

## Scientists call for federal environmental assessment of Highway 413

April 23, 2021

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson

Minister of the Environment and Climate Change

The House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario

Canada

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Dear Minister Wilkinson,

We, the undersigned scientists, urge you to conduct a federal environmental assessment of the proposed GTA West Highway (Hwy 413).

We make this request because we have significant concerns about the highway's impact on biodiversity and the increased greenhouse gas emissions it will foster.

According to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, "Over 1000 ha of land identified as important for local wildlife movement, some of which is also important at a regional scale, will either be removed or intersected by the proposed highway."

Ecojustice, an environmental law charity, states, "The proposed highway and its corridor will destroy a combined 5.95 km length of forests that support many sensitive forest bird species, and other wildlife and plants. This includes destroying seven entire woodlots, portions of other woodlots, and bisecting numerous forested valleys."

Ecojustice adds, "The highway will destroy or partially destroy 75 wetlands, 28 of which are designated by the Province as provincially significant. These wetlands are critical to the ecological health of the Humber, Etobicoke and Credit River Watersheds. They support numerous breeding amphibian ponds, significant swamps and marshes and many rare plant and animal species."

In particular, we fear the highway could extirpate the redbreasted dace, an endangered fish listed under the federal Species at Risk Act.

Finally, we are concerned that the highway will exacerbate the climate emergency. Ecojustice argues, "The potential greenhouse gas emissions associated with the project may hinder the Government of Canada's ability to meet its commitments in respect of climate change, including in the context of Canada's 2030 emissions targets and forecasts."

Emissions from transportation are the largest and fastest-growing source of GHGs in Ontario. Nearly all these emissions come from fossil fuel use in vehicles. A new 400-series highway — which will incentivize car-use — will make the climate crisis worse.

For all these reasons we ask you to conduct an environmental assessment of Highway 413.

Thank you.

--Dr. Scott Wallace, David Suzuki Foundation

--Prof. Mark Winfield, Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, York University

--Dr. Yannick Beaudoin, David Suzuki Foundation

--Dr. Samantha Green, MD CCFP, Family Physician & Assistant Professor, University of Toronto

--Dr. Colin Sue-Chue-Lam, MD, Resident Physician, Division of General Surgery, University of Toronto

--Dr. James Deutsch, MD, PhD, FRCPC, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto

--Prof. Ryan Norris, Department of Integrative Biology, University of Guelph

--Dr. Chantel E. Markle

--Dr. Sophia Lane, MD, FRCPC (Anesthesiology)

-- Prof John Fryxell, Biodiversity Institute of Ontario (BIO), University of Guelph

--Prof Arthur E. Weis, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Toronto

--Prof Njal Rollinson, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology & School of the Environment, University of Toronto

--Dr. James Baxter-Gilbert, Department of Botany and Zoology, Stellenbosch University

--Prof Thomas Hossie, Biology Department, Trent University

--Dr. Brynn Devine, Dept. of Integrative Biology, University of Windsor

--Emma Horrigan, Conservation Projects and Education Manager, Ontario Nature

--Smera Sukumar, Nature Reserves Manager, Ontario Nature

--Prof Madhur Anand, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Guelph

--Prof Daniel Mennill, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Windsor

--Prof Faisal Moola, Department of Geography, University of Guelph

--Prof Trevor Pitcher, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Windsor

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--Prof Scott MacDougall-Shackleton, Department of Psychology, Western University

--Prof Robert Montgomerie, Department of Biology, Queen's University

--Dr. Elizabeth Gow, Migration Biologist, Birds Canada

--Dr. Andy Turko, Dept of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour, McMaster University

--Prof Bridget Stutchbury, Department of Biology, York University

--Prof Neil Rooney, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Guelph

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--Prof. Clement Bataille, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Ottawa

--Prof. Rebecca Rooney, Department of Biology, University of Waterloo

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--Dr. Jeff Skevington

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