

Background

In its 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.

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

In 2016 and again in 2018, Metroline completed 1,200 interviews by telephone, both cell and landline. The survey was available in both official languages, with questions developed from a best practice review of similar surveys in other municipalities, Council's strategic goals and priorities, and Metroline's recommendations.

The same questions were asked in both 2016 and 2018 to ensure comparability. Because of methodological challenges, results from the online version of the survey are available but are reported separately from the summary provided here. Controls over online survey responses did not prevent multiple responses from the same individuals nor ensure the responses reflect a representative sample of the whole community. Therefore, online survey responses are not statistically valid.

The citizen 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 and programs; and
- ◆ Residents' general sense of the future of Greater Sudbury.

Metroline compiled the results of the Citizen Survey. Its 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*.

Three appendices are included with this report:

- ◆ Full survey findings report from Metroline;
- ◆ Verbatim responses to the open-ended questions – telephone survey; and
- ◆ Verbatim responses to the open-ended questions – online survey.

Key Findings of the Report

As in the 2016 survey, responses suggest there is a wide range of levels of understanding of and satisfaction with municipal programs and services. Efforts to inform residents about municipal services, service levels and costs remain important and will continue to evolve.

Metroline has provided a summary of the attached report. Those highlights are below for ease of access to information.

General Overview

Note that these findings reflect only the telephone survey responses.

Generally speaking, Greater Sudbury residents are satisfied with the quality of life they enjoy: 92% of respondents say their quality of life is fairly good to excellent. Only 8% of residents surveyed are unhappy with their quality of life. Residents cite the local environment (availability of green space, water, beaches, etc.) as well as the community as a whole as significant factors in their overall satisfaction with the quality of life.

The issue top of mind for residents, both in the 2016 survey and in the 2018 survey, is the condition of municipal roads:

Just over one quarter (28%) of respondents are satisfied (somewhat or very) with the overall level and quality of service received from the City. In Metroline's view, this overall satisfaction level is significantly influenced by opinions about municipal road conditions.

Municipal Affairs

- ◆ Possibly owing to being closer to the election, slightly more residents in the 2018 survey told us they were “not very” or “not” knowledgeable about municipal affairs (34% in 2018 compared to 29% in 2016).
- ◆ This was met by a similar drop in those saying they are “fairly” or “very” knowledgeable (28% in 2018 compared to 35% in 2016).
- ◆ We see a slight decline in the likelihood to vote from 82% in 2016 to 77% in 2018.
- ◆ Those who were not likely to vote indicated there was currently not much that would motivate them – they told us they were simply not interested or they were not informed enough.

Issues/Perceptions

- ◆ By a wide margin, the top issue for almost 4 in 5 Sudbury residents are road conditions, expressed in the top three by 78% of residents. This is higher than the 70% who expressed the concern in 2016. This includes current road conditions and construction, new road planning and construction.
- ◆ On a somewhat similar track to roads, the second mentioned item is infrastructure (33%).
- ◆ Level of taxes, value received for taxes, and what taxes are spent on rounded out the top three items, reported by 30% of residents – the same as 2016.
- ◆ The Large Projects are infrequently mentioned as part of the survey responses.

Future Direction

- ◆ Fifty-eight percent of residents feel the quality of life in their community is ‘excellent’ (15%) or ‘very’ good (43%). This is statistically similar to the 60% score obtained in the 2016 survey. 34% of residents scored the quality of life as ‘fair’. Just under 1 in 10 residents (8%) scored their quality of life as ‘fair’ (5%) or ‘poor’ (3%).

- ◆ 29% of residents feel the City has been 'getting better' over the past two years, compared to 19% who feel it has been getting 'worse'.
- ◆ Residents are about evenly split regarding their feelings about the City moving in the right direction to ensure a high quality of life for future generations. Just over one-third (34%) of residents agree the City is moving in the right direction, a similar number (35%) neither agree or disagree, and 31% disagree. The percentage of residents who agree has improved slightly over the 2016 survey (34% vs. 31%) however as that falls within the margin of error it is still a similar sentiment.
- ◆ In total, 23% of residents "strongly" (5%) or "somewhat" (18%) agree they receive good value for their tax dollars. The remaining 77% disagree they receive good value for their tax dollars.

Services

- ◆ Just over one quarter of residents in this survey (28%) are satisfied with the level and quality of service they receive, with 5% being 'very' satisfied and 23% 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 (92%), Road Maintenance (92%), and Police Services (87%).
- ◆ Resident satisfaction with Fire and Paramedic Services (83%) and Police Services (73%) shows there is some opportunity to improve satisfaction but the levels fall within Metroline's expected range.
- ◆ Satisfaction for Road Maintenance (7%) is 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.

Communications

- ◆ The City of Greater Sudbury website is often used as a resource for information about Greater Sudbury programs and services. It was the number one mention for both the 2018 and 2016 survey. In 2018, 41% of residents mentioned it as their primary source of municipal information.

- ◆ Local television and local newspapers continue to be a resource as well, in particular for residents 55 years and older.
- ◆ Social media is mentioned much more often for those under 45 years. As an example, using the City of Greater Sudbury Facebook page is mentioned by 13% of residents overall, but by 21% of those 18-34 years, and 25% of those 35-44 years.
- ◆ The primary piece of information that residents want relates to knowing about events happening in the community (36%).
- ◆ After that, the information relates to their taxes and what plans the City has for the future.
- ◆ Information about Road repair and construction is also important, at 23%.

Customer Service

- ◆ Just less than half of residents we spoke with (45%) say they had need of some kind of customer service contact with the City of Greater Sudbury over the past year.
- ◆ A significant majority of the Customer Service contact over the past year was via telephone to the 311 Call Centre (60%). Just over one third (36%) had contact directly with a staff person via telephone or email
- ◆ Most residents are satisfied with the customer service they received. Overall 81% of residents who had some kind of customer service contact were very (54%) or somewhat (27%) satisfied with the service they received. This is statistically similar to the 2016 survey, where 78% of residents were satisfied. Nineteen percent were not satisfied in 2018 with the customer service they received.

Conclusion

Overall levels of satisfaction are consistent with those from 2016; however, road quality and “planning for the future” remain issues of concern for residents. The comments provided by respondents clearly suggest a link between overall satisfaction and negative perception of municipal roads infrastructure.

Conversely, residents are generally satisfied with their quality of life in Greater Sudbury. This suggests that the things that make Sudbury unique (for example, the diverse natural environment) continue to be draws for residents.

Greater Sudbury Council committed to conducting citizen satisfaction surveys in 2016 and again in 2018. It is important to remember that the citizen survey captures opinions at a specific point in time. While it is useful for supporting assessments of the corporation's, and the community's, performance, it is not a prediction of opinion at any future point.

The citizen survey is one way to support both administrative and political decision-making. Staff have been developing, and continue to develop, more and more robust methods for proactively engaging residents about their views regarding municipal services. From the corporation's online engagement platform, "Over to You", to establishing a revised mandate for all Community Action Networks and the development of a corporate customer service strategy, significant work is underway to not only build understanding of residents' needs, but also to support trust and confidence in the corporation's service efforts.