



# City of Belleville

Report No: DDF-2024-06

Meeting Date: August 8, 2024

APPROVAL BLOCK

DF BF

CAO [Signature]

**To:** Members of the Finance Committee  
**Department:** Finance  
**Staff Contact:** Brianne MacNevin, Treasury - Deputy Treasurer

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**Subject: 2025 Operating Budget Guidelines**

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## Recommendation:

"THAT the Finance Committee recommend that Council approve the 2025 Operating Budget Guidelines as outlined in the Manager Finance/Deputy Treasurer's Report No. DDF-2024-06."

## Strategic Plan Alignment:

The City of Belleville's Strategic Plan identifies nine strategic themes. This report aligns with each of the City's nine strategic themes and the City's mission statement by providing innovative and efficient services in support of our community's vision.

## Background:

### Budget Development

The City's Budget & Financial Controls Policy outlines the responsibilities of the Finance Committee and Council relating to budget, which includes:

- Establishing and approving guidelines in advance of detailed budget preparation;
- Approving proposed level of public communication and engagement; and
- Review and debate budget submissions.

The 2025 Draft Operating Budget will be released to Council and the public on January 27th, 2025. In accordance with the above-noted policy, the City presents any adjustments to its prior year adopted budget through base adjustments, management recommendations, and any new operating issues that are meant to highlight new commitment of resources for Council to consider. Operating issues are categorized between: Legislative, Compliance, or Health & Safety, Maintain Levels of Service, and Enhance Levels of Service.

The City imposes and collects property tax for all groups noted below; however, it only has direct control over City Departments. Therefore, it is important that this be considered when recommending guidelines that influence the proposed property tax levy and overall City tax rate.

Group	Proportion of 2024 Property Tax Levy
City Departments	55% (2023 - 60%)
City Boards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Library</li> </ul>	23% (2023 - 22%)
External Agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Purpose Bodies (i.e., Quinte Economic Development Commission, Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board, QuinteWaste Solutions, Quinte Conservation, etc.)</li> <li>• Provincially Mandated Services (i.e., Provincial Offences, EMS, Social Services &amp; Housing, Long-Term Care (Hastings County))</li> </ul>	22% (2023 - 18%)

Engagement Strategy

As part of the May 13th, 2024, Regular Council meeting, the 2025 Capital & Operating Budget timeline and Public Engagement Communication Plan was approved as recommended by the Finance Committee. The plan included three surveys to be distributed to the public as follows:

- Survey #1  
To obtain feedback regarding Capital and Operating spending priorities and overall approach to budget development. These results will be presented to the Finance Committee and Council to assist with the establishment of budgetary guidelines.
- Survey #2  
To obtain direct feedback on the preliminary draft Capital Budget and 10 Year Capital Plan. The survey results will be included at the Capital Budget meetings for Council's consideration.
- Survey #3  
To obtain direct feedback on the preliminary draft Operating budget. The survey results will be included at the Operating Budget meetings for Council's consideration.

Survey #1 went live on May 14th, followed by a media release and social media blasts inviting stakeholders to provide their feedback.

**Financial/Analysis:**

The survey was available for roughly three weeks and concluded June 5th with a total of 781 responses received. The “2025 Preliminary Survey Results Report” highlighting the survey's results are attached, with some high-level observations noted below.

