

# **BACKGROUND**

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## **PROJECT INITIATION**

In July 2003, City Council endorsed the concept of conducting a Citizen Survey every two years as a means of learning about citizens' views regarding their local government. The City's first Citizen Survey, conducted in 2003, served as a base for the design, management, implementation and evaluation of the City's second Citizen Survey in September 2005.

Readers are encouraged to read both surveys for their own interest, however **caution should be made when comparing the results of the 2003 Citizen Survey with the current survey results, as the differences between these two studies have not been statistically tested to determine whether they are significant.** Also, trends cannot be established with only two years of data. Comparative analysis will be done for the next citizen survey.

## **OBJECTIVES**

For its second Citizen Survey, the Mayor, Council and staff members were interested in obtaining citizens' input in a number of key areas, from the quality of life in Victoria, to citizens' perception on taxation and spending. The specific objectives of the 2005 Citizen Survey were as follows:

1. To assess citizens' perceptions regarding the quality of life in, and the services offered by, the City of Victoria;
2. To present citizens an opportunity to provide their input into the City's budget priorities;
3. To investigate the best means of communicating and involving citizens in City issues;
4. To gain knowledge of how citizens envision the future of the City; and
5. To develop benchmarks and performance measures for future analysis by continuing to build upon the 2003 Citizen Survey results.

The information gained from the 2005 Citizen Survey will provide useful information to the Mayor, Council and staff as they set budget priorities, evaluate programs and services and make strategic decisions to shape the future of the City of Victoria.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The 2005 Citizen Survey was mailed to 1,400 randomly selected City of Victoria residences on September 21, 2005. Of the 1,400 surveys mailed, 35 were returned as

undeliverable, two were returned by recipients who did not live within the boundaries of the City of Victoria, and three were returned as incomplete (due to either the recipient's state of mind, health, physical limitation(s), or newness to the area), resulting in a total number of 1,360 valid surveys. Of these, 557 surveys were returned by the due date of October 14, 2005, translating into a 41% response rate. Typically, response rates for citizen surveys of this kind are between 25% and 40%.

Based on a sample size of 557, 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.

The survey instrument consisted of both quantitative and qualitative questions. Closed questions (*quantitative or numeric responses*), based on a 5 point scale, were inserted into the database as per the respondents' answers. Although respondents were asked to rate many of the survey questions on a 5 point scale, with 5 representing the best rating and 1 the worst, most of the results in this summary have been converted to, and are reported on a point scale of 0 to 100, where 0 represents the worst possible score and 100 represents the best possible score. For example, if everyone reported a "very good" quality of life rating, then the resulting score would be 100 on a 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a "very poor" rating, the score would be 0 on a 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was "good," then the results would be 67 on a 100-point scale; "neutral" would be 50 on a 100-point scale; and "poor" would be 33 on a 100 point scale.

The data collected from open-ended questions (*qualitative or written responses*) was first coded (each written response was placed into one of the conceptual categories that were developed for each question to explain the attitudes and beliefs of citizens), and then assigned a numerical value. Numerical values assigned to each written response were then entered into the excel database.

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 not to be significant enough to warrant the additional time and expense required for statistical reweighing. In most questions, results are provided for each demographic group, allowing the readers to make their own judgements on the differences present between sub-groups. The sample is underrepresented by respondents under the age of 34. See Appendix A for demographic data and Appendix D for more information on methodology.

## **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

The main body of this report provides the reader with a brief introduction of the survey's background, objectives and methodology, followed by the survey results. Survey results contain a brief narrative analysis of each section of the survey, followed by selected

figures and/or tables that show the most relevant or interesting segments of the available data (please note that most of the numbers within the report have been rounded).

Readers are encouraged to look at the attached Appendices to better understand the data presented in the survey results and to form their own opinions. For all sections of the survey, more complete figures, including results broken down by demographic data, are available in Appendix B. Verbatim responses to open-ended questions that offer the reader an in-depth view of citizens' perceptions are provided in Appendix C. The survey instrument used in the study can be found in Appendix E.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The success of the 2005 Citizen Survey would not have been possible without the efforts of some key people. Special thanks go to the following individuals/groups:

- Citizens who took the time to carefully complete and return their surveys.
- The City of Victoria Project Team who dedicated many hours to the process. City staff members include:
  - Ed Robertson, Manager, Support Services, Engineering;
  - Soki Kaur, Customer Service Coordinator, Engineering; and
  - Katie Josephson, Manager, Corporate Communications and Customer Service.
- Dr. Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly and Dr. Pierre-Oliver Pineau, professors and researchers, at the University of Victoria, School of Public Administration.
- Sheri McInnis, Sarah Morris, and Debbie Mitton in the Print Shop at the City of Victoria, and Jocelynn Bathgate for data entry.
- Everyone who donated gifts for the 2005 Citizen Survey early-bird and final draws.

## **REPORT AUTHOR**

Rena Bindra, a student in the Masters of Public Administration program at the University of Victoria, administered, implemented, analyzed and reported on the results of the City of Victoria 2005 Citizen Survey.