



**SUBJECT: 2021 community survey results**

**TO: Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk & Accountability Cttee.**

**FROM: Corporate Communications & Engagement**

Report Number: CC-01-22

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 101-03-2

Date to Committee: January 10, 2022

Date to Council: January 18, 2022

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### **Recommendation:**

Receive and file corporate communications and government relations department report CC-01-22 providing the 2021 community survey results.

### **PURPOSE:**

**The purpose of conducting the 2021 Community Survey was to:**

- Measure resident opinions about the City's service delivery,
- Guide future actions and decisions,
- Monitor and benchmark progress since the 2019 Community Survey,
- Learn opinions about taxation, transportation options and,
- Identify and benchmark opinions regarding communications and public involvement with the City.

### **Vision to Focus Alignment:**

Focus Area 5 Key Action Item: Conduct a community-wide survey every two years starting in the fall 2019 to determine if residents feel they are being engaged and are part of the City's decision-making process and based on established municipal norms, including quality of life, city programs and services, value for taxes and governance.

- Improve integrated city mobility
- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
  - Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation
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## **Background and Discussion:**

### **Background:**

Since 1998, the City of Burlington regularly conducts a community survey to uncover resident satisfaction. The surveys typically happen every 2-4 years, the most recent surveys were in 2008, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2021. The survey provides the opportunity for benchmarking and to monitor progress of community measures over time with the goal of continuous improvement. In addition to resident satisfaction, the last three community surveys (2015, 2019 and 2021) included asking residents questions regarding communications and engagement with the City. The 2021 survey had some new additions including questions about the City's response to COVID-19.

### **Discussion:**

After a competitive process, in September of 2019, the city selected MDB Insight to conduct two community surveys for the City of Burlington, one in November of 2019 and one scheduled for the fall of 2021.

### **Strategy/process:**

The 2021 community survey was conducted using Computer Aided Telephone Interviews where respondents were randomly selected from the city's population using a mix of both residential landlines and cell phone numbers. The goal was to complete 750 interviews/surveys, with 125 completed interviews/surveys per ward. The total reached was 755 completed interviews/surveys with a margin of error of +/-3.6% with a 95% confidence interval. The interviews/surveys were conducted between September 13 to October 18 and it took on average 18 minutes to complete. Responses were weighted based on the population by age and ward. Two items that are important to note one, that satisfaction of city services results were analyzed using a priority matrix that compares performance, room for improvement and the derived importance of each service (a measure which represents the level to which each service is related to overall satisfaction) and two a combination of both randomly selected Burlington cellular and landlines were included in order to obtain a variety of responses.

### **Highlights of the Results:**

The full report of the results can be found in Appendix “A” of this report. The following are some highlights:

Overall, the results of the survey turned out highly positive across several measures, including:

- Residents gave ratings of the municipal services offered in the City. There was a rating of 95% satisfaction with the overall quality of services in the City of Burlington. This rating was an increase from 2019 and is equal to the highest satisfaction rate compared to any of the previous measurements of resident satisfaction in the last 13 years.
  - 71% of respondents say they would support a tax increase to maintain current service levels.
  - Services that were identified as strengths are Fire Services, parks, sports fields and trails and festivals and events.
  - Gains were made in all areas of community engagement, questions asked about having enough opportunities to provide input, the City’s ability to engage with residents, being welcoming to public opinion in decision-making, using public input in decision making and decisions made reflect the voice of the majority of residents. There were sharp increases in these areas in 2019 compared to 2015 and 2021 continues to see positive growth.
  - There was substantial growth of 34% of those indicating that they currently find out about city programs, services and initiatives from their ward councillor or mayor.
  - When asked an open-ended question – “what is the one issue you feel should receive the greatest attention from your Mayor and members of Council?”, the most frequent responses were around growth, especially in the downtown related to high rises and the implications it might have on traffic congestion/traffic lights and transportation. This was followed by affordable housing/homelessness/poverty (this was mentioned 10% of the time vs 3% of the time in 2019) and economic development and infrastructure. Other common issues include parks/nature/paths, public transportation, COVID-19 and climate change.
  - Parking management, bylaw enforcement, transit service are the top three areas for primary consideration that were deemed very important and are considered primary opportunities for the City to consider.
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## **Financial Matters:**

### **Total Financial Impact**

The cost for the 2021 survey was \$29,780 and the fee includes drafting and refining of the survey, conducting the telephone interviews, analysis of the data and presenting the data to the City of Burlington. The fee is the same as it was for the 2019 survey.

