
2015 Civic Services Survey

Recommendation

That the information be received.

Topic and Purpose

This report provides the results of the 2015 Civic Services Survey (Attachment 1), which is conducted annually to obtain citizen feedback on a variety of civic issues. The results are used as feedback into the annual business plan and budget process, and to provide high quality services to meet the dynamic needs and high expectations of our citizens.

Report Highlights

1. Perceptions about Saskatoon's quality of life remain high in 2015.
2. Satisfaction with the overall level of services provided by the City of Saskatoon (City) remains high and is consistent with the 2014 survey results.
3. Respondents cite road conditions as the most important issue facing the City but the number of mentions has decreased by 4% for both telephone and online respondents from 2014.
4. The quality of drinking water, fire protection, electrical services reliability, repair of water main breaks, treatment of sewage, garbage collection, police services, and recycling are areas of strength for the City.
5. Participants prefer a combination of user fees and property taxes as a way the City could balance its budget.
6. Citizens would like more spending on road maintenance, snow and ice maintenance, street crime and affordable housing, and less spending on funding for arts and cultural groups and community organizations.
7. Citizens continue to prefer to use a mix of sources to receive information about the City's programs and services, but the City's website remains an important source of information.
8. When doing business with the City, residents prefer to use multiple channels including phone, email, in-person visits and the website.

Strategic Goal

The Civic Services Survey supports the Strategic Goal of Continuous Improvement and being the best-managed city in Canada. The goal of the annual survey is to obtain citizen feedback on a variety of civic issues and to measure progress on reaching the performance target of overall satisfaction with civic services of 90% or more.

Background

The City has conducted the Civic Services Survey annually since the early 1990s. The last survey was completed in May 2014.

Report

In March 2014, the City contracted Inshtrix Inc. (Inshtrix) to conduct the 2014 and 2015 City of Saskatoon Annual Civic Services Survey. As in previous years, both a telephone and an online survey were utilized. A total of 500 surveys were completed via telephone (in 2015, 25% of telephone respondents were from a cell phone list to reach younger and cell phone only households), and 821 surveys were completed online through an online panel. Results were collected between May 11 and June 2, 2015.

Quality of Life and Satisfaction with Services

- In 2015, the City established that “Perceived Quality of Life” would be an indicator to watch relative to our progress on achieving performance targets. This indicator measures citizen perceptions about well-being in the city.
 - Quality of life in Saskatoon continues to be rated high, with 85% of telephone and 86% of online respondents rating it as either good or very good. This is consistent with the 2014 findings (86% online, 86% telephone).
- In 2015, the City established a performance target of “Overall Satisfaction with Civic Services of 90% or more”.
 - Overall satisfaction with the level of service provided by the City remains high. The majority of telephone respondents (86% in 2015 and 2014) and online respondents (77% in 2015 compared to 79% in 2014) are satisfied.

Most Important Issues Facing the City

- Roads continue to be the dominant issue (33% telephone, 28% online).
- In 2015, crime and policing has risen as one of the most important issues since 2014 among telephone respondents (12% in 2015 and 9% in 2014, and among online respondents 17% in 2015 and 11% in 2014).
- The top ten most frequent issues are generally the same as found in the 2014 Survey.

Importance of Services

- Historically citizens have been asked about the importance of 33 different services. The results of this question does not typically vary greatly year over year so it was not asked in 2015 in order to accommodate additional hot topic questions. In 2014, respondents deemed the following services as most important:
 - Road maintenance
 - Repair of water main breaks
 - Snow and ice maintenance
 - Traffic management
 - Planning for growth and development
 - Quality of drinking water
 - Fire protection
 - Treatment of sewage
 - Police services

Performance in Delivering Services

- Results on the City's performance in delivering services are highly comparable to those found in the 2014 Survey, with the some notable exceptions:
 - Recycling is now a key strength;
 - Snow and ice management moved from a key weaknesses in 2014 to a key strength in 2015; and,
 - The maintenance of city parks moved from a key strength in 2014 to a key weakness in 2015.

- Despite the movement of those services noted above, according to the 2015 Survey, services that receive the highest ratings for performance include:
 - Quality of drinking water
 - Fire protection
 - Electrical services reliability
 - Repair of water main breaks
 - Treatment of sewage
 - Garbage collection
 - Police services
 - Recycling

2015 Hot Topics

- When asked what citizens most prefer for the City to use to balance the budget, respondents prefer a combination of user fee and property tax increases (41% telephone, 29% online). However, a sizable portion of online respondents were unsure as to what was the best tool the City should use to balance the 2016 budget (19% telephone, 33% online).
- Citizens were asked whether they believe the City should spend more, less or the same amount as currently is the case on 33 different services. Items citizens most strongly believe more funding should be allocated to include:
 - Road Maintenance
 - Snow and Ice Maintenance
 - Street Crime
 - Affordable Housing
 - Accessible Infrastructure
 - Planning for Growth and Development
 - Traffic Management
 - Transit
- Areas citizens would like to see less spending on include:
 - Funding for arts and cultural groups and community organizations
 - To a lesser degree, citizens would spend less on renewing the city centre and north downtown and City customer service initiatives.

Communications and Customer Service

- Similar to 2014, citizens prefer to use a mix of sources to receive information about the City's programs and services. Most commonly, the City's website and emails are preferred information sources for both telephone and online respondents. However, a number of other preferences—including the media (telephone and radio news stations), flyers, radio ads, utility bill inserts, and TV ads—are also common.
- Citizens were asked how they would like to be contacted during an unplanned services disruption, such as a water main break or power outage. The majority of residents prefer being notified by landline or cell phone (53% telephone, 47% online), followed by email and text message.

- Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred method of conducting business with the City or contacting the City with a question or inquiry. Citizens prefer to use multiple channels including the phone, email, in person, and on the website.

Communication Plan

A variety of tools will be used to update the media and public on the results of the 2015 Civic Services Survey, including a News Release and social media updates on Twitter and Facebook. The information will be shared at future “Shaping our Financial Future” engagement events. A full copy of the 2015 Survey will be available on the website.

Financial Implications

Funding for the cost for the 2015 Civic Services Survey is included in the existing annual operating budget. The cost for the 2015 Survey is \$27,420 (excluding taxes) an increase of approximately \$2,700 over the 2014 Survey (\$24,680). The cost increase for the 2015 Survey is primarily due to including cell phone numbers to capture younger participants and cell phone only households. Including these groups in the 2015 Survey better captures the changing demographics of the city and improves the reliability of the Survey results.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, environmental, privacy or CPTED implications or considerations.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

The results of the “Shaping our Financial Future” June 2015 engagement activities (open house and intercept and online surveys) will be presented at the August 19, 2015 Executive Committee meeting. The next Civic Services Survey will take place in May 2016.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachment

1. City of Saskatoon Annual Civic Services Survey, June 2015

Report Approval

Written by: Carla Blumers, Director of Communications
Reviewed by: Catherine Gryba, General Manager, Corporate Performance
Department
Approved by: Murray Totland, City Manager

Administrative Report – 2015 Civic Services Survey.docx