

# TODOROVA: Highway 413 needed to keep region on the move

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The Greater Toronto Area is among the fastest growing regions in North America. The area expects to welcome an additional 2.8 million people over the next 25 years, with 58% of that population growth destined for York, Halton and Peel Regions.

The expected population growth will increase demand for critical infrastructure for everything from water, wastewater, housing, transit systems, highways and roads. This is why we need to proceed with the construction of the GTA West Corridor, or as it is more commonly known Highway 413, and create a transportation corridor for Ontario's future.

Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy's Fall Economic Statement included two significant commitments to fund the construction of the Bradford Bypass in the north part of the GTA and to fund the land acquisition to make Highway 413 a reality. While opponents have gone into overdrive, it is important to have a nuanced discussion when debating our province's future.

In the regions the highway would serve, 80% of people currently commute by car. When you listen to the project's opponents, one may be left with the impression this region is new to motor vehicles and that it will never undergo any meaningful changes — be they population or workforce based. This could not be further from the truth.

Ontario's grappled with growing pains in recent decades, and our governments' ability to plan and build infrastructure has not always kept pace with the needs. That is why Highway 413 is vital. The gridlock the region experiences today already comes with significant economic costs — \$11 billion per year in lost productivity and very real impacts on quality of life for residents.

The GTA West Corridor is so much more than just a highway. It is a critically needed infrastructure asset for our growing region. What opponents fail to recognize is that it would also create the capabilities for other transit infrastructure, including a dedicated transitway for bus or LRT transit to serve the region. Together, it creates a corridor that can meet the future needs of Ontario industries and people in vibrant communities alike.

Additionally, the increasing electrification of vehicles, whether for people commuting or long-haul trucking, will need roads and highways that complement local transportation dynamics that incorporate foot, bike, transit, and vehicle use. Technological advancements in hydrogen as a fuel source offers great promise to substantially reduce environmental impact and to green trucking fleets that deliver virtually everything needed in our lives.

A greener future for transportation in our growing region is a reality and it is through this lens people need to consider infrastructure opportunities. Hostile rhetoric may lead one to believe that it's an either or proposition. The nuance and hard science of engineering informs us otherwise.

There will also be substantial economic benefits from proceeding with Highway 413. A recent Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario jobs and economic impact report found that the project will create up to 8,000 jobs a year during construction, generate \$2.3 billion in earnings for Ontario workers, and create up to 600 apprenticeship opportunities to train Ontario's next generation of builders.

In Ontario, modern engineering and evolving regulatory requirements put environmental sustainability and wildlife protection at the core of construction design and its build. The construction industry is well versed in best practices and environmental remediation to mitigate any potential adverse impacts to the environment or species at risk.

During a major expansion of Highway 401 from Mississauga to Milton, four species of risk were identified within the project boundaries, including redbreasted dace. Measures were taken to protect the fish and work was only allowed during certain times near watercourse areas. Wildlife crossings were also installed along the route. Constructing Highway 413 would take a similar approach, incorporating the latest ecological knowledge and technical practices as we strive to constantly improve.

Highway 413 will create critical and necessary transportation and transit infrastructure for Ontario's future, featuring innovative and forward-looking technologies. That is why this is a highway for the future. Ontario would be wise to not repeat the mistakes of delaying and deferring needed infrastructure as it has in the past.

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