highway proceeds?** You are familiar with this argument; the developer starts downplaying the ecological significance and value of the lands; this goes on for years; they challenge all of the natural heritage features, the presence of endangered species and so on and so forth. **Then finally one day years later land that was always recognized, protected and designated natural heritage is paved over.** You can not argue to me this will not happen when there are so many examples in Vaughan. Vaughan’s Natural Heritage Network in 2016¹ was

¹ https://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes_agendas/AgendaItems/CW0202_16_15.pdf

never endorsed and you deferred it until the next municipal comprehensive review due to objections from landowners advocating to develop these lands. Sadly, at least three of the developers that attached letters objecting to Vaughan's Natural Heritage Network have recently received MZO's and are now developing on these lands and the natural heritage features lost or it remains unclear what protection is in place².

This is a government that has demonstrated they are willing to rewrite provincial laws to do as they wish and are even willing to make those laws apply retroactively to absolve themselves of any wrong doing (refer to ongoing cases regarding Duffins Creek and the Foundry Heritage Buildings). This is a blatant abuse of power and an assault on democracy. If you continue to endorse this highway under the current government you are also making a statement about the type of democracy and governance you support³.

Based on the discussion at Council last week I would like to bring up a few points. Reversing endorsement for this highway does not mean the Environmental Assessment (EA) will not be completed. Expressing or not expressing your endorsement is about supporting what you think is in the best interests of Vaughan residents and the future of Vaughan. While developers in Vaughan may not have come out and publicly supported the highway developers in Peel Region have and submitted a communication to that affect to Peel's March 11 council meeting⁴. Their arguments seem to only amplify the concerns of residents that the highway will pave over farmland and the greenbelt to facilitate sprawl and goods movement, commercial transportation.

I find it concerning that there was a view expressed to support the proposed highway because it is 'unfair to landowners'. Any landowner I have spoken with who wants to live and remain on their land does not want this highway. **The only landowners I can imagine this would be unfair to are those who own large blocks and are wishing to develop the land but unable to do so due to current zoning or the lands being locked as part of the focused area analysis. Thus, I found this comment highly concerning because whose interests are representing when you state it is 'unfair to landowners'.** It seems highly unfair to the people who will have a highway within 100m of their property, will have their land expropriated and will be forced to endure the pollution and noise from the highway.

When asked what has changed since June of 2020 when Council reaffirmed its motion to endorse the highway is that the Province has proposed a streamlined EA process⁵ to fast track the highway and enable construction prior to approval of the final EA. There is so much uncertainty

² Block 41, Jane and Teston Walmart Distribution Facility, Jane and Rutherford Condominiums

³ A provincial document assessing legal risks to the Duffins Creek project, obtained by CBC News, suggests the amendments would help shield the government against the lawsuit.

"In the absence of the proposed amendments — in particular the proposal for retroactive application — there is a moderately high risk that the MZO would be found to have contravened the Planning Act requirements for consistency with the [provincial policy statement]," says the government document.

[The Ford government is retroactively changing a law to pave the way for a development on wetland in Pickering | CBC News](https://pub-peelregion.escrimemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=07635824-13c5-4829-88d2-2a80590cf657&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=59&Tab=attachments)
⁴ <https://pub-peelregion.escrimemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=07635824-13c5-4829-88d2-2a80590cf657&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=59&Tab=attachments>

⁵ <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1882>

still surrounding this our elected should be alarmed and concerned, but yet we have to 'squeal' to for Regional Councillors and the Mayor to respond and acknowledge that the government is changing the process in the midst of the study.

Local governments will be more important than ever as we face the realities of climate change and they must be stronger and very aware of the impact of their decisions. Climate change is and will impact every aspect of our lives and the decisions you make today have the potential to pay back in dividends for current and future Vaughan residents. Climate Change is more than an environmental problem it will amplify social inequalities, public health issues and our overall quality of life. I do not know who the provincial government is representing but it is not the people of Ontario, I understand it's a pandemic but they are bull dozing and proceeding with a land use and development pattern that will drive and amplify Climate Change to the detriment of Ontario. What this government is doing and supporting is worse than inaction.

Thank you,
Irene Ford