The time may have come for the Ottawa Senators to start thinking about their future. Ottawa now has five straight losses and sit at the very bottom of the Eastern Conference standings. Their consecutive run of making the playoffs is in serious jeopardy at eleven years.

The problem hasn't been with the special teams; the Sens are tied for the fifth lowest power play goals allowed and they have scored the eighth most power play goals in the league. The trouble is that they are the lowest scoring team in the league when five on five.

Once again, scoring outside the top line is a major problem. Mike Fisher is an excellent two-way second line player, but he's often injured and can't do it by himself. Antoine Vermette and Chris Kelly have been ineffective and are not the answer.

The rumoured attempts of trading for Matthias Ohlund would just be delaying the inevitable; this team is going nowhere even if they qualify for the playoffs. It might be better to realize this now and maybe even secure a lottery pick in an effort to snag a top pick in the entry draft. Getting a talented youngster to build on Heatley (27), Alfredsson (35) and/or Spezza (25) would only benefit the Senators future.

There is still plenty of time to turn it around for the Senators. One hot streak and they will be back in playoff contention, but is that really the best thing for the franchise? No doubt Spezza, Heatley and Alfredsson are just slumping right now and will surely break out of it in a big way soon, but that's really missing the big picture. The long-term prognosis for the franchise is not flattering. This dysfunctional group needs to be stripped down and rebuilt with some new key components. This group's time has passed.

The Senators have some high-end talent, but what they really need is a better supporting cast. In 2005-06 (52 wins 113 points), the Senators defence consisted of Chara, Redden, Meszaros, Phillips, Volchenkov, Pothier and Schubert. The following year (48 wins, 105 points), they fielded Redden, Corvo, Preissing, Meszaros, Phillips, Volchenkov and Schubert. Last year (43 wins 94 points – see a trend here?), they lost Preissing and traded Corvo during the season, ineffectively replacing them with Schubert and Luke Richardson.

Detroit General Manager Ken Holland believes a puck moving defence is his team's top priority and that's where he chooses to spend a good chunk of Mr. Ilitch's dough. This season, Ottawa's top defender has been Filip Kuba. There's no denying that he's off to a great start and will most certainly set a career high in points this season, but are you really comfortable building around a 31-year-old whose best season to date is 37 points? Phillips and Volchenkov are still very strong defenders, but after those three come Picard, Jason Smith and Luke Richardson. They are an average group at best. If it means they can't afford their big three forwards and a top defenseman, then one of the big three must go.

Not many teams have the luxury of a goalie like Luongo, Brodeur or Lundqvist, but with a strong defence and defensively conscious forwards playing in a responsible system, all you need is a goalie that can be counted on to make key stops at crucial times.

Ottawa's goaltending situation is unsettled at best. Auld has been decent, but Gerber's

confidence has to be shattered. The real question is, can the player's trust Auld come playoff time? If the answer is no, then you must go out and get someone that inspires confidence. I think Auld has the ability to be that guy if the team shores up its defensive shortcomings.

It could be a quick rebuild if done smartly, a short pause to grab a top young talent. Ottawa needs to sort out the situation in goal and acquire a top puck moving defenseman. Pending unrestricted free agent, Jay.Bouwmeester readily comes to mind and combined with Kuba, Phillips and Volchenkov, that might be sufficient if some of the young talent is able to step it up.

On the farm, forwards Ilya Zubov (13-8-10-18) and Zack Smith (16-9-5-14) along with defensemen Brendan Bell (15-6-9-15) and Mattias Karlsson (16-2-8-10) show potential. Brian Elliott is in his second year as an AHL starter and the numbers look promising. He could play second fiddle next season if Ottawa was to settle their goaltending situation.

Word on the Streit

Who misses whom more, Mark Streit or the Montreal Canadiens? Montreal had last year's number one power play and are now sitting 26th with a 14.6% success rate, while the Islanders power play has improved slightly from 29th to 25th overall. Streit has 12 points in 18 games, six of them coming with the man advantage. Many thought Streit would struggle as a full-time defenseman, but he's only minus-2 and has logged the ninth most ice time in the NHL with an average of 25:53 each game, including over six minutes on the power play.

It is Better to Taketh Away than to Giveth Away

At the top of the takeaway list is Rick Nash (25), followed by Mike Richards (23) and Markus Naslund (21). The three worst offenders in the giveaway category are all offensive defensemen; Andrei Markov (27), Mike Green (25) and Scott Niedermayer (22), now who would have thought that?

Three of Florida's top defensemen have a very bad giveaway/takeaway ratio. Keith Ballard, Nick Boynton and Jay Bouwmeester have combined for fifty giveaways and only seven takeaways. So does this mean they are bad defensemen? No, but it is likely a key contributor to the Panthers having the second most shots against in the league with an average of 35.1 per game. Luckily for them, Craig Anderson is second in the league with a 0.940 save percentage. Tomas Vokoun has "struggled" with only a 0.916 save percentage!

While Semin and Ovechkin lead the league at plus-17 each, Brind'Amour's minus-13 is the second worst plus/minus in the league, behind only Brad Boyes.

Milan a Hit in Boston

Pens defenseman Brooks Orpik leads the NHL's hit parade with 71 official hits. He's followed by Boston's Milan Lucic (69) and Kings Captain Dustin Brown (61). Be careful not to overrate Lucic in one year points pools, much of the hype is from his physical play, not high-end offensive ability. Of Lucic's 11 points, six of them have come in two games. Over his last five games, he is

averaging only 14:55 of ice time per game.

The comparisons to Cam Neely are a bit premature. Lucic may come close eventually, but he has never shown the same goal scoring ability that Cam Neely had. A quick look back to their two years in major junior (at the same age); Neely averaged 1.7 points per game versus 0.66 for Lucic. It still took Neely four seasons to reach nearly a point a game in the NHL.