

**State of the City Address**  
**Mayor Jim Watson**  
**Wednesday, January 27, 2021**

I want to start by thanking Elder Claudette Commanda for offering such a thoughtful Algonquin prayer and blessing to guide us in our deliberations and decisions throughout the coming year.

*Migwetch, Claudette.*

Claudette's ancestors have been stewards of this land for over 6,000 years – and we should look to their steadfast commitment to protecting nature and our waterways as a guiding light in our decision-making.

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.

I'm very pleased that Grand Chiefs Verna Polson and Lisa Robinson, and Chiefs Dylan Whiteduck and Wendy Jocko are able to join us virtually this year.

We've had the honour of welcoming our Algonquin partners at City Hall in previous years – and I look forward to hosting them once again when it's safe to do so.

This year, my State of the City Address revolves around the theme of resilience and determination.

And looking back at 2020, I know it's a year we'll never forget.

We won't forget the hardship, the sacrifices, the loneliness, the loss of life and the anxiety we all went through – here in Ottawa and right around the world.

But let's remind ourselves that it was also a year where we were forced to slow down, spend more time with our family, rediscover our backyards and the natural beauty our city has to offer.

In a sense, COVID helped us put things in perspective.

We were suddenly reminded of what exactly is important in life – and it brought out the best in many of our residents.

Entrepreneurs across the city reinvented their businesses from one day to the next – many redirecting their manufacturing capacity to fighting COVID-19.

I visited Alexandre Cloutier and his team at InnovaTools in Councillor Kitts' ward, who pivoted from a shop producing home construction equipment into an innovative business in rural Ottawa producing see-through face shields that are being tested by the RCMP.

North of 7 Distillery on St. Laurent Boulevard quickly went from producing spirits to hand sanitizer.

The micro distillery produced about 500 bottles of hand sanitizer a day, which was wonderful news for our frontline workers and those working in long-term care and retirement homes.

And I am very impressed by the initiative shown by all these local companies.

We also saw on full display the generosity of so many residents in our community, as they came forward to help complete strangers make it through these difficult times.

Following an urgent appeal from Dr. Anna-Theresa Lobos at CHEO for PPE for frontline healthcare workers, Darcy Walsh from Edelman Canada reached out to a number of community players including HP Canada's President and CEO Mary Ann Yule.

Working together, the team developed a made-in-Ontario innovative face shield that received approval from Health Canada.

The **Shielding Heroes Campaign** ended up raising over \$400,000 to produce 75,000 face shields that were shipped to hospitals throughout Eastern Ontario during a critical three-month period.

Others like Khalid Elgazzar and his team at *Conquer COVID-19* held critical PPE drives in the early days of the pandemic to ensure that frontline healthcare workers and our vulnerable residents had access to masks.

It's also the work of residents like Véronique Stolzman – a local small business owner in Orléans – who had to close her spa and shifted her focus to supporting the community.

In addition to starting a FaceBook support group for Orléans residents, she raised funds and worked with St-Hubert restaurant to provide meals for medical staff at The Ottawa Hospital's General campus – and at Montfort Hospital.

It was residents mobilizing behind groups like Nepean Neighbours – who paired-up volunteers with residents needing help getting groceries and medication, dog walking, and picking up pet supplies while they were in isolation.

It was local chefs like Joe Thottungal of Thali and Coconut Lagoon, Adam Vettorel of North and Navy, Tim Stock of Thyme and Again, and Patrick Garland of Absinthe, who provided meals to homeless residents and low-income families.

And as the pandemic went on and food was in short order for many families, some went above and beyond to support the Ottawa Food Bank – which is still helping more households than ever.

In early April, I had a conversation about these pressing needs with Harley Finkelstein from Shopify and Michael Maidment from the Ottawa Food Bank.

We decided to share our chat on Twitter, and Harley and his wife Lindsay generously committed to donating \$1 for every retweet of our conversation, up to \$10,000.

The campaign went viral and helped us raise over \$300,000 in 48 hours to feed those going hungry in our community.

We received donations from all over the world – including from the hip-hop group Wu-Tang Clan, which only amplified the success of the campaign going forward.

Looking back at all these acts of kindness, I hope we will also remember them when we think of the year that was 2020.

Beyond the generosity of our residents and businesses, our City team stepped up in a significant way to help our community during this pandemic.

Under the impressive leadership of Dr. Etches and Chair Keith Egli, Ottawa Public Health has been at the forefront of our fight against COVID-19 since the very start of this pandemic.

For over ten months, her team at OPH has innovated and stayed on top of the science to provide sage guidance to residents, institutions and business owners, so everyone could do their part to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

A big thank you to Dr. Etches and her entire team for doing everything necessary to keep our community safe during this pandemic.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank all the health professionals that have taken care of our elderly and sick residents since the beginning of the pandemic.

All the doctors, nurses, personal support workers who have worked tirelessly and for countless hours in our hospitals and Long-Term Care homes.

I also want to recognize the unsung heroes of the pandemic – the bus drivers, Bylaw officers, paramedics, police officers, firefighters, our staff in Water Services, the janitors and cleaners in essential buildings, and the clerks at the grocery store.

They all made sure that our city's essential services were maintained while most of us were asked to stay home.

And in a show of solidarity with our healthcare and frontline workers, I have asked that the Ottawa 2017 cauldron in front of City Hall be lit up every night over the next three months.

In partnership with Enbridge, we will reignite this beautiful flame as a thank you to our essential workers and as a light at the end of the tunnel, providing hope and optimism to our community.

Thanks to the guidance and leadership of City Manager Steve Kanellakos and his talented Senior Leadership Team, the City responded quickly to the pandemic in support of our partners and our residents.

