



**SOUTH  
ALGONQUIN  
BUSINESS  
ALLIANCE**

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March 26, 2025

Dear Mayor LaValley and the Economic Development Committee,

Please accept the following letter for consideration at the April Economic Development Committee meeting regarding the upcoming bridge reconstruction in Madawaska.

SABA would like very much to provide a letter of support for bridge reconstruction decisions that improve community wellbeing, including a pedestrian bridge, a southern re-routing of the highway, and economic development. We believe we are aligned on this wish and that this is an excellent opportunity for community support for Council's work.

At this time, however, there are gaps in the available data that would allow us to provide you with such support. We rely on Council not just to make decisions, but to make good decisions based on high quality data that prioritizes best possible outcomes. We hope council will consider filling the following information gaps

for South Algonquin residents with regard to the Madawaska Bridge reconstruction project.

- *JR Booth Park Usage Statistics:* Knowing how usage changes across seasons, days/times of the week and by different stakeholder groups makes it easier to defend and support Council decisions. Have there been any accidents or fatalities at this location previously? How do we quantify the increased risk? We would like to see a thorough staff report that describes usage patterns and safety risks at this important community gathering place and how they align with Council decisions and requests.
- *Connections to the Official Plan, Strategic Plan, and Tourism & Economic Development Plan:* We rely on these documents to understand Council priorities. The most convincing arguments for construction requests connect all of these dots for local and government stakeholders. If Council wants us to understand that a pedestrian bridge is a priority, then it would be helpful to see how it is referenced in these documents.
- *Costs of Safety:* Many of the safety issues Council cited are pre-existing conditions due to the size and location of the park, and we have no data to describe the scope of the current problem or outline responsibilities. A robust analysis of available safety options and costs that fall within the Township responsibility, MTO responsibility or shared responsibility would be helpful.
- *Economic Development Impacts:* The staff report and discussion overlooked all economic benefits of this construction project. We know that local businesses are still suffering enormously in the wake of the COVID pandemic. What is the potential benefit to our local economy of this four-year+ project? It would be helpful if the Township used its unique position to negotiate with the province for contractual concessions that would see the winning contractor hire and purchase services locally. There is no community group who has the means to request or require this of the MTO, save and except the Corporation for the Township of South Algonquin.

The good news is there is still time for Council to move to a collaborative method of negotiation with all parties involved, and provide data and information that can improve community outcomes for all stakeholders. A data-driven and science-backed approach to assessing the impact of the project on our community from recreation, cost, safety, engineering, economic development and other

perspectives is likely to result in better outcomes and gain important community support, including from the South Algonquin Business Alliance.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Pollak". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Angela Pollak, PhD

Chair, South Algonquin Business Alliance