

COMMENT

Have you got a few billion for a new highway?

By David Churchill

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David Churchill

Do we need more highways?

Or perhaps, do we want to spend billions on new highways is the better question.

Or try it this way. Should we build a new super-highway from Halton Hills to Hwy. 400 if it costs about \$300 per every man, woman and child in Ontario?

Highways seem to be a hot topic in the Greater Toronto Area, as the provincial government has put the brakes on some new highway plans while spending untold millions on others. Municipal councillors including our own in Halton Hills are now left scratching their heads not knowing which direction to steer.

While recently putting on hold plans for a new major highway from Halton Hills to Hwy. 400 in York Region, the Wynne government put on a big show two weeks ago in announcing a bypass for Hwy. 6 where it connects with Hwy. 401, west of Milton.

The Morriston bypass, which was announced with no mention of how much it might cost, is expected to provide the same type of relief from traffic congestion that Halton Hills is asking for in Acton and Norval.

But it's the postponement of an environmental assessment and possible cancellation of a planned GTA West Corridor highway that has caught local councils by surprise.

Towns, cities and regions had been planning for years or even decades with the expectation the highway would be built to handle planned growth in the GTA. It's expected to grow from a current population of 6.5 million to almost 10 million by 2041. The highway, also known as Hwy. 413, would

ease congestion on highways 401 and 407.

In Halton Hills, council is being asked to protect a corridor of land for a highway which may never be built. That's left homeowners in the potential path of the highway unsure of the future and with nowhere to turn. Their homes and in some ways their lives are frozen.

The highway assessment delay also raises questions about Halton Hills plans to create a major employment area stretching along Steeles Avenue. A jobs zone is much more appealing when it's connected to a brand new highway to move people and products.

Town of Halton Hills executive director of planning John Linhardt said it's a fairly complex and complicated issue, and... based on everything we know, we're still obligated to provide corridor protection at this particular point in time.

Oh, and in case you were wondering, the Province has yet to talk about the cost of this major highway but others have estimated it would cost at least \$4 billion. That alone might be the reason why the highway never gets built.

Either way, Halton Hills council and other municipalities sit and wait. Transportation minister Steven Del Duca is expected to have an announcement in the next few weeks and Halton Hills can get back to planning with some certainty for the future. It doesn't seem like too much to ask.

David Churchill is a longtime journalist who writes about family, life in Georgetown and a love of travel. Follow him on Twitter @ChurchillDJ

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A: A will is a legal document that states what you want to happen to your assets and who you want to take care of your dependents after you die. A living will is a legal document that states what you want to happen to your body if you become unable to make decisions for yourself.

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