

Administration & Finance Division
Planning & Development Division
Phone: 807-274-5323
Fax: 807-274-8479

Mailing Address for All Divisions:
Civic Centre
320 Portage Avenue
Fort Frances, ON
P9A3P9



Operations & Facilities Division
Phone: 807-274-9893
Fax: 807-274-7360

Community Services Division
Phone 807-274-4561
Fax: 807-274-3799

email: town@fortfrances.ca
www.fortfrances.ca

December 09, 2021

Tamara Rudge
Email: tamara.rudge@tc.gc.ca
Director General
Surface Transportation Policy

RE: Fort Frances - International Bridge

On behalf of the Town of Fort Frances, please accept this letter as the official comments on the proposed change of ownership or operation of the Canadian side of the international bridge. Thank you for providing us with the extension in submitting our comments.

The international bridge is a lifeline for Northwestern Ontario. Businesses, families, and tourism operations from Kenora, to Sioux Lookout, to Atikokan, and every municipality and First Nation in between and beyond are dependent on this vital transportation link.

The Town has significant concern that the international bridge is being considered for sale to other private investors and in the subsequent possibility of the bridge not being maintained and/or eventual closure. The Town had already expressed its concern at the regular Council Meeting on June 14, 2021. The resolution no. 707 regarding the **International Bridge - Ownership and Access Concerns** is attached.

In view of the correspondence from Transport Canada and discussions with government officials, it seems self-evident at this point that there is a limited prospect that the bridge will transition to public ownership, particularly, with the American half of the bridge already having changed hands.

As per the letter from Transport Canada dated November 16, 2021, the Town understands that the *International Bridges and Tunnels Act* (IBTA) ensures the proper consideration of our concerns and comments regarding the approval of the sale of the international bridge. Also, the government of Canada will make the new owner(s) of international bridge responsible for the safety (inspection and maintenance) and operation of the bridge under the *International Bridges and Tunnels Regulations* (IBTR).

The bridge could be a challenging asset for new owner(s) and may require some investment to keep it in reasonable shape in the longer run. Due to international bridge's economic significance, the Town requests Transport Canada to require new owner(s) to create and maintain an asset management fund for efficient maintenance of this bridge. If the bridge changes hands in the future, it ensures that the fund will be transferred to the next owner(s).

We emphasize that any closure or restriction on this bridge or toll hike would be economically devastating for our community and region, and it would not be forgotten by our citizens. We understand that the owner of the international bridge must inform the Minister when a change in tolls, fees or other changes have been implemented at a crossing. In fact, the tolls are collected on the U.S. side of the bridge. We request Transport Canada to look into the fact if it allows Canadian officials to regulate them or intervene if they become even more exorbitant.

We look forward to working with Transport Canada and the new owner(s) to keep one of our most important economic assets viable. However, we would like Transport Canada to address our concerns regarding asset management and tolls.

Please let us know if you have any questions or require clarification.

Sincerely,

Faisal Anwar,
Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Fort Frances

cc: Hon. O. Alghabra, Minister of Transport (Canada)-(omar.alghabra@parl.gc.ca)
Hon. C. Mulroney, Minister of Transportation (Ontario) - Email: (caroline.mulroney@pc.ola.org)
Hon. M. Pawlowski, MP Thunder Bay-Rainy River (Marcus.Powlowski@parl.gc.ca)
Hon. G. Rickford, MPP Kenora-Rainy River (greg.rickford@pc.ola.org)