

# OTTAWA'S CASE OF CONGESTION

## Locals being driven to distress

**DOUG HEMPSTEAD**  
Ottawa Sun

By the time vehicle-driving Ottawa commuters get home on Thursday nights, they're often mad as bees — especially if they were unprepared for whatever held them up.

According to a new study, Thursday night is the worst drive of the week in Ottawa. In this case "worst" is defined as the slowest and most congested.

The report, paid for by GPS-maker TomTom, lists Ottawa as the third-worst city in Canada in which to drive to-and-from work, only slightly behind Toronto where 83 hours are lost due to traffic, compared to 81 in



TONY CALDWELL/OTTAWA SUN

A new study has listed Ottawa as having the third worst commute among Canadian cities.

the capital.

Orléans commuter Justin Mercier figures he spends an hour-and-a-half driving to work downtown each day.

Then, the same amount of time going home — probably more. He does this because he figures he saves money

thanks to his employer providing a \$75/month parking space for him. There are others in the same office complex who spend that much each week.

"During the school year, it's a parking lot," he said of Hwy. 174.

## WORST DRIVES

*Top 7 most congested cities in Canada:*

1. Vancouver
2. Toronto
3. Ottawa
4. Montreal
5. Calgary
6. Quebec
7. Edmonton

"It's bad. There were rumours they were going to build another lane, but apparently that's for the buses."

The report's data suggests traffic congestion on secondary roads is worse than main roads.

It's the sort of thing that can set off road rage in a stressed, already-agitated, or neurotic and ignorant driver, according to a Carleton University professor.

Tim Pychyl specializes in procrastination and time

management, which is really what a sensible commute is all about.

"Stress comes from violated expectations," he said.

He'd know. He spent Tuesday driving to Ottawa from London, Ont., and hit Toronto, right at rush-hour.

"But I expected to go 9 km/h, and I did. So it didn't bother me," he said. "It's the people who don't plan who are thrown for a loop."

Pychyl said gridlock has different effects on different people.

"Not everybody has road rage, but lots of us are simmering under the surface. You're affected based on a combination of your personality and your expectations."

One way to temper those expectations is to get familiar with the bad areas and plan to avoid them. The city's website has a boatload of information as well — like mapped-out locations

of all the major construction projects already underway and how long a delay each will cause. Some of them are more than 15 minutes.

More than 180 km of roadways in the capital will be repaved by the fall. But the city is also spending \$4 million this year to improve highly congested intersections.

"All vibrant, growing, lively cities like Ottawa have congestion issues," said Nancy Schepers, Deputy City Manager for Planning and Infrastructure. "In general, traffic congestion in Ottawa is consistent with similar-sized cities in North America."

Across the city, there are approximately 400 construction projects underway, planned strategically to reduce congestion as much as possible.

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