

State of the City Address
Mayor Jim Watson
Wednesday, January 29, 2020

I want to start by thanking Elder Claudette Commanda – the youngest elder I’ve ever met – for being here today to offer that wonderful Algonquin prayer and blessing.

We must always be mindful and recognize that we are on the sacred land of Claudette’s people – the Algonquin Anishnabeg Nation – who have been the stewards of this region for over 6,000 years.

I hope that her words – inspired by traditions and teachings passed down for millennia – will help guide Council’s deliberations and inspire us to make decisions that will benefit our communities for centuries to come.

Thank you, Claudette.

Inviting our Indigenous friends and partners to share their culture and language with us at these important events is vital to the reconciliation efforts that our city and our entire country have committed to bring justice and equality to this relationship.

I very much value our relationship with our surrounding Algonquin communities – Pikwakanagan and Kitigan Zibi – as well as with all First Nation, Métis and Inuit residents of Ottawa.

Last year, we announced with Pikwakanagan and Ottawa Tourism that our region would have the honour of hosting the 2021 Ontario Indigenous Summer Games, as well as the 2021 and 2023 Masters Indigenous Games.

Registration for the 2021 Masters Indigenous Games will open next week – and we're very excited to welcome thousands of participants who will join us in Ottawa to celebrate their wonderful culture through sport.

We know that these major events are a great boost to Ottawa's economy and help sustain good jobs in the tourism sector.

That's why we are hard at work with Michael Crockatt and his team at Ottawa Tourism to strengthen this industry and the approximately 40,000 jobs it supports in our hotels, restaurants and small businesses across the city.

And we are keeping the momentum with many great sporting events coming to our city this year and next:

- the 2020 Men's and Women's U-Sports Basketball Championships at TD Place in March
- the 2020 Pan American Olympic Qualifying Wrestling Tournament at the Shaw Centre in March – where Stittsville's own Olympic Gold medalist Erica Wiebe will be competing for her place in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics; and
- the 2021 Canada Soccer Under-15 National Championships in March of next year.

And since we delivered Ottawa 2017 with our tourism partners, the industry has continued to grow – seeing once again a solid increase of 4.3% in hotel room nights last year, with visitors coming to Ottawa from 179 countries.

Confidence in our tourism industry continues to grow, with \$25-million in improvements taking shape

at the Ottawa International Airport – in addition to a new ALT Hotel and an LRT station that will both have direct access to the terminal.

Over the last two years, we've also seen more than 1,300 hotel rooms added across the city, in order to meet this growing demand from visitors from around the world.

This enthusiasm is being fueled by players in our tourism community, which are constantly innovating to ensure Ottawa remains an appealing destination for visitors.

In December, we learned that our region was going to be home to the first interprovincial zipline in the world.

Interzip Rogers at Zibi is a great addition to our region's tourism offering.

This zipline will soar 120 feet above the Ottawa River and offer incredible views of the region – including the Parliament Buildings, the Supreme Court, the Chaudière Falls and the Museum of History.

This photo of former London Mayor Boris Johnson shows why I will nominate Gatineau Mayor Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin to test the system first.

And I see this project as a thriving symbol of the special connection that exists between our two cities.

For the first time ever, Ottawa will host the culminating event of a great nationwide tradition, the

Canadian Culinary Championships – which will take place at the Shaw Centre this weekend.

And I know a lot of participants are looking forward to an incredible feast.

In a few months, we'll also have a brand-new sports franchise to cheer on in the nation's capital when the Ottawa Blackjacks make their debut in the Canadian Elite Basketball League at the Arena at TD Place.

But we also have a number of recurring events that are commemorating anniversaries – and we should be enthusiastically celebrating their success.

The Rideau Canal Skateway – the longest skating rink in the world – is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Now as all you know, I can't really skate – but I can certainly appreciate what this long-standing tradition means for our community and for tourism in Ottawa.

The Jazz Festival will celebrate its 40th edition – and I look forward to joining the crowds, who will once again return to Confederation Park for the occasion.

And last but not least, our beloved Canadian Tulip Festival will help us mark a special anniversary this year, as we celebrate 75 years of friendship between Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

And I'm pleased that Chargé d'Affaires Frederieke Quispel and Taylor Heaven are here from the Dutch Embassy today on behalf of Ambassador Henk van der Zwan.

As many of you know, this friendship dates back to the Second World War – when Canadian soldiers led the forces that liberated the Netherlands in 1945.