We put in place the Human Needs Task Force to ensure we could respond to the needs of our most vulnerable residents and the social services sector that supports them – and I believe we did that very successfully.

In the early days of the pandemic, we distributed over 400,000 disposable and cloth masks to residents who needed them.

We provided our partner agencies with more than \$82 million to deal with COVID-related cost increases – \$57 million of which went to the safe reopening and operation of childcare and Early ON centres.

The rest of these transfers include:

- \$16 million to 130 social services and housing partners towards PPE and additional cleaning
- \$800,000 for COVID renovations; and
- \$5 million in supports to other social service agencies – including \$1.4 million specifically for those serving our Indigenous residents.

Overall, our housing and social service partners received \$183 million from the City in 2020: \$101 in ongoing operational funding, and \$82 million in COVID-specific funding.

Working with our partners, we have now conducted over 7,000 wellness visits to residents who are isolated or more at-risk – providing food baskets, masks and mental health referrals along the way.

We have opened three respite centres with access to bathrooms, showers and other supports for residents in the shelter system – Tom Brown Arena, St. Paul's and Bernard Grandmaître – and they now serve an average of 210 clients daily.

Because of physical distancing rules and corresponding capacity restrictions, we have set up a number of physical distancing and isolation centres for our residents in the shelter system – with over 160 currently using those spaces.

As cases continue to rise in our community, these centres are more important than ever – and that’s why we will soon open a physical distancing centre at the Ottawa Jail Hostel, close to the many wrap-around services these residents currently use.

Over the next few weeks, the centre will serve to isolate COVID-positive residents from the shelter system, while there is a need.

After these first few weeks, the facility will help us address the overcrowding in the men’s shelter system and will enable appropriate physical distancing while supporting our most at-risk residents through the colder winter months.

This initiative also helps to ensure the survival of the youth hostel through the pandemic.

Facing a mounting housing crisis in the face of COVID-19, our City staff and three non-profit partner agencies responded enthusiastically this fall to the federal government’s launch of a Rapid Housing Initiative.

Ottawa was allocated \$32 million as part of this program, which will allow us to fund four projects and 109 new supportive housing units – both in the core and in the suburbs.

As an example, this funding will allow the Shepperds of Good Hope to go forward with a 40-unit residence with a new kitchen and a drop-in program at 216 Murray Street – while Hope Living in Kanata, their residence for people aged 55+, will be able to add eight new fully-accessible rooms.

This is of course in addition to the City’s ongoing investments in affordable housing – and thanks to historic yearly investment of \$15 million, the City will break ground on another 250 new supportive and affordable housing units in 2021.

This brings the City's total investment in affordable and supportive housing to \$47 million in 2021 – which will allow us to deliver 359 units.

And I would be remiss not to mention the federal government's announcement in September of its single largest investment in affordable housing – thanks to a mortgage of \$168 million from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to Ottawa Community Housing.

This historic financing announcement will enable Ottawa Community Housing to finally develop Gladstone Village and its 700 new affordable housing units.

I want to thank the federal government – Ministers Hussen, McKenna and Fortier – for their help with this project and their outstanding contributions to affordable housing in our city.

Given these investments, the City has a pipeline of 1,282 units – which are at various stages of planning and development.

But with the help of our partners, we are on track to deliver 694 new units during this Term of Council – which will be the largest number of affordable housing units ever built in the City's history.

As we know, the private sector also plays a key role in the affordability of housing and in ensuring that Ottawa maintains a good mix of housing options for our residents.

And I'm pleased that many of the new projects coming forward are along our existing and future LRT lines, which is exactly the kind of transit-oriented development we have been seeking from the industry.

These projects help us achieve the kind of growth and density we want to see in existing neighbourhoods while reducing the reliance of residents on cars.

And to ensure transit remains affordable for our low-income residents, I'm proud that we froze the cost of the EquiPass and the Community Pass for the third consecutive year as part of Budget 2021 – which is an additional investment of \$185,000 in affordable transit.

This is all good news for the sustainable growth of our city, good news for the environment and good news for our future transit ridership.

And it's in line with the important conversations that are taking place right now in our community and at Planning Committee on the new Official Plan, which will determine how our city will grow over the next 25 years.

As part of that consultation and policy development process, we know we will see more intensification in existing core neighbourhoods and suburbs, creating 15-minute walkable communities that are supported by all the required amenities and services.

The O-Train and the transit-oriented development it is spurring fits right into this sustainable growth and helps us battle urban sprawl.

In 2020, the work started at Albert and Queen, where a surface parking lot and a two-storey building will make way for two towers that will soon connect 588 residential units directly into Lyon Station.

Significant progress was also made on a 25-storey building at the former Trailhead site on Scott Street, which will offer 279 rental units within steps of the future Westboro Station.

This year, construction will begin at 900 Albert, where two residential towers with a direct connection to the Bayview Station platform will provide over 1,200 units – along with over 1,000 bike parking stalls.

Work will also start at LeBreton Flats East on five residential towers that will deliver 1,600 units next to Pimisi Station and our future Central Public Library, on which we will break ground this fall.

And I'm proud that we will deliver the first Net Zero Carbon library in Canada, thanks to an important investment secured by Minister Catherine McKenna.

I also want to thank Councillors Tierney and Luloff for their support and leadership at the Ottawa Public Library board over the years – they were both instrumental in getting this project to where it is today.

But this flurry of development activity is not limited to downtown – with many projects already starting construction or being proposed for much farther out along the Stage 2 LRT corridor.

In the west-end, the owners of the Bayshore Shopping Centre have brought forward plans for two towers on that site – a project that will deliver 500 rental units a stone's throw away from the future Bayshore Station.

