

## Premier Wynne unveils Highway 427 extension plans

By Angela Gismondi  
and Bill Rea

The government of Ontario plans to extend Highway 427 north through Vaughan to Major Mackenzie Drive, if the provincial budget is passed.

Premier Kathleen Wynne was in Vaughan to deliver the news in person last Thursday. She was joined by Transportation Minister Glen Murray and Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Linda Jeffrey.

The announcement has positive ramifications for Caledon.

‘It couldn’t come soon enough,’ Councillor Richard Whitehead declared.

The Highway 427 extension is included in the 2013 Ontario budget. If the budget is passed, construction on the 6.6-kilometre extension would begin in 2016-17. The extension would take the highway from its present terminus at Zenway Boulevard up to Major Mackenzie Drive in Vaughan. The project proposes three new interchanges, including at Langstaff and Rutherford Roads, nine bridges and protection for a future transitway and transit stations along the west side of the highway.

Wynne, the former Minister of Transportation, said she knows how important the project is to the community.

‘Our investments in infrastructure are building a road map for Ontario’s future,’ said Wynne. ‘As our communities continue to grow, we need to fund smart projects like this that will help people get home from their jobs quickly at the end of the day, and connect our businesses to their expanding markets.’

The expansion of the highway would open up the Vaughan Enterprise Zone employment lands, an integrated multi-modal transportation services and economic hub of regional importance in the city’s southwest corner. The Vaughan Enterprise Zone encompasses an area of more than 1,120 hectares (2,767 acres) and is currently home to more than 350 businesses.

‘As businesses expand, we need to be able to facilitate the expansion in a smart and sustainable way,’ said Wynne, adding the extension will also help goods and people move more efficiently, help connect businesses to their workforce and allow commuters to spend less time in their cars. ‘It’s about job creation and quality of life.’

The extension is part of government’s commitment to make smart infrastructure investments to improve infrastructure across the province, explained the Premier. The investment is part of the government’s strategy to create jobs, help Ontario create a competitive business environment and help people in their everyday lives. This project has been in the works for years. An environmental assessment has already been completed.

‘There have been works ongoing on this project for a number of years,’ said Wynne. ‘What’s important is that we have the plans and we can have the shovels in the ground and move ahead as soon as the plans are finalized.’

Murray pointed out Vaughan needs 21st century infrastructure to keep up with the population growth. One aspect of this is the extension of the subway, the other is the extension of Highway 427.

‘The subway will help connect Vaughan and create a dynamic, complete community,’ said Murray. ‘The 427 completes that trifecta of really important infrastructure for the way to secure the future of Vaughan.’

The vote on the budget is expected at the end of the month. The Liberals need the support of the Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats in order to pass the budget and avoid triggering an election.

The announcement was good news for Whitehead.

‘It’s absolutely essential we have that,’ he said, pointing out Highway 50 is now jammed to the point that it’s more like a local collector road. ‘It can’t continue to be the only full-service highway we have.’

He also pointed to the plans to have Major Mackenzie extended west into Peel and connect with the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR).



Premier Kathleen Wynne was in Vaughan last Thursday to announce the extension plans for Highway 427.