

## **MEMBER'S RESOLUTION**

### **Committee of the Whole (1)**

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**DATE:** Tuesday, December 03, 2024

**TITLE: ENDORSEMENT OF FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR HIGHWAY 407**

**FROM:**

Councillor Marilyn Iafrate  
Councillor Rosanna DeFrancesca

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**Whereas**, in 1998, Premier Mike Harris passed Bill 70, allowing the sale of Highway 407 to a private consortium on a 99-year lease, enabling the consortium to set its own toll rates and,

**Whereas**, privatization has led to significant toll increases over the years, limiting the use of Highway 407 by Vaughan residents and causing high traffic volumes on local roads and,

**Whereas**, high tolls disproportionately affect low- and mid-income Vaughan residents who rely on the Highway for commuting to work and,

**Whereas**, trucking companies avoid Highway 407 due to its tolls, leading to high volumes of trucks on Vaughan roads, particularly on Highway 7 as well as Highway 401 and,

**Whereas**, York Region statistics show approximately 100,000 vehicles travel between Jane Street and Weston Road, in which almost 10% consists of trucks and,

**Whereas**, a Transport Action Ontario study suggests a toll subsidy for trucks could increase truck usage of Highway 407, reducing volume on Highway 401 by 12,000-21,000 trucks per day and,

**Whereas**, prevailing logic would see a reduction of truck traffic on Highway 7, which runs parallel to Highway 407, which is just a few kilometers away and,

**Whereas**, subsidizing truck lanes on Highway 407 would facilitate faster delivery of goods, reduce transport costs for Vaughan businesses, and support local economic development and,

**Whereas**, a pilot project to subsidize truck lanes on Highway 407 would provide valuable insights into the economic impact of diverting truck traffic from Highway 7 and Highway 401 and,

**Whereas**, this pilot program would allow the government to conduct a cost-benefit analysis measuring potential savings in lost productivity, reduced vehicle operating costs, and increased efficiency for Vaughan businesses using Highway 407 and,

**Whereas**, toll revenues from Highway 407 currently benefit private entities, while Vaughan residents continue to face high costs and unnecessary traffic volumes and,

**Whereas**, potentially purchasing Highway 407 back would eliminate profit-driven motives, allowing for toll rates to reflect public interest rather than corporate profit and,

**Whereas**, lower tolls from public ownership would increase highway usage, alleviate traffic on other highways, and generate revenue through increased usage and,

**Whereas**, at the start of this term, the Mayor and Council have made it their priority to work towards reducing gridlock and “Getting Vaughan moving again”.

**It is therefore recommended:**

1. That this resolution be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation endorsing a feasibility study assessing the financial and logistical implications of buying back the lease for Highway 407 and,
2. That the provincial government be asked to implement a one-year pilot program that will subsidize or eliminate tolls dedicated truck lanes on Highway 407, evaluating their impact on traffic congestion and overall transportation efficiency and,
3. That this resolution be circulated to all municipalities that host a portion of Highway 407 and,
4. That local MPPs for Vaughan be provided a copy of this resolution.

**Financial and Staff Resource Impact**

There is no financial impact

## **Attachments**

1. Highway 7 Traffic Data, York Region, November 4, 2024.
2. Transport Action Ontario Study, November 7, 2023.
3. Toronto Star Article October 2, 2024.
4. Inside Halton Article, October 28, 2024.

**Average Traffic Statistics on Highway 7:**

| Road Section of Highway 7                      | AADT (Daily Volume) | Truck % |
|--|---------------------|---------|
| Between Yonge Street and Bathurst Street       | 64,400              | 0.9%    |
| Between Bathurst Street and Dufferin Street    | 46,500              | 1.2%    |
| Between Dufferin Street and Keele Street       | 59,600              | 0.8%    |
| Between Keele Street and Jane Street           | 65,600              | 1.1%    |
| Between Jane Street and Highway 400            | 93,800              | 7.9%    |
| Between Highway 400 and Weston Road            | 97,000              | 7.8%    |
| Between Weston Road and Pine Valley Drive      | 59,500              | 3.6%    |
| Between Pine Valley Drive and Islington Avenue | 58,900              | 0.6%    |
| Between Islington Avenue and Highway 27        | 57,700              | 1.3%    |
| Between Highway 27 and Highway 427             | 57,500              | 0.4%    |
| Between Highway 427 and Highway 50             | 81,100              | 5.9%    |

