OTTAWA GYMNASTICS CENTRE
CENTRE DE GYMNASTIQUE D'OTTAWA

OGC sent all Mayoral candidates 5 questions asking their position on community sport. The candidates that responded are posted as received.

OGC thanks all candidates who took the time to reply to our outreach. We recognize the demands of an election campaign and appreciate the engagement of candidates who shared their perspectives with us.

The responses below are presented to help OGC members and the broader community understand candidates' positions on community sport infrastructure and the future of OGC's central Ottawa facility. This information is provided for public awareness and is not intended to endorse or favour any candidate. Responses are presented as received, without changes to their substantive content.

Candidates who did not respond directly to OGC's outreach are not included in the table.

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Question 1: Community Sport Infrastructure

What is your vision for maintaining and investing in community sport and recreation infrastructure across Ottawa, particularly in established urban communities where available space is increasingly limited?

Mark Sutcliffe	My $10 billion infrastructure plan includes a commitment to invest $400 million over the next 10 years to restore or replace all aging recreational facilities. I have also committed to advancing 4 new full rec centres in Ottawa, including new facilities in urban Ottawa. By making strong investments today, we ensure that sport and recreation remain integral parts of our community fabric.
Ali Shayvard	One of my biggest priorities as mayor would be making sure that as Ottawa grows, our infrastructure grows with it. We cannot keep approving new developments and adding thousands of residents without properly planning for the services and facilities those residents will need. When we're planning new communities and approving major developments, we need to be thinking about more than just housing. We need to make sure we're planning for parks, recreational centres, sports facilities, transit, roads, and other essential community services. I would work to ensure that the need for sports and recreational facilities is properly considered in our development planning, using the planning and funding tools available to the City. But there's another side to this that I believe is just as important: **maintaining the infrastructure we already have.** One of the biggest issues I see with Ottawa is that we allow infrastructure to deteriorate until repairing or replacing it becomes extremely expensive. I want to change that approach. We need regular inspections, proper maintenance schedules, and long-term planning. If we take care of our facilities today, we can often extend their useful lives and avoid spending significantly more money replacing them tomorrow. My vision isn't just to build Ottawa for the next four years. It's to build a city that will continue working for our children and grandchildren.
Bernard Couchman	Replied with a link to the candidate website: https://BernardCouchman.ca

Neil Saravanamuttoo	The candidate advised that they would not be responding to the questionnaire due to limited resources and provided a link to their campaign platform. https://neilformayor.ca/priorities/
Queen Divine Priya A Bakshi	The candidate replied to OGC's email with additional questions but did not provide responses to the five questions submitted.
Josh Rachlis	I took gymnastics lessons as a kid, and I remember how fun that was. So I want to do anything I can to support the Ottawa Gymnastics Centre. I believe maintaining the community recreation facilities we already have should be a priority, especially in established neighbourhoods where finding space for new facilities is increasingly difficult. The Ottawa Gymnastics Centre is a perfect example of why we need to plan ahead. An organization that's been serving Ottawa families for more than 65 years shouldn't have to face uncertainty about its future without a clear plan for maintaining access to its programs. I'd want to understand whether the existing facility can be repaired or renovated at a reasonable cost before deciding that it needs to be replaced. If replacement is necessary, the City should work with the organization to explore suitable alternatives. We should also look for creative ways to make better use of existing facilities, including partnerships with schools, community organizations and local businesses. Sports and recreation help keep people healthy, bring communities together and give young people positive activities. As Ottawa grows, we need to make sure we're preserving and expanding access to these opportunities, not losing them.

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Question 2: Facility Continuity

What role do you believe the City should play in helping established not-for-profit community sport organizations identify viable long-term facilities when existing facilities are no longer available?

