



LAWSON

Ottawa deserves better.

ALEX LAWSON FOR MAYOR

Get Ottawa moving.

The Lawson plan for traffic: smarter lights, and road work with an end date.

POLICY PAPER

SEPTEMBER 2026

01 / OVERVIEW

The lights don't adjust themselves.

You can't talk seriously about traffic in Ottawa without talking about the ring road. Alex's position is on the record: a southern ring road as a provincial 400-series highway, built and maintained by Queen's Park, to get 1,000 trucks a day out of Manotick and through-traffic off the 417. Read it at votealex.ca/policy/build-the-ring-road. This plan is about everything else: the roads we already have, and how they're run.

Ottawa runs more than 1,200 traffic signals. They are managed from **the Traffic Control Centre that opened in the 1970s** and staffed from 6 am to 7 pm, Monday to Friday, where operators watch cameras at about 70 intersections and adjust timing by hand when they see a problem. The rest run their pre-set time-of-day plans. Outside those hours there is an on-call team for things like a major crash, a special event, a storm. On an ordinary evening or weekend, every light in the city is running its plan.

About 70 percent of Ottawa's signals have a sensor that knows a car or a pedestrian has arrived. **It's 1960s technology.** Not one of them adjusts its timing to how traffic is actually moving along the road. The plans are written in advance, and unless a person changes one, the lights do the same thing at the same time whatever is on the road.

Other cities have moved. Quebec City signed on to Google's Project Green Light in August 2025 and has already reported positive results from its first optimized intersections. Vancouver started its pilot in July 2026. Peterborough, a city of about 85,000 people, has been running adaptive signals that respond to real traffic since 2021.

The capital is still turning its lights on a weekday schedule.

And the lights are only half of it. Ottawa charges a contractor a flat \$1,748 to close a lane, once, for as long as the job takes. The permit has no clock on it. There is no daily charge, no per-lane charge, and no penalty for leaving pylons on a road where nobody is working. Toronto charges by the square metre of road occupied, by the month, scaled to how busy the street is, plus \$894 a day for a full lane closure downtown. In Ottawa, a lane closed for a week costs the same as a lane closed for a season. So lanes stay closed.

Ottawa has grown. We can't manage traffic like it's 1975.

02 / THE PLAN

Two things Alex will do first.

This plan is built the way a job gets built: cheapest fix first, measure it, then spend on what works. Nothing here needs a study before it starts.

LIGHTS 01

In the first 100 days, apply to Google's Project Green Light. Cost, zero.

Here is how it works without a single new camera. Every phone running Google Maps in a car is already reporting where it is and how fast it's moving. Google takes that driving data, in aggregate, and can see where traffic stops and starts at every signalized intersection in the city. From that it works out where the timing is wrong and sends the city a recommendation: this light, this time of day, this many seconds. City engineers check it and, if they agree, change the timing plan in the signal controller that is already there. No hardware, no sensors, no wiring, because the data is coming from the cars, not the intersection. It is free during the research phase, and Vancouver's terms are the ones Ottawa will take: advisory only, no access to city systems, the city can walk away on 60 days' notice. If staff have already applied, Alex will be happy to inherit the paperwork and hurry it along.

LIGHTS 02

Smart signals on Ottawa's worst corridors, chosen by the City's own data.

This one does need hardware, and that is what the money buys: detectors at each intersection, so the signal itself can see what is coming and change its timing on the spot, not once a day but every cycle. An adaptive signal pilot on the corridors the City's own collision and traffic count data say are the worst in Ottawa. Hunt Club, from Riverside to Greenbank. Baseline, from Woodroffe to Clyde. Innes and St. Laurent in the east. Hazeldean and Terry Fox in Kanata. The pilot covers the 100 worst signals in the city, ranked by the City's own data and starting on those corridors, at roughly \$50,000 an intersection, about what Peterborough paid. The full ranked list is published before a dollar is spent, so everyone can see why their road is or isn't on it. Pilot, measure, publish, scale.

LANES 01

Cones up no more than 24 hours before work starts. Down within 24 hours after.

