

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE APRIL 7, 2003**

**HIGHWAY NO.427 EXTENSION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
REQUEST BY THE REGION OF YORK TO EXPEDITE THE EA STUDY**

**Recommendation**

The Commissioner of Planning and the Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works recommend that:

- a) The following resolution of the Council of the Regional Municipality of York, dated March 27, 2003, which provides as follows, BE SUPPORTED:
  1. Regional Council request MTO include in the Highway 427 Extension Transportation Corridor EA Study Terms of Reference a provision to carry out the Route Planning phase of the EA in two stages so that the route planning phase for the Vaughan part of the corridor can be completed first.
  2. Regional Council request MTO to expedite the EA Study, as described in recommendation 1, on an urgent basis in order to facilitate planned industrial/commercial development in the area north of Highway 7.
  3. Copies of this report be sent by the Regional Clerk to the Minister of Transportation of Ontario and to the Clerks of the municipalities of Vaughan, King, Peel Region, Brampton, Caledon and Simcoe County.
- b) Staff BE DIRECTED to work with the Region of York to support its request to the Ministry of Transportation to incorporate into the terms of reference for the Highway 427 extension Environmental Assessment, a provision which will allow it to proceed in stages in order to expedite the route selection phase for the City of Vaughan, thereby facilitating the development of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone for employment uses.
- c) This report be sent to the Provincial Ministers of Transportation, Environment and Municipal Affairs, the Regions of York and Peel, the City of Brampton, the Town of Caledon, the Township of King, Simcoe County, the members of the Highway 427 Extension Committee and the MPP's representing the City of Vaughan in the Provincial Legislature.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an opportunity to support a resolution adopted by Regional Council. The resolution requests that the Ministry of Transportation include, in the Terms of Reference for the Highway No. 427 extension Environmental Assessment, a provision that would allow the EA to be completed in two stages. This would allow the route planning for the Vaughan portion of the Highway No. 427 corridor to be completed first, potentially accelerating the development of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone. The resolution also calls upon the Ministry to expedite the EA Study to further facilitate the development of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone.

**Background - Analysis and Options**

**Origin**

In June 2002, the Ministry of Transportation announced that it would be proceeding with the terms of reference for the Environmental Assessment for the Highway No. 427 extension. The

decision to proceed was based on the results of two Needs Assessment Studies. In December 2001, the "The Highway 427 Extension Needs Assessment Study" was completed. It confirmed the need for an extension of Highway No. 427 from Highway 7 to the area of Highway 89. In June of 2002, "The Simcoe Area Transportation Network Needs Assessment Study" identified the need for a new corridor extending from Highway 7 to Highway 11, north of Barrie.

The Ministry of Transportation sees these studies as being related and is in the process of preparing a consolidated Needs Assessment Study.

#### Implications for the Environmental Assessment

The first part of the Environmental Assessment process is the preparation of the Needs Assessment Study. This is followed by the preparation of the Terms of Reference for the second part of the EA. It is at this second stage where the route planning is done and the location of the corridor is established. By consolidating the two Needs Assessment Studies, the result could be an Environmental Assessment of enormous scope, running from Highway 7 to north of Barrie. The Region of York identifies the following concerns:

- The length of the corridor increases the chances of complications arising in the Environmental Assessment studies;
- The time to complete the studies and go through the approval process will be increased due to the size of the project; and
- A serious issue in determining the alignment around Barrie could delay or jeopardize the entire study.

By letter dated October 30, 2002, the Highway 427 Extension Committee also advised the Minister of Transportation about its concern over the scope of the EA and the potential for delays. This letter forms part of Attachment No. 1.

#### Risk to the City of Vaughan of Delays in Selecting an Alignment for Highway No. 427

It is possible that an EA of this scope could take in excess of five to seven years to complete. Under the best of circumstances, this is still extremely problematic for the City of Vaughan. The EA study area will include the lands between Highways 27 and 50, north of Highway 7, which comprise the bulk of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone. This is the City's new employment area and includes lands already designated "Employment Area" under OPA No. 450 (south of Langstaff Road) and the Regional OPA No. 19 area (north of Langstaff Road), which was approved on the basis that it would provide the City's long-term supply of employment land.

