

THE 2025 CITY OF LETHBRIDGE MUNICIPAL ELECTION

**CANDIDATE RESPONSES TO THE
LETHBRIDGE SPORT COUNCIL
MEMBER QUESTIONS**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	<u>Background</u>
04	<u>The Questions</u>
05	<u>Quentin Carlson - Mayor Candidate</u>
06	<u>Blaine Hyggen - Mayor Candidate</u>
07	<u>Ryan Mennie - Mayor Candidate</u>
09	<u>Kelti Baird - Councillor Candidate</u>
10	<u>Mark Campbell - Councillor Candidate</u>
11	<u>Belinda Crowson - Councillor Candidate</u>
13	<u>Rajko Dodic - Councillor Candidate</u>
15	<u>Rufa Doria - Councillor Candidate</u>
17	<u>Margaret (Magie) Matulic - Councillor Candidate</u>
18	<u>John Middleton-Hope - Councillor Candidate</u>
19	<u>Tevi Legge - Councillor Candidate</u>
20	<u>Ryan Parker - Councillor Candidate</u>
21	<u>Tom Roulston - Councillor Candidate</u>
22	<u>Mike Schmidtler - Councillor Candidate</u>
23	<u>Jenn Schmidt-Rempel - Councillor Candidate</u>
25	<u>Suteka Shah- Councillor Candidate</u>
26	<u>Ryan Wolfe - Councillor Candidate</u>

The following Mayoral candidate did not respond therefore are not included in this document: Michael Petrakis

The following Councillor candidates did not respond therefore are not included in this document: Kaitte Aurora, Al Beeber, Robin James, Gerry Saguin.

BACKGROUND

The priorities of the elected individuals chosen for Lethbridge's next City Council will have a direct impact on the quality of life in Lethbridge. Lethbridge Sport Council is a voice for sport so we asked our members what questions they wanted us to ask our municipal election candidates.

From the collective responses, six questions, along with some background information were sent to each mayoral and councillor candidate on September 26th.

Of the 22 candidates, 17 (or 77%) submitted responses - 3 of four (75%) mayoral candidates and 14 of 18 (78%) councillor candidates. We are sharing the candidate responses to help educate and inform you before you head to the polls.

You can find their responses in a question and answer format on our website at 2025 Municipal Election Candidate Responses. This document is organized by candidate and includes their social media accounts and website address.

RESPONSES SORTED BY
QUESTION ON OUR WEBSITE



We would like to thank our members who submitted questions and to the municipal election candidates who submitted responses. We look forward to continuing to work with our sport community and be a conduit of information to the City of Lethbridge City Council.

Lethbridge Sport Council was incorporated under the Alberta Societies Act on March 28, 2008. We are a voice for sport in Lethbridge and we believe everyone should experience quality sport, physical activity and active recreation. To find out more about our City of Lethbridge Fee for Service Agreement mandate and how we serve and support the community of Lethbridge check out our website at <https://lethbridgesportcouncil.ca>

THE QUESTIONS

That were posed to each candidate
and the context they were provided to answer them.

Dear Candidate,

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.

Please submit your responses by Sunday, October 5th. All responses will be posted in the News section of our website on Monday, October 6th. Thank you for sharing your perspectives.

1. In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?
2. What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?
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?
 - b. How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?
 - c. How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?
 - d. How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

Thank you so much for your time and willingness to engage with these questions..

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport and active recreation are vital to our community, delivering major returns that benefit everyone: Physical activity directly improves the mental, emotional, and physical health of citizens, reducing long-term public health costs and increasing quality of life across all demographics.

Sporting events are a reliable economic driver, bringing millions in visitor spending to our hotels, restaurants, and retail annually.

Active recreation builds social capital, fosters belonging, and creates a powerful sense of community pride.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

Council must be the Strategic Investor and Anchor Partner for the entire sport ecosystem.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I fully agree with the need identified in the 2021 plan: Lethbridge has a significant shortfall in accessible, modern indoor court and field space. This is unacceptable, and it must be addressed through a three-phase plan:

1. We will immediately negotiate subsidized agreements with existing facilities (YMCA, Lethbridge Polytechnic) to buy up time and significantly increase public access hours this year.
2. The new facility must be formally costed and designated as a key priority in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). We will aggressively pursue provincial and federal grants to build it.
3. The project will be planned under a shared-use partnership model with school divisions or post-secondary institutions to share costs, secure diverse funding, and ensure maximum community access.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

The Joint Use Agreement (JUA) with the school boards is our biggest tool for immediate capacity, but it's too cumbersome. I would push to modernize and simplify the JUA by:

- Ensuring school boards schedule staff to maximize evening and weekend access hours for community groups.
- Establishing a clear fee structure that provides free or near-free access for registered youth, adaptive sport, and low-income programs.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

We must treat non-profit facility operators as essential service partners and stop penalizing their efforts to be sustainable.

