

Established in 1889, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) is the self-regulating body for the province's architecture profession. It governs the practice of architecture and administers the Architects Act in order to serve and protect the public interest.

The Honourable Anita Anand
Minister of Public Service and Procurement Canada
Public Services and Procurement Canada
11 Laurier St, Phase III, Place du Portage
Gatineau, QC K1A 0S5

August 13, 2021

Sent via email: anita.anand@parl.gc.ca

Re: Future of Alexandra Bridge

Dear Minister,

I write to you on behalf of the Ontario Association of Architects, which regulates the province's architecture profession with a vision for "a safe and healthy built environment that performs at the highest levels and elevates the human spirit." I am voicing our support for the [Alexandra Bridge Coalition](#), which has come together to protect its namesake.

I am sure you are familiar with the iconic landmark and transportation link spanning the Ottawa River from Nepean Point to the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau. Our understanding is the federal government is considering the demolition of the Alexandra Bridge under the rationale that it no longer efficiently sustains vehicular traffic and requires ongoing maintenance. **Given the bridge's national built-heritage value and its role in supporting pedestrians and cyclists, we urge you to consider an approach that ensures its renewal for continued use.**

Our interest in the Alexandra Bridge is multifaceted. It is an impressive structural landmark for both Ottawa and Gatineau, representing the interconnectedness of the National Capital Region, while providing a key physical link between not only the two cities, but also the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Its adaptability over time, from rail to cars and now an essential artery for pedestrians and cyclists, is certainly worth celebrating in a time when adaptive reuse is an essential tool in the battle for climate resilience.

As one of only five interprovincial crossings, its capacity to serve nearly 40% of daily active mobility users is a strong indicator of its value to the local community. The National Capital Region enjoys a unique flow of people moving freely between neighbouring cities, and the ease of that movement is directly supported by the Alexandra Bridge; its removal—even temporarily—would create significant barriers for those who rely on non-vehicular modes of transportation.

As an association of design professionals, the OAA also shares your government's strong motivation to ensure significant structural designs are rightfully preserved. The Alexandra Bridge's vintage is impressive (designed and constructed between 1898 and 1901 by Dominion Bridge Co. Ltd.), as is its status at opening as the world's fourth-longest cantilever span (i.e. pin-connected truss).

With its rail tracks and pedestrian footpaths, as well as cantilevered decks for road and streetcar traffic, the steel superstructure and concrete foundations are markers of outstanding achievement in architecture and in engineering, and the Alexandra Bridge continues to be internationally recognized for its innovative cantilevered design.

In 1995, Alexandra Bridge was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Site by our peers at the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers. In 2017, Ottawa City Council approved its inclusion on the City's Heritage Register for cultural heritage value or interest. While the Alexandra Bridge is not yet designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, many are of the opinion it clearly meets all criteria for establishing cultural heritage value or interest under Ontario Regulation 09/06, and would be a strong candidate for individual designation.

As fellow architect and OAA past-president Toon Dreessen pointed out in an [article for the *Globe & Mail*](#), this bridge is one of a handful of "similar steel-truss bridges built before 1920, reflecting our industrial heritage. These crossings have survived and continue to be used and loved. They are integral parts of our cultural heritage, provide some of the best views of the city, and they deserve respect, conservation, and care."

Given your government's commitment to renew heritage sites and cultural landscapes, and its policies surrounding the climate emergency, we strongly suggest the Alexandra Bridge be renewed and refreshed as an example of durable, green infrastructure, rather than completely demolished and relegated for recycling or landfill.

On behalf of OAA Council, and the architecture profession of Ontario, I am pleased to add the Association's name to the [list of signatories](#) calling for the Alexandra Bridge's continued preservation and use for active mobility users.

Sincerely,



Susan Speigel, Architect
OAA, FRAIC
President