That is the rule for every closure on a City road. Overstay the end date and the fee escalates, every day, until the road is open.

LANES 02

Charge for the road by the metre and by the day, like Toronto does.

The current flat \$1,748 fee becomes occupancy pricing on the Toronto model: by the square metre of road taken, by the day, scaled to how busy the street is. A contractor who takes one lane for a week pays for one lane for a week. A contractor who fences off half a main street for a season pays for that. Whatever it collects goes to road renewal.

LANES 03

The City's own contracts get the same clock.

When the City is the one hiring the contractor, the tender says how many lane-days the job gets and when the road reopens. Go over, and it comes off the invoice. This is the term the City's LRT contract on the 417 at Woodroffe did not have.

03 / WHAT IT COSTS

Least expensive first.

Smarter lights. The Green Light application costs nothing. The adaptive pilot is capital: about \$50,000 an intersection on Peterborough's numbers, which for 100 intersections is in the range of \$5 million, spread

over the first two years and funded from the existing transportation capital envelope, not a new tax line. The cost of getting home on time? Priceless.

End dates and occupancy pricing. Putting an end date on a permit and a map on the City website costs staff time on information the City already holds. Occupancy pricing replaces one flat fee with a fee that scales with how much road is taken and for how long; a small job that finishes on time can pay less than it does today, and a big one that drags on pays for every day. Whatever it collects goes to road renewal.

04 / WHY ALEX

Builder, not politician.

Alex Lawson has spent 20 years running job sites, where every job has a start date, an end date, and somebody who answers when it slips. He knows what finishing on time is worth to the crew that has to work to deliver results.

The current administration has had four years to upgrade our signals to something better than what we had in the 1970s, or put a time limit on a closure permit. When the lane closures on the 417 at Woodroffe hit this spring, the mayor said he was disappointed and that there was probably a better way to manage it, maybe on weekends. The contractor he was disappointed with was working on the City's own LRT project, under a City contract. **That contract had no clock in it.** A mayor who has run a job site would have put one there.

Cheapest fix first. Measure it. Then spend on what works.

05 / SOURCES & VERIFICATION

Every figure here is sourced.

TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE HOURS AND MANUAL OPERATION

The City's Transportation System Management page: "The Traffic Control Centre operates from 6 am until 7 pm Monday to Friday with an on-call team available 24 hours day, 7 days a week," with monitoring "extended into evening and weekend periods when incidents or special events in the City causing major disruptions to normal traffic patterns occur." Seventy intersections have cameras; operators adjust signal timing and phasing for a number of intersections.

<https://ottawa.ca/en/parking-roads-and-travel/traffic-services/transportation-system-management>

CITY SIGNAL TIMING PRACTICE

City of Ottawa, Traffic Signals page: each intersection has at least seven time-of-day timing plans, about 70 percent of signals have vehicle or pedestrian sensors, timing updates on major corridors are scheduled annually. No adaptive signal control anywhere in the system.

<https://ottawa.ca/en/parking-roads-and-travel/traffic-services/traffic-signals>

TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE HISTORY

CBC News, March 5, 2019, "Inside Ottawa's traffic nerve centre": the city's intersections "have actually been managed remotely since the mid-1970s, when staff would monitor traffic lights on a giant wall map."

SIGNAL COUNT

"From lines to lights: how Traffic Services keeps our city moving," City of Ottawa newsroom, April 3, 2024: more than 1,200 signalized intersections.

<https://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/city-news/newsroom/lines-lights-how-traffic-services-keeps-our-city-moving>

RING ROAD POSITION OF RECORD

Alex Lawson, July 21, 2026: a southern ring road as a provincial 400-series highway, built and maintained by the Province of Ontario.

<https://votealex.ca/policy/build-the-ring-road/>

GOOGLE PROJECT GREEN LIGHT

Google's Green Light program uses Maps driving trends to recommend signal timing changes that city engineers implement; Google's own FAQ: recommendations are "based on driving trends from Google Maps and are then implemented by the city using the city's existing systems and equipment"; no additional infrastructure; free to participating cities during the research phase; application by expression of interest.

