
2018 Business Plan and Budget Process - 2017 Civic Services Survey Results

Recommendation

That the report of the A/General Manager, Corporate Performance Department dated August 21, 2017, be received as information.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the 2017 Civic Services Survey results (Attachment 1), which is conducted annually to obtain citizen feedback on the delivery and provision of civic services. The results are used by the City of Saskatoon (City) as feedback to build the business plan and budget, and to provide high quality services to meet the needs and expectations of citizens.

Report Highlights

1. Citizen perceptions about the city's quality of life are consistent with 2016.
2. Citizens feel the City is on the right track to being a better city 10 years from now.
3. Road conditions remain the most important issue facing the City, but citizens feel this is less of an issue than in 2016, and significantly less since 2013.
4. Satisfaction with the overall level of services provided by the City remains high, and has seen a significant increase since 2013.
5. New this year, citizens were asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall quality of City information and communications. Satisfaction is strong among both telephone and online respondents.
6. When interacting with the City, citizens give high ratings for customer service related activities such as staff being courteous, helpful, knowledgeable, and practicing open and accessible government.
7. Citizens prefer a combination of user fees and property taxes as the most appropriate way to pay for services and balance the City operating budget. The proportion of respondents wanting to see more services has decreased for most categories compared to 2016, especially road maintenance.
8. The majority of citizens believe they receive good value for what they pay in property taxes (84% telephone, 76% online).

Strategic Goal

This report supports the Strategic Goal of Continuous Improvement and being the best managed city in Canada. The primary goal of the annual survey is to obtain citizen feedback on a variety of civic services 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 2016. In March 2016, the City issued a tender for work on the City of Saskatoon Annual Civic Services Survey. Inshtrix Inc. (Inshtrix) was awarded the contract for 2016 with the option to extend for a second year, which was exercised to conduct the 2017 survey.

Report

A total of 500 surveys were completed via telephone with 25% of telephone respondents from a cell phone list in order to reach younger citizens and cell phone only households. A total of 805 surveys were completed through an online panel. Results were collected between May 15 and June 9, 2017.

Quality of Life

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 89% of telephone and 85% of online respondents rating it as either good or very good. The results have held steady from 2016 for telephone and online respondents (89% and 87%) and since 2013 (90% and 86%).
- The majority of citizens feel that Saskatoon’s quality of life within the past three years has remained the same or improved (78% telephone, 76% online). These results are similar to 2016 (76% telephone, 80% online) when the question was first asked.
- The most common suggestion (34% telephone, 47% online) to improve the quality of life centres on infrastructure and traffic (examples include: road conditions/potholes better traffic flow/control and public transit).

Direction of the City

Citizens were asked about whether or not the City is on the right track to making Saskatoon a better city in 10 years from now. A strong majority agree that the City is heading in the right direction (79% telephone, 74% online). The results are similar to the 2016 responses (80% telephone, 70% online) when the question was first asked.

Most Important Issues Facing the City

Without a list provided, the most important issue facing the City, as cited by citizens in 2017, continues to be roads and sidewalks (20% telephone, 14% online). However, significantly fewer respondents feel that roads and sidewalks are the most important issue when compared to 2013 (36% telephone, 31% online) and 2016 (32% telephone, 22% online).

Other commonly mentioned issues include crime/policing, taxation levels, social issues, and spending. The top ten most frequent issues are generally the same as found in the 2016 Survey.

Satisfaction

In 2015, the City established a performance target of “Overall Satisfaction with Civic Services of 90% or more”.

- Since 2013, overall satisfaction with the level of service provided by the City has increased significantly with telephone respondents (88% in 2017 compared to 83% in 2013) and online respondents (85% in 2017 compared to 73% in 2013).
- When comparing the annual change, overall satisfaction is strong and continues to increase among online respondents. The majority of telephone respondents (88% in 2017 compared to 88% in 2016) and online respondents (85% in 2017 compared to 83% in 2016) are satisfied.
- Services that receive the highest ratings for satisfaction remain the same as 2016.
- In 2017, several services saw increases in satisfaction among online respondents, including: repair of watermain breaks, removing contaminants from waste-water, maintenance of major roadways and freeways, street maintenance in one’s neighbourhood, snow and ice road maintenance, parking services, outdoor swimming pools, and mosquito control.
- No significant decreases were noted this year.

Communications

New this year, citizens were asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall quality of City information and communications. Satisfaction is strong among both telephone and online respondents (85% telephone, 88% online).

Citizens still prefer using a mix of sources to receive information about the City. Most commonly, saskatoon.ca and emails are preferred but the media, Facebook, utility bill stuffers, flyers, print ads, radio ads and TV are also common preferences. The preferred methods continues to differ by age range with younger residents preferring digital sources and older residents citing traditional methods.

Interactions with the City

Approximately one half of all residents report having had contact with or have participated in a City activity within the past 12 months.

- Telephone respondents who have interacted with the City provide high ratings for customer service related activities such as staff being courteous, helpful and knowledgeable, and practicing open and accessible government. Online respondents’ assessments are weaker in most areas.
- Telephone and online respondents provide lower ratings for community engagement related activities such as using input from the public decision-making and allowing citizens to have meaningful input into decision-making.

Budget Input

Citizens were asked questions regarding balancing the City’s budget and preferred priorities for future spending.

- In 2017, respondents still prefer that the City use a combination of user fee and property tax increases (37% telephone, 31% online) to pay for services and balance the operating budget. Significantly fewer telephone respondents identified this compared to 2016 (47% telephone, 29% online). A sizable portion of respondents were unsure (16% telephone and 22% online).
- When asked where the City should provide more, less or the same amount of service in 12 different areas, the proportion of respondents wanting to see more services has decreased for most categories compared to 2016, especially road maintenance. Few changes are noted in the proportion of residents who would like to see less services in the majority of the areas.

Perceived Value and Knowledge of Tax Dollar Spending

The majority of residents believe they receive good value for what they pay in property taxes (84% telephone, 76% online). This question was last asked in 2014 where results were significantly lower (79% telephone, 60% online).

This year citizens were asked about their knowledge about how City tax dollars are spent. Overall levels of how City tax dollars are spent is moderate, with sizable proportions saying they are either somewhat knowledgeable or not very knowledgeable.

Communication Plan

Communications will include a news release and social media updates on Twitter and Facebook. A full copy of the 2017 Survey will be made available on the City's website.

Financial Implications

Funding for the cost for the 2017 Civic Services Survey is included in the existing annual operating budget. The cost for the 2017 Survey is \$27,725 (excluding taxes) compared to \$25,250 in 2016. The lower cost in 2016 was a result of applying an outstanding credit with Insightrix.

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 2017 Citizen Budget will be presented as a separate report at the August 2017 Governance and Priorities Committee. This report will further expand on the budget input questions asked in the 2017 Civic Services Survey. The next Civic Services Survey is anticipated to take place in May 2018.

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 2017

Report Approval

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*“Approved by Jeff Jorgenson, Acting GM, CP Department & Murray Totland, City
Manager, August 14, 2017”*