- I will advocate for Council to use its full authority to ensure that modest commercial revenue streams (like cafes or pro-shops) within an exempt facility are also exempt from property taxes, provided that net income is demonstrably reinvested into the facility's core recreation services.
- We will collectively lobby the Provincial Government to update regulations to give municipalities the flexibility needed to fully support the non-profit sector.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

As mayor seeking re-election in Lethbridge, I see sport as a cornerstone of our city's health, community pride, and economic vitality. Sport connects residents of all ages, supports youth development, builds volunteerism, and attracts regional tournaments that benefit local business.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council's role is to create the conditions for sport and active recreation to thrive—this means maintaining and improving infrastructure, supporting collaboration between organizations, and ensuring equitable access for residents.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

The 2021 Recreation and Culture Plan made it clear that additional indoor gymnasiums and fieldhouse space is needed. I support moving forward with a practical, phased plan to address these gaps, leveraging both municipal investment and partnerships to meet growing demand.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

To improve community access, I would strengthen the Joint Use Agreement with schools for more predictable and affordable gym time, and look at scheduling efficiencies to maximize current facilities.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

Finally, Council can assist nonprofits by reviewing how commercial space tax policies affect recreation providers, advocating for exemptions or relief measures where appropriate. Sustainable facilities are essential to keeping programs accessible, and supporting our nonprofit partners ensures long-term community benefit.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

The value of sport is immeasurable and it touches every aspect of our community. It's a triple-win for Lethbridge:

- * It Builds Healthy Citizens: Sport and active recreation are fundamental to the physical and mental well-being of our residents, from kids learning new skills to seniors staying active.
- * It Builds a Stronger Community: Sport brings people together, teaches our youth about teamwork and resilience, and fosters a powerful sense of community pride and belonging.
- * It Builds Our Local Economy: Sports tourism is a major economic driver, with tournaments and major events filling our hotels and restaurants, supporting local businesses and creating jobs.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council's role is to be a reliable and proactive partner. This involves three key functions:

- * The Planner and Funder: Council must take the lead on long-term planning for facilities and provide stable, predictable funding for our sport organizations and partners like the Lethbridge Sport Council.
- * The Collaborator: Council must actively build and strengthen partnerships with our school divisions, post-secondary institutions, and private facility owners to maximize access to all available spaces.
- * The Champion: The Mayor and Council should be the biggest cheerleaders for our local athletes, teams, and volunteers, celebrating their successes and promoting the value of sport in our city.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I fully support addressing the critical need for more indoor recreation space that was identified in the City's own Master Plan. It's a clear deficit for a growing city of our size.

However, we can't have a serious conversation about funding major new facilities while our current fiscal house is in disorder. My commitment is to first end the pattern of nearly \$50 million in budget overruns this past 4 years. By bringing discipline and accountability to our budget, we create the financial capacity to make smart, planned investments in core community infrastructure in the future. We must fix our spending problem first, so we can then responsibly address our facility needs.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

The Joint Use Agreement with our school divisions is a smart and cost-effective partnership, but it's only as strong as the relationship between the City and the school boards. As Mayor, I will take a direct, personal role in strengthening that relationship. I will meet regularly with both the Public and Holy Spirit school boards to review and modernize the JUA, with the clear goal of making access for our local sport groups simpler, more affordable, and more reliable. This is a leadership issue, and I will lead.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

We have world-class facilities at the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Polytechnic, as well as great private providers. As Mayor, I will proactively explore new and creative partnership agreements to open up more of these existing facilities for community use during their off-peak hours. It's a fiscally responsible way to leverage the incredible facilities that already exist within our community.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

This is a critical issue of fairness and common sense. It makes no sense for the City to grant funds to a non-profit organization with one hand while crippling them with an unsustainable tax bill with the other.

As Mayor, I will initiate a comprehensive review of our property tax assessment and exemption policies as they apply to non-profit facility operators. We need to ensure these policies are fair, consistent, and sustainable.

