

# A 'traffic crisis': Economic, social impact of congestion cost Ontario more than \$50B in 2024, study finds

[Codi Wilson](#) Dec. 9, 2024

The cost of lost economic opportunities in the GTHA due to congestion totaled more than \$10 billion in 2024 and that number rose to more than \$47 billion when factoring in the “social impacts” that diminish a commuter’s quality of life, according to a new report.

The study, released Monday, was conducted by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) on behalf of the Residential & Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario and the Ontario Road Builders’ Association.

According to the report, congestion cost the Ontario economy \$12.8 billion in 2024, with the vast majority of that amount, \$10.1 billion, concentrated in the GTHA. When considering the social impact cost, the study found that the figure rose to \$56.4 billion across Ontario.

The study defines the social cost as factors that increased stress, lowered life satisfaction, and reduced wellbeing due to “extended commute times” that “infringe upon time that could otherwise be spent on leisure, family, or personal pursuits.”

“The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and the rest of Ontario face mounting challenges from worsening traffic congestion. With the region housing over half of Ontario’s population, the GTHA experiences congestion that significantly increases travel times and diminishes economic productivity,” the report read.

“Travel delays due to congestion profoundly affect residents’ quality of life, restrict access to jobs and essential services, and escalate infrastructure costs.”

The study found that the GTHA has seen the number of vehicles on the road rise 37 per cent since 2001, compared to just 17 per cent outside the region. Truck volumes have increased “more uniformly” across the province, with a 32 per cent rise across all Ontario municipalities.

“The GTHA, home to over half of Ontario’s population, bears the brunt of congestion. Here, economic costs hinder sustainable growth, while social impacts diminish residents’ quality of life.”

According to the study, in 2024, commuters in the GTHA experienced “heavy congestion” three or more times per week, compared to 19.8 per cent of commuters elsewhere in Ontario.

The report notes that if heavy congestion had been reduced over the past decade to a point where no commuters experienced more than two days a week of congestion, real GDP in the region could have been \$27.9 billion higher today and about 88,000 more jobs could have been supported.

Across Ontario, the number of commuters is expected to grow by 1.9 million in the next 20 years, including 1.1 million within the GTHA, a 33 per cent increase.

“We estimate that if congestion remains the same, there will be an additional 510,000 GTHA commuters experiencing heavy congestion, a 33% increase relative to current levels, and affecting a total of 2.1 million commuters by 2044 in the region,” the report states.

The report authors estimate that if congestion levels remain unchanged, congestion could cost the province \$108 billion annually by 2044.

“Business leaders, policymakers, and residents widely agree that urgent action is required to expand transit and transportation options and enhance infrastructure project efficiency to alleviate the region’s traffic crisis,” the report states.

“Immediate steps to manage congestion effectively are essential to prevent further declines in business productivity and overall quality of life.”