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## New bridge vote unlikely

Aldermen say Calgarians virtually powerless to stop span's construction

By RENATO GANDIA, SUN MEDIA

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Politicians opposed to the contentious footbridge over the Bow are open to putting off construction until after the next municipal election.

But at least one alderman says yesterday's Sun front-page challenge to council to run on the Peace Bridge in the 2010 election is "hilarious" and is an example of a "biased media" reporting.

"Calgary Sun should have done this six months ago, when the decision was just made by council not when the city is now tied to a contract," said Ald. Brian Pincott, one of the span's proponents.

Those opposed to the bridge admit it's unlikely voters can now have a say on its fate because the city has already committed to the project and the Municipal Government Act prohibits any reconsideration at this point.

Sun readers seem to agree with the challenge -- with close to 1,000 people voting in an online poll yesterday which showed 91% want the project put to a vote.

The Sun reached seven aldermen yesterday weighing in on the challenge.

Ald. Jim Stevenson, Ald. Joe Connelly, Ald. Andre Chabot and Ald. Ric McIver opposed the bridge from the beginning and said they have done everything in their power to stop it.

Stevenson said six council members -- including himself -- tried to block, delay or re-open the discussion because they know the public is not happy with the plan.

"If there's someone that supported this project having second thoughts then I'd be willing to fight it again," said Stevenson.

Chabot said council's decision has already been acted on by entering into a contract with the renown Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava.

"If you could separate out the construction from the design, maybe you can make a case for it, but council approved the project in its entirety," said Chabot.

McIver said the city has a pile of more important infrastructure needs.

"If we could avoid spending \$25 million on something that the citizens don't want, and redirect it to something that they do, I think it's just common sense to do that."

Connelly said he recognizes the general public's opposition but conceded council can't consult Calgarians on projects all the time.

But in his opinion the bridge planned for St. George near the zoo should have been put on the top of the list.

"That's needed and this one is not required," he said.

Ald. Joe Ceci, one of the seven who voted for the bridge, said the city has to move forward with the project.

Ald. Dale Hodges, who along with Ald. Gord Lowe was absent during the vote last year, refused to talk about the matter

Calatrava's designs don't always get constructed, including one bridge in Basel, Switzerland, which was voted down in a referendum.

Bridge advocates Mayor Dave Bronconnier, Ald. Bob Hawkesworth, Ald. Druh Farrell, Ald John Mar and Ald. Linda Fox-Mellway, and opponents Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart and Ald. Ray Jones were not available for comment.

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