



November 26, 2021

Hon. Ernie Hardeman, Chair
c/o Michael Bushara, Clerk
Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
99 Wellesley Street West
Room 1405, Whitney Block
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Sent electronically

RE: Bill 43 - Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) is pleased to provide comments to the Standing Committee regarding Bill 43, *Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures)*.

As a unique labour-management organization derived from the residential and civil construction sectors, RCCAO commends the Government of Ontario's commitment to critical infrastructure that is reflected in the Act. A primary focus for RCCAO since our inception has been the importance of investing in core public works – from transit and water systems to roads and bridges – and doing so smartly and efficiently for taxpayers and daily users of infrastructure.

Infrastructure lays the foundation for building a prosperous and inclusive province as well as providing significant opportunity for economic growth, competitiveness and fostering strong communities across Ontario. The role of infrastructure has never been more important than it is now – and as Ontario seeks to recover from the effects of COVID-19, strategic investments in infrastructure provide one of the best ways to achieve that goal.

An essential part of that critical infrastructure is a transportation system that can address the movement of goods and people in an innovative and proactive way not only for the time being, but for the future. The *Build Ontario Act* contains critical commitment to transportation infrastructure – allocating \$2.6 billion to expand and repair highways and bridges and advancing the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413.

Both these projects will reduce congestion, foster economic recovery and long-term competitiveness, improve connectivity through the establishment of transportation corridors for future growth, and support the expansion of housing in the region. The building of these two infrastructure projects will also facilitate job creation and the training of Ontario's next generation of builders.

A [commissioned economics report by RCCAO](#) found that building Highway 413 will support up to 8,000 jobs annually in construction and other industries over a five-year construction period, generating up to \$2.3 billion in earnings for workers in Ontario. The report also found that building Highway 413 would generate nearly \$1 billion in tax revenues for governments.



The population of the GTA is expected to grow by 2.8 million people over the next 25 years, with 58% of that growth occurring in York, Peel, and Halton regions. The construction of Highway 413 will create a transportation corridor for additional future transit development to serve a growing region where more than 80% of people commute by vehicle. By connecting two of the most vital provincial arteries – Highway 400 and Highway 404, Bradford Bypass represents critical transportation infrastructure for Simcoe County and York Region that will address the congestion and travel demand in this growing area.

Roads and highways are essential infrastructure for the movement of goods across Ontario, which is the backbone for local and regional economies. Demand for goods has reached historic levels, especially during the pandemic, and that demand is only projected to increase as both e-commerce takes firm hold and as the population of the region continues to grow. Building and maintaining road infrastructure increases business productivity and competitiveness by reducing the time and cost of transporting goods. It allows products to move efficiently through the supply chain and to end-use customers around the region and beyond.

The geography of North America and more specifically, Ontario, necessitates cars and allowances must be made for the fact that personal vehicles will always be a reality and as such, infrastructure must be built and maintained for these purposes. As reflected in the Ministry of Transportation's Fall 2020 [Discussion Paper survey](#), 75 percent of Ontarians noted that they use a car daily or one to two times a week prior to COVID-19. Statistics have consistently shown that most trips in the region – by cars, bus, truck, or bicycle – take place on a road, and this will continue in the future.

Building necessary transportation infrastructure like the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413 will also provide additional benefits for the region and the province, including supporting affordable housing initiatives such as increasing land availability and future housing stock as well as building future communities and neighborhoods.

Given the projected population growth over the next three decades as well as the Federal Government's plan to attract 1.3 million new immigrants to Canada over the next three years, housing availability will remain of great importance. In the past, the majority of those new immigrants make their home in the Greater Toronto Area, adding to the economic expansion and opportunities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

For Ontario to achieve housing affordability the province must create reliable transportation networks that expand beyond the GTHA. According to a Scotia Bank [report](#) Canada has the lowest number of housing units per 1,000 residents of any G7 country. The number of housing units per 1,000 Canadians has been falling since 2016 owing to the sharp rise in population growth. A major contributor to the lack of housing developments outside the GTHA is the lack of transportation networks. Despite the amount of livable land in the GGH, the lack of reliable transportation networks has made development unfeasible.

We commend the innovative proposal of the transitway that will run alongside the Highway 413 and be dedicated exclusively for public transit, such as buses and light rail. This sort of mix of transit and transportation infrastructure in one project is commendable and forward-thinking.



Furthermore, as Canada pledges to transition to all new cars and light-duty trucks being zero emission by 2035, this will add a new perspective to the role that highways and roads will play. They will become important facilitators and enablers of environmental stewardship, which is reflected in the planning of the GTA West Highway as it is being designed with significant EV-related infrastructure in place.

Transportation projects like the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413 will provide the necessary infrastructure to meet this inevitable growth in population and employment in Ontario. These types of critical long-term infrastructure projects will ensure a viable transportation corridor required to meet demand and support the economic vitality of the region. That is why RCCAO supports Bill 43, *Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures)* and believes that it contains the necessary groundwork for critical infrastructure work that will ensure Ontario's long-term competitiveness and prosperity.

We look forward to continuing our engagement with the Government of Ontario on these and other issues and appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the Standing Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nadia Todorova'.

Nadia Todorova
Executive Director

Copy to:
Ryan Amato, Director of Stakeholder Relations, Ministry of Transportation