

# State of the City

## January 22, 2003

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I would like to start by wishing everyone very best wishes for the New Year. May the next twelve months bring you health, happiness and success.

The first speech of the New Year is a time for Council to take stock of the past, and look to the future.

And while it is tempting to launch immediately into an account of all we have done, and all we hope to accomplish, I want to first pay tribute to some of the great citizens of Ottawa who passed away in 2002:

- Former Governor General, Ramon Hnatyshyn
- Former Police Chief, Thomas Flanagan
- Retired executive Fire Chief, Howard Robert Lambert
- Former Mayor of Rideau Township, David Bartlett
- Photographer, Yousuf Karsh
- War hero, Henry (Hank) Keane
- Constable Paul Murphy of the Ottawa Police department
- Godfrey Hewitt, organist at Christ Church Cathedral (Ottawa)
- Dan MacMillan, former West Carleton Councillor, and Ottawa teacher
- Lyle Massender, former head of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Ambulance Service
- Mark Marsters, the artist responsible for the "hands" series along the Transitway
- Don McDiarmid, the former tennis champion and member of the Ottawa Sports Hall of Fame
- Bob and Bonnie Dagenais, the former principal and teacher who died so tragically, and who touched so many young lives in such a positive way.

These men and women, among many others, were authors of some of Ottawa's finest moments. They will not be forgotten. And our efforts, as a community and as a Council, must do honour to the lasting contributions and high standards of those who came before us.

In his first speech of 1950, Mayor E. A. Bourque praised Council's vision. In that inaugural address, he declared that the Council of '49 would be remembered as one of the most progressive in the city's history.

I have no doubt that the first Council of the 'new City of Ottawa' will stake a similar claim.

In January of 2001, this region ceased to be a community of cities and became a city of communities - united in purpose and commitment, to maintain and enhance our already high quality of life.

Since that date, Ottawa has grown into a major G-8 political capital, a world class, academic, science, business and tourism capital.

- We are the site of numerous national and international meetings, including the NATO parliamentarians, the G-8 and G-20/IMF meetings and many more. We are seen as an international destination that is secure and a world partner for peace.

- We are indeed the high-tech capital of Canada, and we can lay claim to the title "The Festival Capital of Canada", in a milieu of a rapidly maturing and expanding local arts and cultural industry.
- We are a leader in Life Sciences, Photonics, telecommunications, and software, and our city is the headquarters for many of the largest and most respected companies in these and other fields.
- And we are home to a handful of professional sports teams, including the next Memorial and Stanley Cup champions, the Ottawa 67's and the Ottawa Senators and for the nay sayer who said CFL football might return in 2061 when Halley's Comet returns, even the Grey Cup will be played at Frank Clair Stadium in 2004, maybe even with our very own Renegades on the field.
- To say nothing of landing the Junos in the Capital region.

As Ottawa has grown, so too has the role of cities on the world stage.

The socio-economic sands have shifted, and Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, and other major centres have become more than drivers of their local economies. Cities - along with major corporations - are behind the wheel of national and global economics.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), TD Economics, The Conference Board, and others have cited the heightened importance of municipalities in world affairs, and therefore are calling for "vertical collaboration and federal/provincial/local partnerships" in support of our larger cities.

Even U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has dubbed this the "Urban Millennium".

What's interesting is that these economic and political experts have drawn conclusions with little concern for who the Premier of Ontario may be, or who the next Prime Minister of Canada may be.

The OECD, TD Economics, The Conference Board, the United Nations all have a vision that goes beyond current politics.

Likewise, this municipal Council must grasp this new vision and make it its own.

We must take our place in this new world, we must lead by our example.

City Council's priority will always be our citizens. Our closeness to the public is what makes municipal government the finest example of a modern democracy.

This City is "Where We Live", and we want it to be and to become both more prosperous and more liveable.

And as global issues advance and cities continue to become more important, great responsibility and trust lie with civic leaders to protect the peoples' interests - be they environmental or economic, historical or cultural.