The development of the lands south of Langstaff Road is already constrained by the reservation of an area to accommodate a potential Highway No. 427 alignment that might swing to the west into the City of Brampton. Secondary planning for the OPA No. 19 area, north of Langstaff Road cannot be completed until the route for Highway No. 427 is clarified. This has the potential to constrain the City's supply of employment land for many years.

The City of Vaughan currently has a healthy ratio of Residential to Non Residential assessment. If large amounts of well-located employment land are held off the market for many years, there is the potential for this ratio to degrade, which may impact on the City's abilities to provide services and constrain tax increases.

Staff are in the process of determining the amount of serviced employment land that is available. Preliminary indications are that the existing supply will be effectively exhausted within five years, without a substantial contribution of new lands from the Vaughan Enterprise Zone.

All measures possible should be taken to ensure that the Vaughan Enterprise Zone is brought to the marketplace as quickly as possible.

### The Recommended Remedy

The Region is suggesting an approach where the Terms of Reference would allow the EA Studies to be broken down into two or three stages, which would allow an initial stage to be completed before moving on to the next. This would be more manageable and more likely to minimize delays. In this way, the southerly portion of the EA, through Vaughan and Brampton could be completed, before work on the next section is commenced. There are number of opportunities to divide the corridor into study segments. The Region identifies several potential breakpoints, including: the King-Vaughan Road; the extension of the Bradford By-Pass; or Highway 89. The division of the corridor would have to be acceptable to the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of the Environment.

The Region's resolution is set out in the "Recommendation" section of this report. The first part of the resolution requests that the Ministry of Transportation include a provision that would allow for a two-stage route planning process in order to ensure that the Vaughan portion of the corridor can be completed first. The second part of the resolution requests that the Ministry expedite the EA Study in order to facilitate the planned industrial/commercial development in the area north of Highway 7.

The Region's resolution is consistent with the interests of the City of Vaughan and should be supported.

### Conclusion

If the Terms of Reference for the Highway 427 extension Environmental Assessment require that the EA Study area extend from Highway 7 to north of Barrie, there is substantial risk that delays in the ultimate approval of the route could occur. Any such delays would have the effect of eroding the City of Vaughan's position in the GTA as a destination for investment in employment uses. It could also compromise the implementation of the City's overall land use plan complicate fiscal planning.

The resolution adopted by the Region proposes that the EA studies for the Highway 427 be scoped in a manner that the risk of delay is reduced. The resolution is consistent with the objectives of the City of Vaughan. Should Council concur, then the recommendation set out in the "Recommendation" section of this report should be adopted.

### Attachments

1. Report to Regional Transportation and Works Committee, including letter from the Highway 427 Extension Committee to the Minister of Transportation, October 30, 2002

### Report prepared by:

Roy McQuillin, Manager of Corporate Policy, ext. 8211

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL DeANGLEIS  
Commissioner of Planning

BILL ROBINSON  
Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works

/CM

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

Transportation and Works Committee  
March 5, 2003  
Report of the  
Commissioner of Transportation and Works

**HIGHWAY 427 EXTENSION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council request MTO include in the Highway 427 Extension Transportation Corridor EA Study Terms of Reference a provision to carry out the Route Planning phase of the EA in two stages so that the route planning phase for the Vaughan part of the corridor can be completed first.
2. Regional Council request MTO to expedite the EA Study, as described in recommendation 1, on an urgent basis in order to facilitate planned industrial/commercial development in the area north of Highway 7.
3. Copies of this report be sent by the Regional Clerk to the Minister of Transportation of Ontario and to the Clerks of the municipalities of Vaughan, King, Peel Region, Brampton, Caledon and Simcoe County.

**2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to inform Regional Council of the initiation of the Highway 427 Extension Transportation Corridor EA Study by MTO and to recommend that MTO structure the Route Planning phase of the EA study into two stages.

**3. BACKGROUND**

MTO completed Highway 427 Extension Needs Assessment Study in December 2001 and the Simcoe Area Transportation Network Needs Assessment Study in June 2002. The Highway 427 Extension Needs Assessment Study confirmed the need for a new north-south transportation corridor from Highway 7 to the area of Highway 89 and a widening of Highway 400 to Highway 89. The Simcoe Area Transportation Network Needs Assessment Study also recommended a new transportation corridor from Highway 7 to Highway 11 north of Barrie and expansion of Highway 400.