And I'm proud that my father fought in those battles during the Second World War, as a member of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Canada.

He fought alongside the brave young men who played a pivotal role in North Western Europe.

The Royal Regiment is credited with liberating the city of Assen on April 13, 1945 – before participating in the clearing of Groningen until April 15 – some 20 days before the Netherlands was liberated from German occupation.

For his efforts, my father – Bev Watson – was awarded the France and Germany Star, the

Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the 1939 to 1945 War Medal.

I'm very proud of my father's service to our nation – and it was a special honour for me to visit the Netherlands last fall in the country where he served Canada and defended our freedom during the War.

During our time there, I had the distinct pleasure of meeting Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet – who was born at the Ottawa Civic Hospital while the Dutch Royal Family were living here in exile.

I took that opportunity to invite her to visit Ottawa to renew the special relationship between our two countries and attend a naming ceremony at the new Princess Margriet Park near the Civic Hospital.

And it's my pleasure to announce today that Princess Margriet is indeed planning on joining us in Ottawa in May to mark this momentous occasion.

But before we fast forward to 2020, let's take this opportunity to look back on the challenging and eventful year that was 2019 – during which we approved two budgets, launched the Confederation Line, moved ahead with Stage 2 of LRT – and once again overcame many challenges as a community.

It was certainly a productive year at City Hall – and our committees worked to deliver many ambitious initiatives with a great deal of success.

Following the historic back-to-back flooding that hit our region in 2017 and again last year, the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee updated the flood plain mapping for the region, which will provide

more certainty to residents and developers looking for guidance on where to build new homes in our rural areas.

The flooding once again lasted for many weeks – but this time, our City had to declare a state of emergency to bring in some much-needed reinforcement from the Canadian Armed Forces.

As a result, approximately 600 women and men in uniform joined 15,000 residents who volunteered in this effort to fill and deploy 1.5 million sandbags to protect homes as well as critical infrastructure, like the Britannia Water Treatment Plant.

This emergency response – which was superbly coordinated and executed by our City staff and first responders – significantly limited the damage

caused by these floods, when compared to the 2017 events.

And although more than 150 families had to evacuate their homes, our community came together once again to support our fellow residents in need.

However, it takes years for these affected neighbourhoods to recover from such devastating weather events.

Many residents of West Carleton – who were the victims of the devastating tornadoes in 2018 – will only be returning home in the coming months.

Encouraging signs of progress can we observed in this community, with the new Dunrobin Plaza taking shape once again – this time with a stronger roof.

And many are hoping that the Dunrobin Meat and Grocery – a family business owned by sisters Cindy and Julie Delahunt – will once again find a home there, as a welcome sign that things are getting back to normal.

Unfortunately, these natural disasters seem to be getting all too common – and their effects are being felt right around the world.

In the face of this, our Environment Committee has been working to tackle a worldwide climate challenge, adopting an important Climate Change Master Plan at its last meeting of 2019 – a plan that will be up for debate later today and that I hope you will all support.

This roadmap for a more sustainable community contains ambitious targets that will hopefully see our

City eliminate its corporate greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 – and for our community to do the same by 2050.

Working with our partners, the Plan will deliver numerous concrete actions to achieve these targets – including many energy efficiency projects as part of Energy Evolution, the development of a climate resiliency plan, and applying a climate lens to the new Official Plan.

Despite these environmental challenges, I want to acknowledge the progress we have made over the last few years in reducing GHGs.

According to the latest greenhouse gas inventory, our community's emissions decreased by 14 percent between 2012 and 2018.

The City's corporate emissions – which account for about five percent of Ottawa's total emissions – were reduced by an impressive 36 percent over that same period.

And later this year, OC Transpo will begin piloting electric buses as part of its operations – and I'm hopeful that this will put us on a path to greening our entire fleet, especially as battery technology improves in the coming years.

I want to thank Minister Catherine McKenna for her support of this initiative.

Although we still have much work to do to achieve our long-term targets, there are promising signs that our investments in new technologies and energy efficiency projects are paying off.

The Environment Committee also strengthened the Tree Protection Bylaw, which will put in place greater safeguards – like compensation for removals – and higher fines to help protect Ottawa’s precious tree canopy.

I encourage all colleagues to support these strengthened tree protection measures when they come to a vote today.

One of the City’s most important environmental initiatives will be completed later this year when we start operating the Combined Sewage Storage Tunnel.