Statistical information provided by Roads, Traffic and Fleet, Operations and Services, York Region, November 4, 2024



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# New Report on using Highway 407 for Trucking

By Transport Action Ontario | Highway and Bridges

Nov  
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A new report has been released entitled *The Freight Escape: How to Get Trucks Off the 401 Without Blowing a Hole in the Greenbelt*.

This report was commissioned by Environmental Defence with input from Transport Action Ontario and you can access [this report here](#).

The report finds that subsidizing the toll on the 407 ETR is cheaper, easier, and better for the trucking industry than building the proposed Highway 413. It also shows that moving trucks from Highway 401 to the 407 will alleviate congestion for all road users and reduce journey times for truck drivers. This would also make building the proposed Highway 413 unnecessary, save taxpayers at least \$6 billion (based on 2018 estimates), and conserve valuable natural spaces including 2000 acres of farmland and 400 acres of Greenbelt.

*The Freight Escape* report finds that moving trucks to the 407 will:

- Move 12,000 to 21,000 trucks a day off Highway 401, reducing daily traffic for passenger vehicles
- Cost \$6 billion less than constructing the proposed Highway 413. Subsidizing the 407 trucking toll is estimated to cost \$4 billion, which would be paid over a 30 year period. The Ontario government has not revealed a cost estimate for building Highway 413, but estimates cited in the media are as high as \$10 billion



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## WHY REGISTER?

- Reduce cost and journey time for truck drivers: using Highway 407 will improve journey times for truckers by approximately 80 minutes, which would be less than half the length of time than the equivalent trip on Highway 401
- Conserve local natural spaces and local food production – including 2000 acres of farmland and 400 acres of Greenbelt land that would be paved by Highway 413.

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[https://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/ontario-considering-buying-back-highway-407-premier-doug-ford-says/article\\_2452ad9e-18a1-5cd7-878b-c544601597cf.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/ontario-considering-buying-back-highway-407-premier-doug-ford-says/article_2452ad9e-18a1-5cd7-878b-c544601597cf.html)

ONTARIO

# Ontario considering buying back Highway 407, Premier Doug Ford says

TORONTO - Ontario is considering buying back the tolled Highway 407, possibly in addition to building a massive tunnel under Highway 401 in a bid to ease congestion, Premier Doug Ford said Wednesday.

Updated Oct. 3, 2024 at 4:48 p.m. Oct. 2, 2024



Ontario Premier Doug Ford makes an announcement in Toronto on Friday, May 24, 2024. Ford says his government is considering buying back Highway 407. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Christopher Katsarov

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By Allison Jones and Liam Casey The Canadian Press

TORONTO - Ontario is considering buying back the tolled Highway 407, possibly in addition to building a massive tunnel under Highway 401 in a bid to ease congestion, Premier Doug Ford said Wednesday.

The Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government sold Highway 407 in 1999 for \$3.1 billion dollars to a consortium that included SNC Lavalin, Quebec's provincial pension fund and Spanish company Ferrovial.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board now owns 50.01 per cent of 407 ETR, which runs the highway that goes across the Greater Toronto Area.

Ford has already tasked transportation officials with conducting a feasibility study on digging a tunnel under Highway 401 for traffic and transit going across the GTA, saying gridlock costs the economy \$11 billion a year.

The premier has repeatedly said he will forge ahead with the tunnel regardless of the study's outcome, framing it as looking at how – not if – it can be done.

Critics have questioned the amount of money and time that would need to be spent on a project like that, and when asked Wednesday at a news conference whether Ontario could instead buy back Highway 407 to get more cars off Highway 401 at a lower price, Ford did not rule it out.

