

Open letter to Mayor & Council on highway proposal

OUR READERS WRITE

As a Caledon resident who lives very close to the route of the proposed Highway 413, it is becoming more difficult to contain my steadily increasing disappointment and frustration with the Town's unwavering and blinkered support for this ill-conceived project.

This letter is in support of Jenni Le Forestier's presentation to Caledon Council asking (A) the town to reverse that support, (B) request the Federal Government to conduct an environmental assessment on both the proposed Highway 413 and Bradford Bypass projects and (C) to ask the Auditor General's office to conduct a cost/benefit analysis.

As was noted by an Expert Panel in a review conducted for the previous Liberal government, Highway 413 would only have a few benefits. Those conclusions were the reasons that government placed a moratorium on the project in 2015 and then killed it in 2018.

Highway 413 will be a monstrously expensive 50-kilometre-long highway that 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.

There are alternatives to the highway. The estimated \$6 billion to \$10 billion to build the mega-highway could be better used to significantly increase public transit, especially new GO Transit train lines.

Another option would be to provide a subsidy, or even a 100-per-cent toll rebate, to encourage trucking firms to travel on the underutilized Highway 407. Having a dedicated and provincially subsidize truck lane on Highway 407 was one of a number of strategies suggested by the Expert Panel.

That would eliminate the argument Highway 413 is needed as alternative transportation route. Of course, that's not the point is it? The real purpose of resurrecting this project, which should have remained buried, is to open the parallel lands along the corridor to development.

In a February 13 article in the Toronto Star's business section, the head of a real estate development firm was quoted as saying the highway "would be a slam dunk for us."

Opposition is steadily increasing throughout Caledon and neighbouring municipalities to Highway 413 which will wreak significant environmental damage and saddle Ontario residents with the cost for generations. The Town is on the wrong side on the issue and, if this project proceeds, will be eventually judged as being on the wrong side of history.

Dan O'Reilly Caledon

(Editor's Note: Mr. O'Reilly's letter to the editor was submitted to the Citizen prior to Council's Tuesday night meeting.)