We must treat these vital community organizations as the essential partners they are, not as a source of tax revenue.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sports are a wonderful avenue to establish social connection and cohesion, foster community pride, and engender values of cooperation and civility. They have a monetary/economic value as well, but in my opinion that pales in comparison to the valuable connections formed through sport.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council has the opportunity to strengthen sport and active recreation in the community by supporting policies and projects that encourage folks to engage in sport and active recreation. As a cyclist, I delight in being able to safely move throughout my community and experience it from an active recreation mode of transportation. Moving more slowly, without the responsibility of a car, allows me to interact with my surroundings more, and see things from a new perspective. I interact with drivers, other cyclists, and pedestrians, and feel more connected to my community. With Council supporting development of more infrastructure that encourages active transportation, we can encourage more active recreation in the City like riding in our coulees, and participating in group rides. Additionally, funding organizations and making more grants available for larger events enables more people from all economic backgrounds to be able to enjoy sport and recreation in our community.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I support the need for more amenities, and I would prefer them to be civically owned and operated. While I appreciate that there is space to allow for private enterprise to fill this community need, I am primarily interested in public programs that would allow easier access for a more diverse group of people than is often found in private establishments.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

I would be interested to learn more about how the Joint Use Agreement works, and would be interested to find out if there is any underutilised space in the school district facilities or city-owned spaces.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

I'm interested in finding out if portions of the old Exhibition buildings could be set up for use as sport facilities. I know that the medieval martial artists, roller derby, and pickleball players are all constantly looking for space and I am interested in the adaptive reuse, rather than the demolition of those structures. Additionally, if there are any other underutilized city facilities that could fill needs.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

I am interested in learning more about this and how we can best assist our non profits in their success.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport is invaluable. When you're talking about individuals it teaches leadership, how to win or lose with grace, it's good for you on a health and mental level and having played sports all my life I developed life-long relationships. The camaraderie of playing sports is incalculable. From a municipal level, it brings communities together whether it's on a purely leisure level or if you're an elite athlete. It creates opportunities for people who want to strive for bigger things. Economically when we bring a big event to the city, that translates into putting money into the community. The Brier, for example had an \$8 million impact. And when Lethbridge people play sports they can be tremendous ambassadors for our city.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

- Continue to support Capitol projects when we can.
- -Listen to outside the box ideas that may come from The Sport Council or other sport bodies.
- -Continue with what I consider to be a great relationship with the Lethbridge Sport Council.
- -Understand what the needs are and what plans need to be in place.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

It's vital. I was happy to see the expansion of the Ecole La Verendrye School gym which is underway and the gym at the new West Coulee Station is fantastic. It's a necessary part of addressing the needs we have and will continue to have as the population grows.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

I'd need to understand what the main issues are. Is the community not getting fair access indoor gym space? If not there has to be a combined effort to figure the best way to tackle those issues.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

This goes with my last answer. Dialogue, communication and suggestions coordinated by City Administration and facility providers.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

This would be a good topic to bring to a future SPC meeting. What are the challenges, what are the suggestions from people who deal with this regularly? SPCs are open to public discourse and it could be a good opportunity to create some change.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport is such a wide and varied activity enjoyed by many different audiences that it would be impossible to assign it simply one value. These are but five of the values it brings to Lethbridge.

Value 1: Recreation

What's there to do in Lethbridge? This is a commonly asked question, and sports provides recreational activities for many Lethbridge residents of various ages and backgrounds. To meet all the recreational needs, we need to provide opportunities for various abilities and backgrounds and for people of all ages and financial backgrounds.

Value 2: Prevention

Research shows time and again that sports play a powerful role in helping youth develop into strong, committed residents. Those who are active in sports build friendship, learn skills, develop leadership abilities and are less likely to participate in crime and anti-social behaviours. We know the importance of prevention in helping to ensure youth build resilience and stay away from drugs and alcohol. If we properly fund these activities that help create positive experiences for youth, we can benefit not only them and their families, but our entire communities.

Value 3: Health

Sports help with the physical and mental health of the residents of Lethbridge. They can help prevent stress, enhance self-esteem and encourage lifelong health by keeping people active and fit. We know that people who stay active reduce their chances of getting certain diseases. By providing opportunities for sport for all residents of Lethbridge, we can lower health costs for our communities.

Value 4: Economics.

Professional sports. Tourism. Sports is an important economic driver for Lethbridge. It is no surprise that our hotels and restaurants are busy when Lethbridge hosts tournaments and events. Local stores and venues benefit from the provision of the equipment, clothing, and material athletes need to participate in their desired sports. Our local tourism is boosted both by sports tourism (hosting of events and tournaments) and by how these competitions showcase our community to people from across the region, province and from across Canada. Additionally, professional sports take this economic impact to another level. Overall, sports are one part of the economic life of Lethbridge and need to be included and considered as Lethbridge updates its economic strategy.

