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June 21, 2021

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Government of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
Via email: pm@pm.gc.ca

Premier Doug Ford
Government of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1
Via email: premier@ontario.ca

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau & Premier Ford:

Re: **International Bridge Resolution**

At the recent meeting of Council held on Monday, June 14, 2021, the resolution attached to this letter was approved unanimously by Council. I have been directed to forward a copy of the resolution to a number of representatives which have been listed in the resolution and subsequently cc'd below.

Council looks forward to meeting with you to discuss your plan to protect this vital economic and community link.

Yours very truly,

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE DIVISION

Elizabeth (Lisa) Slomke, AOMC
Municipal Clerk

/es

c.c. Hon. M. Powlowski, MP Thunder Bay-Rainy River (Marcus.Powlowski@parl.gc.ca)
E. Melillo, MP Kenora (Eric.Melillo@parl.gc.ca)
Hon. G. Rickford, MPP Kenora-Rainy River (greg.rickford@pc.ola.org)
S. Mamakwa, MPP Kiiwetinoong (SMamakwa-QP@ndp.on.ca)
J. Monteith-Farrell, MPP Thunder Bay-Atikokan (JMonteith-Farrell-QP@ndp.on.ca)
Hon. C. Mulroney, Minister of Transportation (Ontario) (caroline.mulroney@pc.ola.org)
Hon. O. Alghabra, Minister of Transport (Canada) (Omar.Alghabra@parl.gc.ca)
Hon. B. Blair, Minister of Public Safety (Bill.Blair@parl.gc.ca)

Municipal Councils of Municipalities in Rainy River District: Alberton, LaVallee, Emo, Chapple, Morley, Dawson, Lake of the Woods, Rainy River and Atikokan (various e-mails)
Municipal Councils of Municipalities in Kenora District: Dryden, Ear Falls, Ignace, Kenora, Machin, Pickle Lake, Red Lake, Sioux Lookout and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls (various e-mails)
First Nation Councils located in the Rainy River and Kenora districts (various)
Rainy River District Municipal Association (RRDMA) (chapple@tbaytel.net)
Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) (admin@noma.on.ca)
Chamber of Commerce – Fort Frances District (thefort@fortfranceschamber.com)
Chamber of Commerce – Kenora District (info@kenorachamber.com)
Grand Council Treaty #3 (reception@treaty3.ca)
Sunset Country Metis Community (metisofsunsetcountry@gmail.com)
Sunset Country Travel Association (info@visitsunsetcountry.com)
Mayor and Council – City of International Falls (various)
Mayor and Council – City of Ranier (cityofrainier@frontiernet.net)

Session No. 068

Resolution No. 707

Moved by Judson

Dated: June 14, 2021

Seconded by McTaggart

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;

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

- 14. Calls on the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario:
 - a. to immediately intervene in the sale of the International Bridge and make all necessary efforts to acquire the International Bridge with their American counterparts, operate it as a public asset, and remove tolls, and
 - b. to meet with Council and administration of the municipality to brief it on their efforts and plans to protect this vital economic and community link;
- 15. Directs that a copy of this resolution be sent to:
 - a. Marcus Powlowski, MP (Thunder Bay—Rainy River),
 - b. Eric Melillo, MP (Kenora),
 - c. The Hon. Greg Rickford, MPP (Kenora—Rainy River),
 - d. Sol Mamakwa, MPP (Kiiwetinoong),
 - e. Judith Monteith-Farrell, MPP (Thunder Bay—Atikokan),
 - f. The Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario,
 - g. The Hon. Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation (Ontario),
 - h. The Hon. Omar Alghabra, Minister of Transport (Canada), and
 - i. The Hon. Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety;
- 16. Directs that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the below governments, organizations, and stakeholders, with a covering letter requesting that they issue a supporting resolution or letter to the individuals listed in the previous paragraph:
 - a. All municipal councils and First Nation councils located in the Rainy River and Kenora districts,
 - b. The district municipal associations for the Rainy River and Kenora districts and the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association,
 - c. All chambers of commerce serving the Rainy River and Kenora districts,
 - d. Grand Council Treaty #3,
 - e. The Sunset Country Métis Community, and
 - f. The Sunset Country Travel Association; and
- 17. Directs that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Mayor and Council of the City of International Falls and the Mayor and Council of the City of Ranier, with a covering letter requesting that they adopt a similar resolution and bring both resolutions to the attention of their state and federal officials and representatives.

	Yea	Nay	Disclosure of Interest
M. Behan			
W. Brunetta			
J. Caul			
A. Hallikas			
D. Judson			
J. McTaggart			
R. Wiedenhoeft			

☒ CARRIED

☐ DEFEATED

Jane Caul

MAYOR or DEPUTY MAYOR