

Ontario gives \$40M to widen Rockland's County Road 17

No money promised yet to upgrade two-lane section within Ottawa city limits

By Kate Porter, [CBC News](#) June 16, 2016



The Ontario government is committing \$40 million to four-lane County Road 17 through Rockland to the edge of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, at Ottawa city limits.

Ontario's transportation minister has announced \$40 million to widen a nine kilometre section of County Road 17 through Rockland, but the city councillor for neighbouring Cumberland warns the stretch of highway within city limits needs to go ahead at the same time.

The provincial money would go toward making a nine kilometre stretch, from Landry Road to Canaan Road at the edge of the boundary with Ottawa, a four-lane road.

That project is pegged at about \$107 million, according to a related City of Ottawa study, and construction would be expected to start in 2019.

"The squeaky wheel gets the oil, so we're getting some oil today and we're quite happy about it," said Guy Desjardins, mayor of Clarence-Rockland.



Guy Desjardins, the mayor of Clarence-Rockland, was very pleased on June 16 that Ontario's transportation minister, Steven Del Duca, and the area's MPP, Grant Crack, announced \$40 million to widen County Road 17 through his town. (Kate Porter/CBC)

Desjardins had been pushing for the four-laning, along with Glengarry-Prescott-Russell MPP Grant Crack, because he was concerned about safety on the busy two-lane road east of Ottawa.

At an estimated 25,000 vehicles on it per day, Desjardins said it was just a matter of time before the road would see a serious collision.

The widening would also help Rockland residents who work or shop in Ottawa, said Desjardins, while boosting economic development of the town if it leads to more people coming to Rockland.

A line in February's Ontario budget mentioned money might be forthcoming for Rockland's portion of the road, but until Thursday there had been no funding committed.

'It doesn't make sense' to leave middle 2-lane stretch

But the Ottawa city councillor for the Cumberland ward that borders Clarence-Rockland says it doesn't make sense to start widening the section of road in Rockland, and work west.



The Ontario government has committed \$40 million toward the widening of County Road 17 in Rockland from two lanes to four. Construction could start in 2019. (CBC)

"What's going to happen is you're going to have a four-lane road in Rockland, cramped down to a two-lane road through Cumberland, and back up to a four-lane road in Orleans," said Stephen Blais.

That would create two bottlenecks equivalent to commuters trying to make their way through the "split" where highways 417 and 174 meet, suggested Blais.

"Maybe that's what Rockland residents want but somehow I doubt it."

Blais argues the best plan is to start from Trim Road, which will eventually be the end point for light rail, and work east. The city has an environmental assessment to create high-occupancy vehicle lanes in each direction, to encourage transit, said Blais.

But the city has no money to four-lane its section of road between Trim Road and city limits and the province has not announced any funding for it. That idea has also had vocal critics in Cumberland for years.

Ontario's transportation minister was non-committal about when that middle piece of road might be addressed.

"We're here today to talk about this nine kilometres stretch. I anticipate that we'll continue to have those conversations, that continue to demonstrate progress, continue to work with our partners to get it right," said Steven Del Duca.

"It's not lost on me that there are requirements for additional transportation infrastructure in the united counties, in Ottawa, and beyond in eastern Ontario."

Mayor Desjardins hopes that with Liberal governments at the provincial and federal levels, both in the midst of announcing infrastructure funding, the money will eventually come to do the whole road.

"We can't have just four lanes stopping at Canaan," said Desjardins. "And we'll just keep pushing and asking for it."

"As long as I'm in the office, I will keep asking."