

# State of the City

January 9, 2002

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At this time I am pleased to have the opportunity to deliver the Mayor's Annual Address to Council.

First, on behalf of Council and everyone in the administration I take this opportunity to wish all the residents of Ottawa a happy and successful 2002.

And I also take this opportunity to thank all the citizens of Ottawa for their reliable and exceptional contributions to ensuring that Ottawa remains, arguably, the best city in Canada in which to live and raise a family.

As I have often said, we, the elected officials are merely temporary trustees of decision-making. It takes decades and generations to build a strong, vibrant and proud community.

To the extent we have made progress and met our challenges this past year, it is you, our community and business leaders, who deserve the credit. As a Council we try to facilitate, enhance, and tap into that culture of leadership and to be faithful to the trust you place in us.

And when we speak of community excellence it is helpful to reflect on some of the leaders we lost in 2001:

- Hal Anthony
- Gale Kerwin
- Catherine MacLean
- Don Reid
- Malak Karsh
- Ron Kolbus

If we have a city to be proud of, it is because we have always been blessed with people who care to help build it.

We can reflect on the fact that 12 months and 10 days ago our 12 municipalities were still under the management of an appointed Transition Board, and our Council for the New City of Ottawa had yet to be sworn in.

Thousands of employees who lived through a year of uncertainty in the transition year 2000, still faced months of uncertainty in 2001. To those devoted public servants, we say thank you for your patience and your commitment to our great city - our community owes all of you a debt of gratitude.

We can also reflect on the reality that no one could ever have anticipated the calamitous events of September 11. But we should not have been surprised at the extraordinary leadership clearly demonstrated by all of our emergency and protective services, police, fire, ambulance, and paramedics.

The type of high level performance and dedication that was demonstrated in the devastating ice storm of 1998 was matched again after September 11. So our hats are off to General Manager Steve Kanellakos and the entire Emergency and Protective Services Team.

That day's terror has touched each and every one of us. We have worked hard to put aside our fear. We reached out; we comforted one another and - in doing that- WE were comforted.

On behalf of all residents I want to thank our inter-faith and community leaders for enabling September 11 to bring our community closer together rather than tear it apart.

Some of us are hugging our kids more often and probably hugging them a little tighter. I think we've learned new things about how important we ALL are to each other. We may be redefining what 'community' means; we may be giving it new meaning.

I mention the events of September 11 because, in the weeks since that terrible day, I have been proud, and I have been comforted to be the Mayor of a city whose people put aside their own fear to offer comfort to others, to seek understanding, and to be part of a solution.

Tragedy of such immense proportions has not exposed our weakness - it has helped us discover just how strong we really are. We should not be surprised that this is so.

As mentioned, the people of Ottawa demonstrated the same thing four years ago when we were struck by the devastating natural disaster of the ice storm.

Then, as now, we put aside our own worries. We were strong. Most important, we worked together to get through some very difficult weeks.

Today, I want to talk about what we have accomplished in the past year by working together, a strong experienced Council working with an involved and caring public.

Let's reflect on what the city has achieved just one year after amalgamation. And, what's on our agenda for the year ahead.

The list of Council's accomplishments and initiatives in our first year is impressive - especially given that we were a new Council and a new administration which had never worked together before - and given that we really couldn't begin normal Council business until April as we needed to establish committees and to staff Council's operations.

- First and foremost, as promised, we delivered a 10% tax cut, and in year one instead of year three.
- We acted quickly to introduce a practical bilingualism policy for our new city that reflects a strong consensus on who we are and where we are.
- We cut the ribbon to launch the 'O' Train, our pilot project on light rail. The 'O' Train is already a success story - the people of Ottawa are embracing it; their support is strong and the public is now demanding an east-west light rail line from Kanata to Cumberland. We have commenced a major review of existing rail and transit corridors to consider expansion options.
- We have come up with new rules for our taxi industry.
- For public health reasons we brought in a new non-smoking by-law in public places - an initiative with strong public support.
- And I might add for those who say the timing was bad, we should be mindful that in the year 2000, leading up to amalgamation, every one of the 12 former municipal councils passed a smoking ban resolution requesting the new City to have a by-law in place by May 1, 2001.
- Council approved \$500,000 - by way of an additional grant to the arts, reflecting that arts are a vital part of our quality of life, and an important part of our economy.
- Finally, as promised, we sponsored the Ottawa 20/20 Smart Growth Summit, an unprecedented project to plan our future - 20-20 vision to create a plan to take us to the year 2020.
- We invited speakers from across the country, from around the world and from across our own city to share their wisdom. We held community town hall sessions to collect the views of the citizens of our city. The four-day summit was televised and webcast from gavel to gavel.
- The summit launched our Growth Plan process to include an Official Plan unlike any in the past. I'll talk more about what lies ahead in a minute or two.

But first, there's an overview I want to give of achievements of the past year that may not have come to your attention through the papers or nightly newscasts. These are initiatives carried out in individual neighbourhoods. These things were done to meet specific priorities, needs, concerns and desires of individual communities within our city.

