

Kitesurfing community feedback on the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre & Britannia Park Redevelopment

Councillor Mark Taylor
Ottawa City Hall
110 Laurier Avenue W
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1J1

July 18, 2012

Subject: Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre and Britannia Park Redevelopment

Councillor Taylor,

We are writing to you today on behalf of the Ottawa kitesurfing community to provide you with our community's feedback with respect to the proposal to redevelop the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre and Britannia Park.

First a little history about our sport. Kiteboarding involves using a kite as "the engine" to propel a person across snow, land or water.

The sport first started in the winter on skis back in the mid-seventies and made its first appearance in Ottawa in the 1980s and is now commonly referred to as snowkiting.

In the late 1990's the sport of kiteboarding also expanded to include riding on water (sometimes referred to as kitesurfing) using the same types of kites but swapping skis for a board similar to a wakeboard. Kitesurfing made its first appearance in Ottawa in 1998.

Kitesurfing is a growing sport with more riders taking up the sport every year. It is an exciting and environmentally friendly sport which can be performed at a great spot within the city.

You can find a little more info on the history on kitesurfing in Ottawa area at:

<http://www.kitesurfingschool.org/ottawa.htm>

The kitesurfing community regularly uses the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre and Britannia park year-round to access the water (or in the case of winter-time, the ice). After having reviewed the proposal that was presented on June 26th, and discussed this with the kitesurfing community on our online discussion forum



(<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OttawaKiting/> that currently has 459 members), we would like to identify the following two concerns that would negatively impact our use and enjoyment of the facility and the park:



Parking

For the most part, the kitesurfing community has not had issues with parking at the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre, with the exception of hot summer weekends, when it seems everyone across the city is anxious to enjoy Britannia beach which is one of Ottawa’s “flagship” parks.

From the current draft plan it seems that the number of parking spots for the park will be reduced from their current level. While this is not usually an issue during the fall, winter and spring, it becomes a barrier to access to the park in the summertime when it is hot, particularly on weekends. On several occasions the city has had people managing the parking lot to try and ensure people are not parking illegally and/or blocking access. For example on June 30th of this year, only 3 kites were even able to get parking and use the beach there, on a day which would otherwise attract dozens of kites. We’d request that at a minimum, the number of parking spaces be maintained.

The proposed center will draw in many more visitors to the area, making use of the parking lots that are at times already beyond capacity. We would like to strongly suggest that the number of parking spaces be expanded to ensure additional parking problems are not being created by the expansion of the facility.

Access to water/ice

Ice Access

The kitesurfing community is probably the most frequent users of the parking lot close to the river in the winter time. On windy days, which are more frequent in the winter, we park in that lot which is cleared throughout the winter and we walk approximately 50 meters in the winter from the parking lot to the ice to the left (south) of the pier. If this parking lot is eliminated, the walk would become a long, difficult journey trudging through the snow for approximately 250 meters to get access to the same spot. As you can imagine, this would be a very difficult task given that we are carrying our kites, skis, safety equipment and are dressed with enough layers to keep warm when kiteskiing in the winds out on the river.

If the parking lot near the water is not there, this could displace an estimated 30 vehicles on good days in the winter (and more in the future as this young sport grows), probably to other closer areas such as the nearby Belltown Dome parking on Haughton Avenue, which will probably create new parking problems in that region for users of the dome.

Water Access

In the summertime the parking lot that is closest to the water is used by the kitesurfing community to carry our equipment from our cars to the water's edge. If this parking lot is eliminated, we will have to carry our gear 500m or more on each trip to and from the beach.

In addition, kitesurfers would be carrying their equipment on the same path from the parking lot as all the other beach goers and users of the facility. In the park's current configuration there is separation between the three groups as nobody accessing the facility or the beach is walking along the path to the "Sailboarding Beach". This access is also used by other communities within Ottawa such as windsurfers, kayakers, canoeists and Stand Up Paddle boarders to name a few whose equipment is even heavier than ours.



Emergency Vehicle Access to the river

We also concerned about how easily emergency vehicles (police, ambulance, fire rescue) would be able to access the beach that kitesurfers use that is labeled "Sailboarding Beach" in the event of a medical emergency or fire rescue which have at times launched their zodiac boat from that beach.

In closing, we'd like to thank you for inviting feedback from the public well as community groups that use both the park as well as the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre.

We'd be more than happy to meet with you and planning staff and get involved in the planning stages of the development of the facility and the park to provide additional feedback on how our community uses Britannia Park. We would like to work with you to improve access to recreation, in particular the growing kitesurfing community which is very much appreciative of our access for parking, use of the centre's facilities and most importantly, access to the Ottawa River.

You can contact either of us at the following coordinates:

- Peter Williamson; 613-832-0811; peterw@williamsonforensic.com
- Brent Schmidt 613-820- 1222; bertman360@yahoo.ca

Peter Williamson and Brent Schmidt
on behalf of the Ottawa Kitesurfing Community