This key project of the Ottawa River Action Plan will help us reduce by approximately 80% the discharge of waste water into the Ottawa River – thereby increasing our residents’ enjoyment and improving

the water quality for our wildlife of this great waterway.

These are all important initiatives that will help improve our residents' quality of life for generations to come – and the City is delivering on many others that will have a similar lasting impact.

Think of the new Ottawa Central Library and Library and Archives Canada joint facility, which has tremendous potential to become a people place like no other – both for residents and visitors.

After some of the most enthusiastic community consultations in recent history, the OPL team and the architects at Diamond Schmitt and KWC Architects unveiled the preliminary design last week to much acclaim.

I certainly look forward to us breaking ground on this amazing city-building project and witnessing its grand opening in 2024.

This facility will without a doubt become a stunning architectural addition to Ottawa's downtown – and one that will kickstart the revitalization and encourage the type of development we want to see take place at LeBreton Flats and around Pimisi Station.

To help steer our city's development, the Planning Committee and ARAC are in the midst of developing a new Official Plan, which will guide the growth of Ottawa over the next decades.

With its 5 Big Moves, the new OP will identify long-term trends, challenges and opportunities facing Ottawa – and it will ensure that our city remains on

track to be the most liveable mid-sized city in North America.

The new Official Plan will prioritize the climate change lens across the board, but it will also facilitate economic activity thanks to special economic zone designations for Kanata North – where businesses are bursting at the seams – and the Ottawa International Airport, which is surrounded by underutilized properties.

As our high-tech community in Kanata continues to grow at an impressive rate – now is the time to introduce flexible policies that will foster the development of much-needed office space and attract the attention of investors worldwide.

There is no better time to conduct this important Official Plan review – because as you know, our city

reached an important milestone last year when it surpassed the one million population mark.

By crossing that threshold, Ottawa now finds itself in a new league when competing with cities around the globe – and we have to live up to the expectations of a world-class G7 capital city.

For its part, the Transportation Committee has been tasked with finding mobility solutions to handle this growth – and this process is now underway following the launch of the Transportation Master Plan refresh in December.

It's important for us to work with all our mobility partners across the region – as tens of thousands of residents cross the Ottawa River every morning and afternoon to get to and from work.

And I am proud of the good relationship that Mayor Pedneaud-Jobin and I have developed in recent years.

This relationship benefits several projects on both sides of the river, and it has led to increased collaboration between our transportation teams, as well as between OC Transpo and the STO.

We are both opposed to the construction of a sixth bridge between Ottawa and Gatineau, because we want the federal government to prioritize funding for light rail projects that will have positive effects on the quality of life of our residents and on the environment for decades to come.

We are working closely with each other to ensure that the Board of Directors of the NCC understands our position.

Our teams are also working on plans to connect Gatineau's future light rail network from western Gatineau with Ottawa, in order to maximize the benefits of this system for users on both sides of the river.

I look forward to seeing the results of their study sometime in the next few months, when they make a presentation to the Transportation Committee.

The largest transportation projects have the potential to change not only how we get around – but also how we develop our city.

And the launch of the Confederation Line in September was certainly a defining moment in our city's history – since this critical investment in public

transit will help us manage our population's growth for decades to come.

And although LRT has faced a number of significant challenges since its launch four months ago, I'm confident that we will find permanent solutions to these issues.

Yesterday afternoon, I had the opportunity to visit the Belfast Yard MSF with the Chair and Vice-Chair of our Transit Commission to meet with the team at JBA, who arrived from Britain a few days ago.

It was helpful to get an understanding of their focus over the coming days and weeks, as they assist RTM to increase the number of available trains, as well as help find permanent solutions to improve the reliability of LRT and the experience of our customers.

I wish to thank our transit users for their patience as we work through this.

You rightfully expect and deserve a higher level of service from our transit network.

I'm confident that we will start finding solutions to these issues in the coming weeks.

But LRT remains the right long-term investment for our city.

In a recent Globe & Mail article entitled "Ottawa is poised to grow and meet new work force demand," Adam Stanley highlights the enthusiasm that LRT has created given its long-term economic potential.

While describing it as the most impactful piece of transportation infrastructure since the construction of the Rideau Canal nearly 200 years ago, he goes on to say that: “as a result of recent investments in LRT, and other new infrastructure, Ottawa seems poised at last to step out of the long shadows cast by Toronto and Montreal.”

