

Wednesday April 23, 2025
OBOT City Building Summit

Thank you, Sueling.

Good morning, everyone. / *Bonjour.*

It's great to be back for this year's City Building Summit.

C'est vraiment un plaisir d'être ici avec vous tous ce matin.

Je tiens à saluer mes collègues du conseil municipal.

I want to acknowledge my councillor colleagues here this morning:

Councillors XX

I heard a really interesting stat yesterday.
And I'm going to test it out on you.

How many of you wish you'd been alive at an earlier time, like the 1950s or 1960s?

How many of you think there's never been a better time to be alive than right now?

Well, according to David Coletto, the CEO of Abacus Data, 70% of people would prefer to be living in the 1950s than to be living today.

And I have to tell you, I'm in the other 30%. I think there's never been a better time to be alive than right now.

And look, that's not to say that there aren't some really tough challenges in front of us.

It's been a really surprising and sometimes unsettling year so far and we're not even four months in.

Let's acknowledge what's happening right here in Ottawa.

We have the tariffs imposed by – and threatened by – President Trump, which have led to a massive international trade war.

Les pays du monde entier réagissent et répondent.

Countries all around the world are reacting and responding.

We spent three decades building the wonderful trade partnerships that created

so many jobs and contributed so much to our collective prosperity.

And now they're being torn apart.

And it's not just our economy that's under threat but our sovereignty.

There's a federal election campaign that's almost over and there's so much at stake.

We are very likely to see our number one employer in Ottawa – the federal government – reduce the size of its workforce dramatically and move out of many of its buildings in the downtown core.

We've never seen anything like that before.

Le résultat : un niveau très élevé d'incertitude économique.

The result is a very high level of economic uncertainty.

I talk to residents and small business owners all the time about this and they're genuinely worried about the future of our city.

The economic situation is also contributing to a rising cost of living, as people are forced to pay more and more for rent, for their mortgage, and for the food their family eats.

It's not all bad. At least the Senators are in the playoffs.

But if you're worried about the future of our city, you're not alone. I'm right there with you. I'm very concerned.

But that doesn't mean I'm pessimistic. I'm an optimist at heart.

Tout d'abord, je constate qu'il y a beaucoup de fierté dans notre pays en ce moment.

For starters, I'm seeing so much pride in our country right now.

I see so many Canadian flags when I'm out for a run in the morning.

We're seeing patriotism, a determination to fight back against these threats, a desire to build a stronger, more resilient domestic economy. It's incredible.

Donald Trump has done more to unite Canadians than any Canadian has ever done.

We are working together like never before.
Across governments, across provincial
boundaries, across languages.

And it's particularly clear and relevant here
in Ottawa.

*Je dirais qu'il s'agit d'une élection fédérale
très importante.*

I think this is a really important federal
election, and not just because of tariffs and
trade.

There are some crucial local issues that
must be addressed by the next
government.

I've met with both of the main party leaders
and the mayor of Gatineau and I have
joined forces to send a letter to the federal
party leaders to ensure our issues are top
of mind.

That includes support for downtown revitalization, support for displaced federal workers if there are layoffs, public transit, reducing interprovincial trade barriers, and my Fairness for Ottawa campaign.

As you know, the federal government has been undervaluing its properties in Ottawa for years, and as a result they've been underpaying and local taxpayers like you have had to make up the difference.

The difference over the past few years has been almost \$100 million. That just isn't fair.

There's no other economic region in Canada like Ottawa-Gatineau.

Aucune autre région économique au Canada ne ressemble à Ottawa-Gatineau.

We're a metropolitan area of 1.5 million people separated by a provincial border.

We feel the impact of interprovincial trade barriers like no other community.

We must continue working together to build a stronger, more resilient local economy.

Nous devons continuer à travailler ensemble pour construire une économie locale plus forte et plus résistante.

Whoever the next government is after the next election, I will continue to fight for Ottawa's fair share.

We need the federal government to be our partner as we tackle these unique challenges.

In response to the challenges around tariffs and trade, we assembled the Mayor's Economic Council, which includes the Ottawa Board of Trade and all our economic development partners, to craft our response to these economic challenges.

We passed a motion at City Council to review our procurement practices so we're buying local and buying Canadian whenever possible.

