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Aldermen chided over bridge

Mayor says approval process undermined by opponents

By [SHAWN LOGAN](#)

Mayor Dave Bronconnier yesterday chided a group of aldermen for attempting to overturn plans to spend \$25 million to build a controversial pedestrian bridge with claims it may breach provincial funding guidelines.

With contract negotiations nearing completion with renowned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, a number of aldermen on Monday tried to see talks ceased in order to have an open bidding process, citing the fact that settling on an individual contractor doesn't follow provincial rules for infrastructure funding.



But, Bronconnier took aim at insurgent members of council, noting the city has followed the province's process to the letter and the contract for construction will go to the lowest bidder.

"It is very consistent with the provincial guidelines and, as a matter of fact, the provincial government has already signed off and approved the project and they did so back in October," he said.

"It's quite shocking that members of city council who may not have gotten their way during a vote try to usurp city council's approval and starting to undermine the entire process by saying let's slow up funding for Calgary on this and other projects."

The bridge project became a flashpoint during budget talks, with many questioning the needs to spend \$25 million to design a pair of iconic bridges, but only build one at a time when the economy is sinking and taxpayers are feeling the pinch.

The plans had failed to pass muster at committee and managed to squeak past council in September only because two aldermen opposed to the plan were not present.

Bronconnier said design work has been given to a Calgary-based engineering firm that has partnered up with Calatrava and that was determined to be the best fit for the project.

But opponents of the plan say they aren't done yet.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart said she will ask the city's legal department to look into the city's own policy on sole-sourced contracts at next week's council meeting in hopes council will dump the pricey project.

"I want our law department to look at this and make sure we're following our own rules," she said.