These are encouraging words for our city – and I’m proud that we are continuing the progress.

As you have all seen, our crews have been hard at work on the construction of our Stage 2 extensions to bring light-rail farther east, west and south.

The construction of Stage 2 LRT will add 44 kilometres of new rail and 24 new stations to our city’s O-Train network.

And we won't stop there, having already laid the groundwork to keep extending the system to Kanata-Stittsville and Barrhaven as part of Stage 3.

LRT is also inspiring confidence amongst investors and creating economic opportunities right across the city.

Our local economy is firing on all cylinders, posting significant job gains in 2019, as the unemployment rate hovered between 4.2 and 4.4 percent for most of the year.

I'm proud as Mayor of the city to say that 50,000 new jobs were created in Ottawa in 2019 – spread across all sectors from construction to media & culture, and healthcare to high-tech.

This represented an annual job increase of 8.5 percent, ranking second amongst Canada's 33 largest cities.

There is obviously a lot of confidence from employers and investors in the strength of our economy.

And these numbers also demonstrate the impact of many economic development projects taking shape in many areas across the city.

Next week, ARAC will be considering Hard Rock's \$320-million expansion plans for the Rideau Carleton Raceway in the south end.

If approved, this would lead to the construction of a new eight-story hotel with 178 rooms, a 1,600-seat

theatre, and space for a number of restaurants and shops, in Osgoode Ward.

In Nepean, we have a number of exciting projects taking shape at the NCC Research Farm.

In May, working with Invest Ottawa, we launched the Ottawa L5 Testing Facility – which is helping our local partners grow and lead worldwide in the ever-growing Autonomous Vehicle industry.

This site is now the first and largest AV testing facility of its kind in North America – serving as a test track, research facility and data centre where we can test a number of new products and technologies.

We now have many partners that are benefitting from this initiative – including Smartcone, BlackBerry QNX, Autonomous Stuff, Aurrigo and Carleton

University – who are actively testing and conducting leading-edge research at this facility.

This complements our AV test track in Kanata North, which has for a few years enabled the testing of vehicles that communicate in real time with live City infrastructure.

And as a result of L5, INDRO Robotics, Autonomous Stuff and Aurrigo – Britain’s leading AV company – are all opening offices in Ottawa, which speaks to the economic benefits of this strategic investment.

In a recent article defining what should be our business community’s long-term aspirations, journalist and entrepreneur Mark Sutcliffe described our driverless test track as a shining example of what defines our city as a place of innovation.

We have also been working with the Ottawa Film Office and TriBro Studios on a film studio project for this site, one that would create approximately 500 new jobs during construction – and hundreds of other full-time jobs in film, TV and animation.

Just a few days ago, we had a production using the Rink of Dreams and Confederation Park to film a winter scene – and we can all be sure that Ottawa will once again be showcased on the Lifetime Channel next December.

Following a thorough review of the business case for this project, staff will be bringing forward to FEDCO in March a proposal for the loan financing of this facility – one that will benefit taxpayers and the Film Office while growing this important cultural sector and creating good jobs in our city.

And another opportunity is percolating on the site, with the possible creation of a world-class Smart Farm.

This facility – located a stone’s throw away from the farming industry regulators – would bring together academic and private sector partners to advance precision agriculture and tackle the food insecurity challenges faced by our planet.

This precision agriculture innovation will eventually benefit the 1,045 farms that make up our rural areas and fuel our agricultural economy.

To support even more job creation in our rural villages, staff have been hard at work consulting with residents and businesses to develop a Rural Economic Development Strategy, which ARAC will be approving in the next few months.

In the east end, the arrival last year of the Amazon fulfillment centre in Carlsbad Springs certainly delivered opportunities in this rural village – with the facility now providing employment to over 600 residents.

But we need to do more to stimulate economic growth in Orléans – and I’m pleased that we are working on a roadmap to do this.

Thanks to our Orléans-Highway 174 Economic Corridor Study, we will identify available lands primed for development and target business opportunities to create jobs in the east end.

And although the new Civic Campus project is only in its infancy, we are working closely with the team at The Ottawa Hospital and the Province to ensure

that the planning continues to progress on this important healthcare facility for our region.

All these projects are helping us diversify our local economy while creating businesses and jobs in all parts of the city.