In light of these two studies, MTO has initiated the Highway 427 Extension Transportation Corridor EA Study Terms of Reference in August 2002. MTO now views the two studies as complementary and is in the process of consolidating their findings into a Consolidated Needs Assessment report. This MTO position means that the limits of the Highway 427 Extension Corridor stretches from Highway 7 to a point north of Barrie (*see Attachment 1*). The Highway 427 Extension Transportation Corridor EA Study will determine the alignment of the Highway 427 Extension over the new limits of the corridor. The EA Study is broken into two parts. The first part consists of the completion of the Consolidated Needs Assessment report and the development of the Terms of Reference for the second part of the EA Study, which is the route planning component.

The Region of York, the City of Vaughan, the Region of Peel and the City of Brampton have been requesting the Province to extend Highway 427 for many years. Existing high travel demand, which continues to increase because of continuing developments in Vaughan and Brampton, have made the traffic congested around the Highway 427 terminus at Highway 7. Further development in Vaughan and Brampton has been hampered to some degree by this situation.

#### **4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS**

The commencement of MTO's Highway 427 Extension Transportation Corridor EA Study is welcomed and supported.

However, by combining the recommendation of the Simcoe Area Transportation Network Needs Assessment Study and the Highway 427 Extension Needs Assessment Study for extending Highway 427 into one project, MTO has made the planning of the Highway 427 Extension much more complex than if the two were left separately. First, the sheer length of the new corridor means that the potential for complicating issues arising during the study becomes increased. Second, being a larger project, the effort to complete the study as well as getting through the approval process will take much longer than if just the southern portion was addressed first. Third, a serious issue in determining the alignment around or beyond Barrie could delay or jeopardize the entire study.

Similar concerns have also been expressed by the Highway 427 Extension Committee, a committee comprised of politicians from Vaughan, King, Brampton and Caledon, in a letter dated October 30, 2002 (*see Attachment 2*) to the Minister of Transportation of Ontario.

As stated earlier, MTO's EA Study is a two part process where the first part results in defining a work Terms of Reference for the second, more intense, part of the Study, the route planning part. As in any type of large endeavour, it is reasonable to break down the project into manageable chunks to improve the chances of overall success. The same philosophy applies to this EA Study. If the second part of the EA Study is broken down into two or three stages such that an initial stage must be completed before the next stage can be addressed, then the Study is more manageable and more likely to be completed with the least amount of potential delays. Staff believes that this approach is logical,

reasonable and workable. It will also provide the maximum potential for increased levels of public and stakeholder consultations for the complete project. This approach can be implemented by incorporating it into the Terms of Reference of the EA Study. With this approach, the Vaughan section of the EA corridor is addressed first all the way to Environmental Study Report submission to the Ministry of Environment before the mid-section or the north section of the corridor is addressed. A similar approach was applied by MTO for the easterly extensions of Highway 407 whereby the extension from Highway 48 to Highway 35/115 was broken down into two sections, resulting in the section from Highway 48 to Brock Road in Pickering being constructed first.

If this logical and reasonable approach is acceptable to MTO, then staff will have to work with MTO on determining where the logical corridor breakpoints are. Some of the potential breakpoints are King-Vaughan Road, the extension of the Bradford By-pass corridor, and Highway 89.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is no financial implication resulting from this report.

## **6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT**

Traffic congestion around the Highway 427 terminus at Highway 7 would be alleviated significantly once Highway 427 is extended northerly. As well, lands in the City of Vaughan that are currently on hold, pending the identification of the alignment of the Highway 427 Extension, could be developed once the EA for the extension is completed. Thus, the earlier completion of the Highway 427 Extension EA and construction of the Extension are preferred. The City of Vaughan and King Township are both requesting the earlier resolution of the Highway 427 Extension.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

MTO has started the Highway 427 Extension Transportation Corridor EA Study. However, MTO has extended the study limits by combining the recommendation for extending Highway 427 in York Region with the recommendation for a new north-south highway in Simcoe County. This move has the potential to unduly increase the time it would take MTO to complete the EA Study and also the time to gain environmental approval.

Staff recommends that the EA Study be structured such that the EA for the southern section through York Region be completed first followed by the northern section in Simcoe County.

