

King withdraws support for GTA West Corridor

By Mark Pavilonis Editor Local Journalism Initiative

King Township councillors unanimously withdrew their previous support for the provincial GTA West Corridor. In a lengthy motion passed at the last virtual council meeting, Councillor Debbie Schaefer highlighted some of the main concerns with the proposed Highway 413. She pointed out this planned transportation route would "raze" roughly 800 hectares of valuable farmland, taking them out of production. Schaefer pointed out the value of local food is extremely important and we need to protect our agriculture. Ontario's rich Greenbelt, which recently got a boost from the Province, would be impacted by this highway. The planned infrastructure would negatively impact key natural heritage features, key hydrological features and areas. The onus, according to the motion, should be on the Province to prove that there is "no reasonable alternative," and this has not been done. The corridor would also bring increased traffic through the region. The motion notes this highway will increase traffic in King, largely due to the interchanges at Highway 27 and Weston, as well as those near Nobleton and Laskay. King has consistently expressed concern over the impact of this highway on its communities. In August 2015, King said the route should take a southerly swing, to minimize the impacts on Nobleton. Schaefer said King also supports a move by Environmental Defence calling on the federal government to conduct a full Environmental Assessment on the route. The motion notes the EA undertaking by the previous government was shelved because of strong objections from experts in rural development, agriculture and environmentalists. They contend this will cause irreversible ecological harm caused by the uncontrolled urban sprawl enabled by the corridor. Mayor Steve Pellegrini noted the Township received an abundance of correspondence on this issue, even some from local elementary school students. Councillor David Boyd noted the impact of the corridor would be "too great" on villages like Nobleton and Laskay. The resolution will be sent to the premier, local MPPs, TRCA and other regional municipalities impacted by the GTA West highway.