To give a leg up to our local innovators and entrepreneurs, we opened the Innovation Centre at Bayview Yards in 2017 – where Michael Tremblay and the team at Invest Ottawa are delivering the tools and coaching that will ensure our local start-ups continue to grow.

They have so far accelerated and grown more than 200 small local companies – and the centre is bursting at the seams.

In November, Council approved a two-storey addition to Bayview Yards in order to meet the growing demand.

And with the demand for office, commercial and industrial space continuing to rise – vacancy rates reached new lows in 2019.

According to Avison Young – one of Canada’s largest commercial real estate firms – the Ottawa market shows no signs of slowing down in 2020.

And as we know, there’s a similar reality in the rental housing market right across the city: as the vacancy rates drop, prices increase.

I know that access to and affordability of housing has been top of mind for City Council and for

thousands of residents who are struggling to find a suitable place to live.

But I'm proud that for two years in a row now, this Council has invested \$15 million per year to build new affordable housing units for our residents in need.

This two-year \$30-million-dollar investment in housing infrastructure is the single largest in the City of Ottawa's history.

Working with our community partners and other levels of government, we leveraged this funding last year and launched many projects across the city – representing a total of 519 affordable housing units that are currently in the works.

- 140 units for seniors and families in Centretown with OCH;
- 40 supportive housing units in the Glebe Annex with the John Howard Society;
- 40 units dedicated to homeless veterans at Veteran's House – named in honour of former Air Force pilot Andy Carswell – delivered with Multifaith Housing;
- 42 supportive housing units with the Shepherds of Good Hope near Montfort Hospital; and
- 35 Units of affordable and supportive housing in Bell's Corners with the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa.

This is in addition to many projects that were completed and opened last year – including 58 units for seniors on Cambridge Street South, and a project with the Youth Services Bureau that

delivered 39 supportive housing units for youth in Riverside Park.

Just last fall, Council approved a joint initiative with Ottawa Community Housing that will produce another 271 affordable housing units in Rideau-Rockcliffe.

We are currently working with our not-for-profit partners to ensure that the sites they have identified for affordable housing projects are shovel ready this year and next.

Last year, Council also approved the refinancing of many OCH mortgages, which will generate as much as \$35 million to reinvest in critical repairs to our existing social housing stock.

I'm also committed to continuing our work with our federal and provincial partners to ensure that they take on an increased role and invest their fair share to help us tackle this housing crisis, which is being felt right across the country.

I recently spoke to the provincial Minister of Finance and the Housing Minister, in advance of the provincial budget, to stress the urgent need for new funding to support and build more affordable housing.

And I will be meeting with federal Minister Ahmed Hussen later this week to ask the federal government to move forward with historic investments on affordable housing in the upcoming federal budget – in order to reduce the 56% funding share currently being absorbed by municipalities.

The City is also planning for longer-term opportunities to locate affordable housing near transit stations – because affordable transit is also essential to many residents who cannot afford to own a car to get around the city.

And that's why this past year, FEDCO approved a plan from the Interdepartmental Task Force on Housing to target 18 prime pieces of land that will become transit-oriented neighbourhoods.

These publicly-owned properties along Bus Rapid Transit and the Trillium and Confederation Lines will be developed over the next 20 years and transformed into communities with a strong mix of affordable housing units.

The first of these affordable housing projects will be located beside our new Central Library Project and

will help us kickstart the revitalization of LeBreton Flats.

And in response to record-low vacancy rates and market demand, private sector developers have launched a wave of apartment and multi-residential projects.

Earlier this month, we learned of the Bayshore Centre's plans for two towers on its property – a project with 500 rental units for residents who want convenient access to the future Bayshore Station of Stage 2 LRT.

And similar projects are planned for the Trillium Line, with Arnon announcing its plans for six buildings containing 295 rental units within a few hundred metres of the Carling LRT Station.

These are only two examples of many projects providing additional rental housing units while encouraging greater density along our light-rail transit projects – and it is clearly good news in our city’s efforts to tackle urban sprawl.

In addition to these new developments, I’m encouraged that old and decrepit office buildings are being transformed into apartment rental buildings.

The nearby redevelopment of 170 Metcalfe at the corner of Nepean went online last summer with 64 rental units – which are almost all spoken for.

The old Government of Canada building at the corner of King Edward and Rideau is in the midst of a similar transformation and has been taking in uOttawa students since last fall.

Along the same line, we learned a few weeks ago that the office building at 473 Albert Street had been purchased by a real estate investment trust for the same purpose – and it will undergo a complete renewal this year that will add 153 units to the rental stock.

