

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

Dear Newmarket Council,

As a concerned Newmarket resident I am writing to encourage you to support the request made by Forbid Roads Over Greenspaces (FROGS), Stop the Bradford Bypass and the Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT) groups to designate the Bradford Bypass projects for a federal environmental assessment pursuant to the Minister's power under s.9(1) of the Impact Assessment Act.

The Ontario government has significantly weakened the provincial environmental assessment process for the Bradford Bypass via an exemption to the Environmental Assessment Act on October 7, 2021. As a result, the Bradford Bypass project would be allowed to proceed with construction through the Holland Marsh based on an outdated 24-year-old Environmental Assessment (EA). The original EA approval was conditional on performing additional studies on archaeological resources, stormwater management, hydrogeological systems (including the development of a groundwater protection plan), noise, and compliance monitoring. The Province has now exempted itself from all of these conditions. Without a federal EA, this proposal seeks to remove or weaken studies that were required for protection of public health and Indigenous rights.

Newmarket is surrounded by the white belt; however the climate crisis knows no boundaries in its impact. We are all affected by these initiatives and must all step up to consider each and every impact on the environment.

The bypass would also increase vehicle traffic at a time when the federal government has pledged to cut carbon emissions from transportation. The current assessment process includes no consideration of the climate change impacts of the more than one hundred thousand vehicle journeys per day that these highways would add to Ontario's roads. Further, since the Bradford Bypass relies on a 24 year old study, there have not been any considerations to transit and infrastructure improvements that have been made since. The traffic modelling released by AECOM clearly shows the Bypass will only increase congestion on north-south routes especially provincially significant goods movement corridors like the 400 and 404. Simply, there is not any evidence of need for this highway from a transportation perspective.

This 400-series highway will cause irreversible environmental damage within federal jurisdiction, including harm to fish habitat, multiple federal species at risk, and dozens of significant wetlands, forests, and important ecosystems. The Bradford Bypass will infringe upon one of Ontario's rarest agricultural lands, the Holland Marsh and has significant impacts to Lake Simcoe. Without a proper environmental assessment from the federal government, we may never fully know the extent of these impacts until it's too late.

In the last designation request, over 18,000 public letters were received, and the request was supported by 23 groups. Since then, there has been significant media coverage and three municipalities around Lake Simcoe have asked for higher scrutiny about the impacts to Lake Simcoe before this project progresses.

Given the high levels of public concern, and your Council's commitment to Lake Simcoe, we urge you to support a Federal Impact Assessment for this project.

Our local Newmarket Council quite wonderfully and recently deferred the vote regarding the re-designation of protected lands via the Shining Hill proposal. Your voice in this matter is relevant and critical.

The cost of not doing so is too great to the entire South Lake Simcoe Basin ecosphere. Since the Ontario government won't protect our environment, the federal government needs to step in now.

In this existential climate emergency, we simply cannot continue this business as usual mindset. The cost is too high. Look no further than British Columbia if you need a North American reference.

Thank you,

Debbie Fletcher-Queen

Newmarket Resident and Drawdown Newmarket-Aurora Member