Value 5: Public perception and Identity

Having a strong sports community and having teams that we can celebrate and get behind can help to strengthen our connection to the community and build a stronger community identity. It will also strengthen and grow how Lethbridge is seen by other communities and build our reputation.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council's role in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community is wide ranging and focuses on its governance and policy-setting responsibilities.

The most basic role City Council has in strengthening sports and active recreation is to provide, through the planning and budgeting processes, the infrastructure that supports these activities. This infrastructure includes the buildings and sites, but also the city staffing that supports community groups in providing these opportunities.

City Council also provides appropriate, limited and strategic funding to support sport and active recreation. This can be done through the provision of funding for events (such as the event hosting grant) and in providing support for individuals through the fee assistance program for those who wish to access sports and recreation.

City Council also promotes a positive environment for sports and recreation, recognizing and celebrating its importance for the community and all residents.

Related to the economic role of sports, Council sets the vision for the community and oversees the economic strategy for the city, in which sports and sports tourism play a role.

Further, Council sets the parameters for fee for services agreements, such as that under which the Sports Council operates, and evaluates the impact of such agreements.

BELINDA CONTINUED

COUNCILLOR CANDIDATE

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

As I note in 3b below, the city has chosen for the last while to contribute money to the construction of new schools to help build large gymnasiums with the understanding that these spaces would then be available to community groups. Is this still the best option to provide these facilities?

The need for these facilities must be balanced with the economic reality of the community and with the competing needs of other city departments. In the current economic environment, the current City Council has brought forward a new Asset Management Policy. Administration is now working on creating the Asset Management Plan which will have staff review and evaluate all assets in the city. This will help determine when assets need to be replaced and will help prioritize what assets need to be updated first. The focus under the policy is on existing assets and not the creation of new ones. This will help determine what will be brought forward to the next capital budget. Sports and active recreation amenities will need to fit within this larger mandate. I would invite and encourage members of the sports and recreation community to work with city administration to ensure that sports and recreation assets are involved in the capital budget process.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

Unfortunately, we have been hearing that the Joint Use Agreement may not be providing the level of access to community groups that they would wish. I would recommend that at one of the first meetings of the Joint Committee of Lethbridge City Council and the School Board that the Sports Council be invited to attend for a discussion on concerns, issues, ideas, etc. related to the Joint Use Agreement. This meeting would simply be a conversation and an opportunity to share. The concerns and ideas would then be taken back to respective administrations to look through and report back. From that initial conversation it is expected that some solutions could be brought forward to improve this agreement for the benefit of all.

Related both to this question and 3a, the city has been providing money to enlarge the gyms of new schools. We should also re-evaluate this decision. Is this still the best way to ensure there are facilities for the community or should that money instead be used to provide the indoor gymnasium and fieldhouse spaces that are required? I don't have the answer, but we must work through this conversation and determine the best way to make this happen.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

First, I would need to better understand what is limiting community access. Is it that there aren't enough facilities? Is it timing and scheduling? Are there other concerns?

Once we all had a shared understanding of the concerns, I would then look to hear what possible solutions members of the sports community have and work with Administration to determine what could be provided.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

I don't completely understand this question. Is this the result of financial difficulties facing these nonprofits so that they can't keep up their facilities?

If so, then we would have to look to see if groups are completely accessing all granting opportunities. We would then have to look to see if the buildings are being used to their fullest capacity so that we weren't missing any financial opportunities. Next, we would have to look to see if there are other needs and what options there might be to see that these were sustainable.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport has many values whether the activity be competitive or otherwise, whether in a group or on your own. The variety of sporting opportunities in Lethbridge are many from ice arenas to football and soccer fields, to pickleball and tennis courts, to the Westside Leisure Centre, Spitz Stadium and many others too numerous to mention. Apart from the physical health that sports participation provides, there is a psychological component as well: we all feel better when we are active. Further, there is an economic benefit to sports such as our hockey team, the various and numerous curling events that have been held in Lethbridge and innumerable other sporting activities all that provide an economic boon. The Municipal Government Act sets out the purposes of municipal governments and one of those is : "to provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of a municipality." Therefore, Council is mandated to provide facilities and services which, of course, include 'sport' as a broad description of what we should and want to provide and to ensure that there are sufficient options for all those who want to take part in such activities and to be able to do so. The value of sport is incalculable, but I think I have given you a sense of my thoughts in that regard by my rather lengthy reply to a relatively short question. Sorry, it's the lawyer in me.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

