



Catherine Fife

MPP Waterloo

Bonnie Lysyk
Auditor General of Ontario
20 Dundas Street West, Suite 1530
Toronto, ON M5G 2C2

November 10, 2021

Dear Auditor General Lysyk,

This week the Premier announced that the people of Ontario would be on the hook for two highway projects, Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, but refused to release total cost estimates or budgets for either. However, an independent forensic accountant recently suggested that the total cost for the two projects would be more than \$10 billion, which the province has not committed to spend in either its Spring Budget or the recently released Fall Economic Statement. I am requesting your consideration to review the proposed spending and planning of these projects.

Since Ford has not allocated additional dollars to the highways budget, he must be sacrificing multiple highway construction and upgrade projects, and reallocating that money to the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413. To date, Ford has not publicly stated which projects have been sacrificed.

The \$10-billion price tag for the 413 and Bradford Bypass is a whopping half of the total 10-year budget for highway and bridge construction in all of Ontario.

These two highways are not expected to substantially reduce commute times or congestion, yet they are expected to have a massive financial benefit to people who have donated to Doug Ford's party.

I am not impressed with the Government's lack of planning for and transparency on these projects, in particular because estimates suggest their total costing could be upwards of \$10 billion. Spending that amount of public money when priorities for reducing congestion through massive transit investment is needed is unwise and needs full accounting, especially because, as a total share of highways infrastructure spending, these two projects would consume nearly half of the total ten-year budget for construction. In particular, at an announcement today by Minister Mulroney and Premier Ford, the Government made no commitment to a basic estimate of spending for these projects.

The lack of fulsome planning and accounting, including the irregularities recently uncovered in the Bradford Bypass planning process, are seriously concerning. The potential for even further cost increases for Ontarians is high and the lack of transparency raises serious alarm bells about what value for money citizens will see from these projects, in particular because of the limited claims of efficiency for commutes. Compounded by concerns I have about the nature of lobbying behind the scenes which appears to be driving these proposed highways, including how the Bypass plan was rerouted around a golf course, I believe Ontarians deserve to know exactly how these projects have been proposed and prioritized over so many important infrastructure investments this province desperately needs.

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With these concerns in mind, I am writing to request that your office conduct a full review into the planning and procurement processes for Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass project to determine the full estimated costs of these projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. Fife', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Catherine Fife, MPP Waterloo