What's encouraging is that the private sector is finding greater value in offering decent and affordable rental units rather than lower grade office space.

And although I'm hopeful this increase in the rental stock will provide some relief to apartment seekers, we know the City has an important role to play to ensure that housing remains accessible for our most vulnerable residents.

I very much look forward to the important review of both the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, as well as the emergency shelter standards – a review that our Community and Protective Services Committee will undertake in the coming months.

And there is more that can be done at the municipal level to address these issues of affordability and accessibility to housing.

That is why last year, CPSC considered a major report to regulate the business of short-term rentals and limit their presence to primary residences – which could bring back as many as 1,200 units into the long-term ownership or rental market.

When this framework is implemented later this year, it will ensure that condos and apartment units cannot

be purchased and used for the sole purpose of acting as illegal hotels.

We know that over the last few years, this practice has negatively affected our community by reducing the housing stock, changing the fabric of our neighbourhoods – and in certain instances, has led to criminal activity in residential neighbourhoods.

These are social issues that all large cities are faced with – but we must do everything we can to continue to address some of their root causes.

That's why I'm proud of the work that City Council has done in recent years to bolster the inclusion of underrepresented and vulnerable communities.

- Our ongoing efforts on Indigenous Reconciliation;

- Affordable transit services for all residents by freezing the EquiPass and EquiFare;
- The Transit Commission's ongoing work to decrease waiting times for Para Transpo customers by introducing online booking;
- The appointment of our City's first Women and Gender Equity Liaison and the creation of a Women and Gender Equity Strategy.

These are all concrete actions that this Council has endorsed to make our city more inclusive and more liveable for all.

The development of our Women and Gender Equity Strategy engaged over 400 residents last year and recently led to productive consultations with members of our 2SLGBTQ+ community.

The team is also in the process of establishing its Working Group – and they have engaged with 22 different community partners and allies that will help us envision and deliver on the strategy.

In the last budget, we also set aside the funding required to create an Anti-Racism Secretariat, which will complement our work on Women and Gender Equity and help us fight back against racism in our community.

Although our community is a welcoming and accepting one – as I learned firsthand when I came out last summer – there is always work left to do on this front, particularly at a time when populism and intolerance are on the rise around the world.

Interestingly, a program delivered by Economic Development is also helping us become a more supportive and inclusive community.

One of the initiatives currently being piloted under the Innovation Pilot Program – in partnership with Ottawa Public Health – is a mobile app called Timsle, which is revolutionizing the way we manage mental health.

Created here in Ottawa by Quayce Thomas – who’s in the audience today – Timsle creates a social accountability network that can help improve users’ mental health by leveraging the support of family and friends.

Users of the app are asked to establish goals – like exercising, taking medication or having healthy and regular meals – and then identify the friends or

family members that will keep them on track along the way.

Users will then check-in every day as they accomplish these tasks – but if they fail to do so, Timsle will notify members of their network so they can reach out to see if everything is okay and offer their support.

OPH has recognized its value in supporting positive mental health through strong routines and healthy living – and I'm pleased that Timsle is being added to our community's wellness toolbox.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the team at Ottawa Public Health for their efforts to tackle the vaping epidemic which has invaded our schoolyards.

We must do much more to combat teenagers' access to these deceptive and dangerous vaping products.

I want to thank Premier Ford, who acted quickly – only a few days after I called him on the topic – to announce a ban on the promotion of these products in convenience stores and gas stations.

Unfortunately, companies are using appealing flavours and marketing to win over these customers – and the federal government must also act quickly on this front nationwide in order to protect our teenagers from these hazardous side effects.

As an inclusive city, it is also our responsibility to provide a safe environment for our marginalized or vulnerable residents – and the City does that on a few fronts.

With the Coronavirus having now made its way to 16 countries, Dr. Etches and her team at OPH are keeping a close eye on the matter and working with their healthcare partners to make sure that Ottawa is prepared to deal with any local cases.

I look forward to Dr. Etches' update on this following my remarks.

I was encouraged when Chief Sloy announced a few weeks ago the creation of three new Neighbourhood Resource Teams, which are a pillar of the OPS Community Policing Strategy.

This announcement follows the successful deployment of three teams in Vanier/Overbrook, Heron Gate/South Ottawa and Carlington/Caldwell in 2019.

