

October 2, 2013

To: Public Works and Infrastructure Committee

Re: Creating Greater Transparency and Improving Public Confidence in the Safety of our Bridges and Elevated Roadways

Our bridges, roads and expressways are important public assets that must be maintained in a state of good repair. As our assets age, this increasingly becomes a challenge to our capital budget and our public service. In most, if not all cases, keeping our assets in good repair is a matter of public safety. This has been highlighted by the recent controversy related to the Gardiner Expressway and the Dufferin Bridge.

Not only must we ensure the infrastructure is safe, we must also ensure that the public is confident that the bridges and roadways on which they travel, are safe. They are the ones who will bear the frustration, inconvenience and disruption in having to endure long periods of time, as we repair or replace our roads and bridges. They must have confidence that their government officials are performing the right inspections, at the right intervals, and are making the right decisions accordingly.

As our infrastructure ages, inspections will inevitably become more frequent, complex and costly, as will the construction projects they create. This inevitability demands greater transparency and improved public confidence.

Therefore, I propose better disclosure of information to both City Council and the public on the state of our bridges and elevated roadways, including inspection schedules and results; first, through the introduction of an online resource that is both easy to access and easy to understand; and second, through a requirement that staff report regularly to City Council on the condition of our bridges and elevated roadways and proposed rehabilitation plan.

In doing so, we create greater transparency and we begin to restore public confidence in the decisions of City Council and the safety of the city's infrastructure.

Recommendations:



1. The Public Works and Infrastructure Committee request that the Executive Director of Engineering and Construction Services report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee in the first quarter of 2014 on options for providing the public with access to an online inventory and condition assessment of all bridges and elevated roadways in the City of Toronto; and
2. The Executive Director of Engineering and Construction Services report annually to City Council, through the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, on the condition of the city's bridges and elevated roadways and the proposed rehabilitation plan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denzil Minnan-Wong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Denzil Minnan-Wong
Chair, Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
Councillor, Don Valley East
Ward 34