

Citizen Attitude Survey 2009

City of Fredericton

Executive Summary

Study Overview

This report presents the results of the *2009 Citizen Attitude Survey* conducted by MarketQuest Research on behalf of the City of Fredericton. The primary objective of the survey is to assess citizen satisfaction with various municipal programs, services, developments and initiatives. This research was conducted via a telephone survey of residents living in the City of Fredericton who identified themselves as the head of household 18 years of age or older. In total, 403 residents completed the survey¹.

Summary of Key Findings

Perceptions of the City

Most citizens have a positive perception of Fredericton, with more than one-half (54%) of its citizens stating that it is an 'excellent' place to live and a further 38% stating it is a 'good' place to live. These results are consistent with those in 2007 and an improvement over 2005 results.

For the most part, citizens continue to feel safe in the City of Fredericton. The vast majority of citizens feel safe in the daytime when walking around their neighborhood (98%) and the City in general (96%), and when using public transit (99%²). Fewer citizens feel safe using public transit after dark (87%), using walking trails (79%), and walking after dark in their neighborhood (77%) and the City (67%).

Perceptions of economic growth are generally positive, however citizens have mixed opinions of how the City is faring in terms of economic growth and business development in comparison to two years ago. More specifically, 45% of citizens feel the City is doing *better* today than two years ago, while 42% feel the City is doing *about the same*. Only 5% of citizens feel conditions are worse. While these results are not as positive as they were two years ago, they are encouraging in light of the recent downturn in global economic conditions. The outlook for the next two years is more positive, with 50% of citizens expecting economic growth and business development to be better than it is today, and 38% expecting it to be the same.

Continued promotion of economic development and business potential is important, as 18% of citizens feel that economic growth and development is the most important issue facing the City of Fredericton in the next five years.

¹ Please note that the term "citizen" is used throughout this section to describe the findings, however the results cannot be generalized to all City of Fredericton citizens. Rather they reflect the attitudes and opinions of *heads of households who are 18 years of age or older*.

² Ratings for public transit included a high percentage of don't know responses which were removed from this analysis.

Satisfaction with Services and Perception of City Performance

Generally speaking, most citizens are satisfied with police services and satisfaction in some areas has improved over time (crime prevention programs – up 9% from 2007; patrol of City as a whole – up 7% from 2007; policing in your neighborhood – up 7% from 2007). Dissatisfaction was highest in 2009 for traffic enforcement (15%), primarily due to a need for more patrolling (53%), not enough control (38%), and not enough control over speeding (28%).³

Confidence in the City's Fire Department remains high, with most citizens having confidence in their ability to respond to fire (97%) and non-fire (95%) emergencies. Furthermore, most citizens view the Fire Department as providing adequate service (96%), and being competent (94%), professional (95%), and responsive (97%). In comparison to these other areas of service, fewer citizens (82%) have confidence in the Fire Department's ability to conduct public education around fire prevention. This is primarily due to more citizens being unable to rate the Department in this regard (13%, up from 5% in 2005), rather than a stated lack of confidence.

For the most part, citizens are satisfied with City services and programs, including garbage collection (96%), water and sewer (91%), and clean-up efforts (90%). Satisfaction with snow removal declined since 2007 (for roads and streets – 76%, down 6%; for sidewalks – 65%, down 7%). Dissatisfaction in terms of snow removal primarily stems from a perception of a lack of efficiency. Atlantic Canada's severe and lengthy winters may contribute to a heightened sensitivity surrounding the service of snow removal and a more pronounced desire for efficiency. Furthermore, Fredericton experienced a relatively bad winter in 2008/09, which may have contributed to the decline in satisfaction with snow removal.

In terms of the Development Services Department, performance ratings are highest for preserving the City's historic buildings (3.9 out of 5.0), promoting the City as a tourist destination (3.9), and promoting/supporting the arts community (3.8). Furthermore, performance ratings in these areas have increased since 2005. Consistent with previous years, bylaw enforcement received the lowest performance rating (3.3). Whether it involves a review of bylaw enforcement or dealing with any public misconceptions that may exist in relation to bylaw enforcement, the Department should consider ways to improve their rating in this area.

In total, 21% of citizens reported regular (always or often) or semi-regular (sometimes) use of public transit by members of their household. Nearly all citizens (98%) feel it is important for the City to have a public transit system; in fact, 92% describe it as being very important.

³ Multiple responses allowed.

Recreational Facilities

Most citizens (88%) are satisfied overall with the City's recreational programs and services. Furthermore, most citizens are satisfied with the specific recreational facilities they use (ranging from 90% to 100%, depending on the facility). The City's walking trails continue to be the most widely used recreational facility by far (78%). Citizens are less likely to report household use of other types of recreational facilities, including ice arenas (38%), playgrounds (37%), indoor swimming pools (37%), and outdoor sports fields (37%).

While 28% of citizens consider themselves to be not very informed or not at all informed about the City's recreational programs and services, it is not known if they have a desire to be more informed. Currently, citizens primarily obtain information on the City's recreational programs and services from newspapers (43%) and the City's website (38%).

Contact with the City

Within the past year, one-half of citizens (50%) contacted a City department or official to seek information, with telephone (80%) continuing to be the main method of contact. Most citizens have favorable opinions about City employees (94% perceive them as friendly and courteous) and agree that the City is running efficiently (89%) and providing services fairly to all groups (88%).

Media outlets such as newspaper (60%), radio (40%) and television (23%) are the most popular means of keeping informed of the City's activities and programs; however, their popularity in this regard declined over time since 2005. Approximately half of the citizens (49%) use the City of Fredericton web site to stay informed, which is consistent with results in 2007 (48%) but higher than 2005 (34%).