To continue to provide services and facilities having regard to budgetary realities. I recall years ago a debate whether a twin ice arena on the west-side should be built first or whether CASA should. It would have been nice to do both at the same time but , again, you have to be able to pay for such projects without over burdening property tax payers. Council should, and has, supported one off sporting events that need City support whether in-kind or by way of cash and it is important to continue to support such initiatives. Usually it is the Lethbridge Sport Council that brings those types of opportunities forward and we rely on them to vet the benefits, or otherwise, of such asks and, more often than not, act on their recommendations. I don't see that changing.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

I am going to answer these four questions in one response. During the time I was not on Council between 2013 and 2021, Council made two decisions regarding community projects that have severely limited the amount of capital available to build new facilities. First, the \$50 million borrowing to fund the final phase of the Westside Leisure Centre which was the first time in decades that money was borrowed for a community project. A significant amount of that loan remains outstanding. The second, was the Agri-Hub Centre or the LDE (Lethbridge and District Exhibition). During the time I was Mayor, the LDE project could only receive City funds if the Province and Feds paid 2/3 of the then \$75 Million anticipated cost. This was memorialized in an Official Business Motion. At some point after I left Council and before returning in 2021, that Motion was amended and, to make a long story short, the City is now responsible for basically 2/3 of the capital cost and all of the operational costs that aren't recovered through revenue which presently has a shortfall of about \$5,000.00 a day. The City had to utilize various reserves to fund the Agri-Hub which will continue into the future. The bottomline is that these two projects have left a big gap in terms of what is available for any community project including sports projects although the West-side complex does fill a need but wasn't funded through the usual means which means the interest paid for the loan is not available for community projects. Because of the present lack of capital monies, the City is limited in terms of new visionary projects but can continue to work with schools (although not limited to them), for example, to provide recreational space through joint use agreements. Finally, question (c) and (d) can be answered in one of two ways. The political way which is where candidates state categorically that they will do everything possible to ensure expanded community access to sport facilities or will modify the tax regime to assist in doing so. So that's a promise easy to make but difficult to deliver. My promise is different, I can only promise to do the best I can to facilitate increased access or availability to sporting facilities either existing or yet to be built and I think my track record in supporting the sports in Lethbridge can be verified by my voting record on such and related issues.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport is a powerful connector and a convener of community. It promotes physical and mental well-being, supports youth development, and fosters meaningful connections across diverse backgrounds.

The impact of sport is something I've personally valued for many years. My family business has been a long-time sponsor of the Next-Gen Basketball program, which organizes leagues and clinics for youth aged 9 to 18. Throughout the season, I attend games weekly and deliver motivational talks on how sport builds character, discipline, and resilience. As well, as a former president of the Filipino-Canadian Association, I continue to support our community's sports programming, which includes clinics in volleyball, badminton, and basketball.

The ability of sport to nurture discipline, ambition, and camaraderie is foundational to strong community relationships. For a growing city like Lethbridge, investing in sport is an investment in our collective health, unity, and long-term prosperity.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council should play a vital leadership role in planning, funding, and facilitating sport and active recreation. That includes setting strategic priorities, ensuring equitable access to infrastructure, and working with partners, such as schools, nonprofits, and private operators, to remove barriers to participation. Council also needs to be a strong advocate for provincial and federal funding to support local facility development and long-term sustainability of programs.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I support the findings of the 2021 Recreation and Culture Plan and recognize the urgent need for more indoor sport and recreation spaces. With our growing population and demand for year-round access, it's time to move from planning to implementation. I would advocate for accelerating feasibility studies, identifying funding opportunities, including grants and public-private partnerships, and ensuring that any new development is guided by equity, access, and long-term sustainability.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

Improving the Joint Use Agreement with local school boards is a key opportunity. I would push for more flexible scheduling, lower administrative barriers, and better alignment between school and community needs. In parallel, I would support technology solutions for streamlined bookings and data-sharing, so we can optimize underused space and ensure that community groups (especially youth, low-income families, and seniors) can access gym space when they need it most.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

Collaboration is essential. I suggest stakeholder roundtables with facility providers, including nonprofits, private gyms, post-secondary institutions, cultural groups, and schools, in order to identify shared goals and coordinate usage. Exploring shared cost models, grant partnerships, and facility-sharing agreements can help maximize existing resources while reducing redundancy. I'd also work to ensure zoning and permitting processes are supportive of adaptive reuse and expansion by community sport organizations.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

Nonprofit organizations play a vital role in delivering affordable, accessible recreation opportunities in Lethbridge. It is unfortunate to hear that some are struggling with the financial burden of property taxes on spaces used for community benefit.

City Council should work to ensure that tax policies recognize the unique contributions of nonprofits and don't penalize them for operating community-focused facilities. If elected, I would commit to reviewing the criteria for commercial property tax exemptions and advocating for clear, consistent guidelines that reflect the realities of nonprofit service delivery.

