

An open letter to federal candidates

While it may not be covered in your respective policy platforms and, on cursory glance, would seem to be strictly a provincial issue, the proposed Highway 413 is an issue you need to address in your campaigns.

Estimated to cost between \$6 to \$10 billion dollars, Highway 413 (or the GTA West Corridor) would be a 400-style 59-kilometre-highway which would slash through Caledon as it extends from the intersection of Highways 407 and 401 near Milton to connect with Highway 400 near Kleinburg.

The provincial government resurrected plans for the highway a few years ago, despite the findings of an expert panel which concluded it would only save drivers a mere 30-60 second per trip and that other methods for improving traffic should be examined.

Described by the Globe and Mail as a "\$6-billion billion sprawl accelerator," the highway would pave over farms, forests, wetlands, portions of the Greenbelt and have injurious impacts on the small headwater streams which feed the Humber, West Humber, Etobicoke, and Credit Rivers. It would pose a threat to multiple endangered species, including the Western Chorus Frog, the Redside Dace, and others.

So, why does this matter in the federal election?

It matters because the federal government, at the request of a number of environmental organizations and municipalities, agreed to its own environmental assessment of Highway 413, to be conducted by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

More than 20,000 letters were sent to federal ministers in support of the full environmental assessment and tens of thousands of Ontarians have contacted the Ontario government and their MPPs asking that the project be killed.

The province will not confirm whether the highway would be a toll route or not.

Most likely it would be built under a public/private partnership agreement. But that would still entail a significant financial investment by the provincial government which, in turn, would probably seek federal government infrastructure funding. If this project, of dubious merit, proceeds, Canadian taxpayers will be paying for it for decades.

So, that begs the question of all the Dufferin Caledon candidates. What is your position on Highway 413?

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