<https://sites.research.google/greenlight/>

QUEBEC CITY, AUGUST 2025

Quebec City joined Project Green Light in August 2025 and reported early results from its first optimized intersections.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11341301/quebec-city-artificial-intelligence-traffic/>

VANCOUVER TERMS, JULY 2026

Vancouver's Green Light pilot began July 17, 2026, at no cost to the city, with advisory-only recommendations, no Google access to city traffic infrastructure, and a 60-day withdrawal clause.

<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/vancouver-google-project-green-light-traffic-partnership>

PETERBOROUGH ADAPTIVE SIGNAL PILOT

Lansdowne Street pilot, live August 2021; City of Peterborough report IPSTR22-012 (July 2022) measured approximately \$977,000 per year in reduced road-user costs, travel time down 11 to 30 percent at peak, and side-street delay up at peak. Council approved \$1 million to extend to up to 20 more intersections, about \$50,000 each.

https://miovision.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Miovision_RapidFlow_Surtrac_Peterborough_CaseStudy.pdf

WORST CORRIDORS, CITY OF OTTAWA OPEN DATA

Signalized intersections ranked by collisions in 2022 and 2024, the two most recent years the City has published (the City's collision file omits 2023), cross-ranked with the City's 24-hour intersection volume counts from 2022 to 2024. Hunt Club Road at Riverside Drive recorded 121 collisions across the two years, the most of any signalized intersection in Ottawa, on 72,173 vehicles a day at the City's last published count for that intersection (2019). Seven of the 25 worst signalized intersections for collisions in the city are on Hunt Club Road or West Hunt Club Road.

<https://open.ottawa.ca/datasets/ottawa::traffic-collision-data/about>

CITY OF OTTAWA INTERSECTION VOLUMES

Transportation Intersection Volumes 2024, 2023 and 2022, all motorized vehicles, 24-hour AADT, Open Ottawa. Hunt Club Road at Riverside Drive has no count in those three years; its 72,173 figure is from the Transportation Intersection Volumes 2019 set on the same portal.

<https://ottawa.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=2936cb816b7a4777a4969d5a214ba6ea>

TORONTO STREET OCCUPATION PRICING

Toronto charges street occupation by square metre per month, scaled by zone (up to \$204.38 per square metre per month in the highest-congestion zone, 2026), plus \$894.03 per day for a full lane closure, with a 25 percent premium inside construction hubs.

<https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/building-construction/infrastructure-city-construction/construction-standards-permits/construction-permits/street-occupation-permit/>

OTTAWA TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE FEE

Fee Review, Municipal Consent, Utility Circulation, Road Cut Permit and Temporary Road Closure (ACS2024-PDB-RHU-0008), Transportation Committee October 24, 2024, Council October 30, 2024, in effect January 1, 2025: "The updated Temporary Road Closure Fee is recommended to be \$1,748," set out in Schedule A of the Road Activity By-law. The report contains no per-day, per-lane or idle-site charge.

<https://pub-ottawa.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=206602>

SUTCLIFFE ON THE WOODROFFE CLOSURES, MAY 2026

At the City's construction season announcement, May 15, 2026, Mayor Mark Sutcliffe said he was "disappointed" with how the Highway 417 lane reductions near Woodroffe were being handled: "I think there is a better way to manage that without having to close the lane during rush hour in the morning and afternoon. We need to pace ourselves on some of that work and see if we can do it on weekends and in the evenings instead of during rush hours." CBC reported the reductions were caused by construction from the O-Train expansion, with Traffic Services and OC Transpo "working closely with the contractor."

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-s-2026-construction-season-theres-going-to-be-some-pain-councillor-says-9.7201650>

THE 417 CLOSURES WERE CITY LRT WORK

CBC, May 19, 2026: the deputy director of the City's rail construction program said the median work was bundled with the Stage 2 LRT expansion, with a single lane closed in both directions until July 28; some signage work was for the Ministry of Transportation.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-traffic-highway-417-construction-woodroffe-pinecrest-greenbank-9.7200295>

Authorized by the official agent of the Alex Lawson campaign.