For that very reason, the lights are 'on' at City Hall... and we are all hard at work, Councillors, and the administration.

At no point in the history of this City has the work of city government been so interesting, nor has it ever been so challenging.

All at the same time:

- this Council had to implement the creation of a new City out of 12 different municipal corporations and 12 different municipal cultures, including writing new job descriptions, re-deploying over 12,000 employees, and overseeing the merger of 53 collective bargaining units.
- this Council had to manage and is managing the biggest building boom in the history of our city with 3 consecutive records in the value of building permits issued - and we've absorbed the pressures of over 2.9 billion dollars of venture capital invested here in hi-tech in the last 3 years.
- this Council is writing not one new official plan, but is re-writing 12 official plans into one new one - and the process used to involve our citizens has been a National award winning, creative and innovative process.
- this Council and this administration have not and will not be daunted or deterred by these challenges..
- this Council has and will continue to work at break-neck speed and burn-out pace to ensure these challenges are met.
- And so we have been successful in meeting our new city savings targets, and achieved two tax freezes and one tax cut.
- And we've been holding on tightly to the tiger's tail, as we meet and plan for the challenges of unprecedented growth.
- And we have been bringing community partners together with creativity and innovation by adding new chapters to the traditional official plan process, namely:
  - A Human Services Plan
  - An Arts & Heritage Plan
  - An Environmental Plan
  - An Economic Strategy

It has been said: "Let us teach ourselves and others that politics can be not only the art of the possible... but also the art of the impossible, namely, the art of improving ourselves and the world."

In Ottawa, the 'art of the impossible' began when Lieutenant-Colonel John By started work on the Rideau Canal in 1826. It continued with the Gréber Plan in the early 50's, which included a greenbelt around the city. And it went farther, when the Smart Growth Summit was held here in 2001, to give form and future to the new, soon to be, greater, City of Ottawa.

Fifty-three years ago, in the era of Mayor E.A. Bourque, population growth and boundary definition called for demographers and cartographers.

Today, poised for a population boom and in the midst of a digital revolution, the city requires, among others, expertise in fibre-optics, emergency preparedness, traffic flow, cultural integration, arts & cultural affairs, and environmental planning.

This is a most challenging and exciting time to be alive. And it is certainly the most exciting time to live in Ottawa.

Almost 150 years after Queen Victoria designated Ottawa as the capital, we have the privilege and the responsibility of writing - quite literally - the next chapter of our city's illustrious history.

We are working together as a community and together we will author something truly significant... a living road map that will be more than 'just another volume' in the archives. It will be a great work to be prominently displayed, closely read and consulted.

The Ottawa 20/20 Initiative including the five growth management plans is where we started. But a city that is committed to being 'smarter', 'brighter', 'greener', 'friendlier', 'safer', 'stronger' and 'healthier' cannot stop there.

Delivering on a dream is never easy.

It takes vision, it takes commitment, and, as Council and the community know, it takes hard work.

As we move forward with the fine-tuning of our 20/20 vision, we will be challenged by those who say it cannot be done, that we cannot have 20-20 vision looking toward the year 2020, and actually implement that vision.

Make no mistake: we will not be successful if we give credence to the nay sayers in the media and elsewhere who heckle us and say it cannot be done.

We will succeed only if we have the courage of our convictions.

The generation of Colonel By, and the generation of Jacques Gréber could build their visions. I believe our generation and that of our children will build on that base and achieve our own unique vision.

We should never have to look back and say, "What could we have done?" We must attack our challenges and start asking ourselves "What can we do?"

As a community we will be true to the words on the City's coat of arms: "Advance Ottawa! - Ottawa en avant!"

This Council is a group of experienced municipal leaders, from all philosophical backgrounds, and when one examines the actual results of our debates rather than the media headlines - the achievements have been significant.

Our Councillors do their homework well and work hard to deliver for their constituents. And on virtually every important vote you will see on both sides of the issue the philosophical left, centre and right - that is because this Council votes on the merits of the issue before them - and not with a monolithic political label.

