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Cycling to highlight impacts of potential Highway 413

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There has been plenty of Caledon residents supporting the Stop the 413 campaign by placing signs in their yard in hopes the Provincial government won't move the project forward.

Caledon is known for its beautiful community and Greenbelt land and the highway would impact not only the people, but the ecosystems surrounding it.

Anne and Jim Purvis live in Toronto, but they know the beauty Caledon holds and the long-time environmentalists wanted to leave their mark and help spread the word as to why the highway must be stopped.

The Purvises love the environment and they love to cycle, so they thought there was no better way than to head outside on Easter Sunday and bike the path of the potential 413 to help spread awareness about the negative impacts it will bring.

?We follow environmental issues, and we just really love biking,? Anne Purvis said. ?We had followed the Duffins Creek issue in Ajax, and we thought, ?Geez, we've never even seen Duffins Creek,' so we went and biked it and it was gorgeous. Then we got back to Toronto and were thinking about our concerns with the 413 and thought, lets bike around the route of the 413, that's how it came about.?

?We wanted to add our own voice?as well as all the other reasons to oppose this highway?and show this is beautiful country and we're privileged to bike along here on quiet roads, take in the fresh air and see the crops starting to grow in the fields,? said Jim Purvis.

The day went perfectly thanks to the sunny weather on the weekend, the beauty of the Caledon area, and the residents who came out to support them.

?It was fabulous,? said Jim. ?It was a beautiful day and we really enjoyed seeing the countryside. It was lovely biking along Kirby Road, Healy Road, Old School Road, and Heritage Road. It was beautiful to see the Nashville Conservation area and we passed over the Humber River and the Credit River. We heard lots of frogs and song sparrows, and lots of friendly people met us along the way. We had lots of supporters and it was just a perfect day.?

Not being from the Caledon area gives the Purvises a different outlook on what Caledon has to offer while understanding taking away the countryside will have a ripple that reaches down to where they are in Toronto.

?Coming from Toronto, we also have a very particular perspective,? said Anne. ?We live in a very densely populated area where there isn't really as much green space as Torontonians could use. During the pandemic, our ravines and parks have been just full of people out trying to be refreshed in nature and seeking a nature connection in their own area. We really understand the immediate need for green space that people have, and we feel Caledon has a real treasure up there that needs to be preserved.

?We're naturalists?I'm on the board of the Toronto Field Naturalists?so we're really trying to save habitat in Toronto, we have a lot of biodiversity and it completely depends on what goes on further north. We think of that area as the lungs of Toronto. I couldn't believe biking down Heritage Road and Meadowvale Road?that's the lungs of Mississauga. And another thing is the food; people want to eat local. Supply chains around the world are increasingly fragile.?

They also found it pulled on their heartstring even more once they got out and met some of the people in Caledon who the highway

will directly impact.

?We found it so interesting chatting with the local folks because for them it's the immediate loss of the farm or their acreage,? said Anne. ?For them, it's this thing that they love. We met a group, and a big interchange is supposed to go in right where they are to make it completely uninhabitable by people and they're just devastated by that.?

Developing on the green space in the rural areas of Caledon isn't just taking away the land, it's taking away years of environmental growth that can never be replaced while providing housing that isn't supportive of a healthy growth plan.

?The soil in Ontario started to accumulate 12,000 years ago after the ice retreated,? said Anne, ?so the topsoil has taken 12,000 years to become the rich thing it is. Some people told us the soil up there (in Caledon) is better soil than the Greenbelt further north. It's very rich and deep, but it takes 12,000 years to create topsoil of that quality and developers just scrape it away. Once housing and roads are built there, it will never grow crops again.

?It can't be reversed. It's not that we're against development, but we're against sprawling development. As we biked along, we saw a lot of residential housing going in and it just looks like sprawling development, not that dense development that the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan called for around transit hubs that would allow land to be saved.?

The Purvises aren't done yet; they plan to continue to do what they can to put pressure on the Ontario government to reverse the decision to build the 413.

?We plan on writing to all of the Conservative MPPs in all of the ridings along there,? said Anne. ?This Conservative government is pro-business, but they seem to be only pro one business. Agriculture is a multi-billion-dollar business, but farmers can't continue if the whole infrastructure to support agriculture is fragmented. Land has to be preserved in large chunks to support agriculture and we'd like to see this government investing in that business.?