



Rockcliffe Park Residents Association

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26 June 2011

The Honourable John Baird, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

By e-mail

Dear Minister:

**Subject: National Capital Commission (NCC) Interprovincial Crossings
Environmental Assessment**

Since you are the Minister responsible for the National Capital Commission, I am writing to you on behalf of the Rockcliffe Park Residents Association (RPRA) with regard to the above-noted proceeding. Our community association has been deeply involved in these discussions for many years, as any new interprovincial crossing in Corridor 5 (Kettle Island) will have a profound and lasting negative impact on our residents and on the broader National Capital Region (NCR). We wish to provide you with our position on this important matter, and to share with you some of our serious concerns with the process to date. A more detailed description of our concerns and requests is set out in the attached appendix.

The RPRA strongly opposes all three of the proposed Corridors for an interprovincial crossing

- All three of the Corridors under consideration in Phase 2B are unsuitable for interprovincial crossings as currently proposed.
- Corridor 5 is particularly unsuitable. Converting the Aviation Parkway to a heavy truck corridor would cause immeasurable harm for nearby residents, hospitals, schools, recreational facilities and nationally significant heritage locations. We contend that the Kettle Island Corridor should be dropped from consideration effective immediately.
- The "Canotek" option is a viable alternative to the proposed corridors and alignments. It would route heavy trucks outside of residential neighbourhoods and outside the green belt. It would also provide better incentives for use of public transit.

The RPRA is deeply concerned about the lack of fairness and transparency in the consultation process

- The consultation process to date lacks some of the fundamental aspects of procedural fairness, including adequate notice and the right to be heard by an impartial decision maker.
- Parties have not had sufficient time to analyze the available documentation at hand or to plan adequate and informed involvement in meetings. Moreover, the pre-registration process for the Phase 2B – Round 1 consultation meetings was confusing and discouraged public participation. In our view, these are not meaningful consultations.

The RPRA requests the following immediate remedial action:

- We request intervener funding to allow concerned communities to meaningfully participate in the Interprovincial Crossing process.
- We request that the Interprovincial Crossing process be made sufficiently flexible to allow for other options to be assessed, including:
 - consideration of the Canotek option;
 - a tunnel connecting the MacDonald Cartier Bridge to Highway 417; and
 - the use of the Lemieux Island crossing transportation corridor.
- We request that the NCC federal partner immediately establish an independent panel of urban planners and environmental experts to provide advice and views.

The RPRA is deeply disappointed that this consultation process has pitted community against community instead of bringing residents together to work toward a long-term sustainable solution for the betterment of the entire region. We strongly believe that alternatives exist that can achieve the region's transportation needs without devastating established communities and institutions.

As the Minister responsible for the NCC, we urge you to direct the Commission, its staff and consultants to step back and reconsider the objectives, goals and expectations for this process, with a view to fulfilling the NCC's core mandate to "...assist in the development, conservation and improvement of the National Capital Region in order that the nature and character of the seat of the Government of Canada may be in accordance with its national significance...".

We look forward to receiving as soon as possible a response to all the specific points and requests raised.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Dickson
President, Rockcliffe Park Residents Association

Att.

cc. The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P. Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, M.P.P. Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Jean Charest, P.C., M.N.A. Premier of Quebec

The Honourable James Moore, P.C., M.P. Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
The Honourable Denis Lebel, P.C., M.P. Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec
The Honourable Peter Kent, P.C., M.P. Minister of the Environment
The Honourable Peter Penashue, P.C., M.P. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada
The Honourable John Wilkinson, M.P.P. Ontario Minister of the Environment
The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, M.P.P. Ontario Minister of Transportation
The Honourable Bob Chiarelli, M.P.P. Ontario Minister of Infrastructure
The Honourable Sam Hamad, M.N.A. Quebec Minister of Transport
The Honourable Pierre Arcand, M.N.A. Quebec Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks
The Honourable Norman MacMillan, M.N.A. Quebec Minister for Transport
The Honourable Mauril Bélanger, P.C., M.P. Ottawa-Vanier
The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, M.P.P. Ottawa-Vanier, Minister of Community and Social Services
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Brent Stefanson
His Worship, Jim Watson, Mayor of Ottawa
His Worship, Marc Bureau, Mayor of Gatineau
Councillor Peter Clark
Corridor 5 Community Associations:
Cardinal Glen Community Association
Lindenlea Community Association
Manor Park Community Association
New Edinburgh Community Alliance
Overbrook Community Association
Rockcliffe Mews Residents Association
Rothwell Heights Property Owners Association
Vanier Community Association