These three new teams will be deployed in the ByWard Market/Lowertown in May, followed by Centretown and Bayshore in the fall.

The OPS officers that form these teams will be dedicated exclusively to their assigned neighbourhoods, where they will spend a minimum of two years working with residents and community agencies to tackle crime and its underlying socioeconomic factors.

I also welcome the decision of the Ottawa Police Services Board to support Chief Sloly's plan to hire 100 officers this year – fast tracking the hiring of officers slated for between now and 2023.

This move will see 100 road-ready officers be fully deployed and improving public safety in our

community by next year – and supporting initiatives like neighbourhood policing, reducing gun and gang violence, and violence against women.

We also need to ensure that our neighbourhood streets remain safe for children and families to enjoy.

And that's why in 2019, the Transportation Committee made permanent the successful Pedestrian Crossover Program, which had led to a reduction in collisions where these had been installed.

The Committee also enacted a series of road safety measures to protect vulnerable users, starting with the creation of eight new Community Safety Zones meant to protect children walking to nearby schools and community parks.

With the recent approval from the Province, Transportation staff will start deploying automated speed enforcement measures in the coming months, with the goal of eliminating speeding and dangerous driving around children in those safety zones.

A few months ago, the Transportation Committee also adopted its third Strategic Road Safety Action Plan – a comprehensive roadmap to reduce by 20% the rate of fatal and major injury collisions over the next five years.

In 2020, this plan will lead to investments of 31.5 million dollars in road safety measures and initiatives – up from \$25 million in 2019 – which will help make our streets safer for all road users, including downtown, in the suburbs and on our rural roads.

Over the next few years, this Plan will deliver traffic calming measures in school zones, improvements to warranted pedestrian signals and infrastructure changes that will make our streets safer.

To help us deliver these initiatives, the revenue generated by all new red-light cameras installed beyond 2020 will be directed to funding this Strategic Road Safety Action Plan.

And we're seeing great results from some of the measures that Safer Roads Ottawa has piloted and deployed in recent years.

I'm happy to report that in the seven months following the launch of the school bus stop-arm camera project last May, the Ottawa Police have laid a total of 110 charges – of \$490 each – to drivers who had dangerously failed to stop for a school bus.

To put this in perspective, OPS officers had issued on average 35 fines per year in the two years leading up to the launch of the project.

Since it was first introduced in 2016, OPS has leveraged its now five Automated License Plate Recognition units to apprehend close to 800 suspended drivers still roaming freely on our roads.

It has also generated close to \$2.7 million in fine revenue for the City.

In 2020, the Transportation Committee will consider safety countermeasures for 34 high-volume intersections with heavy traffic and cycling interactions – and our cycling community will also benefit from the adoption and implementation of the City’s Bike Parking Strategy.

And we are constantly providing our residents with more options to get around our city without using a car.

This past year, I was excited to open the beautiful new Flora Footbridge – and it's a highlight of my year at City Hall.

This popular bridge over the Rideau Canal now connects the residents of Old Ottawa East to Lansdowne and the Glebe – and it greatly enhances our pedestrian and cycling networks.

And between its opening day and January 22nd, it had been used by pedestrians and cyclists close to 450,000 times.

I hope the excitement will be as great when we reopen the Harmer Avenue pedestrian and cycling bridge this fall, which will finally reconnect the Civic Hospital and Wellington West communities.

And in honour of a true community builder, I will bring forward a proposal to name the bridge after former Mayor Jackie Holzman, who now lives in Kitchissippi.

As a passionate advocate for the disabled and the first Jewish woman to become mayor of Ottawa, Jackie worked tirelessly during her time at City Hall to bridge differences between communities and to unite residents around important issues.

I hope City Council and residents will join me in supporting this naming proposal and the well-

deserved acknowledgment of Jackie Holzman's contributions to our community.

Please join me in welcoming Jackie Holzman today. This coming spring, we will also begin a number of major renewal projects that will greatly revitalize certain neighbourhoods.

Vanier will benefit from the revitalization of Montreal Road, which will take place over the next two years, in conjunction with the deployment of the Montreal Road Community Improvement Plan.

Jointly, these two initiatives will help us inject vitality and attract investments and urban renewal to Vanier.

Following the opening of LRT, the redevelopment of Mackenzie Avenue and Rideau Street – from

Sussex to Dalhousie – will start this spring to rejuvenate this arts, culture and fashion district connecting the ByWard Market to the new Ottawa Art Gallery and Arts Court.

