

# **2022 BUDGET "BACKGROUNDER" INFORMATION**

**for City of Thorold 2022 Budget Meetings re:  
"SAVING THE SOUTH MAIN STREET BRIDGE" Project  
AKA...as The Port Robinson Ecological Park**

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## **FACTS on The IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH MAIN STREET BRIDGE to PORT ROBINSON and HOW WE USE IT**

**JAN. 20, 2022**

**To: Mayor Ugulini,  
All Members of Thorold Council  
Thorold CAO  
Thorold City Clerk  
City Operations Management  
Maria Mauro, Director of Finance**

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**From: Ron Devereux  
Resident of Port Robinson East for 35 years,  
Community Resource Person and  
Volunteer Leader of "Saving the South Main Street Bridge"  
on behalf of the Port Robinson East Residents**

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**Thank you for the investment of your time to read  
ALL of this document...so that, at final BUDGET decision time,  
you ALL are completely-informed on  
MANY of the main concerns and interests of the Port  
Robinson Residents on the project of  
SAVING THE SOUTH MAIN STREET BRIDGE.**

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**Subject and Context and Focus:  
FACTS on  
The IMPORTANCE OF  
THE SOUTH MAIN STREET BRIDGE to PORT ROBINSON  
and HOW WE USE IT.**

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**(1.) The SOUTH MAIN STREET BRIDGE is a HIGH PRIORITY, VERY Valuable...**

**even PRICELESS...RESOURCE FOR both active and passive OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES.**

**(2.) It is MOST NOTEWORTHY to point out that the use of the Bridge for **ALL** of the activities that it supports and provides access to... as described below...**

**can be participated in by**

**EVERY resident...of all ages and abilities...**

**of the entire PORT ROBINSON community...**

**All-year-round 365 days a year as follows:**

**(A.) Those activities are **NOT** restricted to people of limited certain skills/skill sets or athletic ability...**

**for example, like in an Arena, on a tennis court, etc.**

**(B.) Those activities are **NOT** restricted to people of a limited/certain interest.**

**(C.) Those activities are **NOT** restricted to people of a limited/certain age. For example, it appeals to...and can be used by:**

**(i.) all children and all adults including Seniors...walking;**

**(ii.) those disabled in wheelchairs and/or riding disability scooters;**

**(iii.) children riding tricycles and bicycles and scooters;**

**(iv.) adults riding bicycles;**

**(v.) Parents pushing strollers and/or pulling wagons;**

**(vi.) Etc.**

**(3.) For nearly 50 years, the South Main Street Bridge has been a **PUBLIC ASSET** to Port Robinson residents, that...**

A.) Has cost the City of Thorold virtually **NOTHING TO MAINTAIN**, averaged annually.

B.) Once properly-upgraded, it would continue to cost the City of Thorold virtually **NOTHING TO MAINTAIN**, averaged annually.

(C. ) And, it would continue to cost the City of Thorold virtually **NOTHING to OPERATE**.

**(4.)** For nearly 50 years,

(A.) **NO** Recreational/Leisure/Parks Department **OVERSIGHT, PROGRAMMING or STAFFING COSTS** have been required to be spent by the CITY for the free, spontaneous, self-directed, recreational activities that the Bridge provides access to, for Port Robinson Residents.

(B.) Once upgraded, it would continue to require **NO** Recreational/Leisure/Parks Department **OVERSIGHT, PROGRAMMING or STAFFING COSTS** by the CITY for the free, spontaneous, self-directed, recreational activities that the Bridge provides access to, for Port Robinson Residents...and all other users.

## **THAT'S THE WAY WE USE THE BRIDGE!!**

(C. ) And, it would continue to cost the City of Thorold **NOTHING to OPERATE**.

Because it is an outdoor structure, there would be **NO MONTHLY UTILITY EXPENSES** to the City for heating, electricity, water and sewer, etc.

(D.)(i.) As a large outdoor structure with plenty of space available for social-distancing, its daily use would **NOT BE SUBJECT TO COVID RESTRICTIONS** like an enclosed building.

(D.)(ii.) In these days of CoVid restrictions causing people to be frustrated, stressed, depressed and even committing suicide,  
There are many **HEALTH BENEFITS** of  
Participating in Outdoor Activities (Active and Passive Recreation) in a  
Natural Environment that are Good for Your Brain and Your Well-Being!  
(For example, as provided and expedited by the South Main Street Bridge.)

