

Background

In their 2015-2018 Strategic Plan *Greater Together*, City Council outlined the need for a citizen satisfaction survey to be conducted in 2016, and again in 2018.

It is best practice across Canada for municipalities to conduct citizen satisfaction or perception surveys on an annual or biannual basis. Just a few examples of municipalities that conduct citizen surveys on a regular basis include Edmonton, Calgary, Mississauga, Thunder Bay, Regina, Coquitlam, Red Deer, Kelowna, Blue Mountains, and Oakville.

The City contracted Metroline Research Incorporated, a national marketing firm, to conduct a Citizen Survey. The purpose of the survey was to measure citizen perceptions and attitudes regarding the services provided by the City of Greater Sudbury and the levels of satisfaction with local quality of life.

Metroline completed 1,200 interviews by telephone, both cell and landline, between September and November 2016. An online survey was also conducted in the interests of public engagement and inclusiveness, and a total of 1,719 residents completed the online survey. The telephone and online surveys were available in both official languages.

Metroline has compiled the results of the Citizen Survey and the full report, as well as the comments made by residents in the open-ended question for both the telephone and online surveys, are attached to this report as appendices. The comments have been reviewed by the Clerk's Office for compliance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

For the purposes of analysis, Metroline has reported separately the statistically valid telephone survey responses and the results of the online survey, because the latter results are not statistically valid as the respondents are self-selected.

Overview of the Survey

The 2016 survey generally sought to better understand:

- issues that are most important to residents;
- residents' opinion about the quality of life in Greater Sudbury;
- residents' opinions about municipal services, programs, and facilities; and
- residents' general sense of the future of Greater Sudbury.

The questions included in the 2016 survey were based on a best practice review of surveys from other municipalities from a diverse range of providers; Council's strategic goals and priorities; and recommendations from the service provider. The questions were also reviewed in conjunction with the City's 2009 survey to ensure as much comparability as possible. This was not always possible, as the 2009 survey was designed as part of a budget prioritization process and so the questions were not always exactly replicable. Where comparison with the 2009 results is possible, that comparison has been included in the analysis provided by Metroline.

Three appendices are included with this report:

- Survey findings report from Metroline
- Responses to the open-ended questions – Telephone
- Responses to the open-ended questions – Web

Key Findings of the Report

There are a large range of levels of understanding and satisfaction, evidenced by the disparity in responses provided to the survey. In comparison with other municipalities who have conducted similar surveys (albeit with slightly different questions adapted to their specific needs), the City of Greater Sudbury results are less clearly aligned to one particular perception. This suggests a potential need for greater education around the services the City offers, the costs associated with those services, and a continued effort to enhance the level and type of engagement between the City and residents over the coming months and years.

Metroline has provided a summary of key findings on pages 3 and 4 of the attached report. Those highlights are below for ease of access to information.

Municipal Affairs

- Just over a third of residents (35%) feel they are 'very' or 'somewhat' knowledgeable about municipal affairs. Fewer residents (29%) say they are "not very" or "not" knowledgeable.
- More than 4 in 5 residents indicated they are 'very' likely to vote in the next Municipal election in 2018
- Those who were not likely to vote indicated that there would need to be a candidate they liked or supported to get them out to vote and they need to be more informed. Within this group, a proportion are just not interested in voting

Issues/Perceptions

- By a wide margin, the top issue for Sudbury residents are road conditions and road construction, expressed in the top three by 70% of residents.
- Level of taxes, value received for taxes, and what taxes are spent on is the second concern, reported by 30% residents.
- Maintaining infrastructure was the third mention (buildings, utilities, sewers, etc.) for the telephone survey, for 23% of residents.

Future Direction

- Residents are more optimistic than not about the direction the City of Greater Sudbury is heading in.
- 38% of residents feel the City has been 'getting better' over the past two years, compared to 13% who feel it has been getting 'worse'.
- Residents are about evenly split on whether the City is heading in the right direction to ensure a high quality of life for future generations.
- A significant number of residents do not agree they receive good value for their tax dollars. About half (49%) of residents 'somewhat' (25%) or 'strongly' (24%) disagree with the statement.

Services

- About a third of respondents (31%) are satisfied with the level and quality of service they receive, with 5% being 'very' satisfied and 26% being 'somewhat' satisfied.
- Out of a list of 23 services listed for residents, the ones that scored highest in importance were Fire and Paramedic Services (90%), Road Maintenance (81%), and Police Services (81%).
- Resident satisfaction with Fire and Paramedic Services (81%) and Police Services (67%) shows there is some opportunity to improve satisfaction but fall within a range we expected and have seen before.
- Satisfaction for Road Maintenance (12%) is very low and there is a significant gap in resident perception. Indeed, out of the list of 23 services, although Roads ranked at the top of the list in importance, the satisfaction score was the lowest score received.

Communications

- The City of Greater Sudbury website is often used as a resource for information about Greater Sudbury programs and services. 37% of residents told us they use it.
- Local newspapers continue to be a resource, with 25% of residents using the Sudbury Star, and 21% of residents using Northern Life.
- Not surprisingly, news that relates to taxes and tax changes is the item most often mentioned as what they would like to receive (26%)
- Information or changes related to municipal services is mentioned similarly (26%).
- These are followed closely by information related to future plans and capital projects (25%), upcoming Community Events (25%), and information about Road repair and construction (23%).

Customer Service

- Half of residents we spoke with (50%) say they had need of some kind of customer service contact with the City of Greater Sudbury over the past year.
- A large majority of the Customer Service contact over the past year was via telephone. More than three-quarters of residents had contact by telephone (77%).
- Most residents are satisfied with the customer service they received. 78% of residents were either 'very' satisfied (47%) or 'somewhat' satisfied (31%).

Next Steps

The Citizen Survey results offer an opportunity for the City and Council to better understand the perceptions of residents as they relate to their quality of life in the community, and their level of satisfaction with municipal services. The 2016 survey was not a budget prioritization exercise, and as such, the results are not intended to create a decision-making matrix for Council. Such surveys measure how people feel about municipal services and based on the findings, there is a need for communication around the areas of highest concern as indicated by residents: roads and infrastructure, and taxes and budget. Work is underway to develop additional communication, engagement, and education strategies around those high priority areas. For example, in the City of Greater Sudbury report, the second most important issue to respondents is "taxes/high taxes/budget": while this reflects respondents' perception of the level of taxation, the City of Greater Sudbury has the fourth lowest taxation level in Ontario.

Additionally, a large majority of residents cite “roads and infrastructure” as their primary area of concern in this survey; through the 2017 budget, Council has invested more than \$220 million in capital work for this year, more than double the amount allocated to capital in the 2016 budget.

These examples point to opportunities to continue a dialogue with residents about services, costs, and citizen involvement in municipal processes.

The 2016 Citizen Survey is a tool to provide data on how residents perceive the City and municipal services offered. Council has committed to conducting a similar survey in 2018, and the 2016 results will provide a useful benchmarking tool for the 2018 results.