

In the Loop with Wellington



Alexandra Bridge Coalition / Coalition pour le pont Alexandra

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May 31, 2022

Introduction

- I am here today as a spokesperson for the Alexandra Bridge Coalition.
- It is our understanding that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is seeking input on the repurposing of Wellington street, namely in regard to its exclusive use for public transit and active transportation.
- As both Wellington Street and the Alexandra Bridge are integral parts of the Confederation Boulevard loop; rethinking use of Wellington Street should extend to the plans for the Alexandra Bridge.
- Important synergies exists, especially in the areas of **sustainable transport** and **heritage**.

Alexandra Bridge Coalition

- In 2019, the decision to demolish the Alexandra Bridge was made without a full analysis of options for retention and rehabilitation.
- To protect the future of the historic Alexandra Bridge, an inter-provincial, multi-disciplinary coalition was formed. It is made up of advocates from the heritage, sustainable transportation and environmental sectors.
- The Alexandra Bridge Coalition advocates for the maintenance of the heritage structure and repurposing for public transit and active transportation exclusively.
- <https://heritageottawa.org/alexandra-bridge>

Heritage, environmental advocates form group to save Alexandra Bridge



120-year-old bridge could be demolished, rebuilt

CBC News · Posted: May 07, 2021 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: May 7, 2021

Source: CBC



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Des voix s'élèvent pour la préservation du pont Alexandra

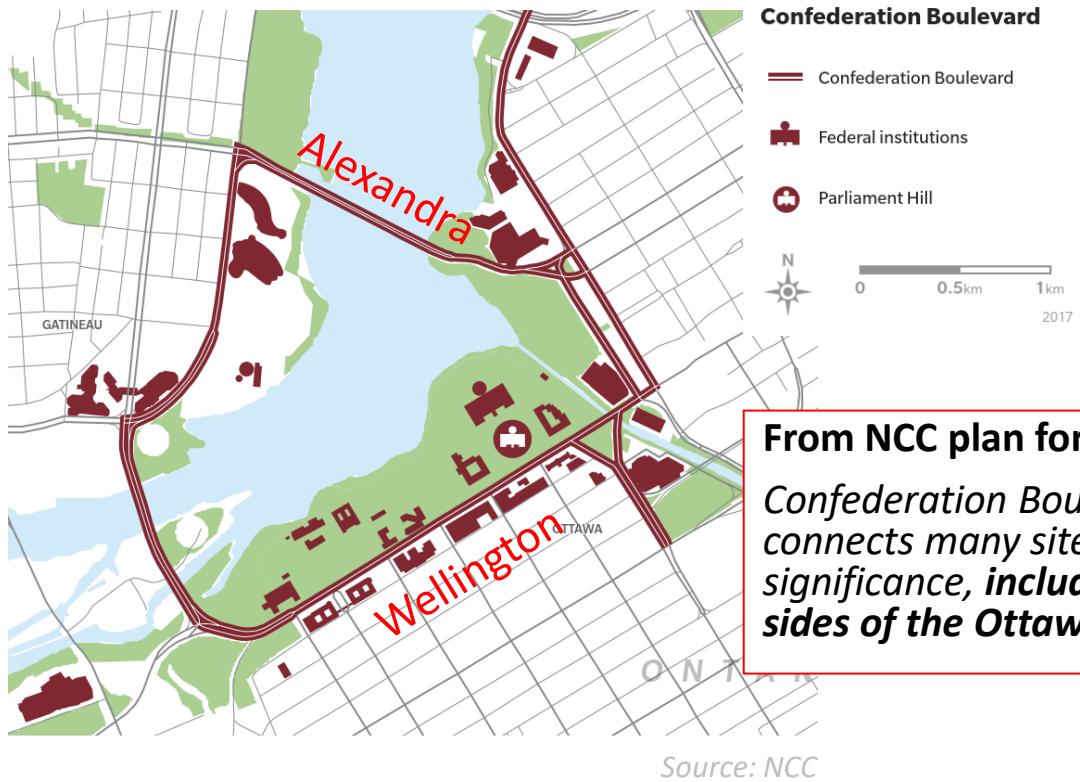
Source: Radio-Canada

Canada risks burning its bridges to its architectural and cultural history

TOON DREESSEN
CONTRIBUTED TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL
PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 27, 2020