**LINK TO THE MEDICAL SCIENCE:**

<https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/22/how-nature-changes-the-brain/?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&region=CColumn&module=MostEmailed&version=Full&src=me&WT.nav=MostEmailed>

(D.) (iii.) In the Discipline and Science of Practical Psychology...

A NUTSHELL summary of the LINKED article above:

Reynolds writes:

“(Increasingly,) many of us today live in cities and spend far less time outside in green, natural spaces than people did several generations ago. City dwellers also have a higher risk for anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses than people living outside urban centers, studies show...”  
(...in Practical Psychology).

These results strongly suggest that **getting out into natural environments could be an easy and almost immediate way to improve “moods” (sense of well-being)** for city/urban/suburban dwellers...

**MY COMMENT: Much needed in the “Age of Covid”.)**

(iv.) Many other similar studies and sources can be found at this **GOOGLE SEARCH:**

<https://www.google.ca/search?q=walking+in+nature+changes+the+brain&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiqz8j7xrzaAhWK6oMKHYS4DywQ1QIIAEoBA&biw=1280&bih=590>

**E.) The Discipline and Science of Recreational Geography.**

It is a well-established FACT, in the Discipline and Science of Recreational Geography, **that water-based, recreational opportunities, in a natural setting, are the most highly-valued asset of all recreational qualities for outdoor enjoyment!**

**F.) Location, Location, Location:**

As residents, we like to say, “Port Robinson is 10 minutes from everywhere...in the middle of NOWHERE!”

The site and situation of the Village of Port Robinson in the Niagara Region and

the site and situation of the South Main Street Bridge in Port Robinson:

i.) **Combine to provide and expedite** a rich, unique and highly-valued, naturally-blessed, rural, residential community... and sub-communities within it.

ii.) **Combine to provide and expedite easy public access** to the Chippawa Creek ecosystem and its environs... **right near the CENTER of our Village...** surrounded by the developed residential areas of Port Robinson.

THIS is a **significant asset** to our feeling of living “in the middle of NOWHERE”...**and a key component** of the reality of our enjoyment of the quiet, rural, natural setting of our quaint residential enclave...that makes Port Robinson a special place to live.

## **(5.) FACTS: THE MOST CRUCIAL CHARACTERISTICS of the Bridge are:**

**A.) Its LARGE SIZE...its 250 foot LENGTH AND 30 foot WIDTH...**  
provides ample room for the complete range of outdoor activities described in this report...  
**to occur simultaneously in the same space...**  
**without participants being in conflict with each other,**  
as would be the case if the Bridge was smaller or did not exist.

**B.) Its ELEVATED HEIGHT ABOVE THE WATER provides OVERHEAD VIEWING for...**  
...Observation, discovery and self-education about the Creek’s “inhabitants”, habitats, ecosystem.  
The Bridge provides an elevated, “**mid-stream**” perspective  
**NOT** available from a shoreline location at water-level.

**C.) It’s ELEVATED HEIGHT ABOVE THE WATER also provides SEPARATION and ELEVATION** of activities on the Bridge, avoiding primary human intrusion into the primary habitats of the ecosystem...  
**thus saving and preserving the existing sensitive ecology and habitats of this mature ecosystem...**

sparing it from direct human intrusion, trampling, habitat disruption and degradation, etc.

**Therefore, the Bridge facilitates and expedites the essential theme of respecting this natural environment:**

**ENJOY IT...DON'T DESTROY IT!!**

## **(6.) FACTS: The Role of the Bridge in our Port Robinson East Community:**

**A.) OUR PREMISE** is that instead of the BRIDGE being viewed ONLY as a City of Thorold OPERATIONS LIABILITY, as a “simple” walkway, **it must, instead, be viewed as an INVESTMENT in a COMMUNITY, FAMILY-oriented , NATURE-related, OUTDOOR, RECREATIONAL FACILITY/RESOURCE.**  
**This Bridge offers MANY important , valuable, and unique functions to ALL residents...of all ages.**

### **B.) PEDESTRIAN-BICYCLE CONNECTION...(Utilitarian Function)**

The Bridge provides a **SAFE “pathway” over Chippawa Creek... separated from the vehicular traffic on River Road...for walking/cycling to and from**

the recreation facilities of Port Robinson Municipal Park,  
the Post Office,

Bridge 12 Pub and Eatery,

Port Robinson Community Center and

to the homes of friends and neighbours who are otherwise separated from each other in the Village by the “dogleg” section of Chippawa Creek.

