

= Ontario Highway 420 =

King 's Highway 420 , commonly referred to as Highway 420 , is a 400 @-@ series highway in the Canadian province of Ontario that connects the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) with downtown Niagara Falls . It continues east as a limited @-@ access expressway named Niagara Regional Road 420 to connect with the Rainbow Bridge international crossing between Canada and the United States over the Niagara River ; this was part of Highway 420 until 1998 . West of the QEW , the freeway ends at an at @-@ grade intersection with Montrose Road (Niagara Regional Road 98) . The highway has a speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour (50 mph) , making it the only 400 @-@ series highway to have a speed limit less than 100 kilometres per hour (62 mph) for its entirety .

Originally constructed as a divided four lane road with two traffic circles , the route of Highway 420 formed part of the QEW between 1941 and 1972 before being assigned a unique route number . This took place during the reconstruction of the four lane divided highway into a freeway and the construction of the large interchange at the freeway 's western terminus . In 1998 , the section of Highway 420 east of Stanley Avenue was transferred to the responsibility of the Regional Municipality of Niagara and redesignated as Regional Road 420 .

= = Route description = =

At 3 @.@ 3 km (2 @.@ 1 mi) , Highway 420 is the shortest 400 @-@ series highway , travelling through Niagara Falls from Montrose Road to Stanley Avenue , on the outskirts of the city 's tourist district . East of Stanley Avenue (Regional Road 102) the highway becomes Niagara Regional Road 420 and is known as Falls Avenue and Newman Hill on approach to the Rainbow Bridge . This portion was designated a part of Highway 420 until 2000 , when it was transferred to the City of Niagara Falls and the Regional Municipality of Niagara , although the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) still assists with the maintenance of it under a Connecting Link agreement . East of Drummond Road , Highway 420 features stylized light fixtures with the letters " ER " , which stand for Elizabeth Regina and are a tribute to The Queen Mother .

Highway 420 begins in the west at a signalized intersection with Montrose Road (Regional Road 98) , west of which it continues as Watson Street through the residential neighbourhood of Greens Corners to Beaverdams Road (Regional Road 53) . East of Montrose Road , the highway is a four lane roadway divided by a raised paved median , and passes north of a forest as it approaches a large interchange with the QEW . In addition to a parclo interchange that provides almost all directional movements , this four @-@ level stack interchange features two flyovers that arc from south to east as well as a four lane mainline that curves from north to east , directing most westbound Highway 420 traffic onto the Toronto @-@ bound QEW .

East of the QEW , Highway 420 encounters an interchange with Dorchester Road as both cross the Queenston @-@ Chippawa Power Canal . This interchange was originally a traffic circle that was removed in the early 1970s . The numerous lanes from the stack interchange to the west begin to converge between residential subdivisions east of Dorchester Road , gradually narrowing to four through lanes at the Drummond Road interchange . After passing beneath Portage Road , the route widens on approach to an at @-@ grade intersection with Stanley Avenue . This intersection is the eastern end of both the freeway segment of the route and the signed King 's Highway 420 ; east of Stanley Avenue the route is signed as Niagara Regional Road 420 and known as Falls Avenue .

Now separated by a landscaped median , the route progresses eastward , intersecting MacDonald Avenue and providing access to several residential / retail properties that adjoin the road . The route travels through a concrete trench and abruptly curves to the southeast as it passes beneath Victoria Avenue , with which there is a simple interchange . East of this point , the road was named Newman Hill until March 2012 . Palmer Avenue and Ontario Avenue overpass the route as it descends a hill towards the Niagara Gorge . At the bottom , the route curves to the southwest , where it provides access to the Rainbow Bridge border crossing into the United States as well as the tourist district of the city .

Due to its association with the number 420 in cannabis culture , Highway 420 is also the location for

the annual Cannabis Conference and Protest , usually taking place sometime around April 20 . The event includes a march beginning near Niagara Falls and travelling to Highway 420 .

