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OFFICE OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE
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June 22nd, 2010

Mr. Larry O'Brien
Mayor
City of Ottawa
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa Ontario K1P 1J1

Your Worship,

I recently learned of the plan to redevelop Lansdowne Park in Ottawa and I would like to share my concerns with respect to the legal and linguistic obligations of the plan partners.

Clearly, Lansdowne Park is a unique site and a jewel in Ottawa's crown. It is both a UNESCO world heritage site and an important part of the National Capital Region's heritage. Lansdowne Park has established itself as a major tourist attraction—one of which your citizens can be proud.

Having said that, I have very serious concerns about the plan to redevelop and transform Lansdowne Park. There is every indication that the plan partners will not be required to offer services in both English and French. This raises serious concerns for the respect, recognition, and development of Francophones living in the Ottawa area. Taking this approach would have a considerable impact on the prosperity and vitality of the Francophone community.

In my most recent annual report, *Open for Solutions*, released in June 2010, I spoke at length about third-party service delivery. I urged the government to make a decision that would put an end to the violations of the *French Language Services Act* that occur when third parties and organizations to whom provincial responsibilities are devolved fail to meet their obligation to offer French-language services. Allow me to share my specific concerns with respect to Lansdowne Park. The fact that it is being redeveloped by a private developer must in no way undermine or adversely affect the possibility of having access to bilingual services within the boundaries of the City of Ottawa.

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Once it has been redeveloped, Lansdowne Park will showcase many attractions of both the city and the National Capital region, one of which is most definitely the existence of both official language groups. An equal emphasis must be placed on the French fact and access to services of equivalent quality must be guaranteed for Francophones and Anglophones. I believe that the plan partners and the service providers with whom you sign agreements must have a direct impact on the delivery of French-language municipal services and programs. In 2001, the City of Ottawa adopted a *Bilingualism Policy*. The spirit of this policy must govern both the redevelopment phase and the delivery of all of the services that are subsequently offered, including those offered by the private sector.


In my opinion, the redevelopment and transformation of Lansdowne Park represents a golden opportunity for the City of Ottawa to demonstrate leadership in the area of bilingualism and to renew its commitment to its French-speaking community. All that will be required, in order to ensure that their rights are provided for and respected, is to implement the necessary mechanisms.

As I stated in my most recent annual report, institutions such as the City of Ottawa must make every effort to create environments that encourage Francophones to request service in French. I am referring not just to the Francophones who live in Ottawa; I am referring to the Francophones who visit the area from other parts of Canada and the world. Where official minority language communities are concerned, the rule of supply and demand that prevails in the free marketplace simply does not work: French-language services must be actively offered in order for French-speaking citizens to find the confidence to request service in French.

I firmly believe that, with the support of the Ottawa City Council- that also received this letter- you can make the best possible decision for the official language communities in your region and ensure that these communities thrive for generations to come.

I would be delighted to discuss this project with you and to discuss the obligation to offer services in French and English.

Yours truly,



François Boileau
French Language Services Commissioner