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## Senate leader: Bridge issue dead until next year at earliest

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Lansing — It will be next year and possibly later before the Michigan Legislature is ready to tackle another bridge bill, Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville said Friday.

"I'm done with this bill — this version," Richardville, R-Monroe, told The Detroit News one day after legislation to allow a new public bridge to Canada was voted down in a Senate committee.

"It would have to start all over again in terms of a different model."

Richardville carried the ball in the Senate for the New International Trade Crossing championed by Gov. Rick Snyder, but ultimately wasn't able to move the initiative out of the Senate Economic Development Committee, let alone the full Senate, where GOP lawmakers hold a 26-12 majority.

Republican Gov. Rick Snyder on Thursday described the bill's 3-2 defeat as a setback, but pledged to make another effort with the Legislature after a cooling-off period he said could last up to several weeks.

Snyder, backed by all the state's major business and labor groups, is pushing the public bridge as a way of clearing a border bottleneck and assuring Michigan's automakers and other exporters have secure and easy access to Canada, the state's largest trading partner. He's promised the bridge would be publicly owned but privately financed, built and run, all at no cost to state taxpayers because of \$550 million fronted by the government of Canada.

Ambassador Bridge owner Manuel "Matty" Moroun spent millions on TV ads, lobbying and campaign donations to fight the proposal, saying it's an unfair encroachment by government on his private business.

Richardville said "we'll let the dust settle and work on some other things," but suggested a longer hiatus than the one put forth by Snyder.

"I'm done with it for now," he said, suggesting Snyder might want to raise the issue again "at a future State of the State" address, next year or later.

Snyder spokeswoman GERALYN Lasher said Richardville's comments underscore the need for a cooling-off period. Snyder didn't specify the length of the break he envisioned, but doesn't see it extending into next year, she said.

"We want to make sure we get moving," so federal road match money from the project can be used on Michigan roads, she said. "He and the majority leader and speaker (of the House Jase Bolger) will have more discussions about it," Lasher said.

Richardville said his caucus members have a full agenda on economic development, personal property taxes and other issues that will occupy the Senate's time through the end of the year, and he has nobody

"champing at the bit" to bring forward another bridge bill.

"In general, people weren't supportive of the plan, the way it was laid out," he said.

Richardville said Republicans were concerned about whether state tax money would be used and whether the bridge would be self-supporting. Democrats wanted assurances residents of the Delray neighborhood in southwest Detroit that would host the bridge will be looked after.

"By the time the teeter-totter stopped swinging, there wasn't an agreement in place, though "it's still possible" to get one in the future under a new model, he said.

Senate Minority Leader Gretchen Whitmer accused Richardville on Thursday of backing out of a deal he struck with her caucus leaders under which Democrats would support the bridge bill in return for community benefits for Delray. The two Democratic senators on the committee — Virgil Smith and Tupac Hunter of Detroit — abstained on the original bridge bill after a substitute bill that offered the community benefits was voted down 5-2 along party lines.

Whitmer described Richardville's conduct as "surprising and disgusting," and said it seemed to follow a pattern of behavior after an earlier deal on education funding fell apart during budget hearings.

Richardville said "I think there was a misunderstanding there," and "a similar misunderstanding happened during the budget negotiations."

"I think they were sincere in believing we had an agreement, and I take some responsibility for the communication breakdown — I don't take all of the responsibility," he said.

Richardville said Moroun's TV ads had an impact, but he thinks the Senate panel tried to decide the issue based on the facts. "Most of them are very prudent and went through a lot of the detail with all the committee hearings," he said.

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