Mark Sutcliffe	The City must ensure that facilities in our community can be used by the organizations that bring them to life - particularly non-profit sport and recreation organizations. To ensure continuity, we must invest more strongly in building new facilities while committing to revitalizing old ones. This way, when revitalization or replacement work occurs, organizations have options to ease their transition to new spaces. The City can and should do more to help organizations by providing predictable renewal timetables and by doing its utmost to support their transition to new spaces.
Ali Shayvard	I understand that buildings age. Eventually, some reach a point where repairing them may no longer be safe or financially reasonable. However, before we decide that something must be demolished or replaced, I believe we need to look carefully at all the available options. In the case of the Ottawa Gymnastics Centre, I would want to review the building's condition assessments and understand exactly why the facility has been classified as being at the end of its life. Can it be repaired? Can its life be extended? Can it be modernized at a reasonable cost? If the answer is no, then we need to look at the next best option. One thing I strongly believe is that **we should be making better use of the land and facilities the City already owns.** Before spending large amounts of taxpayer money purchasing new properties or developing entirely new locations, we should review what resources are already available. Do we have underused buildings? City-owned land? Existing facilities that could be expanded, renovated, or redesigned to serve multiple community needs? If we're going to build something new, let's make sure we're designing it properly, using the available space efficiently, and creating something that will serve Ottawa for decades. I would want the City to work directly with organizations like yours to explore these opportunities. You've been serving Ottawa for over 65 years, and that history and experience should matter when decisions affecting your future are being made.
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Queen Divine Priya A Bakshi	The candidate replied to OGC's email with additional questions but did not provide responses to the five questions submitted.
Josh Rachlis	I believe the City should take an active role in helping established not-for-profit sports organizations find suitable facilities when their existing spaces are no longer available. These organizations contribute so much to our communities. They give children opportunities to develop skills, build friendships, stay active and gain confidence. They make life more meaningful for families across Ottawa, and we shouldn't take them for granted. Rather than leaving organizations like the Ottawa Gymnastics Centre to find a new home on their own, I'd want City staff to work directly with them to identify suitable municipal properties, explore partnerships with schools and private property owners, and help navigate zoning and permit requirements. I'd also explore ways the City could help make a transition financially feasible, while being responsible with taxpayers' money. Ideally, we should be planning these transitions well in advance so organizations can continue serving their communities without interruption.

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Question 3: Zoning and Land Use

What is your perspective on ensuring that municipal zoning and planning policies provide practical opportunities for non-profit sport and indoor recreation facilities in locations where suitable facilities can realistically be accommodated?

Mark Sutcliffe	As was the case in our new zoning by-law, we need to provide thoughtful flexibility to ensure that uses, such as recreational uses, can be advanced throughout Ottawa. Additionally, when the City approves new development, this must be done in coordination with earmarking land for parks, recreational facilities, schools, greenspace, and other considerations. As we look to update our official plan, I will ensure that these considerations are front and centre. From a practical standpoint, I am working with staff to cut red tape and address planning delays so that approvals come faster and with less difficulty for all applicants, including non-profits. I will continue that work in the coming years
Ali Shayvard	I believe municipal zoning and planning policies should make it easier for community organizations to operate, not create unnecessary barriers. Gymnastics is a perfect example. Your organization requires a specialized facility with high ceilings and sufficient open space. You cannot simply move into any available commercial building. I would support reviewing our zoning rules to identify unnecessary restrictions that prevent not-for-profit sports organizations from using otherwise suitable properties. I would also encourage the City to identify opportunities for recreational facilities when reviewing major development proposals and planning new communities. We should be looking at creative solutions, including shared facilities, partnerships with schools and community organizations, and adapting existing buildings where practical. Of course, safety, accessibility, and proper building standards must always be maintained. Ultimately, I want Ottawa to be a city where community organizations can find the space they need to grow alongside our population.
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Josh Rachlis	Community sports and recreation facilities contribute so much to our neighbourhoods, and I believe we should prioritize making space for them in our zoning and land-use planning. I'd want the City to review zoning regulations to identify unnecessary barriers that prevent not-for-profit sports organizations from opening or relocating facilities. For example, gymnastics requires large indoor spaces with high ceilings, so we should make sure suitable buildings can be used for recreation where it's practical and compatible with surrounding neighbourhoods. I'd also like City staff to work directly with organizations to help them navigate the approval process and identify suitable locations. As Ottawa grows and space becomes more limited, we need to make sure we're planning for the facilities that make our communities great places to live, not just housing and commercial development.

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Question 4: Affordability and Access

What approaches would you support to help ensure that community sport remains financially accessible to Ottawa families as facility and operating costs increase?