Source: Globe and Mail

Confederation Boulevard



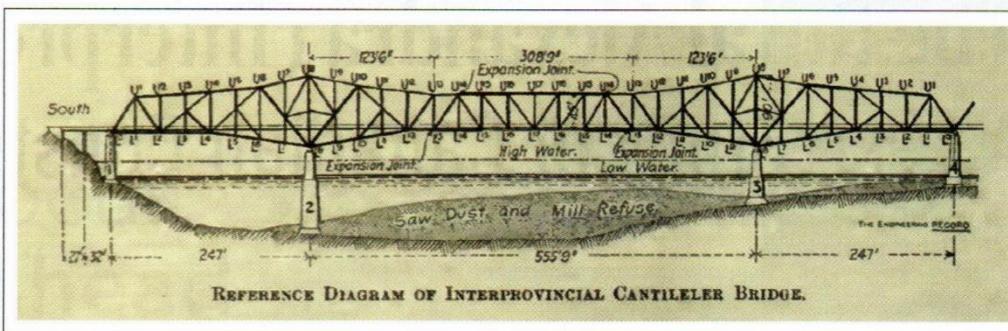
From NCC plan for 2017-2067 :

*Confederation Boulevard reflects Canada, as it connects many sites and symbols of national significance, **including a loop that connects both sides of the Ottawa River***

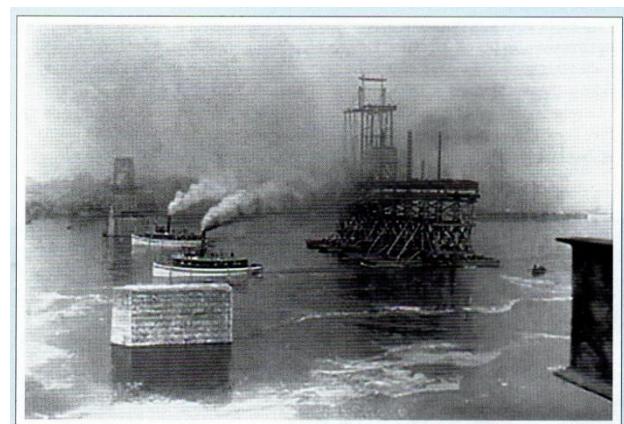
- A vision of **Wellington Street** without cars naturally extends to the **Alexandra Bridge**, as both are integral part of the Confederation Boulevard loop.
- The Alexandra Bridge is a national landmark that can be repurposed in harmony with this Wellington Street vision.

120-Year-Old National Historic Landmark

- Inaugurated in 1901, joint effort from communities on both sides of the river.
- Cantilever structure designed and built by Canadians, for railway, streetcar, horse carriage and pedestrian traffic.
- Longest span at the time, **establishing Canada as the foremost bridge-building nation in the world.**
- National Historic Civil Engineering Site designation by the Canadian Society of Civil Engineering (CSCE) in 1995 :
“Constructed with the most advanced technologies available at the time, the Alexandra Bridge stands today as evidence of the outstanding ingenuity and foresight of Canadian engineers.”



Elevation of the Royal Alexandra Bridge: The 555-ft, 9-inch (169.4 m) main span made it the fourth longest cantilever structure in the world and the longest in Canada. (*The Engineering Record*, 1901).



Moving the Anchor Span: Ottawa Transportation Co. tugs *Florence* and *Dolphin* tow the anchor span across the Ottawa River on April 21, 1900. The horizontal roadway and sloping bottom chord are clearly visible, as is the erection traveler.

Source: Canadian Museum of History CD2000-31-32, W. Harmer.

Part of our Modern Identity

- The imposing Alexandra Bridge is a key component of the nationally significant cultural landscape including the Hill and the Museum of History.
- **Picturesque element showcased more times than any other landmark in the NCC Plan for Canada's Capital for 2067**
- Tourist gateway and destination
 - Considered as the *porte d'entrée* by Tourisme Outaouais
 - High ranking in Trip Advisor and other web platforms
- Used for 40 % of all active transportation (cyclist and pedestrian) over the Ottawa River.



Source: NCC



Source: AB Coalition⁶

Position and Actions of the Coalition

Position

- Repurpose the historic landmark with a modern mission.
- Prioritize public and active transport; currently used by only 10 % of motorized cross-shore traffic.
 - Dedicated public and active transport use would remove the salt-laden private vehicles that have caused the current degradation, reducing maintenance costs.
- Create a cross-shore tramway loop that includes the bridge and Wellington Street
- PSPC should consider the repurposing option; including independent studies to determine feasibility; a heritage engineer must be involved
- Execute full maintenance schedule as opposed to planned obsolescence.
- Position consistent with Zeidler's principles guiding Block 2 redevelopment:
 - retain the existing heritage bridge, avoiding the waste and carbon vandalism of demolition.
 - The old structures ought to be woven together with modern transportation modes to create a diverse, characterful, yet coherent whole.