In the east-end, developers will break ground on three towers at the corner of Ogilvie and Cummings, which will offer 850 rental units and 175 hotel rooms a few hundred metres away from Cyrville Station.

Construction will also start this year on a 397-unit retirement home at 211 Centrum – across the street from Place d'Orléans and its future LRT station.

All this construction activity helped us sustain our local economy and thousands of good jobs throughout this pandemic – and our staff in Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development played a pivotal role in making sure we didn't skip a beat on that front.

In 2020, the City issued 2.6% more building permits than the year before – and the value of those permits increased by 20%, from \$3.2 billion in 2019 to \$4 billion last year.

As we all know, not many sectors were that lucky, and the pain was felt particularly hard by our small business owners and the tens of thousands of employees they support across the city.

We know small businesses are the backbone of our local economy – and they inject a lot of life and vibrancy into our neighbourhoods.

Tourism, hospitality and retail were some of the hardest hit sectors of our local economy – and it will take years to build back to where we were before.

But working with our Economic Partners Task Force – under the leadership of Councillors El-Chantiry and Dudas – we acted quickly to roll out a number of measures to help small businesses make it through the last 10 months.

Under the City's Property Tax Hardship Deferral Program, we extended tax deadlines for 1,900 property owners – both residents and small businesses – who needed a bit of breathing room.

As the first wave of the virus was slowing down and our economy was getting ready to reopen, our Business Reopening Toolkit received more than 17,500 visits and was downloaded over 1,400 times by small businesses wanting to make sure they were reopening safely.

In May, we also launched the Recovery Stream of the Innovation Pilot Program, in order to help local companies test products and technologies that could help us in our fight against COVID-19.

We received 47 applications – and five projects were selected to be piloted within City services or partner organizations.

In-it-Live, a Kanata-based company who helps community organizations with a volunteer management solution, has expanded from one foodbank to four – and they now have several new opportunities in their pipeline.

Last summer, we expanded opportunities for restaurants and stores to do business outside, where customers typically felt safer.

Under the Patio Innovation Program, approximately 350 patios and cafés sprung up around the city – roughly 260 more than in 2019.

We also had seven road closures in place for the purpose of expanding patios – and these provided approximately 500 paying seats to those benefitting restaurants and their very happy customers.

Another investment made by our Economic Development team that yielded impressive results in 2020 was a grant to the Ottawa Chinese Community Services Centre to deliver the Women Information Technology Teleworkers program.

The program was designed to overcome barriers of internationally-trained IT professionals who were not using their skills because they needed to stay home to care for their children.

The pandemic changed this dynamic considerably, and the program launched in April after bringing many employers on board.

So far, 24 of the 38 immigrant women in the group have been hired and can work from home as web developers, network architects, business analysts and user experience designers, just to name a few.

This initiative would not have launched without the support of the City – and I couldn't be happier that we were able to make a difference for this group of talented immigrant women.

We're also working with business leaders at OCOBIA, the Ottawa Board of Trade and the RGA to advocate on behalf of small businesses with the provincial and federal governments.

Following a letter issued by OCOBIA Chair Mark Kaluski last week, Councillor Kavanagh and I will bring forward a motion today asking the Province to ensure there's a level playing field among businesses facing closures during this lockdown.

It is absolutely unfair to ask small businesses to shut their doors while Costco's and Walmart's across the city are completely accessible to customers because they sell groceries.

These big-box stores should be cordoning off their non-essential goods sections to respect the spirit of the current pandemic measures – and I hope you will all support this plea to Premier Ford.

We know that Ottawa's economy typically weathers the storm better than other Canadian cities – and that was no different throughout this crisis.

Thanks to the presence of the federal government and a tech industry which played a key role supporting workers at home during this pandemic, Ottawa's unemployment rate stood at 6.7% in December – the lowest rate amongst Canada's six largest cities, and only one of two cities under 10%.

But we have still lost tens of thousands of jobs – and "for lease" signs are more noticeable in every part of the city.

I want us to return quickly to a thriving economy and the 4.3% unemployment rate our city enjoyed before the pandemic.

And we're currently working with our many economic development partners to make sure that the recovery is as strong as it can be.

With the vaccination campaign underway, now's the time to plan how our economy can rebound solidly once most of us have been vaccinated and life returns to normal.

We know people will want to travel; they will seek out the adventures and experiences they have missed.

Festivals, concerts and good meals in restaurants with loved ones – all the good things that make life worth living.

Companies will seek out investment opportunities in projects that are green and sustainable to ensure that we rebuild our communities better.

We need to start looking at policy changes, investments or community-building projects that will help us get there.

That's why on February 9, I will host an Economic Rebound Roundtable with leaders in important sectors of our economy – so we can identify those key opportunities for our economy and chart a course of action for our city's rebound.

This discussion will determine our priorities over the coming months and will feed into the City's new Economic Development Strategy, which will be presented to FEDCO this fall.

The private sector will without a doubt play a key role in the rebound – and there's already some great projects that will help strengthen employment in our city in the coming months.

The second Amazon fulfilment centre – the largest construction project in the city’s history – is currently taking shape in Barrhaven.

It’s providing jobs to 500 construction workers on site – and the project will create up to 1,500 full-time jobs starting this fall.

Not far from that site, construction is progressing rapidly on the Advanced Building Innovation Company – or ABIC – which will create 300 full-time jobs starting this spring.

This A.I.-enabled facility will transform the way residential homes are fabricated, transported and assembled in our region – while dramatically reducing the amount of waste generated in the process.

ABIC is an exciting and innovative project and I very much look forward to the economic and environmental benefits it will generate for our region.

After taking a pause due to COVID, the Ottawa Film Office and TriBro Studios are currently on track to break ground later this year on Ottawa’s new soundstage campus and creative hub.

This is of course contingent on COVID-19 restrictions and their potential impact on the construction sector...

But once it gets off the ground, this exciting cultural facility will create hundreds of jobs and support the growth of Ottawa’s film, TV and animation sectors...

And I want to thank Councillor Cloutier for his support of this great project and his ongoing work with the Ottawa Film Office.

Our infrastructure needs to keep up in order to support this flurry of economic activity in the south-end – and thanks to Councillor Harder’s leadership and advocacy, the City is

now working with the provincial government on the EA for a new interchange at the 416 and Barnsdale Road.

This new infrastructure would ensure that residents and businesses have the capacity to easily connect in and out of the 416 – a crucial economic corridor for moving goods and services across Ontario.

Throughout the pandemic, Invest Ottawa has continued to support our local entrepreneurs and innovators – and as part of its Digital Main Street future-proofing program, the team helped over 400 small businesses get online quickly to generate new revenues.

In the first three quarters of 2020, the Invest Ottawa team helped attract \$398 million in investments and facilitated 990 new jobs in our region.

I'm pleased to announce that Councillor Sudds will be joining the Invest Ottawa Board of Directors in the coming months – and I know that with her background and expertise, she will help advance IO's efforts to grow our tech sector and our local economy by supporting the next generation of local innovators and entrepreneurs.

Despite some ups and downs in our knowledge-based economy this past year, our tech sector and its talent pool remain almost unsurpassed – primarily on the strength of the tech community in Kanata North.

According to CBRE, Ottawa retained the number one spot for the highest concentration of tech talent per capita among 50 markets across North America – coming in at 11.3%, ahead of San Francisco's 10.5%, which includes Silicon Valley.

Invest Ottawa has leveraged this deep pool of talent and technology companies to launch the world-class living labs that have become Area X.O and the Smart Farm at the NCC's Research Farm.

Councillor Harder has for many years championed the vision for Ottawa's Smart Farm.

She has been laser-focused on the need to increase the global food production by 50 to 70 percent by 2050 – so we can manage to feed the projected nine billion inhabitants of our planet.

The Smart Farm helps producers collect and analyze data in real-time to make decisions that will maximize their crop yields and their return on investment.

In an article on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Globe & Mail described the facility as “a one-of-a-kind farm [...] set to change the agri-tech landscape.”

So far, 20 innovators and companies have used the Smart Farm to improve their research and technology.

And I'm very pleased to say that in its first year, the crop yields achieved at the Smart Farm were approximately 17% higher than on neighbouring farms – and their production costs were also well below average, which helps put more money into the pocket of local farmers.

Our economic development partners are certainly doing a lot to maintain Ottawa's reputation as a world-class city for technology and innovation.

And our friends at Ottawa Tourism are also in full swing to keep up the momentum and our reputation as an impressive host city – and they are making sure we have a solid pipeline of major events for when things get back to normal.

Although 24 major events were cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic, many like the Canadian Curling Club Championships, the Bingham Cup and the Canoe Kayak Sprint National Championships have already been rescheduled to take place in Ottawa.

Thanks to continued funding from the City, the Major Events Office has continued to bid on large-scale sporting events and conferences in support of Ottawa's rebound – and we have had some very positive announcements in 2020.

These include the CP Women's Open at the Hunt Club next year, as well as Canada's very first Valour Games – a version of the Invictus Games geared towards Canadian veterans – and the 2026 World Wheelchair Basketball Championships, which will be held at TD Place.

As our tourism partners very well know, Lansdowne Park in Councillor Menard's ward is a crucial asset for us to attract large-scale sporting and cultural events to the nation's capital.

It has been in the past – attracting events like the NHL Heritage Classic, the Grey Cup, Guns N' Roses, the FIFA Women's World Cup, the Brier and City Folk – and I know it will again in the future.

Were it not for the pandemic, we would have seen the arrival of three new sports teams at TD Place in 2020 – in addition to our beloved RedBlacks and 67's.

The Atletico Ottawa soccer team – an affiliate to the Atletico Madrid – was supposed to make its debut at TD Place this past summer, as were the Ottawa BlackJacks professional basketball team and the Ottawa Aces professional rugby team.

I know these new teams are thrilled to be finding a home at TD Place – and I look forward to visiting Lansdowne Park to see them play in our city.

In addition to this activity by our economic development partners, I want to make it clear that we at the City have not taken our foot off the gas either – knowing full well that we must always continue to build and plan for the future.

The opening of the Confederation Line was a momentous event in our city's history – and it propelled Ottawa into a new era as well as another league of world-class cities.

In response to the many issues we encountered in the first year of the system, we have held RTG's feet to the fire to significantly improve the reliability of the system for our transit users – and although more progress is needed, they are on the right track and service has indeed improved.

Right across the city, we can witness the progress being made on the construction of Stage 2 LRT, which will bring the benefits of rail service to communities farther south, east and west.

But we are not stopping there – and this fall, we completed the planning for Stage 3 LRT with the adoption of the Barrhaven Extension EA, following the approval of the Kanata-Stittsville EA in 2019.

I know that Councillors Meehan, Harder, Egli and Moffatt in the south, as well as Councillors Hubley, Sudds, Gower and El-Chantiry in the west – are looking forward to the City bringing Stage 3 LRT to their communities.

So far I've had very positive discussions with elected officials at the provincial and federal levels on the funding of Stage 3.

But with the EAs now approved, we will engage this year in a more formal and coordinated advocacy campaign to appeal to our provincial and federal partners.

We also worked with our partners in Gatineau on their plans to see a tram connect Gatineau's west-end to downtown Ottawa – a system that would link our two downtowns and serve customers on both sides of the river.

That's still many years away, but in the meantime, we have continued to invest in our roads and to deliver new complete streets that improve our active transportation network.

Last year, we officially reopened Elgin Street in Councillor McKenney's ward, which has been completely transformed into a pedestrian destination thanks to its impressive sidewalks and flex spots for new patios.

In December, we also reopened Rideau Street to cars and buses in Councillor Fleury's ward – and once the project is fully completed in the spring, it will offer segregated cycling lanes and new greenery, as well as a renewed William Street for pedestrians.

Out in the west-end, we officially opened phase 1 of the Kanata South Link in Councillor Hubley's ward – a full year ahead of schedule.

This important new corridor will provide a smooth connection for many Kanata and Stittsville residents out to the 416.

In 2020, construction started on the renewal of Montreal Road, which will also feature bike lanes and help with the revitalization of Montreal Road and Vanier.

We also broke ground on the widening of Strandherd Drive, which is much needed to support the rapid growth of our population in the south-end of the city.

These investments in road renewal, complete streets and segregated bike lanes are making our roads safer for all users – in addition to the many other initiatives being delivered under our Road Safety Action Plan.

In 2021, the City of Ottawa will spend a total of \$37.8 million on road safety measures and initiatives, compared to \$25 million in 2019.

Our red-light camera program has led to a reduction of 50% in serious T-bone collisions at those intersections – and our 2021 Budget will allow us to install another 10 red-light cameras this year.

Last year, the City launched the Automated Speed Enforcement pilot program, which was one of my campaign commitments to reduce speeding in school zones and enhance safety for children in our community.

After designating eight Community Safety Zones where fines would double for speeding infractions, staff initially rolled out four cameras, to which two more were added at the end of December.

In the coming weeks, another two cameras will be installed – for a total of eight cameras covering all eight Community Safety Zones.

So far, approximately 47,000 tickets have been issued since mid-July, along with \$2.5 million in revenue collected as of early December – which will be reinvested into road safety measures, including priority intersection improvements.

Staff have also observed a reduction in operating speeds and greater compliance with the posted speed limits – which is the kind of behavioural changes we want to see from drivers as part of this program.

Staff are always seeking opportunities to improve the safety of our road network for all users.

This year, they will be undertaking the detailed design of three high-volume intersections identified in the 2020 study, as well as three rural skewed intersections identified for improvement in the Road Safety Action Plan.

We will also be making improvements to the cycle track on Laurier Avenue West, which will include a protected intersection at Elgin and Laurier – and the free-flow channel at the Jeanne d'Arc interchange is being removed and re-designed as part of Stage 2 LRT project.

Just before the holidays, we leveraged the Investing in Canada Program's COVID-19 Resilience Stream to make significant progress on many important projects that support both our social and transportation infrastructure.

Ottawa's \$20.1 million allotment will help us deliver:

- A new clubhouse for the Boys & Girls Club of Ottawa, which will benefit community members in Ottawa south, represented by Councillors Deans, Brockington and Cloutier
- The expansion of the Beacon Hill North Community Centre in Councillor Tierney's ward
- \$1.2 million invested in upgrades at shelters
- \$1.5 million in energy efficiency upgrades at City facilities
- \$950,000 in repairs to the historic ByWard Market building
- 13 Wi-Fi projects at community centres across the city
- 19 MUPs, bike facilities and sidewalk projects
- 12 PXOs and pedestrian signals; and
- 8 picnic areas in parks

In 2021, we will also finish renovating the Blackburn Hamlet Arena in Councillor Dudas' ward, which will reopen to the public in June after a significant upgrade to make it more accessible to all residents.

We are also investing in other parks and facilities across the city this year, including:

- Laroche Park in Councillor Leiper's community;
- the Corkery Community Building expansion in Councillor El-Chantiry's ward;

- the Cobble Hill Park redevelopment and expansion in Councillor Harder's ward;
- Riverchase Park in Councillor Sudds' community; and
- The Riverain Park redevelopment in Councillor Fleury's ward, just to name a few.

I'm also proud that we have managed to deliver a number of new bridges to connect our communities.

In the last few years alone, we have delivered the Adawe Crossing over the Rideau River, the Flora Footbridge over the Rideau Canal, and the Jackie Holzman Bridge over the 417.

This year, the City will be transforming the Prince of Wales Bridge into an interprovincial active transportation corridor – where residents will be able to walk, cycle and cross-country ski.

This historic bridge linking Ottawa to Gatineau was built in 1880 and was last used for rail traffic in 2001.

A few decades from now, the bridge will no doubt serve as a secondary rail link bringing Gatineau residents to LeBreton Flats or to the Ottawa Airport...

But in the meantime – and with the certainty now that the STO tram project will cross the river using the Portage Bridge – the time has come for the Prince of Wales Bridge to provide active transportation benefits to our residents.

In the beginning, this bridge unfortunately served as a corridor to extract and transport natural resources from the land of the Algonquins.

That reality is part of Canada's dark colonial past – one that we must recognize if we want to engage in meaningful Reconciliation with our Indigenous partners.

I read Randy Boswell's column in the Citizen attentively during the holidays, and I agree with him that this bridge crossing the Ottawa River – which has been deemed sacred by the Algonquin People for thousands of years – should bare an Indigenous name.

The renaming of the Prince of Wales Bridge will serve as an important symbol of Reconciliation between our nations.

And I'm pleased to announce that following initial discussions with our Algonquin partners, I will be seeking your support to rename the bridge the Chief William Commanda Bridge.

William Commanda served as Chief of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation from 1951 to 1970.

He was an Algonquin elder, a spiritual leader, a promoter of environmental stewardship and a great bridge builder between our nations.