We've also launched a Shop Local, Buy Canadian campaign – and I've been visiting small businesses to hand out these special decals.

I've seen them in business windows across the city and I think they've been well received.

We've brought a few of those decals here today, so help yourself on the way out.

Par ailleurs, nous faisons tout ce qui est en notre pouvoir pour répondre à la crise de l'abordabilité.

At the same time, we're doing everything we can to respond to the affordability crisis.

The last thing we need is for local government to add to the burden of residents with big tax increases.

So we've worked hard on the city budget.

And we continue to have the lowest tax increases of any major city in Canada.

Other cities are increasing their property taxes by 8, 9, 10 per cent – even more in some cases.

But here in Ottawa, the average has been below 3 per cent per year, lower than even the last term of council.

We've done that while continuing to invest in our residents' priorities – like roads, City facilities and community centres, public transit, community policing and affordable housing, so our vulnerable residents can have a roof over their heads.

We've been able to do that through a lot of hard work to find savings and efficiencies in the City budget.

In the past two years, we've identified more than \$200 million in savings for Ottawa residents, the equivalent of \$400 per household.

We have also extended the small business tax discount for another year.

Nous avons également prolongé d'un an la réduction d'impôt pour les petites entreprises.

That will help more than 10,000 small businesses in Ottawa, saving them an average of \$3,700 per year.

We're also working hard on housing affordability. We have to find ways to deliver more housing units faster.

That's why we recently launched our Housing Innovation Task Force, made up of experts and industry representatives who will come up with solutions to remove barriers that add cost and time to the permitting process, without any benefit to our community.

The task force is co-chaired by Board of Trade chair Brendan McGuinty. It will examine the City's own internal permitting process, but also look to other municipalities who have shorter approval timelines to see how they're doing it.

In the last two years, Ottawa has approved more than 53,000 units for construction. But so far, the development industry has moved only about 10,500 of those units to the building-permit stage.

We have to work together with developers to move more of these approved projects forward.

I'm looking forward to seeing their recommendations this fall – and to working with City Council to streamline our approvals process, so that more residents can have access to a home faster.

Also this fall, staff will bring back their final plan for the Lansdowne 2.0 redevelopment. The stadium at TD Place is at the end of its lifecycle and no longer meets modern hosting standards for large and international events.

We must ensure that Lansdowne continues to host festivals, cultural and sporting events that attract visitors to Ottawa, while enabling more housing options on-site so that it's a vibrant community 365 days a year – not just on game days.

In January, we launched Lines 2 and 4 of LRT, running from Bayview Station all the way to Riverside South and the airport, and passing through Carleton University.

It's been a very successful launch. We made sure nothing proceeded until all the proper tests and protocols had been completed. And we'll do the same later this year when we open the East Extension of LRT, which will bring service all the way to Trim Station in Orleans.

That will add another 12.5 kilometres of rail and five stations to serve our east-end residents.

De nombreux projets ambitieux sont également en cours de réalisation dans toute la ville.

There are also a lot of exciting projects taking shape across the city, including the new Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, the new Civic campus of the Ottawa Hospital, and more.

So do we face some challenges?

Absolutely. But is there reason for hope and optimism? Yes.

Because we live in a great city. We have a wonderful community.

And we have great leaders in business and economic development who are working together to build a brighter future.

I feel so lucky to live in Ottawa. We have so much going for us. And that's especially true right now.

When the people of Ottawa work together, we can achieve great things.

Lorsque les citoyens d'Ottawa travaillent ensemble, nous pouvons réaliser de grandes choses.

When we join forces across sectors, across communities, and across all levels of government, we can get a lot done.

That's how we'll keep growing our economy, supporting job creation, and building the Ottawa we all want.

So let's be brutally realistic about the challenges we are facing. But let's continue to be hopeful about the future.

Mais continuons à espérer en l'avenir. Let's be determined to build a better city.

I want to thank everyone here today for joining us on that mission.

Thank you for your commitment to our city.

Thank you for believing and investing in Ottawa. *Merci de croire et d'investir à Ottawa.*

Thank you for choosing Ottawa.

Let's keep working together to face down these challenges and build a better city for our children and grandchildren.

I think we have a lot to be excited about because there's never been a better time to be in Ottawa.

Thank you / *Merci.*