

# Introduction: Objectives & Methodology

---

In July 2003, City Council endorsed the concept of conducting a Citizen Survey to learn about what is on the minds of citizens regarding their local government. The City of Victoria worked in collaboration with the Centre for Public Sector Studies at the University of Victoria and the District of Saanich in the design, management, implementation, and evaluation of its first ever citizen survey based upon prevailing standards in local government survey methodology.

The Mayor, Council and staff members were interested in obtaining citizen input on several key areas, primarily on the:

- Quality of life in the City of Victoria;
- Level of satisfaction, importance, and usage rate of City and downtown services and facilities;
- City taxation, spending and budget allocation;
- Interaction between citizens and the City; and
- Overall vision and values of citizens living within the boundaries of the City of Victoria.

Information gained through this process will provide useful information to Council as they set budget priorities, set benchmarks and evaluate programs and services, and make strategic decisions to shape the future of the City of Victoria.

## Survey Objectives

The objectives of this research effort were to:

1. Obtain a statistical assessment of citizen perceptions on quality of life and services offered within the City of Victoria.
2. Provide citizens an opportunity to give their input into the City's financial planning process.
3. Investigate the best means of communicating and involving citizens in City issues.
4. Gain knowledge on how citizens vision the future of the City.
5. Develop benchmarks and performance measures for future analysis.

## Methodology

The 2003 Citizen Survey was mailed to 1,400 randomly selected City of Victoria residences on October 17, 2003. Of the 1,400 surveys mailed, 17 were returned as undeliverables, one was returned by the recipient as he or she did not live within the boundaries of the City of Victoria, and 11 were returned incompleated due to the recipient's state of mind, health, physical limitation(s), or newness to the area. Therefore, the total number of valid surveys mailed were 1,371. Of the 1,371, 544 surveys were returned by the due date of November 7, 2003, translating the 544 surveys to a 39.7% response rate. Typically, response rates for citizen surveys of this kind are between 25% to 40%.

Based on a sample size of 544, our margin of error, also known as sampling error, is plus or minus 4%, 19 times out of 20, which means that 95% of the time, our survey results have a  $\pm 4\%$  difference with the results we would have obtained if every adult in the City of Victoria had been surveyed.

Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 5 point scale with 5 representing the best rating and 1 the worst, most of the results in this summary are reported on percentage scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating.

No statistical reweighing of results was done to precisely match the demographic characteristics of survey respondents with those of the population. Demographic differences between the sample and the population were judged to be not significant enough to warrant the additional time and expense required for statistical reweighing. In most questions, results are provided for each demographic group, allowing survey readers to make their own judgements on the differences present between sub-groups. The sample is underrepresented by respondents under the age of 44, and by respondents who are renters. See Appendix I for demographic data and Appendix II for more information on methodology.

## Presentation of Results

The main body of this report contains a brief narrative analysis of each section of the survey, followed by selected figures and tables, showing the most relevant or interesting segments of the available data. For all sections of the survey, more complete figures, including results broken down by demographic data, are available in Appendix III. Verbatim responses are also provided in Appendix IV to provide the reader with rich information on citizen perceptions. The original survey can be found in Appendix V.

## **Acknowledgements**

The success of the 2003 Citizen Survey would not have been possible without the special efforts of some key people. Special thanks goes to:

- The City of Victoria Project Team who dedicated many hours to the process. City staff members include: Ed Robertson, Manager, Support Services, Engineering and Survey Team Chair; Keith Dowdall, Director of Finance; Donna Atkinson, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Development; and Carla Higgins, Coordinator of Corporate Communications.
- Mike Buda, Corporate Planning Assistant at the District of Saanich for his expert technical and supportive role.
- The District of Saanich for their time, effort, and support.
- Dr. Pierre-Olivier Pineau, professor and researcher, at the University of Victoria, School of Public Administration.
- Cindy Vallance at the Centre for Public Service Sector at the University of Victoria.
- Sheri McInnis and Sarah Morris in the Print Shop at the City of Victoria, Judith York and Paula White for data entry, and Wayne Regan in the Print Shop at the District of Saanich.
- Everyone who donated gifts for distributions to winners of the 2003 Citizen Survey early-bird and final draws.
- All those citizens who took the time to carefully complete and return their surveys.

## **Survey Design & Report Author**

Soki Kaur, a graduate of the Master of Public of Administration program at the University of Victoria, assisted and provided guidance with the planning, administration, implementation, and evaluation of the City of Victoria 2003 Citizen Survey.