It is a practice that enables progress on all fronts on the issues of today and on those issues that will guide our vision for tomorrow.

These include, among many more accomplishments we cannot recite in one speech, the following:

- a long-term financial plan;
- in three years one tax cut and two tax freezes, while virtually all other major Canadian cities have raised both taxes and user fees;
- the achievement of savings targets in the New City;
- progress in arts & cultural issues, which include more project funding, an expanded CentrepoinTE theatre, financial commitments for an east end performing arts complex, and additional support for "La Nouvelle Scène";
- sound environmental policies and initiatives which include:
  - co-generation at Robert O. Pickard Environmental Centre converting methane gas to energy,
  - 11 City ethanol fueling sites for city vehicles,

- continuing the significant acquisition of valuable green spaces,
  - a pilot project to convert landfill methane gas to energy,
  - as well as expanding recycling programs.
- for the rural and agricultural constituents, improved water testing, significantly expanded library service, maintaining client service centres, an increase in ambulance service from two to eight ambulances, a streamlined hunting by-law, increased capital budgets, and new equipment for rural fire stations.
- Community infrastructure which includes renovations to the Glebe Centre, a new Plant Pool, a new Southeast Library Branch, a new District Police Station on St. Joseph Boulevard, a new headquarters for the Western Community Resource Centre, a new community resource centre in River Ward, a new park and beach on Petrie Island, and many others.
- In the area of public health the successful implementation of the Smoking in Public Places By-law; a new by-law regarding the use of pesticides, a new Diabetes Prevention Program, new Men's Health Campaign, a new smoking cessation program and the launch of Request For Proposals on a new long-term care facility on Porter Island.
- The adoption of a new and unique in Canada public-private partnership policy and the issue of no less than seven Requests For Proposals which include, indoor ice surfaces in the East & West Ends of the City, and the new Corporate Accommodation Master Plan to reduce thirteen administrative centres to three; this includes the sale of two more City Halls.
- For our overheated growth in Kanata & the West-end, in Barrhaven and Nepean South, and in the Orléans area in the East, we have allocated hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure backlog - including the widening of Innes Road, the extension of Terry Fox Drive, the widening of Woodroffe Avenue at Fallowfield, the construction and expansion of bus lanes and park & rides, to name but a few.

In the last year alone, in no particular order, Ottawa has:

- Made an investment of \$6.1 million in the purchase of 14 new pumper trucks for our Fire Services, six of which are already on the road;
- Launched "Action Ottawa", a pilot project that started work on new affordable housing units, with more on the way (all funded solely by City money);
- Working with community partners invested significantly in projects for the homeless;
- Witnessed the average Emergency Medical Services response time improve by nearly four minutes in urban Ottawa, and by more than five minutes in rural areas;
- Increased police service;
- Added 117 new low-floor articulated buses and attracted more than 2 million new passengers to public transit;
- Experienced a resurgence of growth and activity in downtown residential construction.

Virtually all of these accomplishments, and more, have involved hot and heavy Committee and Council debates. These debates have been well researched, sometimes heated, almost always respectful and constructive.

Much of the debate has been a magnet for confrontational media coverage. However, the outcomes flowing from these debates, by way of the actual decisions taken by Council, have been in my submission, respectful and responsive to public consensus.

On behalf of Council, I gratefully acknowledge and thank the administration and all the employees of our City for being able to survive the vortex of change and uncertainty, and for their steady hands, through the stormy sea of building our new City in its first two years.

As I have said on occasion, elected officials are merely temporary trustees of decision-making on behalf of the public.

It is community leadership, contributions made over decades and generations, which create the long term successes that are leading our City to become an international destination of diversity and excellence.

On behalf of Council, I want to thank all the members in our community who step up and take ownership of our City, our neighbourhoods, and our villages, who hold our elected officials to a high standard, and who in the process are making a tremendous success of this place where we live, together. This place we all call home.

Thank you.