

Established in 2008, the **Lethbridge Sport Council** represents 245 members (organization, associate, and individual) reaching over 30,000 citizens, with a vision of an inclusive, accessible sport community that celebrates quality experiences. Learn more about our mandate on our website at lethbridgesportcouncil.ca.

The **City of Lethbridge Recreation and Culture Master Plan (p.10)** highlights the strong community value placed on recreation and sport:

- 93% of households say recreation and culture are vital to community wellbeing
- 93% say access for all is important
- 94% say these services contribute to the local economy
- 87% say recreation and culture are very important to their household

We asked our membership to submit questions they wanted to ask our municipal election candidates.

1. In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport is part of the foundation of a healthy, thriving community. It builds skills, confidence, and belonging in our youth, creates social connections across all ages, and brings people together in a way few other activities can. Beyond personal and social benefits, sport is also a driver of economic activity through events, tournaments, and tourism.

In my time on Council, I've supported initiatives that recognize this dual role of sport – improving quality of life while contributing to the local economy.

I've supported Tourism Lethbridge's sport tourism strategy, which has positioned our city as a reliable host for events such as curling championships, hockey tournaments, and youth competitions. I've also supported investments in downtown activation including Festival Square and the new downtown playground. These have also given us flexible spaces that can be used for sport and recreation while boosting business activity.

Sport fosters teamwork, wellness, and pride in our city, and it gives us a competitive edge in attracting families, students, and investment. It's about both quality of life and economic development.

2. What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

We can get out and participate ourselves and try some of the activities our city has to offer!

In addition, City Council's role is to:

- Plan and invest strategically: ensure recreation and culture priorities are reflected in long-term planning such as the Recreation and Culture Master Plan and the Municipal Development Plan.
- Support barrier-free access: continue expanding supports such as the Fee Assistance Program so families aren't excluded by cost, and ensure facilities are built with universal design to accommodate all ages and abilities.
- Strengthen partnerships: maximize use of existing facilities through agreements with our school divisions, YMCA, and post-secondaries. This also helps align sport with workforce development and student retention.
- Champion sport tourism: continue backing Tourism Lethbridge's work to grow sport tourism, which generates revenue for hotels, restaurants, and local businesses.

Council must be both a convener and a champion – bringing the right partners together and ensuring recreation and sport are integral to our city's growth.

3. The City's 2021 Recreation and Culture Plan identified a need for more indoor gymnasium and fieldhouse spaces within three years, a need our membership supports.

a. What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I support addressing the need for more indoor recreation amenities. However, I would balance that with critical infrastructure spending and needs, and that doesn't stop us from planning for the future and finding innovative ways to attract investment in this area. The City's 2021 Recreation and Culture Plan was clear, and residents continue to tell us demand for dry-floor and multi-use spaces is outpacing supply. Lethbridge has proven that when we plan ahead and remain "opportunity-ready," we can act quickly when partnerships, grants, or private-sector investment arise.

b. How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

The City of Lethbridge works with the Lethbridge School Division and Holy Spirit Catholic School Division on the Joint Use Agreements. In May 2024, City of Lethbridge Rec and Culture, brought back a report to the Asset and Infrastructure Standing Policy Committee to update the Joint Use Agreements to better reflect the current operating processes and include updated language and facility lists. I would continue to advocate for strengthening and updating the Joint Use Agreement to ensure these facilities truly meet community needs, and I would also continue to advocate for the Joint Committee of City Council and School Boards because this is where Council and the School Boards can ensure the issue is discussed and moved forward.

c. How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

Partnerships are key. We must continue to work with existing partners and build new partnerships throughout the city and grow possibilities for community access. Council's role is to facilitate those conversations and remove barriers so that families and community sport organizations have more options.

d. How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

I recognize that nonprofit organizations running sport and recreation facilities are facing increasing pressures with operational costs, particularly when it comes to property taxation of commercial spaces. Council can:

- Improve zoning for recreational facilities so they are being located appropriately and are easily accessible for residents. Some of the tax issues come from locating in commercial and industrial areas, which may not be appropriate for recreational facilities.
- Work with organizations on long-term sustainability planning, including partnerships with the City, businesses, and other levels of government.
- Explore policy tools that differentiate between commercial competition and community-based programming.
- Review existing tax exemption frameworks to ensure facilities providing public benefit aren't unfairly disadvantaged.

Supporting nonprofits such as the Lethbridge Sport Council is critical. These organizations deliver frontline sport and recreation opportunities, and they need stability to continue making Lethbridge an active, healthy, and inclusive community.