

# The Alexandra Bridge Coalition

*A Green Future for the Alexandra Bridge!*

**The Federal Government proposes to demolish the Alexandra Bridge.**

**Our Coalition proposes that the Bridge be retained for its national built-heritage value and significance and repurposed for green infrastructure transportation.**

April 30, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

As you know, the demolition of the Alexandra Bridge is in the mandate letter of The Hon. Anita Anand, Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada.

It has been argued that the bridge needs to be replaced because it can no longer sustain vehicular traffic. Our Coalition would like the Government of Canada to revisit this decision, in light of the Government's own commitment to renew heritage sites and cultural landscapes and its policies on climate change and green infrastructure.

## **Keeping the Alexandra Bridge is the Sustainable Thing to do:**

Sustainability is a cornerstone of the Government of Canada's policies on climate change. The greenest structure is the one that is already there. These principles should guide the debate on revitalizing the Alexandra Bridge.

Even pre-pandemic, the Alexandra Bridge was supporting greener transportation. It carried 40% of active pedestrian and cycling cross-river transportation, and only 9% of the vehicular traffic. This trend needs support not erasure.

A repurposed Alexandra Bridge could accommodate a green-friendly Loop Tramway, better linking Ottawa and Gatineau along a significant, tourist-dominated route connecting the National Capital's major destinations. Indeed, the National Capital Commission has recently been charged with examining options pertaining to a Loop Tramway; we trust that their studies will consider the Alexandra Bridge.

Conversion of the bridge to active transportation would alleviate much of the corrosion and load stresses brought on by vehicular traffic and would better ensure its maintainability and durability.

Conversely, a new bridge designed to carry increased vehicular traffic would have a negative impact on the social sustainability of the residential neighbourhoods at both ends.

Good sustainability practice calls for assessments of the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that would be produced by the demolition, materials removals, traffic detours, and construction of the new bridge, as opposed to retention of the existing bridge. But demolition is not necessary.

### **Why the Alexandra Bridge Matters:**

The Alexandra Bridge is of national historic importance for its historical, engineering, and environmental significance. It was built by the Dominion Bridge Company in 1900, the first Canadian company to tackle an engineering feat of this scope.

The Alexandra Bridge is an outstanding work of engineering as recognized by the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers. The engineering value of the Alexandra Bridge resides in its innovative design, featuring all steel construction and mid-truss deck. It is internationally recognized as an outstanding example of the cantilevered steel bridge type.

The Alexandra Bridge is a key component of the nationally significant landscape of the Parliamentary precinct and its environs, encompassing monuments and landscape features on both sides of the Ottawa River that are important to our nation.

The National Capital Commission's own website refers to the Alexandra Bridge as: *a major national landmark. It is recognized for its iconic beauty and world-class workmanship,*

### **The Alexandra Bridge Coalition asks that there be:**

A reversal of the decision to demolish the bridge in favour of the revitalisation of the bridge for active transportation.

In support of evidence-based decision-making, we request access to all studies: historical studies, engineering studies, options analyses, financial analyses, traffic studies, and environmental and cultural heritage impact studies.

A peer-review of the decision to demolish the bridge.

Full public consultation on the future of the bridge, not on how it should be commemorated after demolition. This includes consultations with the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, and appropriate provincial partners.

Referral to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada for consideration as a national historic site.

Stabilization and maintenance of the structure according to the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*.

A management plan posited upon a future as an active-transportation bridge. This plan should be created through public consultation and signed by the minister responsible.

Yours sincerely,

The Coalition to Protect the Alexandra Bridge

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**Co-signatories:**

The National Trust for Canada

Heritage Ottawa

La Fédération Histoire Québec (FHQ)

Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO)

Architects DCA

La Société d'histoire de l'Outaouais (SHO)

Transport Action Canada

Greenspace Alliance for Canada's Capital

Action Vélo Outaouais (AVO)

L'Association des résidents de l'Île de Hull (ARIH)

L'Association du patrimoine du ruisseau de la Brasserie (APRB)

Lowertown Community Association

Manor Park Community Association

Action Sandy Hill

c.c.:

The Hon. Anita Anand, Minister Responsible for Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)

The Hon. Catherine McKenna, Minister Responsible for Infrastructure

The Hon. John Wilkinson, Minister of Environment & Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada

Greg Fergus, MP Hull-Aylmer, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister

Steven MacKinnon, MP Gatineau, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of PSPC

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