

# Alex Cullen

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Sept. 24, 2024

Mark Sutcliffe  
Mayor, City of Ottawa  
Ottawa City Hall

Dear Mayor Sutcliffe:

## City of Ottawa Budget 2025 Funding for Recreational Facilities Life-Cycle Costs

I am writing to you to ask that you ensure that there is sufficient funding in the City's 2025 budget to meet the requirements to maintain and, where necessary, replace the City's aging indoor ice rinks, consistent with the City's 10-year Recreation & Cultural Services Asset Management Plan.

The 2024 budget for life-cycle funding for Ottawa's sports facilities is \$22.8 million, which is insufficient to maintain the City's aging indoor ice arenas. The closure of the Belltown Dome, a well-used indoor rink in Ottawa's west end (Bay Ward), as an artificial ice surface, illustrates the issue. The cost to repair this facility, according to City staff, is \$3.2 million as a result of failing refrigeration equipment and aging structure. There are no plans to replace this facility as the City's policy is to replace such facilities with 2 ice pads and there is no space for this at the Belltown Dome. Unfortunately this will displace the hockey leagues (West End Hockey Association, Nepean Minor Hockey Association, Kanata Girls Hockey Association) and other users with little capacity for the remaining arenas to absorb the hours of ice time lost (West End Hockey Association estimates that 500 hours of ice time will be lost for them *alone*). Bay Ward will now be without an artificial ice pad. The City's policy (from the Parks & Recreation Master Plan) is to have one artificial ice surface for every 20,000 residents: Bay Ward (population 43,000) qualifies for *two* ice pads but will have none, with no plan to replace the Belltown Dome.

The closure of the Belltown Dome is but a harbinger of things to come. The City's 10-year Recreation & Cultural Services Asset Management Plan states that the City's 36 arenas have an average age of 45 years, so it is likely that other arenas will face failing refrigeration equipment as they age. The 10-year Plan estimates the City will need \$907 million for renewal of these arenas, \$166 million for enhancement, and \$655 million for growth as the City expands, for a total of \$1.8 billion. However, the Plan states that there is a funding **shortfall** to meet these targets of **\$910 million**.

Unless the City ensures there is adequate funding to maintain and replace these aging facilities then other arenas will follow Belltown Dome's example and close as well, reducing an important community service valued by our residents – not only for hockey (boys & girls, adult), but for ringette, figure-skating, learn-to-skate, etc.

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This is an issue that must be addressed before Ottawa loses any more of its valued arenas. It cannot be addressed with rate-of-inflation tax increases, as this approach has led to underfunding the needed life-cycle investment in the City's aging assets. Not investing here means eventual loss of the services these community assets now provide, and the inability to provide for new neighbourhoods.

Taxes pay for services. You and your Council colleagues have the obligation to ensure that the City's assets are well-maintained and can accommodate future growth. I look forward to City Council adopting a 2025 City budget that recognizes this obligation.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Cullen".

Alex Cullen

Cc Wendy Stephenson, City Manager  
Dan Chenier, General Manager, Recreation & Cultural Facilities