



June 30, 2025

Mayor Mark Sutcliffe and City Councillors
City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON K1P1J1

Dear Mayor and City Councillors,

I am writing on behalf of the Glebe Community Association (GCA) with some perspectives on Lansdowne 2.0 for your consideration over the summer break. I trust they will prove thought-provoking even if they don't have the appeal of a beach read.

Much has changed since the City of Ottawa gave conditional approval to Lansdowne 2.0 in 2023.

First, the overall financial picture has worsened and the City faces many more financial pressures.

- **The city is in a financial crisis.** Mayor Sutcliffe declared the City to be in a financial crisis in 2024 and the City has had insufficient budget room to sufficiently address priorities like housing, public transit and climate change adaptation.
- **Spending \$500M on Lansdowne is a choice to spend less on closing the \$11B Infrastructure gap.** The City recently identified a very significant “service gap” of \$11B for city assets and infrastructure over the next 10 years. These assets are spread all across the City and include arenas, recreation centres, and roads that are used by citizens every single day.
- **Lansdowne will inevitably cost more and require the city to increase debt even more.** The City of Ottawa’s Auditor General concluded that projected costs for Lansdowne 2.0 were significantly underestimated by as much as \$73.4M. This was before the current tariff war. Expected costs could rise to about \$500 million with well over \$300 million in new debt. The city, not OSEG, will be responsible for cost overruns on a new build.
- **Annual costs for Lansdowne 2.0 have not been made clear to Council.** Council has been told that Lansdowne 2.0 would cost only \$5M a year. But that is an average cost over 40 years. For the first 10-15 years, the city does not expect any significant funds to flow from Lansdowne so taxpayers will shoulder the full cost of servicing the debt—likely \$16-\$20M a year. And the 40-year projections will only come true if

everything goes exactly to plan and Lansdowne generates huge revenues, something we haven't seen to date.

Second, the entire rationale for this huge public expenditure is now questionable:

- **OSEG is no longer losing money on Lansdowne.** The drive for this very costly proposal for Lansdowne 2.0 has come from OSEG, not the city. At the time, OSEG was running financial losses. But Lansdowne is now thriving and has broken even financially in the last two years. According to the Financial Due Diligence undertaken by EY based on OSEG's figures, it is expected to achieve profitability by 2030.
- **There is no "Cost of Doing Nothing".** Since 2023, the city staff's assertion has been that the "Cost of Doing Nothing" is about \$8.5 million a year. This was based on a simplistic look at cash flow deficits over the first twelve years. Now that Lansdowne is breaking even, the cost of doing nothing is \$0. And remember, OSEG is legally obligated to maintain the sports facilities at Lansdowne until 2054.
- **Lansdowne is safe.** Independent engineering reports indicate that the sports facilities are structurally sound and safe for public use. According to Morrison Hershfield, the existing sports facilities could be operational for 40 more years based on a capital repair and replacement plan of \$40 million (or \$1 million a year).
- **The proposed new Lansdowne 2.0 sports facilities are inadequate for Ottawa sports fans.** Eliminating 3000 seats in the event centre arena means it will not be able to accommodate Ottawa Charge fans. The loss of a roof over the north-side stands to save money is short-sighted given the weather extremes of climate change.
- **The Ottawa Senators are closing in on a downtown arena deal.** In their Financial Due Diligence report in 2023, EY identified the competing Ottawa Senators "Sports and Entertainment district" at Lebreton flats as a key risk -- but staff gave it only cursory consideration. Council needs to be clear-eyed about putting \$500M of taxpayer dollars into Lansdowne now.

Today, Lansdowne is finally thriving. It hosts an increasing number of events and teams and has become a popular destination. It is breaking even financially and OSEG expects it to do better in the future.

The City has many priorities that are not properly funded. Your residents probably tell you that they enjoy Lansdowne now. Would they really rather pay for costly improvements to Lansdowne, or would they prioritize spending to fix roads, improve transit, build housing and improve safety? Not to mention "fixing" the Byward Market and Ottawa's downtown that the Ottawa Board of Trade has indicated is their highest priority.

We ask you to think deeply about whether you should spend half a billion dollars on a project that is no longer urgent, risks taxpayer dollars, reduces our ability to finance other higher

priority infrastructure, and which will not provide the capacity and weather protection that Ottawa residents need.

There are alternatives to Lansdowne 2.0 that could address issues such as accessibility. We ask you to direct staff to defer Lansdowne 2.0 as currently conceived, and instead form a working group with stakeholders, including community groups across the city, to develop recommendations for a less costly and prioritised list of improvements at Lansdowne Park including the arena and stadium facilities.

We would welcome the opportunity to work together to make Lansdowne even more successful than it is now.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Crump". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

John Crump
President
Glebe Community Association