

## Write about your library experiences

If you've been bitten by the writing bug, there is still a month to go to enter the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library's writing contest.

The contest is open to all residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville, who are invited to submit an entry of up to 500 words outlining an experience they had with any public library.

Submissions are encouraged from all ages. Only one entry per resident will be accepted.

The contest deadline is Sept. 28.

Prizes are to be awarded during Ontario Public Library Week in October.

The winning entries will be posted on the library's website, whitchurch-library.on.ca

For more information, call Catherine Sword at 905-642-7323, ext. 224.

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# Hwy. 404 to stretch into Georgina

BY SEAN PEARCE  
 Staff Writer

Your drive north will improve, Whitchurch-Stouffville.

After what seems like an eternity of speculation, the drive to and from Georgina is about to get a whole lot faster for York Region commuters.

The long-heralded extension of Hwy. 404 will gradually become a reality over the next five years, Ontario Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield announced last week.

Some details still need to be worked out, but Ms Cansfield said the project is moving ahead.

"The next five years, it will be extended right up to Ravenshoe (Road) from Green Lane," she said.

"The environmental assessment is being done, we've got the acquisitions and it will be built along the preferred route."

And you will play a large role in choosing that route, Ms Cansfield said, open houses are being scheduled for your input.

The extension from Green Lane to Ravenshoe will extend the highway by 13 kilometres. The first phase of the construction will be a new northbound bridge at Green Lane.

The \$2.6-million project will be built by Toronto Zenith Contracting Limited of Concord and construction of the bridge is slated to be completed by year's end.

During construction, some of the ramps at the Green Lane interchange may be closed temporarily, but the work will be scheduled for times that will cause the least disruption, Ms Cansfield said.

The extension of Hwy. 404 has been a long time coming, but Ms Cansfield said, until

now, the money just hasn't been there to make it a reality.

"There was a huge deficit in infrastructure in the past," she said, adding the McGuinty government has since corrected that by investing billions of dollars in the province's roads and highways.

The news was met with enthusiastic approval from Georgina Mayor Rob Grossi, who said the highway extension will complement much of the planned commercial development in the area, but added the five-year timeframe is a concern.

"The sooner it happens, the better," Mr. Grossi said.

### FASTER, SAFER TRIPS

"We are happy and excited to see the construction begin at Green Lane, however, we do think the province should, perhaps, fast-track the project so that it arrives in this community sooner as opposed to later."

East Gwillimbury Mayor James Young was also pleased with the announcement and said he expected the highway extension to bring a number of bonuses to the community, not the least of which would be a reduction in traffic congestion.

The extension of the highway will not only get people around faster, but also improve safety, Mr. Young said, but he cautioned some concerns need to be addressed.

"We still have to be cognizant, because there is still agriculture going on," Mr. Young said. "We don't want to hinder that or growth overall in East Gwillimbury."

York North MPP Julia Munro agreed the extension would be a boon to the area, but questioned the timing and why it had taken so long for action.

"I think it's sort of interesting seeing that we're about 30 days away from an election," the Conservative MPP said.

"They had four years to do this and so, all of a sudden, shovels go in the ground right around the time of an election when this was outlined as a priority previously by our government."

Despite her concerns, Ms Munro said the highway extension should do wonders to help ease traffic congestion and will likely improve the mental and physical health of area residents.

Timing has little to do with it, Ms Cansfield said, adding the Hwy. 404 project is just one of many infrastructure upgrades to which the McGuinty government has committed.

"The important thing is we need to do our work because there's been such a deficit," she said. "Road users are going to be annoyed with some of the construction around the province, but it needs to be done."


For their part, Georgina residents were cautiously optimistic about the highway headed north. Robert Caldwell, who's lived in the area for 40 years, said it would help with his daily commute, but he's heard this song sung by many successive governments. As a result he'll believe it when he sees it.

"Again?" he said with a laugh. "Oh sure it would help... Anybody travelling down Woodbine (Avenue) knows it's a nightmare."

Glenn Grosskurth, also of Keswick, said he travels extensively for work and often ends up south of Hwy. 401.






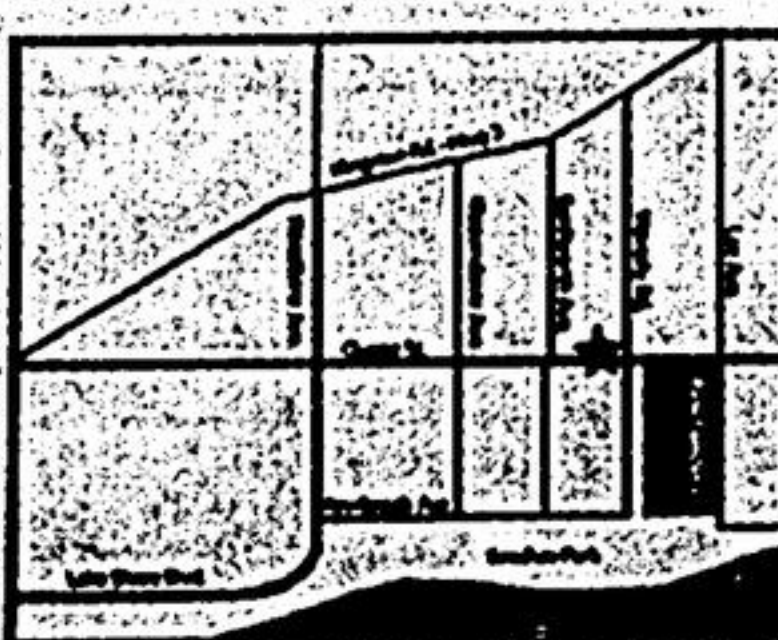

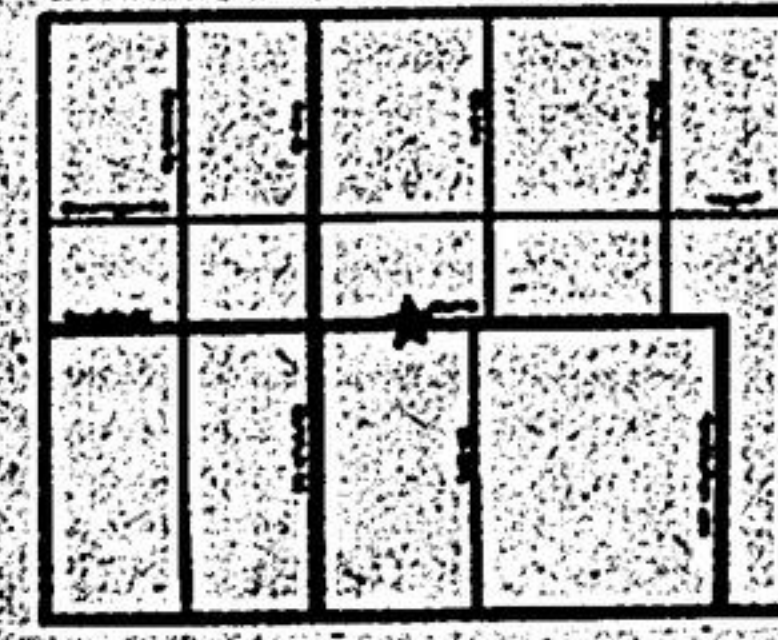
As such, the extension would be a big bonus.

"It would muchly improve my drive," he said. "I've been waiting 20 years for it."



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