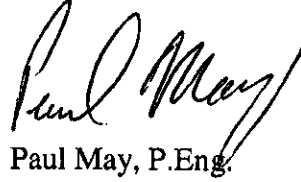
The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

Prepared by:



Loy Cheah  
Manager, Transportation Planning

Reviewed by:



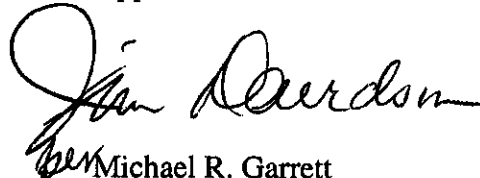
Paul May, P.Eng.  
Director, Infrastructure Planning

Recommended by:



Kees Schipper, P.Eng.  
Commissioner of Transportation and Works

Approved for Submission:



Michael R. Garrett  
Chief Administrative Officer

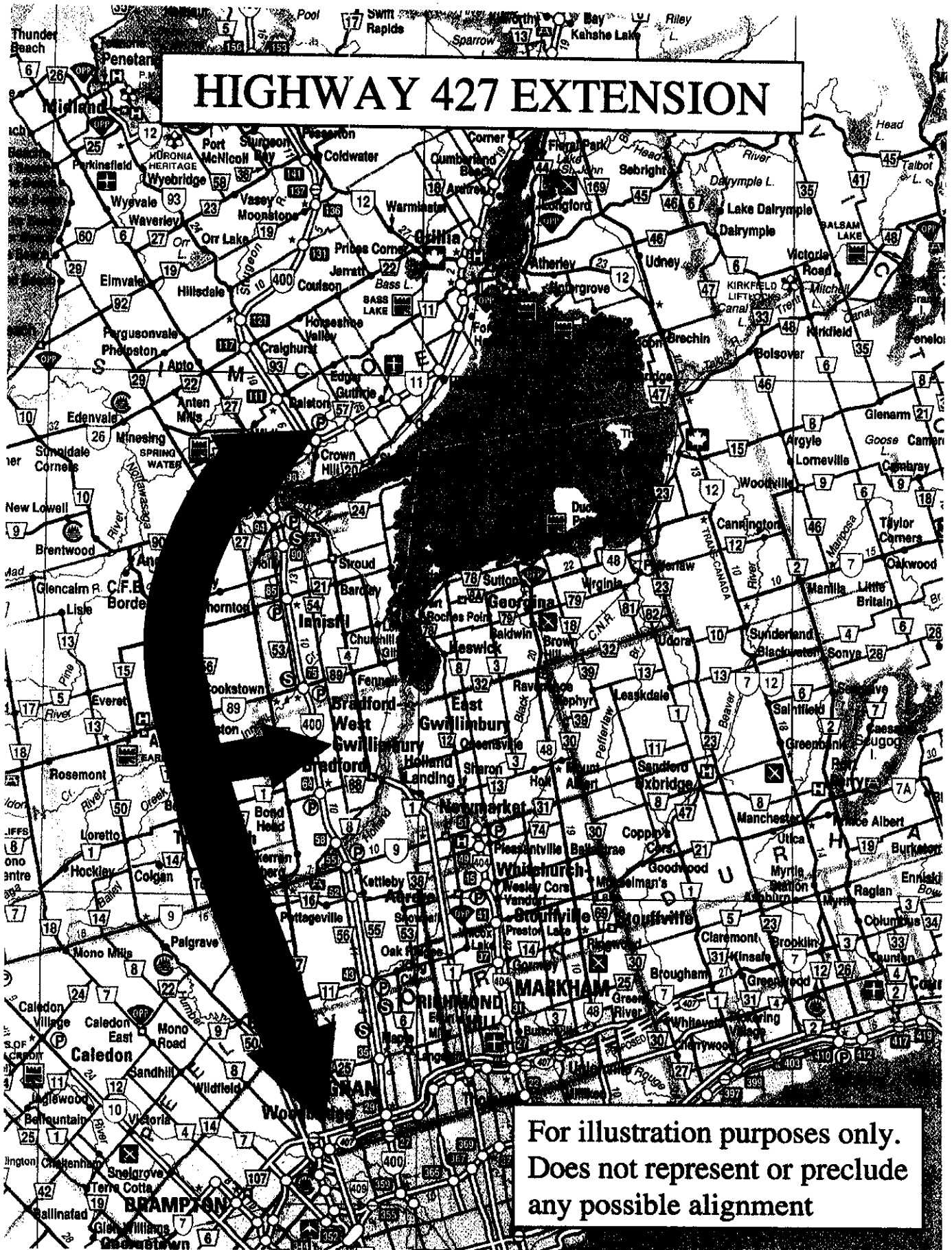
February 19, 2003

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Attachments 2

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Printed on 03/05/2003

# HIGHWAY 427 EXTENSION



For illustration purposes only.  
Does not represent or preclude  
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Town of Caledon  
(Alternate)

[www.427extension.ca](http://www.427extension.ca)

October 30, 2002

Honourable Norman W. Sterling  
Minister of Transportation of Ontario  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Ferguson Block  
77 Wellesley Street west  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

Dear Minister,

Re: Highway No. 427 Extension  
Studies and Environmental Assessment Process

At its June 26, 2002 meeting, the Highway 427 Extension Committee (comprised of Members from the City of Vaughan, City of Brampton, Township of King, Town of Caledon and the Regions of York and Peel) received copies of your Ministry's Press Release and Backgrounder respecting the recently completed Simcoe Area Transportation Strategy study for a new transportation corridor around Barrie.

We note that the one of the next steps for this study is to undertake the Environmental Assessment (EA) process for new facilities and for the proposed expansion of existing facilities associated with this study. This is similar to the approach and requirements associated with the Highway 427 Extension EA.

While we consider these two related projects and the announcement that the Simcoe area process is underway to be good news, we are very concerned that the "Next Steps" outlined in the June 14, 2002 "Backgrounder" to the Simcoe Area Transportation Strategy includes an announcement that the Ministry (MTO) will, "Expand the Highway 427 Extension EA Terms of Reference to include the new transportation corridor around Barrie." By expanding and widening the EA, we are of the view that this makes the EA much more complex, and, indeed, too complex for a timely resolution of issues.

