

Citizen Budget



2014 Budget Consultation Online Summary Report

November 25, 2013

Overview:

An online interactive tool was available November 5 to November 22, 2013. The educational tool created by Open North of Montreal allowed residents to learn about budget revenue sources, distribution of expenditures, and amount of household spending used for taxes. The tool allowed users to simulate adding or decreasing funding to a list of 17 tax-supported areas and 2 utilities. The tool displayed the amount of their taxes per month going to each service area. Users had an option to submit their budget recommendations and answers to a questionnaire.

1,911 unique visitors reviewed the online tool, 547 individual submissions were completed, with an average completion time of 10 minutes. This represents a 28.6% participation rate.

Service Priorities: residents were asked if funding for a listing of 19 service areas should be increased, decreased or kept the same. Users could click pop-ups or links to learn more about programs in each service area. The section had two parts – the tax-supported operations and the utilities. Respondents changed actual dollars per service area. A value of 100% represents “stay the same”; the percentage listed below reflects the averaged recommended change in funding compared to current funding:

- 5 services that had an average response across all submissions for an increase in budget were: Neighbourhood Renewal (104% of current); traffic management (100.8% of current); winter road maintenance (105% of current); summer road maintenance (104% of current); and public transit (103% of current).
- The remaining 11 tax-supported services had an average score with no change or only marginally deviating from 100% “stay the same”, or a decrease. The 4 services with an average decrease greater than 2% were: Corporate Support (94% of current); Economic Development (96% of current); City Governance (94% of current); and Planning, Housing and Buildings (97% of current).
- The area that had the most number of users changing the budget allocation was Public Transit (66% of users adjusted the budget), followed by Neighbourhood Renewal (60% changed the budget); and Economic Development (60% of respondents changed the budget).

Balancing the budget. Online users had two ways to indicate their preferred approach to balancing the budget. They had an opportunity following their budget re-allocation and they could read the list of options and select which approach they preferred most and which they liked least:

- 22% had created a budget that was in deficit because the spending had increased but they did not support a property tax or user fee increase
- 32% preferred the option of increasing user fees and taxes when they finished reallocating dollars but it dropped to 27% stating they preferred the option of increasing user fees and taxes when asked independent of the budget reallocations
- 39% said they least liked the option to only increase property taxes
- 36% said the least like the option to cut services to reduce taxes

Satisfaction with Services. This question is significantly different between the online and phone poll:

- 64% were either very or somewhat satisfied with City services
- 36% were either very or somewhat dissatisfied with City services

More than 500 suggestions for improving services are being tabulated and sorted into service areas and will be identified for Departments to review.

Value for taxes:

- 46% said they received excellent, very good or good value for taxes
- 26% said they receive fair value
- 25% said they received poor value

Satisfaction with life in Edmonton:

- Respondents **definitely would** recommend Edmonton as place to Live (35%), Work (43%), Visit (26%)

Trends Data

Responses for each question

Balancing the Budget

Services supported by Property Taxes

1 Recreation Facilities, Programming and Attractions

57.2% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **99%**.

2 Planning, Housing and Buildings

56.8% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **96.6%**.

3 Neighbourhood Renewal

59.9% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **104%**.

4 Public Transit

66.3% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **102.5%**.

5 Economic Development

59.9% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **96%**.

6 Corporate Support

54.3% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **94.3%**.

7 Traffic Management

42.7% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **100.8%**.

8 Community and Neighbourhood Services

57% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **99.2%**.

9 Public Library

51.1% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **99.6%**.

10 Winter Road Maintenance

55.9% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **104.7%**.

11 Parks

47.5% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **100%**.

12 Summer Road Maintenance

50.5% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was **104.1%**.

13 Police Services

53% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was 97.9%.

14 Fire Rescue

30.1% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was 99.6%.

15 Community Standards

45.3% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was 97%.

16 City Governance

57% modified this activity. The average choice, including participants who did not modify this activity, was 93.7%.

17 If your proposed budget results in increased dollars per month, your proposed budget is in a deficit. This means the City will have to balance the budget by increasing property taxes, user fees or both. Which do you prefer?

87.8% answered this question.

<u>20%</u>	Increase property taxes
<u>27%</u>	Increase user fees
<u>32%</u>	Increase property taxes and user fees
<u>22%</u>	No property tax or user fee increase

For Waste Management Services, the default value was 37.5, and the average choice was 36.9 (67% left it at the default value).

For Drainage Services, the default value was 31 and the average choice was 30.9 (65% left it at the default value).

Satisfaction with City Services

18 Generally speaking, how would you rate your level of satisfaction overall with the quality of services provided by the City of Edmonton?

99.5% answered this question.

14%	Very dissatisfied
22%	Somewhat dissatisfied
48%	Somewhat satisfied
16%	Very satisfied

19 Thinking back over the last 12 months, would you say that the quality of service provided by the City of Edmonton has

...?

97.8% answered this question.

18%	Improved
56%	Remained about the same
20%	Got worse
6%	Don't know / Not stated

Household Costs and Taxes

20 Thinking about the portion of property taxes that pay for municipal services, would you say you receive...?

99.5% answered this question.

5%	Excellent value for your tax dollars
17%	Very good value
24%	Good value
26%	Fair value
25%	Poor value for your tax dollars
2%	Don't know / Not stated

21 There are only a few ways to deal with increased costs to pay for City services. Which option you would support the *most* to balance the budget?

“ The City has reduced costs by \$168 million over the past 4 years due to efficiency measures. But the cost of delivering City services has increased due to the need to expand services to a growing population and growing area, and due to inflation (mainly for labour and materials). ”

98.7% answered this question.

<u>16%</u>	Increase property taxes
<u>15%</u>	Increase user fees
<u>10%</u>	Cut existing service levels to maintain current taxes
<u>11%</u>	Cut existing services to reduce taxes
<u>27%</u>	Combination of increase in property tax and user fees
<u>21%</u>	Combination of cutting service levels and small increase in taxes and user fees

22 Which of the options would you support the *least*?

98.7% answered this question.

<u>39%</u>	Increase property taxes
<u>5%</u>	Increase user fees
<u>14%</u>	Cut existing service levels to maintain current taxes
<u>36%</u>	Cut existing services to reduce taxes
<u>3%</u>	Combination of increase in property tax and user fees
<u>4%</u>	Combination of cutting service levels and small increase in taxes and user fees

Likelihood to Recommend Edmonton

23 Would you recommend Edmonton as a place to work?

98.9% answered this question.

<hr/> 4%	Definitely would NOT recommend
<hr/> 11%	Probably would NOT recommend
<hr/> 42%	Probably WOULD recommend
<hr/> 43%	Definitely WOULD recommend

24 Would you recommend Edmonton as a place to live?

98.9% answered this question.

<hr/> 8%	Definitely would NOT recommend
<hr/> 17%	Probably would NOT recommend
<hr/> 40%	Probably WOULD recommend
<hr/> 35%	Definitely WOULD recommend

25 Would you recommend Edmonton as a place to visit?

99.1% answered this question.

<hr/> 11%	Definitely would NOT recommend
<hr/> 29%	Probably would NOT recommend
<hr/> 34%	Probably WOULD recommend
<hr/> 26%	Definitely WOULD recommend