Green Initiatives

Support for the City's commitment to being green and environmentally sensitive is overwhelmingly positive (95%), with 73% *strongly* supporting and 22% *somewhat* supporting the City. Similarly, the vast majority (95%) feel it is important for the City to be committed to being green and environmentally sensitive (73% *very* important; 22% *somewhat* important).

Social Goals

The City of Fredericton, through its ISO certification objectives, strives to provide program services consistent with social goals in seven areas: community development, corporate, economic development, environmental health, leisure, public safety, and transportation.

Based on the findings of the survey, the City of Fredericton appears to be achieving success in addressing the social goals it has set forth for itself. Success is displayed in the generally positive feedback provided by respondents regarding the programs, services, developments, and initiatives that fall within each social goal.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The following are the survey highlights from the 2009 City of Fredericton Citizen Attitude Survey⁴:

- City of Fredericton citizens continue to have pride in their City. Over half of the citizens believe it is an excellent place to live and 38% believe it is a good place to live, results which are comparable to 2007.
- The majority of citizens feel safe in Fredericton, particularly in the daytime walking in their neighborhood (98%) and the City (96%). Fewer citizens feel safe on walking trails (79%) and walking after dark in their neighborhood (77%) and the City (67%). However, more citizens feel safe walking around the City after dark in 2009 (67%) than in 2007 (60%).
- Most citizens are satisfied with police services in the City (ranging from 72% to 82%), and satisfaction has increased for some service areas.
 - Highest satisfaction is for professionalism of police officers (87%), patrol of the City (87%), and neighborhood policing (85%).
 - Lowest satisfaction is for traffic enforcement (81%), crime prevention programs (81%), and public education (72%).
 - Since 2007, satisfaction has improved for crime prevention programs (up 9%), patrol of the City (up 7%), and neighborhood policing (up 7%).
- Confidence in the Fire Department's ability to respond to fire (97%) and non-fire (95%) emergencies remains high, and a large majority of citizens have positive opinions of the Department in terms of adequacy of service (96%), competency (94%), professionalism (95%), and responsiveness (97%). Fewer citizens have confidence in the Fire Department's ability to conduct public education in 2009 (82%) as compared to 2007 (89%).
- As in previous years, satisfaction with services under the Engineering and Public Works Department varied widely depending on the service (ranging from 65% to 96%).
 - Highest satisfaction is for garbage collection (96%), water and sewer (96%), and the clean-up program (90%).
 - Lowest satisfaction is for snow plowing for sidewalks (65%), snow plowing for roads and streets (76%), and neighborhood street maintenance (83%).
 - Satisfaction with snow removal declined since 2007 (for roads and streets – 76%, down 6%; for sidewalks – 65%, down 7%), which is likely related to the bad winter conditions experienced in Fredericton during Winter 2008-09.

⁴ Please note that the term "citizen" is used throughout this section to describe the findings, however the results cannot be generalized to all City of Fredericton citizens. Rather they reflect the attitudes and opinions of *heads of households who are 18 years of age or older*.

- The top areas of performance for the Development Services Department are preserving historic buildings (mean rating of 3.9 out of 5), promoting the City as a tourist destination (3.9), and promoting and supporting the arts community (3.8), all of which have increased since 2005. Bylaw enforcement continues to receive the lowest performance rating (3.3). Approximately two in ten citizens (21%) view this service area as very poor or poor, primarily due to a perceived lack of enforcement (73%).
- Use of the City's recreational facilities varies depending on the facility, with reported household use⁵ highest for walking trails (78%) and lowest for Field House (38%). Use of walking trails (down 8%), Field House (down 7%), and outdoor swimming pools (down 7%) is down in comparison to 2007. However, use of recreation centres has gradually increased since 2005 (up 11%).
- Most citizens are satisfied with the specific recreational facilities they use (ranging from 90% to 100%). Satisfaction with basketball/tennis courts (up 15%) and Field House (up 13%) has increased over the past two years to reach levels comparable to those in 2005. Satisfaction with ice arenas has steadily increased since 2005 (up 17%).
- One in five citizens feel they are *very* informed of the City's recreational programs and services. Most (51%) say they are *somewhat* informed, while a further 28% say they are not at all or not very informed. Younger citizens (18-34: 41%) are more likely to feel they are not at all or not very informed than those from higher age groups (35-54: 27%; 55+:22%).
- Perceptions of economic growth and business development are positive in light of the recent downturn in global economic conditions. Forty-five percent (45%) of citizens feel the City is doing *better* today than two years ago, while 42% feel the City is doing *about the same*. The outlook for the next two years is more positive, with 50% of citizens expecting economic growth and business development to be better than it is today.
- A variety of issues were reported as the most important issue facing the City of Fredericton in the next five years. Economic growth and development was the most prevalent (18%), followed by the related issue of employment (7%).
- The vast majority (95%) of citizens recognize the importance of being a green and environmentally sensitive city, and they are supportive (95%) of the City's efforts in this regard.

⁵ Respondents were asked to describe how often they or other members of their household use each facility by selecting from the following response options: always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the City of Fredericton continues to perform very well. Most citizens have a positive opinion of the City and the services provided. The research also demonstrates opportunities for improvement, and the following have been identified as priority areas based on the findings:

- Traffic enforcement;
- Crime prevention programs;
- Public education by police;
- Public education on fire prevention;
- Snow plowing;
- Street maintenance;
- Recreation program and service awareness; and
- Bylaw enforcement.

The City should focus on ways to improve citizen satisfaction with these service areas. In doing this, consideration should be given to (1) the service itself (i.e., can we identify ways to improve the service?) and (2) communications (i.e., are we communicating effectively with citizens regarding this service?). With opinions often formed based on misunderstandings and/or a lack of information, communications can play a vital role in improving perceptions and increasing satisfaction.