Actions

- Met with PSPC project leaders in early 2021.
- Engaged with local and federal elected officials
- The National Trust has placed the bridge on the 10 Most Endangered Heritage Places in Canada.
- Worked with Heritage Ottawa to organize an ongoing conference series about the bridge.
- Worked with CSCE to highlight bridge as a Canadian achievement.
- Submitted sustainability questions to Impact Assessment Agency (IAAC).

Some Progress

- PSPC revealed in April 2022 that they had started a "side" evaluation of repurposing of the bridge.
- Preliminary conclusion is that the Bridge lifecycle would be improved with use of a tramway instead of car traffic.
- However, this is a closed-door study; Coalition has not been asked for input; the parameters of the study are unknown

Our Plea to the Committee

- Include an interprovincial tramway line in plans for Wellington Street
- Ensure the plans are compatible with the creation of a tramway loop that includes the Alexandra Bridge
- Encourage PSPC
 - to initiate a transparent study of the preservation of the Alexandra Bridge repurposed for the loop,
 - to perform full maintenance of the bridge with a view to its integration in the tramway loop.

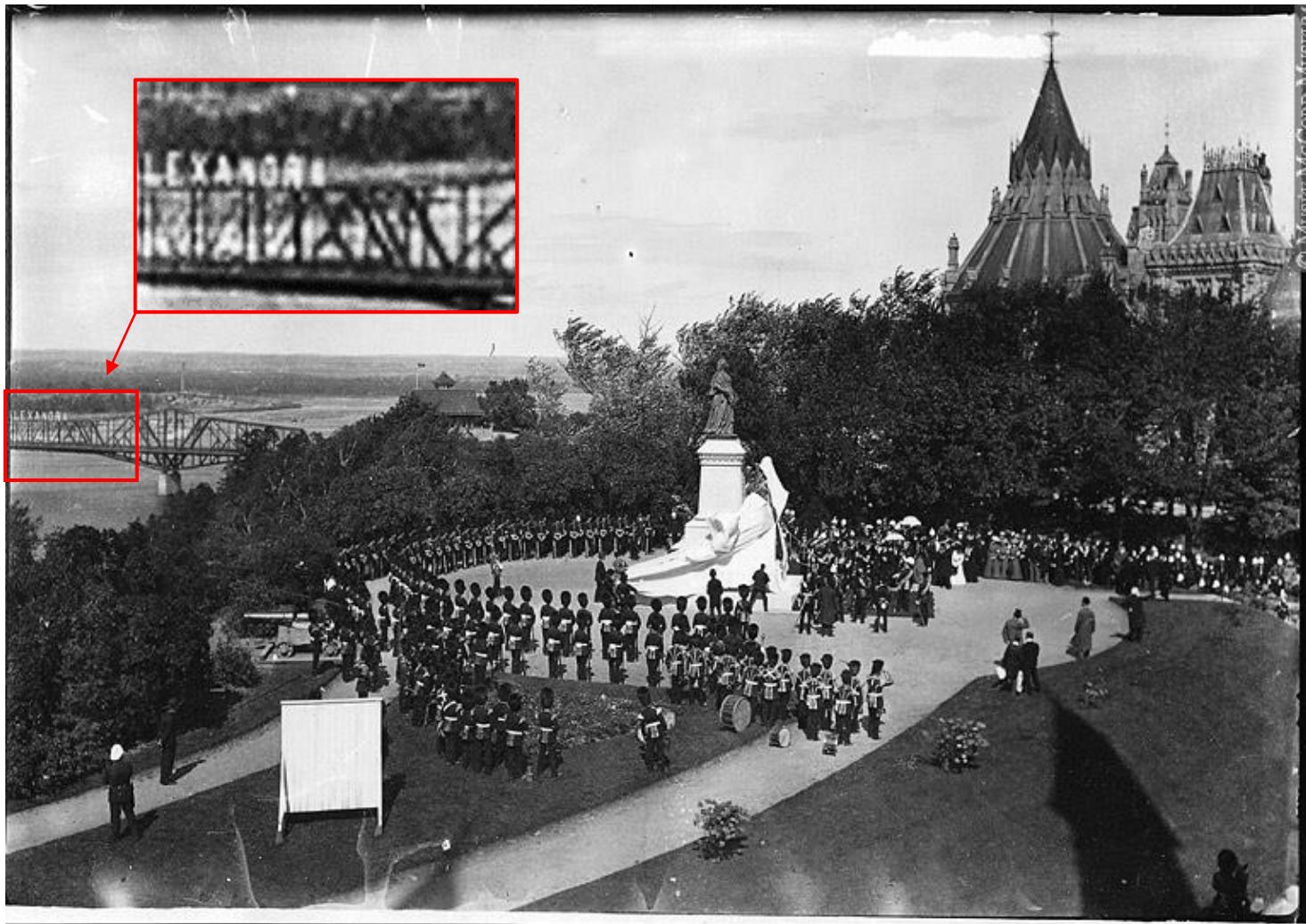


Canada

Source: NCC

120-Year-Old National Historic Landmark

- Bridge proudly showcased during the 1901 visit of future King George V and Queen Mary