In addition, I would support creating a dedicated liaison or advisory service within the City to help nonprofits navigate the tax system, apply for exemptions, and access grants or subsidies. By reducing financial and administrative barriers, we can help these organizations stay sustainable and focused on serving our community through sport and recreation.

MARGARET (MAGIE) MATULIC

**COUNCILLOR
CANDIDATE**

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

HIGH VALUE

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

By being a leader is promoting sport and rec.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

There would have to be funds found, I believe I can find them given my property tax solution.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

I am thinking of a "flex pass" that can be used in multiple locations.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

as per above , I am thinking of a "flex pass" that can be used in multiple locations.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

By Freezing fees.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sports for any community builds character and leadership among those involved. It builds commitment to others including team mates and coaches. From a more macro perspective, sports enhance tourism and our citizens to become involved in activities around town. I see lots of folks at high school football games, in part because of kids or grandkids but also because it is an evening out that people can enjoy. I fully support community funding for road hockey, curling, baseball, soccer tournaments and more that engage our youth in productive activities.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

Where possible support initiatives to bring events to Lethbridge. As much as those involved in sport want more recreation facilities and more events, cost is always a factor and the majority of citizens do not want us to put activities ahead of public safety, business development, housing etc. So it is an ongoing balancing act. Much like the arts, we as citizens need to understand the financial consequences of our decisions to support one over another and then as council, make those decisions our citizens expect of us. Where ever possible, work with sports groups to secure funding from other levels of government to support more activities for our citizens. This helps make our community thrive.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

Because of weather uncertainty we experience (sitting on the sidelines watching my grandkids play soccer in April can be a cold experience), I think there are benefits to having more indoor space to allow for recreation to occur all year long. Soccer, basketball, pickleball, badminton, volleyball are all sports that would benefit from more court space. Not only youth, but seniors too benefit from being able to play indoors all year long. We have worked with schools (by enlarging gyms) to build more recreation spaces (joint use agreement). We need to continue to work with them to ensure space is allocated not only to students but also to others after school to help meet this need. Churches and community halls may also be leveraged in addition to city facilities to provide more space. We have not decided on the pavilions at the Exhibition. I believe they remain a possible alternative to additional space. Expanding community access will only come with extended hours of operation of existing facilities. Building more facilities must be done strategically by projecting sport and recreation development over many years and meeting those needs. Today pickleball, volleyball, badminton, basketball, soccer, hockey all create demands on indoor facilities, while soccer, rugby, football and baseball create demands on outdoor space. We must accurately project the changing demographics and use such as pickleball for indoor or cricket for outdoor space (fastest growing sport in Canada). A strategic master plan updated in 2026 will help us plan and allocate dollars and space for the next 25 years. There are opportunities to provide some spaces to not for profit organizations and there are partnerships with sports organizations and the private sector to build and maintain facilities. Again part of this will require comprehensive examination of what our community demands over the next horizon and beyond to meet the need of a city that is nearing 120,000 this year and potentially double that number by 2050.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

One of the reasons I love this city so much is because of how active our community is. I think sport plays such an important role in creating community, sustaining community, and making a community thrive as I have seen it first hand through my own kids participating in sports around the city.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

I think the City should play the following role, help with strategic vision and leadership, investment in facilities and infrastructure, ensuring sport is accessible and affordable, event attraction and hosting, an policy and advocacy.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I think we need to look back at the plan, refresh it if required to make it relevant and reevaluate from there.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

I think getting schools involved in renting out their gym space could be an advantageous way of increasing capacity without building new infrastructure. A modernized booking system would also help.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

Build relationships, make sure I understand how everything works, and find the best ways to work together to bring more sport to Lethbridge.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

We could review the property tax policies for nonprofits and make amendments if required. We could offer property tax rebates, we could prioritize access to municipally owned space, encourage multi-use/shared models like I referred to with the schools. We can also advocate provincially and push for provincial operating grants tied specifically to community rec facilities.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport plays a huge role in shaping the quality of life in Lethbridge. It brings people together, promotes healthy living, and builds strong community connections. Whether it's youth learning teamwork, adults staying active, or volunteers giving their time to support local programs, sport contributes to our city's physical, social, and economic wellbeing.

Sport also helps put Lethbridge on the map—hosting tournaments, attracting visitors, and supporting local businesses. Most importantly, it teaches life skills like discipline, respect, and perseverance that benefit individuals far beyond the field or arena.