As you know, the Member municipalities of our Committee are concerned that the future alignment be determined by the earliest possible date. We have been asking that the process be fast-tracked as much as possible. We feel that there must be some creative way to proceed more quickly within the existing technical and administrative requirements of the EA process.

We are sure that you would agree that the economic growth potential associated with the southern portion of the future Highway 427 corridor is provincial in scale and critical to the vibrancy of the Greater Toronto Area as a whole.

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Highway 427 Extension Committee, 2141 Major Mackenzie Drive, Vaughan, Ontario L6A 1T1  
Tel: (905) 832-8585 Ext. 8345 Fax: (905) 832-8538 Email: [gino.rosati@city.vaughan.on.ca](mailto:gino.rosati@city.vaughan.on.ca)



We would respectively suggest two alternative ways to accelerate the EA process in the southern link area. Firstly, it is apparent that there will be limited practical alternatives for alignments to cross the Humber River and a number of lesser watercourses. If the EA process was divided into two phases, one addressing river crossings and compatibility issues with other linear facilities such as hydro-electric corridors, the corridor options in the southern area would be readily identifiable at an early stage.

Secondly, the Simcoe area EA could be also be separated from the area to the south by phases, permitting the southern work to be carried out first. This is a compelling solution when one considers that there will also likely be a need to consider at an early stage, an inter-regional transit facility within the new Highway 427 corridor.

Work on the two EAs could proceed concurrently in such a way as to ensure they converge at key points in the process without unduly hindering either.

I, and Members of the Highway 427 Extension Committee, would suggest that we meet as soon as possible to discuss all avenues available to us to expedite the EA process and the determination of the future Highway 427 corridor.

The critical role this highway plays and will play in the economic development of the province and our communities demands we do nothing less.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,

Gino Rosati, Regional Councillor  
Chairman  
Joint Highway 427 Extension Committee

Copy to: Mayor and Members of Council  
Members, Highway 427 Extension Committee

Highway 427 Extension Committee, 2141 Major Mackenzie Drive, Vaughan, Ontario L6A 1T1  
Tel: (905) 832-8585 Ext. 8345 Fax: (905) 832-8538 Email: gino.rosati@city.vaughan.on.ca  
www.427extension.ca