

TODOROVA: Ford must get on with job of expanding transportation network

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While politics during the summer is usually limited to barbecues and community festivals, this year is a little different as the 43rd Parliament at Queen's Park commenced on Monday.

The rare summer session provides an opportunity to not only pass this year's budget, as has been widely reported, but to also act on the government's mandate to build.

Expediting the expansion of the GTA's transportation network needs to be a top priority, coming off June's provincial election that saw Premier Doug Ford's PCs win a larger majority in the legislature.

The premier campaigned heavily on the theme of "get it done," and regions of the province where Hwy. 413 and the Bradford Bypass are proposed all sent PC MPPs to Queen's Park.

Anti-development advocates appear undeterred by the strong support shown in public polling for the two projects, nor are they respectful of the choice that Ontarians made in the election. Opponents of Hwy. 413 have ramped up their marketing of mistruths, while publicly appealing to the federal government to interfere in the building of a provincial highway.

Whether it's traffic congestion on our highways, inadequate transit infrastructure in our cities, or limited supply fuelling the housing crisis, people across Ontario are bearing the costs of these delays — both to the economy and to our quality of life. We cannot afford more years of the delay and inaction that has plagued previous governments at Queen's Park.

Most critically, acting on these commitments builds the foundation to meet the demands of a growing province, while modernizing Ontario's transportation grid that includes both roads and public transit.

While the best technology and practices in modern engineering will design and provide the literal blueprint for these new highways, Ford needs to make it clear that the people of Ontario have spoken: new transportation infrastructure, both highways and transit, are critical to addressing chronic problems in the province's most populous region.

In an advanced, industrial economy such as Ontario's, the regulatory framework and technical capabilities exist to proceed with development while protecting the environment. That is why the appeal to the federal government in an attempt to further dithering and delays is nothing more than a recipe for increased congestion and reduced productivity.

Congestion today already costs the GTA economy \$11 billion annually, and that's without taking into consideration the historical inflation being experienced.

With labour and input costs all rising, the cost of not building new transportation is only going to climb. Critics are negligently naive to believe our planet is going to be in peril if the expansion of the GTA's transportation network proceeds.

To the contrary, building out Transportation Minister Caroline Mulroney's plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe will allow for greater densification in the region, reduce congestion, and improve mobility, all while bringing more of the latest technologies onto the market, including the infrastructure to enable greater adoption of EVs.

The extraordinary summer sessions at Queen's Park is a recognition by Ford's government of the need to act.

The opportunity to make meaningful progress in addressing Ontario's long-standing challenges in a way that will improve the lives of the people of this province must be seized.

The government will find citizens and industry ready to work with them. Let's get it done.

— Nadia Todorova is the executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario