**Statement from Mayor Mark Sutcliffe on the 2026 Budget**

***Déclaration du maire Mark Sutcliffe sur le budget 2026***

(Check against delivery)

When I ran for Mayor in 2022, I heard loudly and clearly from Ottawa residents that they were struggling with rising costs. They had big concerns about the reliability of city services. And they were worried about public safety. That’s why I made a commitment to residents to work as hard as possible to make our city safer, more reliable, and more affordable.

For the past three years, we’ve taken a strong, balanced approach to our budgets.

*Nous avons tenu compte de la crise d’abordabilité que vivent nos résidents en maintenant les hausses d’impôts aussi basses que possible.*

We’ve been respecting the affordability crisis facing our residents by keeping tax increases as low as possible; in fact, lower than any other major city in Canada. And we’ve been investing in our priorities, including public transit, public safety, affordable housing, and more.

*Nous avons investi dans nos priorités, notamment le transport en commun, la sécurité publique, le logement abordable et plus encore.*

Working together, we’ve made a lot of progress since 2022. But we’re also facing new challenges. No one could have imagined in 2022 what we’d be dealing with in 2025: tariffs and threats on Canadian sovereignty, economic uncertainty, the prospect of significant cuts to the federal public service. That’s why, even more than in the past three years, we need to bring a careful, balanced approach to the next budget.

*Nous devons adopter une approche prudente et équilibrée pour le prochain budget.*

We must continue to protect our residents from inflation and rising costs by keeping tax increases as low as possible. And we must continue to invest in our priorities, to make Ottawa safer, more reliable, and more affordable. Despite all the pressures, threats, and risks we are facing, the 2026 budget will do that.

We’re able to do that because we’ve managed our city into a strong financial position. Since I became Mayor, I’ve worked with my Council colleagues and senior staff to find savings and efficiencies in the city budget. Just like families across the city are doing every day in order to make ends meet.

*Au cours des trois dernières années, nous avons réalisé 207 millions de dollars en économies.*

Over the last three years, we’ve found $207 million dollars in savings. That’s the equivalent of a 10% tax increase we did not impose on taxpayers.

For the average household, that’s $415 in savings on your tax bill.

We have also worked very closely with the provincial and federal governments to secure significant investments in our city. Eighteen months ago, Premier Doug Ford announced the new deal for Ottawa, an investment of more than $535 million in our city.

That money has been invested in important areas including public safety, road projects in rural areas, and revitalization of the downtown core and ByWard Market.

Leading up to the provincial election earlier this year, I made the case that Ottawa deserved to be treated like other municipalities in Ontario.

*La campagne Équité pour Ottawa a mené à une promesse du premier ministre Ford de prendre en charge le réseau de train léger d’Ottawa.*

The Fairness for Ottawa campaign led to a promise from Premier Ford to upload Ottawa’s light rail system, which has the potential to save our city billions of dollars in the coming years.

That money will all be reinvested in public transit to build a system that is better and more reliable for our residents. I’m grateful to Premier Ford and his team for their investments and commitments to Ottawa.

In January of this year, the federal government announced $180 million in transit funding for Ottawa. And since the new government was elected, I’ve had important conversations with Prime Minister Carney and several members of his cabinet and local MPs.

They have committed to working with us to address our city’s challenges, including revitalizing downtown and the ByWard Market, improving public transit, and building more affordable homes in Ottawa.

I look forward to advancing these discussions in the coming weeks and months.

Just as I did in 2022, I hear regularly from residents about their concerns. They worry about rising costs. They want more reliable services such as public transit. And they want to ensure their city is safe.

In a time of rising costs and economic uncertainty, our residents and business owners need a budget that brings a balanced approach, investing in what matters most while keeping life affordable.

*En cette période de hausse des coûts et d’incertitude économique, nos résidents et nos entrepreneurs ont besoin d’un budget équilibré qui investit dans ce qui compte le plus tout en maintenant la vie abordable.*

Today, we released the budget directions report. And once again we are committing to keeping taxes as low as possible, while investing in safety and reliability.

The budget directions report includes a 2.9% increase for most City operations and programs.

*La direction du budget prévoit une augmentation de 2,9 % pour la plupart des opérations et programmes municipaux.*

I’ll be honest. This will not be an easy process. It will take a lot of work to get there.

The report also commits to investing significantly in priority areas, particularly in two critical areas that must be more properly funded: public transit and public safety.

We are facing a huge structural deficit in our long-range financial plan for transit. The upload of light rail will help significantly, but it won’t cover the entire gap. So, as we did last year, we must continue to invest in public transit.

*Nous devons continuer à investir dans le transport en commun.*

The report includes a range of options to increase funding for public transit to record levels. In the coming weeks, we’ll discuss where we’ll land on various levers including increases to transit fares and the transit levy.

Public transit is vitally important to our community and our economy. Earlier this year, we successfully launched Lines 2 and 4 of light rail. In the coming months, we’ll open the eastern extension of Line 1 to Orleans, another huge milestone for light rail. We’re also continuing to purchase more electric buses to make our transit service greener and more reliable.

These improvements cost money, so another boost in transit funding is required.

*Ces améliorations ont un coût, il est donc nécessaire d'augmenter à nouveau le financement des transports en commun.*

I’ve also heard from residents that one of their greatest priorities is public safety. Over the past few years, we’ve been hiring hundreds of paramedics, firefighters, and police officers. The number of Level Zero events, where there isn’t a single ambulance available in our city, has dropped by 80% this year. We still have more work to do, but that’s significant progress. We also opened a new police station to serve the ByWard Market. And the police have been dealing with a significantly increased number of protests and demonstrations. The demands on emergency services have never been higher.

Our residents have been asking for better and more effective policing. They want to see more police officers patrolling our streets. They want faster response times. They want to feel safe in their community.

*Ils souhaitent des temps de réponse plus rapides. Ils veulent se sentir en sécurité dans leur communauté.*

I’m very grateful to Police Chief Eric Stubbs, who has been doing an outstanding job over the past three years to listen to the community and adapt our police service to its changing needs. Based on community feedback, the police are moving toward a district policing model that will increase service in every part of the city. We need to support these important changes by investing further in policing.

The budget directions report includes a recommendation of a police budget increase of up to 6.5% to accommodate the transition to the district model and the implementation of the staff stabilization plan to ensure we have enough resources to serve the community. That’s the largest increase in the police budget in more than 15 years.

*Il s’agit de la plus forte augmentation du budget de la police depuis plus de 15 ans.*

But it comes at a time when it’s needed in order to serve our community.

So we will be making important investments to sustain both public transit and public safety. But despite those investments, we will continue to have among the lowest tax increases among major cities in Canada.

Other cities like Toronto and Vancouver have seen increases of 7, 8, 9 or even 10 per cent over the past few years, while our average tax increase has been just over 2.9 per cent.

The budget direction calls for an overall tax increase, including the investments in transit and policing of no more than 3.75% for 2026. That’s lower than last year’s increase, and it maintains my commitment to respect the rising costs our residents are facing.

*C'est moins que l'augmentation de l'année dernière, et cela me permet de respecter mon engagement à tenir compte de la hausse des coûts auxquels nos résidents sont confrontés.*

The finance department has been working very hard on the 2026 budget, almost since the day the 2025 budget was approved. And there’s still a lot of very difficult work ahead.

Over the course of the next two days, I will be visiting every single ward in the city, all 24 of them.

Every summer since 2022, I’ve done a tour of all the wards – 24 wards in 48 hours – to check in with residents and hear their concerns and their aspirations. I’m looking forward to hearing their input as we continue the budget process.

As I said, it won’t be easy to hit these targets. But we owe it to our residents to do everything possible to achieve this important balance between investing in what matters most and keeping life affordable.

*Nous devons tout faire pour atteindre cet équilibre important entre l’investissement dans ce qui compte le plus et le maintien d’une vie abordable pour nos résidents.*

There are a lot of needs and pressures. But we will continue to do the heavy lifting to find savings and efficiencies.

*Nous continuerons à collaborer avec les gouvernements provincial et fédéral pour trouver des solutions.*

We will continue to work with the provincial and federal governments to find solutions, including more investment and a better and fairer deal for our city.

We must deliver a budget of this nature, because that is what our residents and business owners expect us to do.

There are seniors on fixed incomes, families struggling to make ends meet, small business owners dealing with economic uncertainty.

*Ils comptent sur nous pour présenter un budget solide et équilibré.*

They are counting on us to deliver a strong and balanced budget, a budget that prioritizes public transit and public safety, a budget that doesn’t add big tax increases to the burden they are already facing. We can’t let them down. I won’t let them down.

*Aujourd’hui, je renouvelle la promesse que j’ai faite en 2022. Je travaillerai chaque jour pour rendre notre ville plus sécuritaire, plus fiable et plus abordable pour tous.*

Today, I’m renewing the promise I made in 2022. I will work hard every day to make our city safer, more reliable, and more affordable for everyone.

Thank you / Merci.