= = History = =

= = = Rainbow Bridge Approach = = =

The history of Highway 420 predates its designation by nearly 75 years , tied in with the crossing of the Niagara Gorge between the twin cities of Niagara Falls . The first level crossing between the two cities was the Honeymoon Bridge , constructed in 1898 . The 14 m (46 ft) wide structure spanned 255 m (837 ft) between the Canadian and American sides , 58 m (190 ft) above the Niagara River . Its narrow design proved to be a fatal flaw , and on January 27 , 1938 , under the weight of a massive ice jam in the river , the structure collapsed . A day later , both the owners of the previous bridge ? the International Railway Company (IRC) ? as well as the Minister of Highways Thomas Baker McQuesten announced intentions to construct a new span ; a long political battle ensued for several years over the merits of private or public ownership of border crossings . In the end , the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission (NFBC) paid the IRC \$ 615 @, @ 000 to purchase the right @-@ of @-@ way of the old bridge as well as the rights to construct the new one . The future Rainbow Bridge was royally dedicated by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on June 7 , 1939 , just hours after the couple dedicated the QEW .

On May 16 , 1940 , Samuel Johnson , the vice @-@ chair of the NFBC , and McQuesten , who in addition to his parliamentary role was chair of the commission , ceremonially turned the first sod for the new bridge using a two @-@ handled shovel . However , construction had begun two weeks earlier on May 4 . The new bridge was assembled over the following 18 months ; the design was prepared by New York engineering firm Waddell & Hardesty and supervised by the Edward Lupfer Corporation , the latter the designers of the Peace Bridge . The new structure was located 167 m (548 ft) downstream from the Honeymoon Bridge , as the gorge is slightly wider at that point , resulting in a 288 m (945 ft) span .

Meanwhile , McQuesten was overseeing the construction of the QEW between Toronto and Fort Erie . The new dual highway , inspired by German Autobahns , was the first of its kind in Canada . However , the start of World War II in September 1939 would temporarily halt his ambitions , as funding was quickly shifted to the war effort . As a result , construction on the new superhighway was put on hold south of Niagara Falls . McQuesten officially opened the QEW on August 23 , 1940 ; the pavement ended south of Lundy 's Lane . Despite the war , work began on a link between the highway and the Rainbow Bridge through the centre of Niagara Falls . This link would not be completed in time for the opening of the new bridge .

On November 1 , 1941 , the Rainbow Bridge was officially opened during a simple ceremony . The oldest living couple known to have wed in Niagara Falls , a pair from Pennsylvania , were the first to cross , followed by a newlywed couple from Georgia . This symbolically tied the history of the two bridges together , and was followed by McQuesten and Johnson walking towards the centre of the structure from the Canadian and American sides , respectively , and shaking hands at the centre . Several explosions followed and the bridge was opened to traffic .

Work continued on the four lane bridge approach throughout 1941 , and by the summer of 1942 it was possible to drive directly from the bridge onto the QEW . The new link featured a traffic circle at Dorchester Road as well as at the QEW . Four gravel lanes opened between Niagara Falls and Fort Erie during the summer of 1941 , becoming the main route of the QEW . As a result , what would become Highway 420 was referred to by several names , including the Queen Elizabeth Way Extension (and known by locals for decades as the " Queen E Extension ") and the Rainbow Bridge Approach .

= = = Upgrade to freeway = = =

During the mid 1960s , the DHO examined the possibility of extending the freeway portion of the route east towards the Rainbow Bridge . They began to purchase properties lining Roberts Street in 1966 . In 1971 , construction began on a three level stack interchange between the QEW and the Rainbow Bridge Approach . This removed the two traffic circles along the approach . The interchange between the QEW and Lundy 's Lane (Highway 20) was also removed ; instead , the new stack interchange included access to Montrose Road . By April 1972 , the Rainbow Bridge Approach was designated as Highway 420 .

In 1998 , the Niagara Falls Transportation Study was released , recommending that Roberts Street be rebuilt as a gateway to the city as opposed to a freeway . Highway 420 east of Stanley Avenue was subsequently transferred to Niagara Region . While the section near the QEW junction has high mast lighting , like other provincial freeways , the rest of the route (including Regional Road 420) had the " ER " lightposts to commemorate the route 's historical status as the original routing of the QEW .

On September 23 , 2010 , Highway 420 was designated as the Niagara Veterans Memorial Highway . On January 31 , 2012 , Niagara Regional Council approved the renaming of Roberts Street and Newman Hill as an extension of Falls Avenue , beginning March 1 . Prior to this , Falls Avenue curved into Newman Hill at the Rainbow Bridge .

= = Exit list = =

The following table lists the major junctions along Highway 420 , as noted by the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario . The entire route is located in the Regional Municipality of Niagara . All exits are unnumbered .