For me, sport represents community pride, inclusion, and opportunity—values that make Lethbridge a better place to live for everyone.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council should be a strong partner in supporting sport and active recreation by creating the conditions for success. That means investing in quality facilities, maintaining accessible spaces like parks and trails, and supporting organizations that deliver programs to residents of all ages and abilities.

Council's role isn't to run sports—it's to help build the foundation that allows local groups, volunteers, and athletes to thrive. By working collaboratively with the Lethbridge Sports Council and community partners, we can ensure that sport remains a key part of our city's health, economy, and sense of community.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I support the need for more indoor gymnasium and fieldhouse spaces in Lethbridge. As demand grows, we need to plan responsibly by exploring partnerships with schools, post-secondary institutions, and community groups to maximize existing facilities and share costs on new ones. Investing in recreation isn't just about infrastructure—it's about promoting health, connection, and community pride while ensuring projects remain financially sustainable for taxpayers.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

I believe we can improve access to indoor gym space by making better use of what we already have. Strengthening the Joint Use Agreement with our school divisions would allow more community access to school gyms during evenings and weekends. At the same time, we should explore partnerships and phased investments in new facilities to meet growing demand. The goal is to keep recreation accessible, affordable, and inclusive for all residents.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

I believe collaboration is the best way to expand access to sport facilities. By working with schools, post-secondary institutions, and private operators, we can maximize use of existing spaces through improved scheduling, shared-use agreements, and cost-sharing opportunities. This approach strengthens community access and supports growth in sport and recreation without placing additional strain on taxpayers.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

Nonprofits are essential to providing affordable recreation in our community. City Council can support them by reviewing how property tax and assessment policies affect nonprofit-run facilities and ensuring fair, consistent treatment. We should also explore partnerships, grants, or operating agreements that help offset costs while maintaining accountability. Keeping these organizations sustainable is key to supporting health, inclusion, and community connection in Lethbridge.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport is invaluable to our city. Not only does it offer avenues for health and well-being, but it creates a sense of community. Healthy communities are thriving communities and it's important that municipal leaders recognize this relationship between sport and community.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council needs to be an ally of sports organizations in Lethbridge. Council needs to be a body that is always willing to listen to local sports groups and associations. Listen to what they're seeing in terms of participation, what facilities they have to support programming and what pain points they're experiencing that could impact participation. City Council should be consistently taking stock of these groups' needs. Council also needs to play a lead role in getting the most out of its existing sports and recreational facilities. When needs arise for new amenities or renovations to existing facilities, multi-use planning should always be taken into account to benefit as many user groups as possible, thus getting the most value out of that investment.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I believe indoor sport and active recreation amenities should be a priority for city council. As per my remarks above, healthy communities are thriving communities. Many people want to live where there is convenient access to recreational amenities and we, as a city, should make efforts to check those boxes not just for the people who live here, but for prospective residents, as well as potential job creators. A company is more likely to make economic investments if there are perks, like up to date recreational facilities, that can benefit its potential employees.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

I think the Joint Use Agreement is a great way to utilize as many indoor gym spaces as possible in our city. I don't have an answer right now on ways we could improve community access, but if elected, I'm eager to meet with various user stakeholder groups to identify any pain points and work towards potential improvements to the Joint Use Agreement in a collaborative way.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

I have two thoughts here. If expanding community access is about space, we need to get a clear picture from facility operators as to when there are amenities that are not in use. Then work with sports organizations looking for space to fill those gaps.

If expanding community access is about inclusion - we need to collaborate on ways to break down access barriers. If elected, I would support initiatives like subsidized admissions for low-income residents, as well as free admission days as a way to get more people, in particular first timers, in the door. If elected, I will always support sustainable ways we can boost inclusion in local sports and recreation.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

I believe tax exemptions can work, granted they be structured so there is at least some cost recovery. I think that cost recovery formula needs to remain fluid as different nonprofits will each have different needs. Speaking in broader terms, I think potential cost recovery avenues could include things like a percentage of revenue, a percentage of user fees or even corporate sponsorship opportunities depending on the type of recreational facility. We generally associate sponsorships with major facilities, but is there an opportunity to engage with the business community on some of the smaller ones too? This is an area where there needs to be collaborative discussions with all stakeholders before reaching a solution.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport and active recreation provide tremendous value to the community of Lethbridge, contributing to physical health, community spirit, safe and productive youth development, strengthens social connections and local economic vitality through events and tourism. Active recreation also reduces health costs, improves mental well-being, and makes Lethbridge a more attractive place to live and work.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council should facilitate strategic planning, fund key projects, forge partnerships, and advocate for inclusive access to facilities. They are responsible for steering policy frameworks, supporting infrastructure investments, and ensuring equity in recreation opportunities for underserved groups.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

