

Press release: Greenspace Alliance 2018 Municipal Election Survey

October 8, 2018

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, as part of its 2018 Ottawa municipal election strategy, recently conducted a survey of candidates for Ottawa City Council.

It undertook the survey with the goal of raising the level of knowledge of key greenspace issues amongst municipal candidates. The results show that while the level of candidate awareness was mixed, candidates put a high degree of importance on greenspace issues. Over 80 percent said that greenspace was "extremely important" for residents of their ward and another 19 percent said it was "very important." It is encouraging to see that so many candidates recognize the importance of greenspace as a key element of a liveable community. We are confident that this survey has raised the awareness of greenspace issues in the National Capital Region.

The Alliance asked candidates to identify what they thought were the greatest threats to greenspace in their wards. Residential development was continually brought up as the most significant threat. Orléans Ward Council candidate Jarrod Goldsmith said in his response that "Development is the greatest threat to original greenspace. I would like to see greenspace replacement to be included for every construction project." Kitchissippi Ward Councillor Jeff Leiper stated that "Development - towers and infill - are significantly reducing greenspace, permeable space, and tree canopy." We look forward to working with the next City Council on solutions to this development versus greenspace issue.

The survey also asked candidates about their level of awareness of specific greenspace policies and which ones they thought were the most important. Candidates were most aware of the City's Urban Tree Conservation By-laws, followed by the Urban Forest Management Plan, the Significant Woodland Policy, and the Site Alteration By-law, in descending order. The Urban Forest Management Plan was considered to be the most important policy, followed by the Urban Tree Conservation By-laws, the Significant Woodland Policy and the Site Alteration By-law. Candidates were also concerned with the Chalk River nuclear waste disposal plan, with over 90 percent of respondents saying they were either "very aware" or "somewhat aware" of the issue and 85 percent of respondents saying they would support a Council declaration opposing the plan.

As noted, there was a generally lower level of awareness among candidates of the Site Alteration By-law. The brief explanation provided in the introduction to the question will undoubtedly have raised their awareness of this policy. In response to a specific question on the implementation of the By-law, almost 90 percent of respondents said they would support moving from the current complaint based system to a permit based one. The City of Ottawa is currently the only municipality in Ontario with a site alteration by-law that does not include a permit based system.

Finally, on the question of urban expansion, the overwhelming majority of candidates were in favour of accommodating future population growth within the current urban boundary. This accommodation would come through intensification, not only in the core but spread throughout the urban area, in a way that preserves greenspace and promotes healthy communities.

Full ward level results from the survey can be found here: <http://greenspace-alliance.ca/index.php/greenspace-alliance-2018-municipal-election-survey/>

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