

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE FORT-FALLS INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE  
FOR CONSIDERATION BY COUNCIL December 13, 2021**

**WHEREAS:**

1. The Fort Frances—International Falls International Bridge [**“International Bridge”**] is a critical economic and community link connecting the Town of Fort Frances, Ontario and the City of International Falls, Minnesota;
2. The International Bridge sees more than 800,000 vehicle crossings annually, including:
  - a. tourists destined throughout Northwestern Ontario,
  - b. local trips for employment, business, recreational, educational, medical, emergency response, and family reasons,
  - c. commercial traffic serving the resource-based economy west of Thunder Bay, and
  - d. the importing of goods used in the mining, agricultural, and forestry sectors;
3. The International Bridge has been privately owned by the operators of local paper mills since it was built in 1908, and is currently owned, through subsidiaries, by the Packaging Corporation of America and Resolute Forest Products [**“Resolute”**], which is required by the *Customs Act* to provide the Canada Border Services Agency with facilities on the Canadian side of the International Bridge;
4. In Ontario, tolls on international bridges are authorized by the provincial Minister of Transportation under the *Toll Bridges Act*, but the bridge owners have placed their toll collection on the Minnesota side;
5. These tolls have become a growing concern for the citizens of Fort Frances and the surrounding communities, and deter American locals and visitors from crossing into Canada to support local businesses;
6. The only other privately-owned toll bridge connecting Canada and the United States is the Ambassador Bridge between Detroit and Windsor, which is 7,500 feet in length and charges less per crossing;
7. A January 31, 2006 public meeting revealed that one span of the International Bridge had only 15 to 20 years left in its lifespan before it needed to be replaced, at a then-estimated cost of \$8 million (USD);
8. Since 2006, it has been understood that high tolls were being charged by the bridge owners in order to rehabilitate the bridge in the 2020s, but Resolute now indicates that it wishes to divest itself from ownership, after collecting these high tolls for many years;
9. Council adopted resolutions in 2005 and 2006 calling on the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario to acquire the International Bridge and make it a public asset without tolls, but those calls went unanswered;

10. The Town of Fort Frances and its neighbouring communities are concerned that new private ownership of the International Bridge will result in even higher tolls or that public access to the bridge will be compromised for safety or financial reasons;
11. Ontario's *Toll Bridges Act* permits the Government of Ontario to enter into agreements with any Canadian or foreign authority for "the joint financing, construction or operation of any international bridge or tunnel and for any matter incidental thereto", as reflected in the provincial and state governments' \$30 million investment to replace the Rainy River—Baudette Bridge, which continues to operate without tolls;
12. Access to the International Bridge facilitates treaty obligations, including under the Jay Treaty of 1794, which allows Indigenous people from Canada to live and work freely in the United States, and allows access to traditional territories in northern Minnesota; and
13. The Town of Fort Frances' strategic plan recognizes that the community is in a period of economic transition, with a renewed focus on tourism, forestry, and mining sectors, and that its prosperity requires improved border access and transportation links;
14. The *Resolute Forest Products Canada*, the International Bridge and Terminal Company Inc. (IB&T) and Aazhogan Limited Partnership (Aazhogan) have submitted a joint application to the Minister of Transport seeking Governor in Council (GiC) approval for Aazhogan to own and operate the Canadian side of the Fort Frances – International Falls International Bridge;
15. As part of Transport Canada's review of the application, they are engaging with stakeholders and authorities who may have an interest in this proposed change of ownership, and asked for comments from the Town of Fort Frances; and
16. The Town of Fort Frances expressed its concerns and provided comments including but not limited to the economic significance of the International Bridge, importance of an asset management plan, and control/removal of tolls. The formal response letter is attached as schedule "A" forming part of this resolution.

**THEREFORE IT IS RESOLVED that Council of the Town of Fort Frances:**

17. Directs that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to annual general meeting of the Rainy River District Municipal Association for their consideration