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF RPRA POSITION, CONCERNS AND REQUESTS –
INTERPROVINCIAL CROSSING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

1. **The RPRA strongly opposes all three of the proposed Corridors for an interprovincial crossing**

- The RPRA rejects **all three** of the proposed Corridors under consideration in Phase 2B as unsuitable locations for interprovincial crossings. The Phase 1 study failed to distinguish and properly weigh the impact of semi-trailer trucks on human populations. Any solution must remove these huge toxic vehicles out of the downtown corridor and away from areas where people live in close proximity to the roads leading to the bridges on both sides of the river (i.e. Corridors 5, 6 and 7). Instead, we strongly advocate a more visionary and future-oriented NCR ring road with a bridge further out in both the east end and west end. The current three corridors cover a unique and continuous shoreline-green space of significant environmental, recreational, cultural and institutional importance close to the centre of the NCR. This shoreline is intrinsic to the NCR's uniqueness and integrity.
- Corridor 5 (Kettle Island), in particular, is a socially, environmentally and economically toxic option and will prove to be politically toxic if it is pursued further. The Aviation and Rockcliffe Parkways are prized cultural landscapes of significant importance to all NCR residents and indeed to all Canadians. These parkways are key elements of the scenic gateway to Sussex Drive and Parliament Hill. They are also surrounded by residential neighbourhoods that are home to more than 100,000 people. Converting the Aviation Parkway to a heavy truck corridor would cause immeasurable harm for nearby residents, hospitals, schools, recreational facilities and nationally significant heritage locations (including the RCMP Musical Ride Centre, the Canada Aviation and Space Museum, and Rockcliffe Airport – the oldest operating airport in Canada). This crossing has the greatest social, environmental and economic impact of the three corridors under consideration and is by far the least desirable from a public interest perspective. We contend that the Kettle Island Corridor should be dropped from consideration effective immediately. Had an urban planning lens rather than a transportation lens and a people first weighting been applied in the previous Phase of the interprovincial crossing project, Corridor 5 would no longer be under consideration.
- The RPRA contends that an alternative corridor, known as the Canotek option, would have far less social impact than the three options currently under consideration. This option envisages access to Autoroute 50 (and Gatineau Airport) via Boulevard Maloney East (Highway 148) and a component of upper Corridor 7. It would route heavy trucks outside of residential neighbourhoods and outside the green belt. It would also provide better incentives for use of public transit.
- The RPRA does not support the access of any crossing to the Rockcliffe Parkway or the Hemlock/Beechwood corridor. The combination of the massive Rockcliffe Base development and the Corridor 5 – Kettle Island option would have a devastating traffic impact on these already congested routes, not to mention residential arteries.

2. **The RPRA is deeply concerned about the lack of fairness and transparency in the consultation process**

