

A comment on “For Senators it all comes down to NCC”

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**Expert Witness, 1991 Ontario Municipal Board Hearing
in the matter of Proposed Amendment No. 8 to the
Official Plan, Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton,
Proposed Official Plan Amendment No. 7, Official Plan
for the City of Kanata, and appeal against
Zoning By-law No. 125-90 for the City of Kanata
regarding lands known as "Ottawa Palladium".**

1. Background

The subject newspaper article, “For Senators it all comes down to NCC”, was published in the Ottawa Citizen, December 21, 2017.

As a long time participant in the public discourse on the Ottawa Senators hockey club, I was troubled by what I regarded as embellishments and statements offered as truth without proof, and what I took to be a promotional or rah-rah air that was similar to reportage on many previous proposals and discussions involving the hockey franchise.

After debating whether to bother with what seemed to be yet another “re-write of history”, I decided that matters at stake warranted communicating

some of my concerns about the article in a Letter to the Editor, which was email dated and time marked *Fri 12/22/2017 9:33 PM*.

As circumstances would have it my letter was not selected for publication, which is not a big deal since many letters to editors suffer that same fate.

However, where things get sticky is that the Citizen did not print any comment on “For Senators it all comes down to NCC”, which belies the often fractious and sometimes bellicose history of the franchise, a matter which is well-documented in the popular literature.

In brief, the Ottawa Senators’ story has involved numerous highly-publicized, contentious aspects that began with the processes of securing and locating the franchise in the late 1980s and early 1990s, continue to this day and, based on the record to date, are very likely to continue for as long as this franchise or any NHL franchise is in Ottawa.

It therefore seems grossly unlikely that the column “For Senators it all comes down to NCC” would receive a free pass without a word to the contrary from readers, and all the more so when the matter at issue involves a private sector-public sector relationship with the potential if not the inevitability of public lands, public monies, public infrastructure, public services, and other matters of public interest potentially being proposed by one party or the other as chips to put “on the table” as the LeBreton Flats re-development process unfolds.

That being said, and regardless of how head-shaking they may seem to be, the reporting practices of the Ottawa Citizen are what they are, so rather than curse the darkness it is important to move on and do what can be done in order for the letter to “see the light of day”.

As shown in the next section, the route taken to comment on several representations in the interests of informing public debate is to post the letter on my website. In the absence of the visibility that would have attached to a letter to the editor, I invite forwarding the item heading and link to parties in Ottawa and elsewhere with an interest in private arena /stadium proposals involving public assets.

The posted material concludes in section 3 by listing selected publications produced in 1991, 1999, and 2009 which provide information pertinent to the contents of the letter to the editor.

2. Letter

The communication sent to Letters to the Editor, Ottawa Citizen, was dated and time marked *Fri 12/22/2017 9:33 PM*, and is reproduced verbatim.

Re: For Senators it all comes down to NCC, Dec. 21.

It is appalling for Bruce Firestone to refer to alleged discussions in 1987 with Jean Piggott about putting an NHL arena on NCC lands. Mrs. Piggott is no longer alive and cannot either affirm or deny his recollection of what he said, or what he says she said, and there is no apparent record of the discourse, so the comments by Mr. Firestone are the one-sided, self-serving material of a locker room blow-off, and should not have been lent any credence in a feature story in a major newspaper.

As for laments by Eugene Melnyk about low crowds due to the location of the arena, the location issue should not come as a surprise to anyone, and especially not to an astute business man who knows better than to read just the reports of cheerleaders, and has the wits to connect dots that were evident years ago.

The many shortcomings of the Kanata site are contained in the expert opinion report that I submitted to the Ontario Municipal Board in 1991 on behalf of the Federation of Citizens Associations. I was retained to evaluate planning, zoning, transportation, and economic spin-off aspects of proposals by Mr. Firestone and others to amend the Official Plans of the Region of Ottawa-Carleton and the City of Kanata, and the associated zoning by-laws, in order to locate the arena in Kanata.

It was my finding that locating the arena in Kanata was doomed to failure, but politicians at all levels, businesses, and a variety of vested interests were enthusiastically on board with the proposal by Firestone *et al.* Now, as

the red ink rises and Mr. Melnyk seethes, they look to NCC and the federal government to save the day.

What next, asking the same geniuses who gave that so-called expert advice about locating the arena in Kanata to advise on the LeBreton development?

Barry Wellar
Ottawa

3. Selected context publications pertinent to the letter.

1). OMB documents. Documents which I submitted or in which I am named as an expert witness while attending at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearings in 1991 are available from various sources, including the OMB as well as the City of Ottawa which houses files previously held by the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton. For search purposes interested readers could reference OMB file numbers 0900207, 0910004, and R910015 for lands originally known as Ottawa Palladium, then re-named Corel Center, then Scotiabank Place and, currently, Canadian Tire Centre.

2). ***Senators Tax Plea on Thin Ice***. This article was published in the July 1999 issue of The West End Chronicle, an Ottawa community newspaper. The article was incorporated as background material for a 2009 opinion (see item 3, below) on the issue of public bodies such as governments or their agents subsidizing private sport-based businesses.

3). ***Another Proposal for a Sports Stadium? Based on Ottawa's Experience, Cover Your Wallet with Both Hands, and Run! Run!!*** This opinion incorporates the 1999 article, ***Senators Tax Plea on Thin Ice***. <http://wellar.ca/wellarconsulting/Proposal%20for%20a%20Sports%20Stadium.pdf>.