For his dedication and outstanding service to his people, William Commanda was awarded the Order of Canada in 2008.

I could not think of a more fitting name for this great bridge that crosses the Kitchissippi – the Algonquin name for the sacred Ottawa River.

I am committed to advancing this dialogue over the coming months with the goal of reopening it as the Chief William Commanda Bridge later this year or early next year.

In addition to these investments in our infrastructure and the good jobs they sustain, the City's Economic Development team will of course play a key role in our rebound – and we still have a number of initiatives we're working to deliver.

Before the holidays, we launched the Winter City Grant Program to help BIAs and Business Associations deliver small capital improvements to beautify or animate our commercial main streets.

The program received 19 applications, but the initial \$150,000 in funding will only allow us to support six projects, which include:

- Kanata North's Outdoor Community Ice Rink for both tech workers and residents;
- Wellington West's improvements to the LRT gateway into their business district; and
- the Market's repurposing of giant B-Y-W-A-R-D letters into a series of six unique benches that will improve the public realm and visitor experience.

The other three projects are in the Glebe, Downtown Rideau and Quartier Vanier.

But so we can do more, staff have also identified an additional \$50,000 that can be reprofiled from existing 2021 Economic Development funding.

Councillor El-Chantiry and I will be bringing forward a motion later today that will allow us to fund another six projects in business areas across the city.

I hope we can count on your support to deliver these six additional projects in Carp, Chinatown, Stittsville, Westboro, Manotick and on Elgin Street.

The Economic Development team is also in the process of reviewing its CIP roll-out strategy – and as part of that exercise, they will be coming back to FEDCO this spring with a plan for a new integrated Orléans CIP that leverages our investment in Stage 2 LRT.

I know our east-end councillors are looking forward to promoting this new CIP and showcasing their community as an ideal place to invest and do business.

We also have strategies to guide our investments in some of our assets that support the tourism industry – like the Sparks Street and ByWard Market Public Realm plans.

I know our plans for the ByWard Market and Sparks Street will dictate some of the City's infrastructure investments over the next five to 10 years – but how can we work with our partners to deliver on this faster or better?

We have to explore and seize all opportunities – just like we did with Ottawa 2017.

We started planning those celebrations in 2012 – five years before Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday – and that's the reason those celebrations were such a success for our city and our tourism industry.

I believe we have a similar opportunity in 2027 – and that's why I'm announcing today the creation of an Organizing Committee that I will chair to plan the celebrations of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ByWard Market – just six years from now.

As we all know, the ByWard Market was created by Colonel John By as he was spearheading the construction of the Rideau Canal – when Ottawa was a very different kind of place.

But what hasn't changed is that the ByWard Market remains a major draw for visitors to our city, and a symbol of Ottawa's thriving agricultural industry – both past and present.

I believe that if we start to plan now, we can land on an exciting plan and find the funds to deliver programming that will help us attract more visitors to the nation's capital – helping hotels, restaurants and businesses flourish along the way.

And who knows: following the rebound of our tourism industry over the next few years, 2027 might be the year to bring back La Machine to amaze thousands of residents and families in the ByWard Market.

In the meantime, I've been quite encouraged with the new leadership at Ottawa Markets – and I want to thank Zach Dayler, Board chair Bryan Chandler, the whole board of directors and the staff team for the good work they have done over the last year to lay the foundation for a strong rebound once the pandemic is over.

I'm particularly impressed with Ottawa Markets' new Farmers First policy – which is a direction I have encouraged for some time.

Although a number of new farmers markets have sprung up across the city in recent years, we need to once again attract farmers and local producers to the Parkdale and ByWard Markets – where it all started.

This Farmers First approach will help us do just that by offering free stalls to new farmers and giving incentives for local producers – and I'm pleased that the City will help support these efforts.

And that's just one of the ways the City is supporting our rural communities.

In March, Council approved the City's very first Rural Economic Development Strategy, which highlights many actions and measures to encourage investment and job-creation in our rural areas.

As part of this strategy, the City is currently working with its partners to conduct an inventory and mapping of all our agri-food assets, which will help identify and support new business opportunities in rural Ottawa.

In a few weeks, we will be launching the Rural Business Toolkit – a one-stop shop for investors and business owners containing all the programs and tools that can help them grow their business and create jobs in rural Ottawa.

And I want to thank Councillors El-Chantiry, Kitts, Darouze and Moffatt for their advocacy of these initiatives supporting our rural residents and business owners.

Last summer, we worked with Ottawa Tourism to launch the Rural Cycling and Tourism Campaign.

At a time when many residents were opting for staycations, we encouraged them to rediscover the beauty and charm of our four rural wards, while supporting their restaurants and businesses.

Included in the campaign were self-guided cycling routes, sample day itineraries, and a photo contest that received almost 1,400 entries.

The promotional video for the campaign received over 21,000 views – making it Ottawa Tourism’s second-most-viewed IGTV video ever.

And once the stay-at-home order has been lifted, we will work with Ottawa Tourism on a similar Winter Rural Tourism Campaign, which I know will once again benefit our rural businesses.

I suspect part of that winter campaign will include snowmobiling; but George – please don’t invite me.

At the core of the rural tourism offering are our cherished rural fairs – Carp, Metcalfe, Navan, Richmond and the Capital Fair – which were unfortunately not able to take place last year.

This broke the running streak for these longstanding rural events – with the Carp Fair postponing its 157<sup>th</sup> edition to 2021.

Given their importance to our rural villages and their contributions to the agricultural societies, I'm proud that the City's Rural Affairs Office was able to provide each fair with a \$15,000 grant to help them make it through 2020.

And I'm pleased to say that, if the rural fairs cannot be held this summer and fall, the City will once again be there to support them.