- The RPRA has significant procedural concerns regarding the environmental assessment process and the consultations currently underway. There is a deep suspicion among many residents in our community and neighbouring communities that Corridor 5 is being targeted (or has already been chosen) and that the Phase 2B consultations are designed to placate and possibly co-opt concerned community associations and citizens into a process designed to identify mitigation measures for a Kettle Island crossing.
- The RPRA is participating without prejudice in the Phase 2B consultations, but we do so under protest and our participation should not be construed as acceptance of the process. For reasons set out in more detail below, the RPRA considers that the consultation process lacks some of the fundamental aspects of procedural fairness, including adequate notice and the right to be heard by an impartial decision-maker.
- The RPRA does not recognize the competence and objectivity - having previously recommended Corridor 5 - of the consultant firm undertaking this phase of the consultation. Moreover, the RPRA objects to the selection process of the current consultants. It is our understanding that a Proposal Evaluation Team made up of 'staff professionals' from interested governments recommended Roche-NCE to the NCC Board using a weighting of 75% for the proponent's cost score. Given the weighting attributed to costs there was no doubt about the result. Was the trust of communities in the consultant a factor? It is our understanding that when the NCC Board recently met, it reversed its initial decision not to accept Roche-NCE. What were the grounds for this reversal?
- The RPRA objects to the timing of consultations for Phase 2B, which we believe are being unduly expedited by the NCC. Parties were provided with less than a week's notice of the consultation meetings. As a result, we have not had sufficient time to analyze the available documentation at hand or to plan adequate and informed involvement in meetings that have been held essentially back to back (and simultaneously in Gatineau and Ottawa, precluding the ability to attend meetings on both sides of the river pertaining to the same corridor). Moreover, the pre-registration process for the consultation meetings was confusing and unduly discouraged public participation.
- The RPRA objects to the fact that the recent consultation meetings on all three corridors were held in a location that is far from the corridors under review and from the impacted associations, particularly Corridor 5. It was especially objectionable that the Corridor 5 consultation was held in Orleans, a community that has favoured Corridor 5 and opposed the other two corridors. The Corridor 5 session should at least have been more easily accessible to those closest and most impacted.
- The RPRA considers that the NCC's process has fallen far short of its own "Key Principles Established by Public Engagement Specialists" (Appendix A-3 to the NCC's Corporate Administrative Policies and Procedures, dated July 7, 2010). These principles include transparency, honesty, meaningfulness, inclusiveness, clarity, accessibility and accountability. In our view, this process has failed to respect these

key principles, with the result that participants have no faith in the integrity of the process or in their ability to influence decisions.

3. The RPRA requests the following immediate remedial action:

- The RPRA requests intervener funding to allow concerned communities to meaningfully participate in the Interprovincial Crossing process and to ensure that its members and its involvement are well informed.
- The RPRA requests that the Interprovincial Crossing process be made sufficiently flexible to allow for other options to be assessed, including a tunnel connecting the MacDonald Cartier Bridge to Highway 417 and the use of the Lemieux Island crossing transportation corridor. There is still time for imagination before mitigation. For example, consider a visually appealing and functional enclosed roadway above and/or below ground designed to safely isolate and channel truck movement downtown (King Edward and connecting route to the 417). It could be forward thinking in design incorporating green space features which would brand the NCR for originality and as a place where quality of life comes first. Moreover, an outer ring road of the NCR connected by Ottawa River crossings should be a key feature of future planning, accommodating truck traffic, while green action, including joint and effective Ottawa-Gatineau rapid transit, should be vigorously pursued now to alleviate and manage commuter problems without resorting to an unimaginative and socially divisive bridge.
- The RPRA requests a copy of a letter of direction from the NCC to its consultant requesting that it seriously consider the Canotek option and that it interpret its terms of reference broadly to consider variations of alignments and transportation corridors, particularly in Quebec, between Corridors 6 and 7.
- Phase 2B - Round 2 consultations on Alignments/Corridor-Specific Input should not start until Round 1 on community values is validated with community input on the consultant findings. The relevant report should be made available to communities as soon as possible for analysis over the summer and validated in the fall of 2011 through consultations. Round 2 could then start, hopefully with an introductory information session to equip communities to provide informed input. The consultation process must be more sensitive to the resource limitations of communities and paced for optimum contribution. The pace envisaged for consultation is unsustainable and community fatigue will undermine the quality of informed public involvement in the process. Round 1 of Phase 2B has been exhausting and obviously rushed. We fear that future rounds will be conducted with the same unsustainable intensity.
- The RPRA requests to have in writing from the NCC, a statement to the effect that the three corridors under review will not be affected by the Greenbelt Master Plan update. It is incumbent on the NCC to clarify its position on this important matter as it potentially puts into question the credibility of the current options under review and the entire process, including related costs to all involved.

- The RPRA is concerned that the decision makers and experts involved are primarily transportation/engineer oriented and not urban planners. For this reason, the RPRA requests that the NCC federal partner immediately establish an independent panel of urban planners and environmental experts to provide advice and views on the Interprovincial Crossing project. The establishment of such a body was proposed at a May 20, 2011 meeting at Madame Madeleine Meilleur's constituency office - attended by NCC representatives.