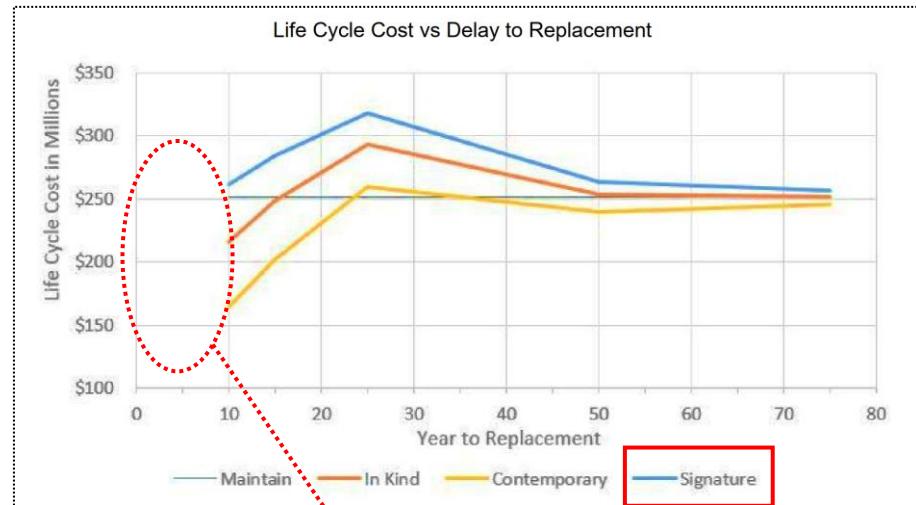
PSPC's Incomplete and Inconsistent Plans for the Bridge

Incomplete

- The use of de-icing salts and past negligence has caused important corrosion damage which has increased maintenance costs.
- PSPC made a rushed decision in 2018 to demolish and replace the bridge 10 years from now based on unconvincing “life-cycle” cost arguments
- Promised studies on socio-economics, transportation planning, cultural and heritage significance were not done
- No visible contribution from heritage specialists.

Inconsistent

- Replacement objectives inconsistent with Canada's sustainability objectives.
- Prioritised improving private car traffic with “perhaps later” consideration for public transit
- Contradicts Ottawa vehicular traffic reduction objectives in Lower Town.
- In public consultations railroaded into replacement, NCC promotes « signature » bridge, a more expensive option than preservation: contradicts stated cost saving objective of PSPC.



Source: PSPC

Replacement plans exclude full maintenance for the next 10 years, ensuring the doom of the historic bridge.

Coalition Members

- The National Trust for Canada | La Fiducie nationale du Canada
- Heritage Ottawa | Patrimoine Ottawa
- La Fédération Histoire Québec (FHQ)
- Ontario Association of Architects (OAA)
- Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO)
- Architects DCA
- La Société d'histoire de l'Outaouais (SHO)
- La Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans
- Le Centre régional d'archives de l'Outaouais (CRAO)
- Transport Action Canada
- Greenspace Alliance for Canada's Capital | Alliance pour les espaces verts de la capitale du Canada
- Le Conseil régional de l'environnement et du développement durable de l'Outaouais
- MOBI-O (Centre de gestion des déplacements de l'Outaouais)
- Ecology Ottawa
- Action Vélo Outaouais (AVO)
- Bike Ottawa
- L'Association des résidents de l'Île de Hull (ARIH)
- L'Association du patrimoine du ruisseau de la Brasserie (APRB)
- Les Amis de Wychwood
- Cantley 1889
- Lowertown Community Association | L'Association communautaire de la Basse-Ville
- Rockcliffe Park Residents Association
- Manor Park Community Association
- Action Sandy Hill | Action Côte-du-Sable
- Vanier Community Association | Association communautaire Vanier
- Kanata Lakes Community Association
- Haunted Walks Inc.
- Fâcheux Théâtre
- For Our Kids / Parents for the Planet Ottawa-Gatineau
- BON WEEKEND.info
- Kichesippi Beer Co.
- Gardens Ottawa