

Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association

August 7, 2008

TO:

Hon. James Bradley, Minister of Transportation
Ministry of Transportation
77 Wellesley St W, 3rd Floor, Ferguson Block
Toronto ON M7A 1Z8

Mr. Peter Wowk, P. Eng.
Consultant Project Manager
URS Canada Inc.
75 Commerce Valley Drive East
Markham, ON L3T 7N9

Re: July 10 public Information Centre #1 and presentation on replacement of the Oxtongue Lake Narrows Bridge (GWP 93-89-00) and Oxtongue River Bridge (GWP 5550-04-00), Township of Algonquin Highlands, County of Haliburton

Dear Sirs:

In follow-up to our letter of July 10 to MTO, which was submitted at the Public Information Session at Oxtongue Lake on that date, we wish to raise the following comments in the context of the bridge replacement construction options that were presented at that session.

The public information session did not directly address many of the concerns raised in our original letter. In response to several of the issues we raised verbally at the information session, we were told that, at this stage of the project and without the benefit of detailed design, our concerns may or may not even be an issue. Hence we are left to hope that the matters will be addressed at the appropriate stage of the planning process.

We therefore request that a commitment be made by the URS/MTO planning team to address the considerations raised in this letter as part of the public presentation of the preferred option later this year, and to commit at that time to a framework for resolving these considerations before construction begins. Our community cannot be expected to endorse or even understand a preferred option if issues related to safety, access, the environment, financial compensation, etc. are not discussed and agreed to at the same time that the preferred option is presented.

A summary of the common community-wide issues and criteria for successful bridge replacement projects that have been identified to date follows:

- Minimize impact on the environment during and accelerate recovery of the environment after construction – waterlife, forests, rock outcroppings, ambient noise, dust, etc.

- Minimize financial impact on the tourism-related businesses in the community and make suitable financial compensation mechanisms available in advance
- Consider carefully the impact of interim road diversions on traffic patterns and safety in the vicinity of the bridges
- Minimize loss of private property and permanent negative impact on the aesthetic value of nearby properties
- Consider ongoing highway safety considerations; e.g., lower the currently posted speed limit, create school bus drop-off areas, design wider sidewalks on both sides of both bridges to minimize the need for pedestrian traffic to cross the highway, consider a pedestrian underpass at one end, minimize further “deepening” of existing curves, improve sightlines where practical, add left turn lanes to side roads near the bridges
- Inspect and consider removal of old wooden bridge pylons if they prove to be a navigation or diving hazard (diving from a bridge is of course not allowed – but kids do it anyway)
- Minimize duration of construction time, consider off-season construction to minimize disruption of prime vacation and visitor times and to the tourism businesses in general
- Maintain safe water access under the bridges during the construction period for all water traffic
- Maintain an open line of communication with the community through the OLRA and the use of public forums before, during and after the project.

We formally request that all of these considerations be taken into account and be reported on later this year when making recommendations for a preferred option for the Oxtongue bridges.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association,

James Grant, Vice President
Oxtongue Lake Ratepayers Association
c/o Gary Schultz, President
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Dwight, ON P0A 1H0

Cc:
Hon. Peter Fonseca, Minister of Tourism
Laurie Scott, MPP
Ted Arnott, MPP
Eleanor Harrison, Reeve
Diane Griffin, Councillor