

Why GASP opposes Highway 413

Highway 413 will promote urban sprawl - low-density development (such as single-family homes) on large plots of land over a large area, sometimes extending for miles outside of the urban limits. The highway is a gift to developers who have purchased land along the proposed route.

Urban sprawl locks in increased greenhouse gas emissions at a time when the United Nations has asked all countries to halve their emissions by 2030. Negative side effects of sprawl include:

- higher water and air pollution,
- increased traffic fatalities and jams,
- loss of agricultural capacity,
- increased car dependency,
- higher taxes - need to build new infrastructure
- increased runoff into rivers and lakes,
- harmful effects on human health, including higher rates of obesity, high blood pressure, hypertension and chronic diseases caused by long commutes
- increased flooding
- decrease in social capital and
- loss of natural habitats, wildlife and open space.

Highway 413 will destroy Ontario's green spaces and harm threatened species

If built, Highway 413 would cut through:

- 2,000 acres of farmland
- cross 85 waterways
- pave nearly 400 acres of protected Greenbelt land
- disrupt 220 wetlands and
- impact the habitats of 10 species at risk.

Southern Ontario's green spaces enhance our health and well being. Why destroy the environment during a climate emergency just to give land to developers?

Highway 413 will Increase water pollution

Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass will reduce the quality of Ontario's sensitive and over-burdened watersheds with increased road salt and toxins from asphalt.

Highway 413 will touch on the Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine and impact our headwaters. The headwaters have clean water that provide cooler water temperatures for the organisms like fish as the water flows down to Lake Ontario. Adding a new highway to a system that's already stressed out, will affect the quality of our drinking water.

The increased presence of road salt with the new highway is a serious concern. Elevated levels of salt in local waterways make the streams and rivers undesirable and unsafe for aquatic life. Pavement is harmful - during a rainstorm, water rushes off the surface, gathering toxins and causing erosion downstream.

The added construction jobs do not merit the loss of valuable wetlands and forests

Building highway 413 will generate short-term construction jobs but the price is too high given the loss of wetlands. There is no shortage of land for homes and warehouses. When you destroy a wetland, you increase the risk of damaging floods and droughts. As each year breaks the record for increased warming:

- storms are fiercer - wilder, windier and wetter because warmer air carries more water
- the risk of floods is greater. Floods cause damage to urban forests and agriculture. Insurance companies are increasingly unwilling to cover flood damage.

Forests and wetlands provide valuable services:

- Forests and wetlands are life-giving. During a rainstorm, water seeps into groundwater and spreads to the ecosystem
- Intact wetlands help to maintain water flow patterns and reduce some of the impacts of extreme weather events. Even a wetland as small as 2 hectares can retain water runoff.
- Wetlands help to moderate temperatures and provide habitat for birds.
- Wetlands filter the water better than any man-made sewage system.

Highway 413 will threaten Ontario's food supply

In an open letter to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and Halton officials, farmers called for firm limits on urban sprawl. Allan Ehrlick, president of the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture said: **"The highway is a profound economic mistake. It's an outdated throwback to an earlier era when farms, rural communities and nature itself were all merely the raw materials for unrestricted urban growth.** The COVID pandemic has dramatically changed the way people work. And that's reduced the need for a new superhighway."

The pandemic revealed our food system's fragile reliance on increasingly pricey imported food trucked in across closed borders, Ehrlick adds. "Suddenly, everyone wants to buy local food. **But you can't grow it in subdivisions.**"

With the Climate Emergency, food supply will become unstable due to droughts south of the border. Paving over farmland is not a good strategy for many reasons. It will increase GHG emissions significantly and weaken Ontario's ability to adapt to Climate Change. **"You can't eat real estate."**

Future generations of people will know that GASP and other environmental groups fought to protect their food supply,

There are great alternatives to Highway 413 - including building more public transit, allowing trucks on the 407. Ontario does not need more urban sprawl - there is enough land to build within urban boundaries.