"All options are on the table – maybe both options," he said. "We'll do the feasibility study. We'll look at the 407 and see exactly which way are we going."

A spokesperson for 407 ETR said the province has not engaged them in any discussions on the topic.

The province still owns a 22-kilometre stretch on Highway 407's eastern flank and tolls drivers at a significantly cheaper rate than the private portion of the highway.

On Wednesday, Ford lamented the high cost for drivers using Highway 407. While his government has removed tolls on highways 412 and 418, he has not so far indicated he would remove tolls on the provincially owned section of Highway 407 East.

A Ministry of Transportation report in 2021 projected those tolls would be giving the province around \$72 million in revenue in 2024-25.

Ford also said he has asked construction unions and companies whether it would be better to build a new road over top of the existing Highway 401 instead of digging a tunnel, and he said they both said no.

"You'd have to shut down the 401 totally if you did build on top of it," he said. "The maintenance would be a nightmare. Eventually, it would end up looking like the Gardiner (Expressway), that concrete would be falling down."



This report by The Canadian Press was first published Oct. 2, 2024.

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[https://www.insidehalton.com/news/should-ontario-buy-back-highway-407-as-premier-doug-ford-suggests-to-ease-commuter-pain/article\\_8f14f6c5-7471-55ed-b387-e422fa1d095f.html](https://www.insidehalton.com/news/should-ontario-buy-back-highway-407-as-premier-doug-ford-suggests-to-ease-commuter-pain/article_8f14f6c5-7471-55ed-b387-e422fa1d095f.html)

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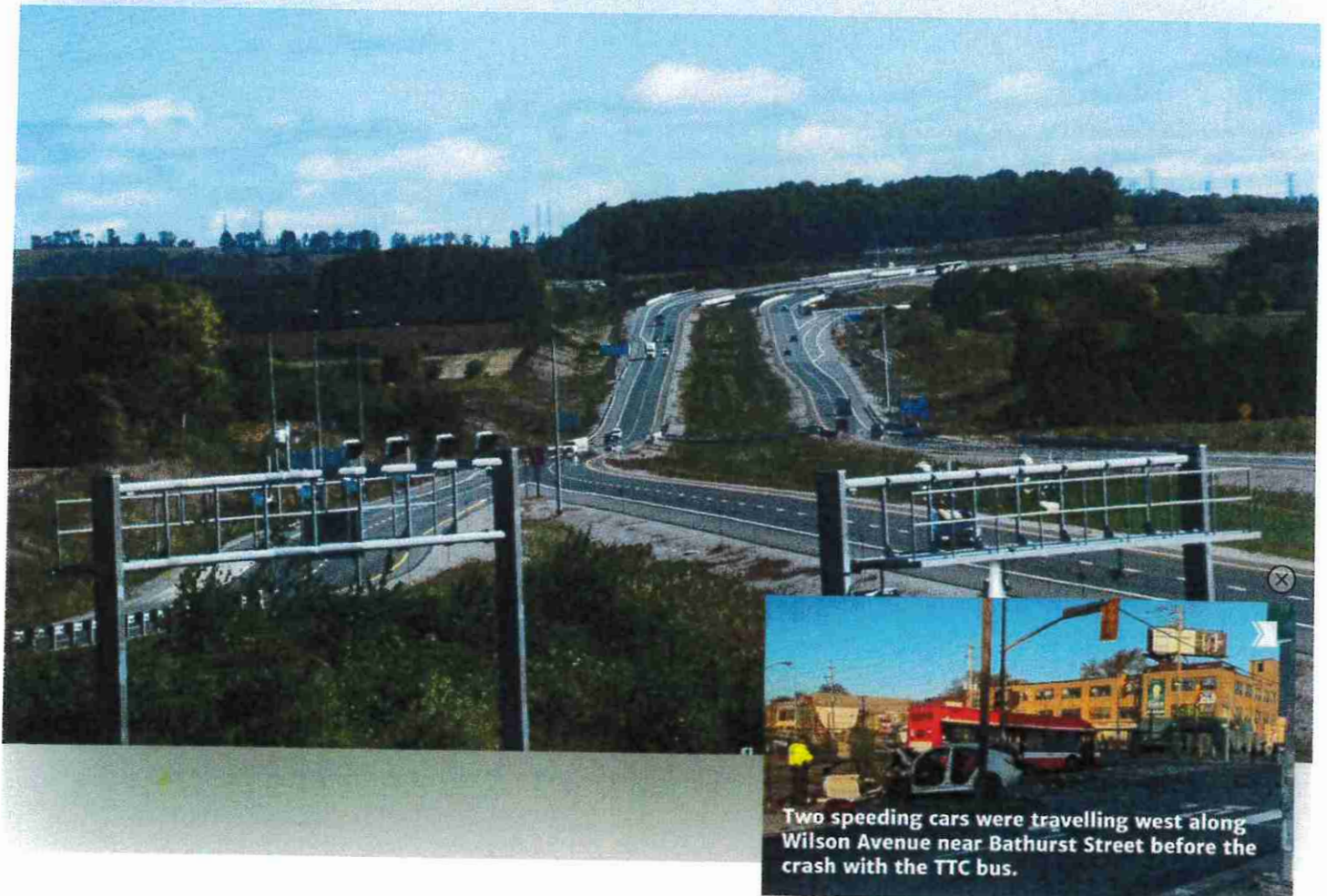
# Should Ontario buy back Highway 407 as Premier Doug Ford suggests to ease commuter pain?