A year ago, in almost every speech, I spoke about how the new City of Ottawa would only be as strong as its individual communities and neighbourhoods. I was determined then and I am determined now to keep individual communities and neighbourhoods strong, as I believe each member of Council does.

In a few short months, we've acted in concrete ways to do just that. Here are just a few things we've put in place, by way of examples.

- We took a decision to preserve the reserves of individual pre-amalgamation cities in Nepean, Vanier, and Cumberland. This was a concern in the lead-up to amalgamation. We acted quickly to preserve those reserves.

- In Osgoode, we've done away with the tag-a-bag system for garbage. We did that within our first three months. This was identified by the Osgoode community as a priority in the election campaign.
- As Councillors McNeely and Kreling know, we invested \$5 million - 50% of the total cost - to build a new Frank Kenny Road in Cumberland.
- We have begun the beach project at Petrie Island.
- We made improvements to the streetscape in Navan - again, something we did in the lead-up to hosting the plowing match.
- For Manotick, we have approved a secondary plan - it's sort of like a local official plan. It was an overdue priority, which addresses the specific needs and desires of that community.
- In New Edinburgh, we showed leadership and used a great deal of creativity to come up with a partnership to save Crichton Street Public School. It's now a hub for our arts community and is the new home for the Ottawa School of dance.
- For the fast growing community of South Nepean we continued to invest heavily in infrastructure to improve intersections such as Woodroffe Avenue and Fallowfield Road, to fast track bus lanes on Woodroffe Avenue, to expand our social housing network. We took a decision to grade separate the train tracks at Woodroffe and Fallowfield and we are awaiting a provincial co-funding announcement and a property transaction with the N.C.C. to commence this \$40 Million Project for South Nepean.
- We cut the ribbon on the state-of-the-art Peter D. Clark long-term care centre at Centrepointe. We preserved Ben Franklin Place as a community activity centre.
- To meet the needs of another rapidly growing community - the south end of our city - we've taken steps towards a new south end library branch.
- In the east, we have held consultations on a variety of improvements. Subject to budget deliberations, there are plans for new small Park & Ride lots for Navan and Notre-Dame Des Champs and new large Park & Ride lots at Trim Road in Orleans and on Navan Road south of Innes.
- We have identified the widening of Innes Road as a priority, are negotiating funding with the Province and have completed the environmental assessment for the project.
- We have acted to preserve the heritage character of Rockcliffe, requiring that any planning matters go directly to the planning and development committee. It's not done on delegated authority. As Councillor Legendre advocated, Rockcliffe wanted this protection.
- We are working towards maintaining Rockcliffe's library and its leaf collection program.
- In the heart of our city, we've taken steps to preserve the Plant Bath. For years, it had been an important community facility for residents. Thanks to our efforts, in the near future it will again be a focus of community life and activity; its renewal is closer at hand.
- We've initiated a process and planning to improve water quality at Britannia Beach.

- In West Carleton, we've taken a number of steps to work with the local community, particularly the business community, in an effort to create a secondary plan for the Carp Road area.
- Amalgamation marked a leap of faith for many rural residents. Many joined to form the new City of Ottawa believing they would be better off in doing so; others had major concerns. I want to tell rural residents you can have faith that the new partnership is indeed working
- We've acted to address many needs in our rural areas. We're in the second stage of public consultation on a Public Transit Service for our village and rural areas. We created the new Standing Committee on Agriculture and Rural Affairs, which gives the rural community a strong voice in the new City.

In March, the City tabled a report, 'The Economic Impacts of Agriculture on the Economy of the New City of Ottawa.' It shows all of us that we are not only the nation's capital, not only a high-tech capital, but that we are also a significant "farm capital" in Canada.

- This important study will be invaluable in helping to map out a future for our rural areas - a future that builds on the past.
- In the East End we are close to completion of the construction of our new police district office on St-Joseph Boulevard at 10th Line; an \$ 8.7 million project.
- In Kanata, we quickly completed the widening of the Terry Fox Drive Bridge and have identified several important road and transit initiatives for which we are presently nearing final agreement with the Province of Ontario's Superbuild Fund.
- We have made significant progress in a partnership of community consultation on the Kanata West Development Plan.
- We've approved the Terry Fox and Castlefrank overpass projects.
- We've completed the purchase of 556 acres of green space in the South March Highlands and increased the number of firefighters in Kanata to the same level as other suburban communities.
- We've given approval for a new and improved Bridlewood Community Centre.
- I also want to mention something we've done to address the needs of those whose neighbourhood cannot be defined in our geography.

On any given night, close to 800 men, women and children in this city are without permanent housing.

They live in this city's streets, in our emergency shelters. They sleep on mats on the floor in places like the Union Mission, one of several agencies we should be very proud of for their caring, for their hard work.