Given the 2021 Recreation and Culture Plan's findings and clear community support, addressing the shortfall in indoor gymnasium and fieldhouse spaces is essential. City Council should prioritize investment in these amenities, explore joint funding models, and seek grants or provincial/federal support. Regular needs assessments, phased development, and repurposing underutilized spaces can also help bridge gaps.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

- Expand and update the Joint Use Agreement with local school boards to optimize shared scheduling of school gymnasiums for general public use outside school hours.
- Invest in public booking systems, clear communication, and streamlined processes so residents can easily access facility spaces.
- Create pilot programs with discounted rates or free slots for nonprofits and youth groups.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

- Form working groups between the City and facility operators (universities, schools, recreation centers) to advance coordinated scheduling and maximize facility utilization year-round.
- Develop long-term lease or operating agreements that guarantee accessible hours for residents, particularly during peak evening and weekend times.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

City Council can:

- Advocate for or establish local property tax exemptions or rebates for nonprofit recreation facility providers, helping reduce financial strain.
- Collaborate with provincial authorities to clarify eligibility and streamline exemption processes, ensuring more organizations benefit.
- Consider alternative models such as community service agreements or capacity-building grants that offset operational costs for nonprofits facing space-related tax challenges.

QUESTION ONE - 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.

QUESTION TWO - 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.

QUESTION THREE 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.

QUESTION THREE 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.

QUESTION THREE 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.

QUESTION THREE 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.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Sport plays a vital role in Lethbridge. It builds community, teaches teamwork and discipline, supports mental and physical health, and gives young people positive opportunities to grow and succeed. Beyond the individual benefits, sport also strengthens our local economy by attracting tournaments, events, and families who invest in our city. With my own children involved in local sports, I see firsthand how important these opportunities are to families and to our community's overall wellbeing.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

City Council should act as both a partner and a facilitator. That means ensuring responsible investments in sport and recreation facilities, listening to the needs of community organizations, and finding collaborative ways to maximize the impact of every tax dollar. Council should also advocate for partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and private providers to keep access affordable and inclusive.

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

I support addressing this need in a responsible and phased way. Demand is clearly there, and we know indoor facilities are essential to support year-round activity. However, new investments must be fiscally responsible. I would support exploring partnerships—whether with school boards, nonprofits, or private groups—to share costs and expand access without putting the full burden on taxpayers.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

The Joint Use Agreement is a valuable tool, but we know there are still challenges in accessing school gyms and other spaces. I would support reviewing and improving that agreement to ensure community groups have more reliable and affordable access during evenings and weekends. A more coordinated scheduling system could also help reduce conflicts and maximize use of existing spaces.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

City Council can play a stronger role in building relationships with facility providers. This means creating opportunities for collaboration, offering incentives for shared use, and reducing red tape that makes it difficult for groups to work together. By partnering with universities, colleges, private gyms, and nonprofits, we can get more value out of facilities that already exist before investing in new builds.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

Nonprofits provide tremendous value to our community, and their contributions to sport and recreation are significant. I believe Council should review the policies around tax exemptions to ensure they are applied fairly and consistently, while keeping sustainability in mind. Supporting nonprofits through exemptions, grants, or partnerships can often be more cost-effective for taxpayers than replacing their services with city-run alternatives.

Closing: Sport is part of the fabric of Lethbridge. As a councillor, I would work to strengthen access to recreation and sport by listening to organizations, supporting responsible investments, and ensuring every dollar spent benefits the greatest number of residents.

QUESTION ONE - In your view, what is the value of sport to Lethbridge?

Our daughter was a competitive volleyball player. Sport is of great value developmentally, economically and mentally. Sport is very important.

QUESTION TWO - What role should City Council play in strengthening sport and active recreation in our community?

Council should take an active role based on feedback and input from the "Pros" like the Lethbridge Sports Council

QUESTION THREE A - What is your position on addressing this need for additional indoor sport and active recreation amenities?

would like to see this happen when possible/feasible. It would bring a lot of money to the city.

QUESTION THREE B - How would you improve community access to indoor gym space, including through the Joint Use Agreement?

No idea. It is not my role to come up/create those strategies. I depend on groups such as yours to provide ideas and input that can be brought to council and discussed and explored.

QUESTION THREE C - How would you work with existing facility providers to expand community access to sport facilities?

I would happily engage with facility providers to find realistic solutions.

QUESTION THREE D - How can City Council support nonprofits facing challenges with commercial space tax exemptions to keep recreation facilities sustainable?

WE will need to continue to work together to explore and pursue the best options to provide the support for the valuable work being done.