

Dear Sirs/Madames of Woolwich and Wellington Council:

I am writing this letter urging both Woolwich Township and Wellington County to reconsider their decision to prevent public access to the historic Middlebrook Place bridge and ultimately remove it. For several reasons, this is a bridge most certainly worth saving.

Without question, access to this bridge is vital for non-pavement cycling routes in the region. So-called "gravel riding" is growing in popularity in the region as cyclists are looking to spend less time on busy (and getting busier) main roads in favor of quieter unpaved roads including Weisenberg road leading up to the Middlebrook Place bridge. By preventing riders from crossing the river it is forcing us onto much busier and less safe routes. (The recent paving of Middlebrook road without allowance for a paved shoulder is another example of not serving to improve cycling infrastructure.) For many years, this historic and beautiful bridge made for a safe way to enjoy cycling in our area.

Removing this bridge is counterproductive to the goal of communities as a whole to promote active transportation in the battle against climate change. Citizen tax dollars and possible government grants would be better spent on restoring this bridge so that it is deemed safe for pedestrian use and once again enhancing the area as a recreational site. At the very least, an alternative crossing should be erected once this bridge is demolished.

In my numerous crossings over the years, I have noticed many others including hikers and fishermen enjoying the bridge and its picturesque setting. No doubt to a benefit to mental health. Visits to the area increased with COVID as people were seeking out natural settings for physical and mental health. We need more of these natural areas to visit not less.

Rehabilitation should always be the first option considered, as recommended in the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment. These landmarks are important reminders of our history and cannot be replaced. To remove the bridge permanently for budgetary reasons is, quite frankly, backward-thinking.

Is this the cheapest solution? No. Is this the best outcome for the community? Most certainly yes. I am asking the council and municipal management to re-think their approach to this bridge to better align with the recreation and aesthetic needs of the community. I am among a large collection of concerned citizens who believe that the Council should consider rehabilitating the bridge for pedestrian/recreation use (no vehicles) rather than removing it.

Yours Truly,

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