### **C.) Leisure- Walking: (Active Recreation)**

Within Port Robinson East, **jogging, leisure-walking and dog-walking** are popular activities regularly-embraced by many residents due to the quiet, safe and natural environs that can be experienced and enjoyed.

Being able to jog, walk longer distances (jogging/walking recreation) is enhanced by the Bridge...by being able to SAFELY jog/walk the full-length of the Village from Allanport Road to the far-end of the “subdivision” (Old Biggar Road) via the “connection” of the South Main Street Bridge.

Beyond each of these Village boundary points, jogging/leisure walking is not "pedestrian-friendly" due to the absence of sidewalks along the adjacent high-speed, rural roadways...Allanport Road and Biggar Road.

**D.) It serves as a Fishing Pier. (Active Recreation)**

i.) Many species of fish are caught in this section of the Creek...perch, rock bass, black bass, pike, sunfish, crappies, bluegills, catfish, carp, etc. **This section of the Creek is a valuable spawning ground for them... which maintains the fish population to sustain the ongoing fishing activities.**

ii.) Throughout the fishing season, as many as 6 to 10 anglers may be present on the Bridge at any one time.

Anglers are not only Port Robinson residents. They also come from many other parts of the Niagara Region to fish here...St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland, Pelham, Port Colborne. Fort Erie, other parts of Thorold...and even Beamsville!!

Many of them that I meet there, grew up fishing from the Bridge when they were growing up as children in the Village...and they enjoy returning to this "old, childhood haunt"...often... now, bringing their own children to fish there with them..

iii.) The length of the Bridge provides much more space to easily accommodate anglers than is available by attempting to fish from the overgrown shore locations along the swampy Creek shoreline.

iv.) Fishing from the Bridge **eliminates trampling and destruction of the natural shoreline ecosystem and habitats of the native Creek "wildlife" species** that live in this section of the Creek...

-beaver, muskrat, ferret, mink...**huts/burrows**;

-migratory birds...**nesting grounds**;

-fish...**spawning areas**;

-snapping turtles and mud turtles...**egg-laying areas**;

-raccoons, squirrels, rabbits, frogs, etc.

v.) In this day-and-age when children spend so much time indoors glued to electronic devices, having easy access to **free** fishing



resources located in their neighbourhood... close to home... is **highly-valued...to get them outdoors, actively-enjoying nature.**

**E.) It's an Elevated "Observation Deck" for prime-viewing of the Creek's ecosystem activities:  
(Passive Recreation)**

**i.) Overhead viewing:** Observation, discovery and self-education about the Creek 'inhabitants', habitats, ecosystem.

**ii.)** The Bridge provides a **"mid-stream" elevated perspective not available from a shoreline location at water-level.**

**iii.)** Beaver, muskrat, ferret, fish, snapping turtles, mud turtles, raccoons, frogs, etc. can be easily-observed from this "above the water" position.

**iv.)** Nearby activities of other wildlife of the Creek ecosystem can be easily-watched also: squirrels, rabbits, purple martins, barn swallows, bald eagles, hawks, swans, Snow geese (seasonally), kingfishers, gulls, Blue Herons, egrets, and many other species of migratory birds and waterfowl (ducks, Canada geese, coots).

**v.)** NATURE SOUNDS of the Creek ecosystem can be enjoyed...croaking of frogs, quacking and honking of waterfowl, trill calls of songbirds (red-wing blackbirds, cardinals, orioles, robins, Larkin wrens, finches, etc.)

**So, in summary,**

**(7.) The Bridge is ESSENTIALLY-IMPORTANT...  
to preserving the**

**QUALITY uses,  
QUALITY experiences and**

## **QUALITY values**

**that we...the Residents of Port Robinson... derive from this very simple, yet ICONIC BRIDGE... because of its strategic location and vantage point surrounded by a mature Creek ecosystem.**

**(8.) Thank you, again, for the investment of your time to read ALL of this document...so that, at final BUDGET decision time, you are ALL completely-informed on MANY of the concerns and interests of the Port Robinson Residents regarding the project of SAVING THE SOUTH MAIN STREET BRIDGE.**

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**(9.) We are looking forward to  
A.) A positive response...by the Council of the City of Thorold...to the interests of the residents of Port Robinson East... and...  
B.) Moving forward in 2022, with the start of the rehabilitation of this VERY valuable...even PRICELESS...Resource for Outdoor Recreational and Leisure Activities.**

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## **ADDENDUM**

**10.) Port Robinson resident, Bill Klassen, will be making a delegation presentation to you...on this project... at the 2022 Budget meetings.**

**11.) As well as the information below in items #12 through #15... For at least 6 months or more, prior to the start of PHASE 2...**

It is ESSENTIAL for the City to have a  
a communications strategy in place...

to FOREWARN Bridge Users...

especially fishermen who come from "Out-of-Town"...

of the BRIDGE'S pending OFFICIAL CLOSING FOR  
RECONSTRUCTION.