The hot-button topic of ownership of Hwy. 407 is being served up, in addition to building a new highway with a tunnel through the most congested areas of the GTA. Tell us what you think by taking our poll.

By **Bruce Froude** Insidehaltoncom

Oct 4, 2024

Article was updated **Oct 28, 2024**





Ontario Premier Doug Ford says buying back Highway 407 could help alleviate traffic congestion in the GTA.



Everybody in the GTA gets stuck in traffic, but Ontario Premier Doug Ford is thinking of an option that could ease commuter pain — buying back the tolled Highway 407.

“Wouldn’t it be great if we could even get over 50 kilometres an hour on the 401 in rush hour through the city?” he asked reporters during a press conference in East York on Wednesday, Oct. 2.

The hot-button topic of ownership of Hwy. 407 was front and centre, with buying it back served up in addition to building a new highway with a tunnel through the most congested areas of the GTA. When asked whether Ontario could purchase Hwy. 407 at a lower price to remove more cars from Hwy. 401, the premier quickly replied.

“All options are on the table — maybe both options,” he said. “We’ll do the feasibility study. We’ll look at the 407 and see exactly which way are we going.”



Highway 407 isn’t popular in Durham Region, or other areas, because of high tolls. The hope was the highway would serve as relief from the high traffic volumes on Hwy. 401, but that hasn’t been the case.

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Most days, drivers on Hwy. 401 are going nowhere fast, and the economy is bearing the brunt. According to a statement by Ford, the financial cost to the Ontario economy has been estimated at more than \$11 billion in lost productivity annually.

In September, the Toronto Region Board of Trade Ipsos poll revealed that 53 per cent of residents contemplate relocation due to traffic congestion, while 62 per cent are reluctant to travel to work.

### Does it make sense for the province to buy back Highway 407?

- ☐ Yes, it's too expensive to use
- ☐ No, it would be too expensive.
- ☐ Don't care because I don't ever take the highway

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"We basically have one route going east and west," said Ford. "The city is growing so quick, the region is growing so quick; it's (Hwy. 401) pretty well at capacity now. But the 407 will be at capacity in 20 years or so. We have to think 20, 30, 40 years down the road."



The Mike Harris government sold the toll highway in 1999 for \$3 billion.

### Related Stories

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Premier Doug Ford says getting rid of Hwy. 407 tolls, a 'great question, a fantastic question' and doesn't rule out quick action on move



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