### **Source of Funding**

Like the 2019 survey, the funding for the 2021 survey was from Strategic Plan funding in the operating budget.

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## **Climate Implications**

There are no climate implications regarding this report, however, it should be noted that a number of residents listed “climate change”, “environmental responsibility” and “public transportation (including buses and cycling lanes)” when asked the open-ended question “What is the one issue you feel should receive the greatest attention from your Mayor and members of City Council?”.

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## **Engagement Matters:**

755 Burlington residents were randomly selected and interviewed using either a residential landline or cell phone number. The 2019 community survey is the first time that interviews/surveys were conducted using cell phone numbers, this is an important distinction to make as more people are forgoing landlines in favour of cell phone. The Community Survey was also replicated online (from September 13 to October 15) the City's decision-making about projects and services is reflective of the voice of a majority of residents, with two major differences; 1) it was open call where anyone registered to the Get Involved Burlington platform could take the survey and 2) the sample size was much smaller (234 online versus 755 facilitated by MDB Insight).

There are a number of similarities and differences in the results including:

Question	Rating via Phone	Rating via Online
How would you rate Burlington as a place to live?	89% (excellent or very good)	82% (excellent or very good)
How satisfied are you with the overall quality of services provided by the City of Burlington?	95% (very satisfied or somewhat satisfied)	88% very satisfied or somewhat satisfied)
Property tax question – Which of the following would you prefer the City pursue?*	<p>26% - increase taxes to enhance services</p> <p>45% - increase taxes to maintain current service levels</p> <p>18% - cut services to maintain current tax level</p> <p>11% Cut services and reduce taxes</p> <p>71% indicated an increase in property taxes is acceptable</p>	<p>23% - increase taxes to enhance services</p> <p>39% - increase taxes to maintain current service levels</p> <p>22% - cut services to maintain current tax level</p> <p>16% - Cut services and reduce taxes</p> <p>62% indicated an increase in property taxes is acceptable</p>

\*This question was also asked as part of the 2022 Budget Specific Survey that was open from July 19 to September 30 and had 539 contributions – 528 were anonymous contributions.

21% of respondents chose increase taxes to enhance services, 32% chose increase taxes to maintain current service levels, 23% chose cut services to maintain current tax levels and 12% chose Cut services and reduce taxes. Overall, 53% indicated an increase in property taxes is acceptable.

It should be noted in this section that gains were made in all areas relating to engagement as noted in the table:

Attribute	2015	2019	2021
Residents have enough opportunities to provide input into decision-making about city projects and services	65%	77%	79%
would like to provide input to the City for the purpose of influencing decision-making about city projects and services	63%	76%	80%
The city does a good job of engaging residents in decision-making about city projects and services	54%	71%	75%
The city would welcome my opinion when making decisions about city projects and services that impact me	57%	71%	75%
The city uses input from residents in decision-making about city projects and services	50%	70%	71%
The city's decision-making about projects and services is reflective of the voice of a majority of residents	46%	64%	65%

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## Conclusion:

The results of the 2021 Community Survey provide us with important, statistically valid baseline data. This information will be useful to guide future actions and decisions and to better understand the opinions of the average Burlington resident.

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Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Dwyer

Manager of Engagement and Volunteers

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## Appendices: (if none delete section)

- A. MDB Insight Final Report – December 2021
- B. MDB Insight presentation
- C. Results from Get Involved Burlington online engagement portal

## Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.