

# Greenbelt protection added to interprovincial bridge debate

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When it comes to selecting a location for the controversial interprovincial bridge, the integrity of the Greenbelt must be preserved, local politicians and community members told federal Transport Minister John Baird last week.

In a bid to ensure the bridge doesn't cut through the Greenbelt, Ottawa-Orléans MP Royal Galipeau arranged a meeting between Baird, three east-end councillors and representatives from Common Sense Crossing on March 18.

The Greenbelt in the east is only a fraction of the land set aside in the west, Galipeau said, noting Beacon Hill was built in the Greenbelt although Rothwell Heights was originally intended to be the eastern limit of the urban core.

"There's very little Greenbelt left," he continued, adding a bridge through the feature would basically destroy the eastern portion.

Along with arguments to see the Greenbelt protected, Galipeau also supplied the minister with some historical background on the controversy dating back to 1950, showing Kettle Island has been the preferred technical option for decades.

"I made it clear that I do not support funding for a bridge that would damage the Greenbelt,"

Galipeau said.

His concerns were echoed by area councillors. Kettle Island, Orléans Coun. Bob Monette said, has also been supported by both Ottawa and Gatineau city councils.

The problem is that Rockcliffe is opposed to that location, he continued, and it seems they want to muddy the waters with other corridors. It's a political game aimed at delaying the process and inevitable solution, Monette suggested.

Monette cautioned that the so-called Canotek option would drive thousands to the split. And while the city should expand the split, that doesn't mean they should fix it just to turn around and add problems to the traffic flow.

If the region is looking to build a bridge, it should look to Kettle Island, Monette indicated. He explained that, if the professionals and engineers showed him Kettle Island was a poor choice then, as an elected official, he would say they know what they're talking about.

"I'm a politician, not an expert," he said. "All I look at is what the experts keep telling us."

With three reports pointing to Kettle Island, that's three strikes, he continued.

He said he hopes this final consultation will resolve and confirm one last time that Kettle Island is the preferred location.