

Letter to the editor:

Dear Editor,

With regard to the article "407 Stalled Until 2017" by Brendan Wedley, in your June 12th issue of the Peterborough Examiner.

According to the article, Jeff Leal, MPP for Peterborough, commented that the Province remains committed to extending Highway 407 to Highway 35/115 with the entire project expected to be completed by 2017. Mr. Leal states that breaking the project into two stages makes it more manageable and "That essentially will be fast-tracking the process..."

Unfortunately, readers may be left with the impression that this was a good news announcement. It is in fact a shocking disappointment to Durham Region councillors, residents and businesses and I would assume for Peterborough and City of Kawartha Lakes as well. It is also completely contrary to repeated commitments made by the province since 2007 that the entire extension would be completed by 2013. How is this fast tracking?

Last week, Infrastructure Ontario issued a Request for Qualifications for project teams to design and construct the 407 to the Simcoe Street area of Oshawa. Terminating the highway at Simcoe Street was never discussed as an option during the Environmental Assessment (EA) process and is a recipe for disaster.

Imagine the 407 ending in your community at a two-lane arterial road. This is what we have now at Brock Road in Pickering where traffic completing its trip on the 407 pours onto a rural road network not designed to handle such traffic volumes. It will be even more problematic to dump the 407 traffic onto Simcoe Street. Currently, the transportation network in the area is close to capacity. None of the north/south or east/west connecting roads, (all two-lane roadways), have the capacity to handle a 407 terminus. In fact, the intersections east of Simcoe Street have already been identified as deficient. Funding for road widening in this area is not in our five-year forecast. These roads will not be ready for this influx of traffic.

MPP Leal is correct in his assessment that this \$8 billion project is “hugely significant”. But delaying the project for four MORE years has huge negative impacts for Durham Region, and I expect, for Peterborough and the City of Kawartha Lakes.

Durham Regional Council knew that 2013 was a very ambitious timeline. We asked more than once if it was do-able and were repeatedly assured that 2013 was the expected completion date. The federal provincial FLOW announcement on March 6, 2007, posted on the Prime Minister’s website, committed \$4.5 billion in public transit and highway infrastructure projects in the Greater Toronto Area. Within this announcement, the benefits of transit and highway investments in cutting commute times, clearing the air and driving the economy are listed along with a specific reference to the extension of the Highway 407 east to highway 35/115.

“Highway 407 will be extended eastwards by 67 kilometres from Brock Road in Pickering to Highway 35/115 in Clarington, and will include two north-south connections to Highway 401: one from Ajax/Whitby and one from Oshawa/Clarington. A provision for a future dedicated transit right -of -way is also included... The project is expected to be completed by 2013.”

Ministry of Transportation (MTO) staff assured Durham Regional Council on more than one occasion that the target for 407 completion was 2013. In slides from their October 2007 presentation, MTO outlined an accelerated schedule and commitment to complete construction by 2013. To meet the revised schedule, the MTO began acquiring property along the preferred route on a “willing buyer-willing seller” basis in 2007. The EA was completed in August 2009 and received approval on June 3, 2010.

So to now hear through the media, that the completion of the highway has been pushed four more years into the future is completely unacceptable. The entire 407 east extension runs through Durham Region. It will provide a critical link in the transportation network to Peterborough and the City of Kawartha Lakes. If Mr. McGuinty’s cabinet has indeed made such a decision, they should have contacted us in advance to discuss directly the serious negative impacts of a route that ends at Simcoe Street in Oshawa, not even half way to Highway 35/115.

Construction of the 407 east extension is absolutely essential to enable access to employment lands in our communities.

Mr. Leal misses the point when he talks about the construction jobs created by building the highway. Long term business investment and jobs for the residents of Durham, Kawartha and Peterborough, not just temporary construction jobs, are the goal on which we should be focused.

The only bright spot in this story is that at last, construction on the 407 east extension will begin...where and when it will end is the problem.

Roger Anderson
Regional Chair and CEO
The Regional Municipality of Durham