Ali Shayvard	Affordability is one of the biggest reasons I decided to run for mayor. The cost of living has become extremely difficult for many Ottawa families, and I understand that this problem has multiple causes. Some are federal, some are provincial, and others are municipal. As mayor, I would focus on what we can actually control at the municipal level. For example, one of my campaign commitments is to reduce the regular adult OC Transpo monthly pass to $90 for four years. The current regular adult monthly pass costs $138.50. Under my proposal, someone purchasing a regular adult monthly pass would save $48.50 every month, or $582 per year. For a household with two adults purchasing regular monthly passes, that would represent $1,164 in annual savings. This is one example of how I want to reduce everyday costs for Ottawa residents, subject to building a responsible and sustainable municipal budget. When families save money on essential services, they have more room in their budgets for things like children's sports, recreation, and other activities. I also believe we need to protect affordable access to community programs. We should explore practical ways to help not-for-profit organizations manage their operating costs, including making City-owned facilities available where appropriate, exploring shared-use arrangements, and reviewing existing recreation funding. Another important part of affordability is making sure that when we're building or renovating facilities, we're doing the work properly the first time. That means investing in quality materials, meeting appropriate standards for accessibility and energy efficiency, and making sure projects are properly inspected. I also believe we need to take a serious look at how the City uses outside contractors. Some municipal work is ongoing. Maintaining our roads, buildings, and infrastructure is not a one-time job. It's work that must be done every year. I want to review whether certain services could be performed more effectively and economically by trained City employees rather than repeatedly contracting out the same work. We also need stronger accountability for contractors. If work isn't done properly, we should be identifying those problems early and ensuring they're corrected rather than paying again for the same job. Every dollar we save through better management is a dollar we can potentially put toward improving services for residents.

Mark Sutcliffe	I will freeze recreation fees for seniors and families for at least one year and will keep any future increases below the rate of inflation.
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Queen Divine Priya A Bakshi	The candidate replied to OGC's email with additional questions but did not provide responses to the five questions submitted.
Josh Rachlis	I believe every family in Ottawa should have access to affordable sports and recreation programs, regardless of their income. I'd explore sponsorship opportunities with local businesses to help cover facility and operating costs, so those expenses don't have to be passed on to families through higher fees. I'd also work with community organizations to organize fundraising events that bring people together while raising money to support local sports programs. And I believe investing public funds in community recreation is important. These programs help keep people healthy, give children opportunities to develop skills and friendships, and bring communities together. They're an investment in the quality of life of Ottawa residents. I'd want to explore a combination of public funding, private sponsorships and community fundraising to help keep these programs accessible to everyone.

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Question 5: Transition and Community Recreation

What role should the City play in planning for the transition of established community recreation facilities approaching the end of their useful life, particularly where the loss of a facility could reduce access to specialized youth recreation?

Mark Sutcliffe	The city must do more to fund new facilities, renew old facilities, and plan for transitions when necessary so that families have continuity and community groups have predictability.
Ali Shayvard	I believe the City has a responsibility to plan ahead when community facilities are approaching the end of their useful lives. Organizations like the Ottawa Gymnastics Centre should not be left wondering what will happen to them when a lease expires. With your current lease ending in June 2027, I believe there should already be a clear discussion about the building's condition, the options for remaining at the existing location, and what alternatives may be available if relocation becomes necessary. If elected, I would work to bring the relevant City departments together with your organization to review those options. My preference would always be to explore whether an existing facility can be maintained safely and economically before replacing it. If replacement is unavoidable, then we should develop a realistic transition plan that looks at City-owned land, available buildings, potential partnerships, operating costs, and the needs of the families who depend on your services. I also want better long-term planning so organizations are not placed in similar situations in the future. This is why I keep coming back to the importance of maintaining our infrastructure and planning for growth. We know Ottawa is growing. That means we know we're going to need more sports facilities, more recreational spaces, and more services. We shouldn't be waiting until facilities close or communities are underserved before we start planning for those needs.
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Josh Rachlis	First, I'd want to do everything reasonably possible to preserve existing facilities. I believe older buildings add so much to the character and feeling of our communities. Seeing old pennants and photos on the walls, and knowing that past generations played sports in the very same building, creates a sense of history and belonging. To me, that kind of continuity is priceless. Of course, we need to make sure buildings are safe and financially viable to maintain. But before giving up on a facility, I'd want to explore every reasonable option for repairing, renovating or extending its useful life. If there's no other option but to move to another facility, the City should provide full support in planning the transition, working closely with the organization to identify suitable locations, explore funding options and ensure that programs can continue with as little interruption as possible. Youth recreation is so important. And childhood goes by so quickly. Our young people don't have years to wait while the adults figure out how to maintain access to the activities they love. We need to plan ahead so that children who are participating in sports today can continue enjoying those opportunities tomorrow.