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## Opponents of public bridge offer reasons at forum

*TOM GREENWOOD**/ The Detroit News*

*Sterling Heights*— Three Michigan Republicans joined Matthew Moroun on Tuesday night to explain why they think a second, publicly owned international bridge shouldn't be constructed.

Moroun, the son of Ambassador Bridge owner Manuel "Matty" Moroun, spoke against the proposed New International Trade Crossing at the American Polish Cultural Center, along with former Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop; state Rep. Chuck Moss, R-Birmingham; and former state House Majority Leader Rocky Raczkowski, who is running for U.S. Congress.

The Detroit International Bridge Co., which owns the Ambassador Bridge, has been fighting against the proposed new bridge, saying it would take up to 75 percent of its business.

Moss, who represents the 40th District, said "I feel a guy who has a private company should build the bridge with his own money."

Bishop, who said he was at the meeting as a private citizen, called the new span a "boondoggle like you've never seen." Moroun said backers of the NITC were misleading the public.

"The Michigan Department of Transportation said that traffic volumes are going to increase," Moroun said to the crowd of at least 200. "When? When the numbers come out, they keep saying 'soon' or 'next year.'"

The DIBC is proposing to build its own twin span beside the 83-year-old bridge connecting Detroit and Windsor.

Moroun said the tolls from the new bridge would not pay off the bridge as MDOT has predicted, and would leave the span with an \$85 million deficit.

The government of Canada also wants the new bridge and has offered to lend Michigan up to \$550 million to cover its share of the \$3.5 billion bridge, with the money to be paid back through tolls. Canada has said the new bridge wouldn't cost Michigan taxpayers a cent.

Gov. Rick Snyder has stated he favors a publicly financed bridge, saying it is vital for the state's economic future. Snyder said this week he remains confident the state Legislature will approve the new \$1 billion bridge this fall, perhaps in October.

"I believe it's going to happen and I'm excited, and we're going to have a great crossing to make it a lot easier for a lot more great Canadians to visit Michigan and vice versa," he said Sunday.

Oak Park resident Howard Shorr is dead set against the new bridge. "When I first heard the proposal I thought it couldn't be for real," Shorr said Tuesday night. "In this economy? Maybe 30 years from now. Right now I can't comprehend it."

Mark Hess, who owns a business in Detroit's Delray area, wants the new structure.

"It's a \$1.5 billion investment in Michigan," said Hess, who lives in Oxford. "Why turn it down?"

Canada is moving ahead with its part of the project by buying more than 100 acres in a largely industrial area of Windsor, where the bridge would connect across the river in Delray.

And last week it began the \$1.6 billion Windsor-Essex Parkway project that would extend Highway 401 to the site of the proposed new bridge. The parkway would bypass downtown Windsor and connect the highway to the bridge.

About 30 percent of the goods sold between the United States and Canada are trucked across the Detroit River.

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