I want to thank our rural Councillors for their advocacy and support on this – and I very much look forward to celebrating with them when our rural fairs are back in action this summer or next.

I think it's important for Ottawa's cultural events to know that the City – which is often one of their major funders – has their back during this pandemic.

I'm proud that our cultural funding has continued to flow to these festivals and special events in 2020 and 2021 – and I want to assure them that we will continue to do so going forward.

That's the only way we can ensure that these great events – from Bluesfest to Capital Pride and the International Writers Festival – can rebound and thrive once we've received the vaccine and the pandemic is over.

And the same can be said of our funding to the Ottawa Music Industry Coalition, which reassigned \$25,000 of City funding last year to assist 50 artists in need with \$500 grants, as they pivoted to online performances.

Councillor Leiper played a key role in the development of our Music Strategy – and I know he has been very supportive of OMIC's efforts in the last few years.

We also have a great relationship with our partners in the Francophone community – and Lise Sarazin and the RGA play a central role in our efforts.

We are working together on a number of joint projects – and I believe the RGA helps us better serve our business community.

I also believe the City is getting better every year at providing quality programs and services to our Francophone residents.

And I am proud to report that in 2020, we received only 32 complaints, a decrease of 24 percent from the 42 complaints we received in 2019.

I'm also proud that we have continued to advance social programs and initiatives that help us make Ottawa a more inclusive, livable and welcoming city.

As we know, Indigenous Peoples, Black, Asian and other racialized residents have disproportionately been – and continue to be – the victims of violence, racist graffiti, racial slurs, and they're constantly excluded from employment opportunities and discriminated against in the workplace.

The City has a leadership role to play in addressing systemic racism in our community – and that's why last year, we created the Anti-Racism Secretariat and appointed the City's very first Council Liaison on Anti-Racism and Ethnocultural Relations Initiatives.

And I want to thank Councillor King for accepting to serve in that role.

In 2020, the City hired its very first Anti-Racism Specialist to advance this work from within and across all City departments.

Since the establishment of the Secretariat, some of the progress made includes:

- Initiating the creation of an Anti-Racism Advisory Table;
- Launching a social media awareness campaign to condemn anti-Asian racism;

- Launching the gender and race equity baseline study – together with the Women and Gender Equity Specialist; and
- Creating the “Coping with Racial Stress” pilot project for youth with the Neighbourhood Ambassador Program.

In a few weeks, a new Director of Gender and Race Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations, and Social Development Services will join the City team – a new position and a new internal structure that will allow us to better coordinate our efforts.

I am confident that the team will build on the work that is underway at the Somali Community Table since 2016, as well as deliver progress for our racialized communities with respect to employment equity, housing, economic development, health outcomes and youth development.

Councillor King’s appointment follows that of Councillor Kavanagh in 2019 as the City’s first Council Liaison on Women and Gender Equity.

On that front, the Women and Gender Equity Strategy is being finalized and will be presented to CPSC and Council in the coming months.

The strategy will guide the City in applying the gender lens to all the work we do, steering us towards a more equitable workplace and community.

Chief Sloly and his team at the Ottawa Police are also playing a key role in rebuilding relationships and trust within our racialized communities – and that starts with the makeup of our police service itself.

I’m proud that this commitment to diversity is reflected in the Service’s recent graduating class of 96 recruits – which included 32 women, 31 racialized men and three Indigenous new officers.

In 2020, our community experienced a decline in violent crime – and I'd like to share a few encouraging stats with you.

Homicides were down 40% to just eight cases, which were all solved by our women and men in uniform.

Shootings were down nearly 40% – and our officers recovered a record number of guns, taking 105 firearms off our streets.

OPS officers administered Naloxone 115 times, saving the lives of 103 residents struggling with addiction.

Thanks to the efforts of Councillors El-Chantiry and Deans at the head of the Police Board, Chief Sloly has reinstated the Neighbourhood Policing Program, which helps our officers forge lasting and meaningful relationships with residents and community partners in at-risk neighbourhoods.

In 2019, three Neighbourhood Resource Teams were deployed in Vanier/Overbrook; Heron Gate/South Ottawa; and Carlington/Caldwell.

Due to their success, the program was expanded to three more neighbourhoods last year: the ByWard Market/Lowertown in May – and Centretown and Bayshore in the fall.

Under this model, the officers are dedicated exclusively to their assigned neighbourhoods for a minimum of two years, where they work with local residents, schools, not-for-profit organizations, business associations and City staff to better understand and address crime and its underlying socio-economic issues.

Adequate mental health response – as well as anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism training – are at the core of these programs.

And at the Ottawa Police Services Board on Monday, Chief Sloly tabled a plan to engage with the community on how OPS can better support the safety and well-being of residents with mental health challenges, including how officers respond to people in mental health crisis.

Another social issue I'd like to raise attention to this year – and especially as COVID-19 remains in our community – is the epidemic of loneliness that faces so many residents – young and old.

A recent Angus Reid survey found that close to half of Canadians describe themselves as sometimes or often lonely and longing for company.

And it's been acknowledged in research that profound loneliness can shorten someone's life by as many as 15 years – and that it has similar effects as obesity or smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

The problem is so severe that medical researchers are now developing medication to try to address these issues.

But I believe there are things we could contemplate as a society to address this chronic loneliness that so many of our residents are struggling with.

For example in Britain, doctors have started issuing social prescriptions – like dance, cooking and art classes.

On a personal note, I have found the lockdowns and stay-at-home orders to be a challenge as a single person.

As someone who enjoys meeting and spending time with people, the isolation and at times loneliness can be a real challenge.