With the addition of bike lanes and some greenery, Rideau Street will become more liveable and inviting – especially for shoppers and commuters using the Rideau Station of LRT.

This year, we will also complete the revitalization of Elgin Street, which will feature much wider sidewalks, benches and trees.

I know this great street will regain its glory and soon become a pedestrian destination.

We are seeing that renewal projects like Main Street, Queen Street, Montreal Road and Elgin Street are

all revitalizing neighbourhoods and creating business and job opportunities for the future – and that’s why we are also planning for the revitalization of Sparks Street and the ByWard Market.

These are only a few of the investments we are making to maintain our extensive road network in good condition for all road users.

This year, the City will invest \$51 million in road resurfacing projects across the city – up from the yearly average of \$35.5 million over the last Term of Council.

We are also investing \$66.2 million for growth projects that will benefit commuters in rapidly expanding neighbourhoods, who use roads like Strandherd Drive, Campeau Drive and the Kanata South Link.

And because residents across the city have to benefit from these improvements, we are making critical investments of \$44.5 million in our rural infrastructure – up from the four-year average of \$39.7 million.

This will deliver a number of important culvert projects and will improve the conditions of many rural roads and bridges – like Spruce Ridge Road in West-Carleton, Ashton Station Road in Rideau-Goulburn and River Road in Osgoode.

And we are also making significant investments to support the development of our Francophone community, which is now established in every corner of the city.

I look forward to officially opening the Maison de la Francophonie tomorrow evening – this multi-service hub is set to become an important meeting place for the growing Francophone community in Ottawa’s west end.

And I am proud of the City’s role in giving this project a home, by donating the former Grant School on Richmond Road to the CMFO.

Following several years of community efforts, I want to thank all the volunteers who contributed hundreds of hours to achieving this project, as well as the Conseil des écoles publiques, which ensured that the centre was completed.

I am certain that tomorrow’s event will be a memorable opportunity to celebrate the opening of

this important facility and to recognize the contributions of volunteers and the community.

So many individuals in the community and here at the City are behind the success of these countless initiatives that strengthen our community.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our City Manager Steve Kanellakos, his Senior Leadership Team, and all our dedicated City staff.

They work day in and day out to make Ottawa such a wonderful place to live.

I know 2019 was a tough and demanding year for many teams at the City – and I thank all of you who sacrificed family time and personal commitments to ensure you were serving our residents and our community in times of need.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce that this year, I will be recognizing the work of distinguished individuals as well as an organization who have made our city proud by presenting the Key to the City to:

- Accomplished golfer and three-time Canadian Press female athlete of the year: Brooke Henderson;
- Former Governor General, accomplished journalist and worldwide ambassador of La Francophonie: Michaëlle Jean;
- TSN sportscaster and proud Carleton University journalism graduate: James Duthie;
- and last but not least, the Ottawa Citizen, an organization that has been providing news coverage in the nation's capital for 175 years –

the longest continuing local business in Ottawa today.

There is a lot to celebrate in Ottawa – and we are sometimes too modest when boasting about our city.

But when speaking recently about Ottawa's employment growth, Shawn Hamilton, who's Senior Vice-President at CBRE in Ottawa, recently acknowledged that "a confluence of well-timed events – a thriving tech scene, multiple postsecondary institutions, easy access to green space, and new infrastructure such as a new library and a new hospital coming down the pipe – have contributed to an upward spiral for the city, and I'm hard-pressed to find a strike against us for growth."

And similar aspirations were echoed in Harley Finkelstein and Lindsay Taub's "Love Letter to Ottawa," published in the Citizen at the end of December, in which they state that "in the next decade, we can transform this city by saying yes more often."

I love their enthusiasm and passion for this great city we all call home.

And I believe they come at it with the right attitude, recognizing that "there's a lot of work to be done – but there is also so much opportunity ahead."

I very much share their point of view that there is a lot we can do to brighten the future of our city.

We need to invest in our infrastructure if we want our local economy to continue to prosper, sustaining good paying jobs in communities across the city.

But we must also ensure that this rising tide of prosperity lifts all boats and helps us support residents from all walks of life, including those who are most vulnerable.

I believe City Council can deliver on all these goals if we continue to take the right approach.

There's an ancient African proverb that says: "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

I invite us all to continue this important work together, to the benefit of our community.

Thank you.