Taking action on homelessness was one of the very first things we did in the new city of Ottawa. In February, in partnership with federal and provincial governments, we announced and managed the process of more than \$8 million in aid for more than 40 different organizations working to prevent and end homelessness in Ottawa.

More than \$1 million is from the City of Ottawa. We are leading efforts to address the needs of this important and very vulnerable group in our society.

All of these initiatives - the major ones and the neighbourhood ones - show that this Council is plugged into the very specific needs that together make us an exceptional city.

It shows how we are focusing on the big picture, but also that we are building strong vibrant communities within the city.

We are fortunate to be able to share a city that is alive, vibrant, and engaging and in some respects we take progress and accomplishments in stride; I'd like to mention a few more:

- The initiation of our defibrillator program in public buildings - already saving the lives of heart attack victims.
- The return of CFL football to Frank Clair Stadium.
- The success of our new atom hockey tournament, the Bell Ottawa International Hockey Festival, attracting 3,500 ten and eleven year old participants, plus their parents, hundreds of volunteers, and a \$20 million boost to our local tourism industry.
- The important merger of the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation and the Ottawa Economic Development Corporation.
- The first key to the new City of Ottawa presented to one of our municipal political icons, Ben Franklin of Nepean.
- Major partnerships with the Francophonie Games and the International Plowing Match.
- Facing down terrorism by participation in the public safety of NATO and G-20 conferences in Ottawa after September 11.
- The creation of our new Youth Cabinet and all our Advisory Committees.
- The 4th annual increase in ridership at O-C Transpo.

But let it be said, loudly and clearly, despite the accomplishments of the first year, it has not been a bed of roses; we've encountered many thorns on the way. The task of merging 12 planning departments has created problems in development approvals; we will continue to work with the industry to sort this out. We thank the development industry for their patience and co-operation.

On the Human Resources and office accommodation side we have had a year of uncertainty with the Transition Board and a year with the new administration to re-position approximately 12,500 full time employees.

This has been an enormous challenge and the process has been unnerving and unsettling for thousands of employees; on behalf of Council and the residents of Ottawa I want to thank all of the employees of the new City for their professionalism and patience, especially so since the most often heard praise of the first year of amalgamation is that the level of services was by and large maintained and in some cases improved.

It has been said many times in many contexts that amalgamation is a three-year process. Having survived the first difficult year, Council will no doubt agree that year two will be no easier, in some respects it will be more difficult.

The most difficult and important decision for this term for Council and the community will be the completion of our Growth Plan and Official Plan in the next nine or ten months.

In the next nineteen years we will see our population grow by 400,000 people (more than the population of the City of Ottawa which came into amalgamation), we will see over 190,000 more residential dwelling units, and an additional 200,000 cars in our midst within the same geography. Any mistakes we make now we will pay dearly for in the future.

Next, our 2002 operating and capital budgets will be challenging and difficult. I am asking Council and the administration to ensure a tax freeze in order to enshrine last year's 10% tax cut into our base-operating budget. And I am asking Council and the administration to exercise some patience in the scheduling of our capital program.

Also, most amalgamated municipalities have faltered on the issue of merging labour contracts; it has proved to be their Achilles' heel. When compared to other merged municipalities, Ottawa has fared better to date.

We must be determined, collectively, to resolve our new labour contract in a reasonable manner. I am encouraging the management and union teams to consider the mutually painful consequences of a failure of negotiations.

Our employees, management, and Council have a tremendous opportunity to move forward in partnership, to mutually benefit from our City's growing economy over the medium term.

As well, we will need to deal with the agenda of by-law harmonization. This will attract active and sometimes sharp debate; we should be able to expect it will also attract the high quality of debate our Council and our community is capable of.

I would like to make several more remarks in conclusion.

- To the city administration, we thank you for your near burn-out pace, for succeeding to date in ways other amalgamated municipalities have not, for coming together as a cohesive team, and for your clear resolution for the years ahead to work in partnership with Council and the public to continue to grow Ottawa as both a liveable and affordable city. So to the City Manager, Bruce Thom and to General Managers: David Bray, Steve Kanellakos, Kent Kirkpatrick, Rose Leclair and Dick Stewart, and your teams, we appreciate both the commitment and the results.
- As for Council, as Mayor, I have a unique observation post, so I want to acknowledge and highlight for the public the hard work and effectiveness

demonstrated by your experienced and committed Councillors; it would be fair to say that the results this past year for our residents have been significantly more positive than negative but also, in looking at the future:

- There is little room for complacency,
  - There is little margin for error,
  - That political partnership and respect must continue to supersede political gamesmanship or expediency.
- To our community and business leaders, we recognize your wisdom and foresight in putting the difficult and fractious amalgamation debate behind us, for having the faith and patience to be a positive force with our Council and our administration.
  - This Mayor and this Council accept your challenge, as community and business leaders, to keep you relevant, to keep you involved, and to keep you as a partner in making all the difficult choices ahead, choices for this place where we live called Ottawa, so it will remain liveable, affordable, and people friendly.

Thank you. Merci.