Over the next few weeks, I would ask everyone to take a moment to think of those in their social network and see if there's an old friend or family member they haven't spoken to in a while.

And if there is: make some time and pick up the phone.

Give them five or ten minutes of your time; have a quick chat and make their day.

Every week, I try to call five or six different seniors I know just to say hello and see how they are doing.

I hope it is of some help to my senior friends, as I know it is helpful for me.

During the pandemic, I also managed to keep occupied and connected with our community by hosting over 50 virtual class visits.

I've always enjoyed visiting schools and chatting with engaged students – and I often found it was an enjoyable part of my day that brought some sense of normalcy.

I believe the students appreciated our discussions as well.

In one of the thank you notes I received from Natalie Paquette, a teacher at Henry Larsen Elementary, she wrote:

"Your visit brought some joy and excitement to our class in the midst of a difficult school year in which the students are constantly hearing about what they can't do.

I overheard one student say – "He must think we're important because he visited us!" – so thank you for making them feel important."

These kids often relayed to me what they were doing to pass the time during COVID – and much of that was doing activities outside with their family.

They visited a lot of parks and were reminded of how beautiful and green Ottawa truly is.

I was quite proud to tell them how we're investing in the environment to ensure Ottawa remains a green, sustainable and livable city for future generations – and I want to thank Councillor Moffatt for his stewardship of these environmental initiatives over the last few years.

Last September, the Combined Sewage Storage Tunnel – the jewel in the crown of the Ottawa River Action Plan – was finally put into service to protect the health of this great river.

This \$232 million project will play a crucial role in reducing stormwater overflow from going directly into the Ottawa River – helping us keep our water clean, our fish healthy and our beaches open.

As an added benefit, it will also help address possible basement flooding in low-lying areas in Centretown and the Glebe.

I'm also proud that on January 1 of this year, our new and strengthened Tree Bylaw came into effect.

One of our city's greatest assets is our tree canopy.

It makes Ottawa a green and enjoyable city – and that's what differentiates us from many other large cities around North America.

As I promised last year, the new by-law includes stricter fines to discourage the illegal removal of trees.

We have also modified the criteria of a distinctive tree in the inner urban area – which is now defined by having a smaller 30-centimetre diameter rather than the previous 50 centimetres.

This year, the City is completing an inventory of spaces available for tree planting in our urban areas.

Staff will then use that map to prioritize new planting locations, which will help us achieve our long-term canopy cover target of 40% – helping us protect this great asset for generations to come.

During the State of the City Address last year, I announced I would give the Key to the City to a number of accomplished Canadians who have had an impact on our city and its image on the national and international scene.

I know the recipients were looking forward to their Key to the City ceremony, which we had to cancel due to COVID-19.

I'm hoping we will be able to host these in 2021 – and as a reminder, the recipients are:

- Accomplished golfer and three-time Canadian Press female athlete of the year: Brooke Henderson;
- Former Governor General, veteran journalist and global ambassador for 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.

Although a ceremony could not be held, we nonetheless awarded the Order of Ottawa to 15 outstanding and deserving residents, who are:

- Reverend Doctor Anthony Bailey
- Donald Ross Bradley
- Dale Craig
- Dr. Rouba Fattal
- Sylvio A. Gravel
- Paul Hindo
- Barry J. Hobin
- Barbara MacKinnon
- Fiona McKean
- Bob Monette
- David H. O'Malley
- Bruce G. Roney
- Bharat Rudra
- Vineet Srivastava; and
- Joe M. Thottungal

Jean-Sorpha Guillaume will also be awarded the Brian Kilrea Award for Excellence in Coaching, which recognizes the contributions of an amateur coach who exemplifies leadership and commitment.

These residents have all left their mark in our community – in sectors like academia, medicine, community activism and business – and I look forward to celebrating their achievements at a ceremony later this year.

And I look to later this year with a sense of cautious optimism – because I dare to think that 2021 will end on a much better note than it began.

Ottawa's own Spartan Bioscience received approval from Health Canada a few days ago for its COVID-19 rapid test kit.

I'm hopeful that rapid testing will help us better control the pandemic, as well as reopen our economy in the coming months.

With our vaccination campaign now underway, there is in fact a light at the end of the tunnel; the tunnel of this pandemic we have all been facing for close to a year now.

Based on the guidance of our federal and provincial partners, I'm hopeful that most members of our community will have been vaccinated by the end of the summer.

This vaccine roll-out campaign is a monumental community effort – and I want to thank all the partners that are involved.

Thanks to our hospitals for their leadership; Ottawa Public Health, as well as our very own paramedics – who are lending a hand and managed to vaccinate in record time all the residents, workers and primary caregivers at Ottawa's 28 Long-Term Care homes.

And I'll read an excerpt of a note sent by David Eggett, chair of the Board of Directors at Osgoode Care Centre in Councillor Darouze's ward, to Paramedic Chief Pierre Poirier about their impact in our community – and I quote:

"Comments I received were that the teams were very well organized, efficient, fast and gentle. The latter is particularly key in dealing with long-term care community residents. I was told that there was a 101-year-old resident who NEVER wants to so much as take a pill, so a vaccine seemed unlikely.

One of the paramedics asked to be able to talk to her – and lo and behold – was able to coax her into receiving the vaccine!"

It warms my heart to know our staff is making this kind of a difference in the lives of our residents – and I look forward to hearing of many more moments like these, as the vaccination campaign progresses in our community.

I encourage all our residents to remain hopeful and kind; to take good care of each other and of yourselves, while we make it through this home stretch of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I hope that by the time I deliver the State of the City Address next January, things will have returned to normal for most of us – and that we will once again be a healthy and thriving city as we were merely a year ago.

Let's have faith.

I know we will get through this together.