

Q. Governor, the Ways and Means Committee today met on the bridge and harbor crossing authorization bill, tacking an emergency provision on it and also requiring that if there is a Harbor crossing, it must be by tunnel. What's your reaction to that, Governor?

A. Well, I reflect Mr. Wolff's misgivings about the absoluteness of the prohibition of a bridge crossing of the harbor. A tunnel costs many millions of dollars more. I can't recall the exact figure; it seems to me it's somewhere around 40 million dollars more for a tunnel. I think that may be the figure, but don't quote me because I would have to refresh my memory. I do know this, that the operating costs of the tunnel, forgetting the construction cost, are 3 million dollars more a year than for a crossing. This gives me some concern. I don't think it's prohibitive in its impact. I think Mr. Wolff has taken under consideration the possibility that a tunnel may have been mandated.

As far as the emergency legislation feature goes, I would hope that the votes are there to pass it because I don't like to see this project delayed any further. Now, I understand that there's some feeling that a referendum may occur again, but I would point out that if a referendum does occur, if the bill isn't passed as an emergency bill, it will be another two years almost before anything further can be done on this project. And there does come a point when something does have to be constructed.

Q. Governor, is that the authorization for a Harbor tunnel?

A. No, I was talking about the parallel Bay bridge at that point, and they are all tied in with the same package.

Q. You won't see a need to veto a Harbor tunnel requirement?

A. Not unless Mr. Wolff provides me with a statement that it's absolutely impossible to proceed under the existing set of circumstances.

Q. Is the 40 million dollars to be borrowed money with a provision to pay by tolls?

A. Pay by tolls, yes. There is a question of what can be done with other construction if you tie up 40 million dollars in a tunnel. That seems to be the point of dispute. Mr. Wolff's position, as I understood his briefing to me, was that other projects could go forward simultaneously if we could have a Harbor bridge crossing instead of a tunnel. The alternatives to some extent revolve around the possibility of a one-tube tunnel at the present time. I'm not sure whether this is good or bad, but we'll have to look into the situation.