This should feature signs posted at both ends of the BRIDGE  
stating...FOR EXAMPLE ...

***"This Bridge will be closing for reconstruction in  
2023.***

***All entry into surrounding shoreline and habitat  
areas will be PROHIBITED until the Bridge re-  
opens."***

**12.) It is important to highlight  
some of the LOGISTICAL REASONS why it is  
important to approve funding THIS YEAR  
to get this project started.**

**As outlined in the RJ Burnside Consultant's  
presentation to you ...**

**in the Council meeting on Nov.16<sup>th</sup>,  
and shown on the City's website of Capital  
Projects...**

**this project will be undertaken chronologically  
in 4 PHASES,**

**which will take several years to complete.**

**13.) The Barn-Swallows and all the Turtles in the ecosystem are officially-classified as "*SPECIES-AT-RISK*", due to their generally-declining populations in Ontario.**

**THEREFORE, items in Phase One...**

**A.) Include the Barn-Swallow nesting box...  
to provide an alternative to the removal of their current nesting sites, on the underside of the Bridge...during its re-construction.**

**B.) And the Turtle-Nesting Mounds...  
to provide alternatives to the current turtle-nesting sites in the roadside gravel under the guardrail along River Road.**

**The RJ Burnside Consultants indicated that...  
by Government Regulation...**

**these alternatives must be in place for  
one-year...**

**before Phase Two...rebuilding the Bridge...**

can begin.

**So getting these items done as early as possible in 2022 is crucial.**

**This will then also provide a whole year of time for the**

**City's Operations and Engineering Staff to prepare for Phase 2...**

**the Bridge replacement in 2023.**

**14.) It is ALSO very important to emphasize that before the start of Phase 2...**

**IT MUST BE FORMALLY-RECOGNIZED** that during the time of the construction activities of rebuilding the Bridge,

it could be out-of-use for a significant amount of time.

This presents the **risk** of putting **significant human pressure** on the ecology and the **sensitive shoreline habitat areas** of the mature ecosystem that exist, in the Creek

area, surrounding the Bridge.

This has NEVER been mentioned in **any** Consultant's reports

or in **any** City Staff reports to Council

on the subject of

Saving the South Main Street Bridge.

**15.) THEREFORE, our concern and emphasis is, that this must be officially-acknowledged and properly-addressed BEFORE**

**the Bridge is "permanently-closed" for rehabilitation.**

**SPECIFICALLY...**

**A.)** The ramifications of stopping all uses of the Bridge **must be accounted** for prior to its "official" closing... especially-related to fishing activities.

The Bridge is a popular fishing "pier".

Being unable to fish from the Bridge,

will restrict fishing activities to primarily be

"Land-Based" only,

meaning...fishing only from the Creek shoreline.

Over the years, we have found that a significant percentage of people who fish at the Bridge, come from **OUT-OF-TOWN**...from many other Regional municipalities...including

Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Welland, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, other parts of Thorold...and even Beamsville!

It is a reasonable assumption, that they are not necessarily as knowledgeable as our residents of all of the ecological/habitat sensitivities of the Bridge-area ecosystem.

**B.)** Therefore...it is essential that

**PEDESTRIAN ACCESS to the WHOLE AREA of turtle shoreline habitat on the WESTERN side of the Bridge...**

**from the water's edge....**

**right up to the "temporary" asphalt pathway...**

**must be totally-prohibited...cordoned-off/fenced-off...prior to the start of PHASE 2.**

**C.) The denial of access to this area must be properly-explained with appropriate signage...**

to prevent human access to this area...

to prevent it from being trampled, which will have adverse effects on the turtles' access to their egg-laying area...

the gravel "turtle mounds" to be built in Phase 1...

**because, as previously-mentioned,**

**all turtles in Ontario**

**are officially-designated as "*Species-at-Risk*."**

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**Informational 2 minute video on threats to turtles...**

**explains turtle breeding and egg-laying habits:**

<https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/videos/gallery/roads-are-a-serious-danger-to-canadas-freshwater-turtles-heres-what-to-do/sharevideo/6039883856001/>

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**Thank you for investing the time to read this entire Document.**