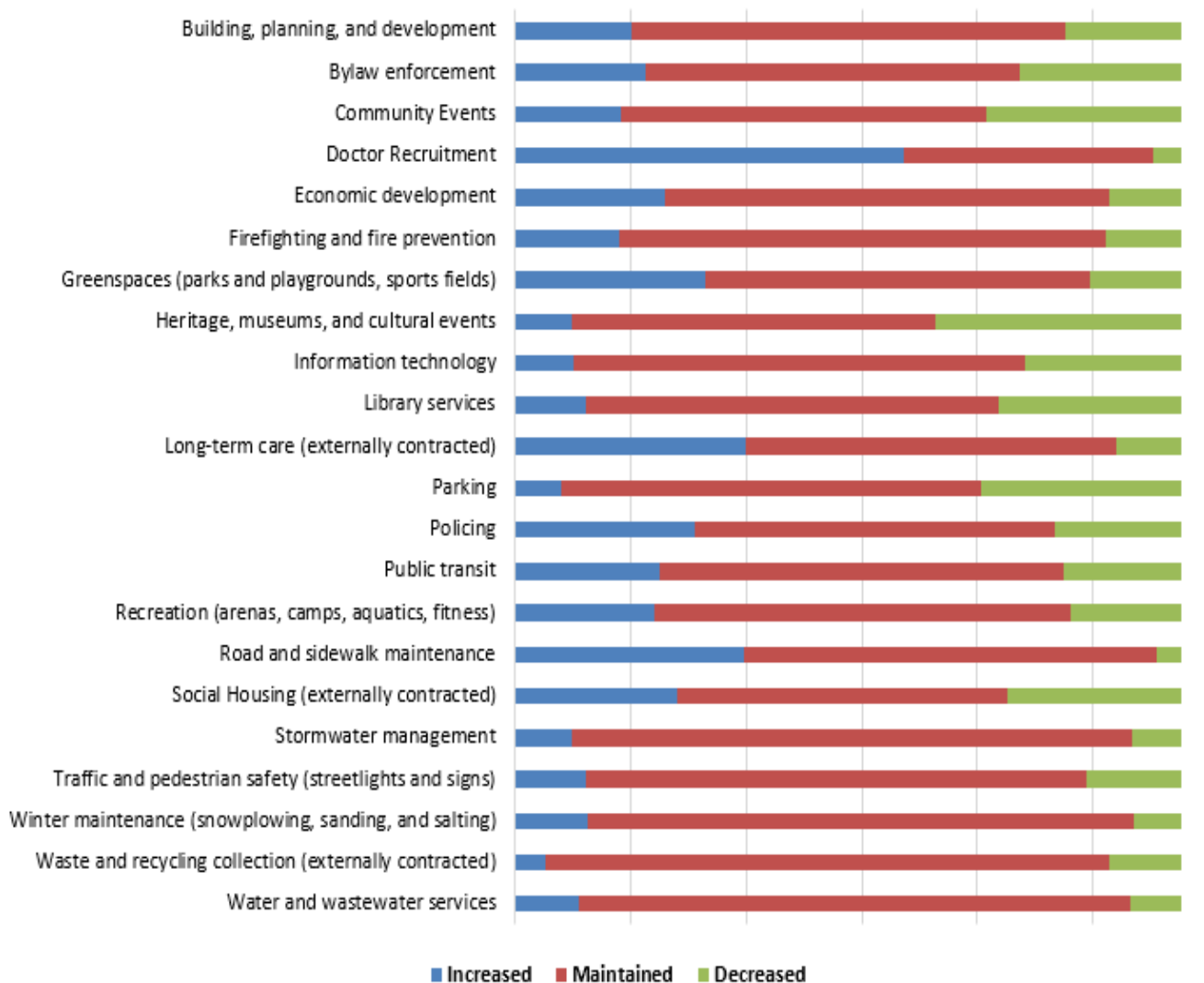
## Taxation

When asked about current tax levels, in relation to tax-funded services, the majority (42%) of respondents were in favor of maintaining taxes, even if it means reducing some discretionary tax-funded services. There was a relatively equal split between “increase taxes to an extent that maintains tax-funded services” and “decrease taxes by reducing discretionary tax-funded services” at 22% and 26%, respectively.

## Service Levels

Respondents were provided with specific service types and asked to provide feedback on the current level of service. Overall, it appears most would like to see services maintained at existing levels. There were three services, Doctor Recruitment (58%), Long-Term Care (34%), and Road and Sidewalk Maintenance (34%) that received considerable support for increased levels of service.

### 2025 Preliminary Budget Survey Levels of Service



## User Fees

Participants were asked whether they would be in favor of user fees increases, and if so, which specific fees they would support increases to. While over 17% of the responses did not support increases to any of the user fees, respondents were supportive of increasing most fees, with the exception of Bag Tags. Apart from Bag Tags and Transit Fares, which received just slightly less support, potential increases to other user fees, including Dog Tags, Pools, Sports Fields and Recreation Programs, were supported by over 45% of respondents. Arenas and Museum Services were the most supported areas, receiving support from over 55% of respondents.

## Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

With the development and inclusion of departmental plans as part of the annual operating budget process, respondents were asked to provide feedback on which KPIs were most relevant and beneficial for tracking performance. Efficiency and Community Impact were identified as the top two KPIs, with a desired focus on Finance.

## Contributions to Capital Projects

Respondents were asked to prioritize the City's capital spending, which shaped the 2025 Capital Budget guidelines adopted by Council on July 8th. One of the guidelines were as follows:

*"THAT Staff bring forth a proposed increase in contribution to reserve funds for capital projects in the 2025 draft Operating Budget that aligns with the financial strategy and recommendations outlined in the Asset Management Plan."*

## Proposed Guidelines

Staff have considered the survey results and the City's level of control around proposed budgets from City Boards and External Agencies to draft the 2025 Operating Budget guidelines, which have been presented for consideration. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the Council approved the 2024 Fire Master Plan and associated recommendations that were presented on July 8th. This plan included a proportion of Cannifton Rural ratepayers shifting to the Cannifton Urban tax table, yielding forecasted tax increases for the Cannifton Rural and Belleville Rural groups.

The draft recommended 2025 Operating Budget Guidelines are as follows:

1. That the 2025 Draft Operating Budget be presented with overall residential property tax rate increases not to exceed 5%, excluding any tax rate increases generated from the 2024 Fire Master Plan phase-in approved by Council;
2. That the 2025 Draft Operating Budget consider the service areas prioritized through public input received;
3. That City Department operating issues presented in the 2025 Draft Operating Budget align with the strategic themes and initiatives outlined in the City's Strategic Plan and Departmental Operating Plans, with priority given to those categorized as Legislative, Compliance, or Health & Safety and Maintenance of Service Levels, and where any Enhancement of Service Levels are proposed, that they align with public input received; and
4. That the 2025 Draft Operating Budget incorporate a moderate increase in its tax-funded contributions to capital projects in alignment with the financial strategy outlined in the 2024 Asset Management Plan.

**Conclusion:**

"THAT the Finance Committee recommend that Council approve the 2025 Operating Budget Guidelines as outlined in the Manager Finance/Deputy Treasurer's Report No. DDF-2024-06."

**Attachments:**

[2025 Preliminary Survey Results Report](#)



# 2025 Capital & Operating Budget Phase 1: Public Engagement Report

# Background & Objectives

## Background

A municipality's annual budget is an important policy document that dictates how the City will collect and allocate resources to best improve and maintain City services and infrastructure for the community.

The City of Belleville's budget is broken down into two components: capital and operating. While residents have always been welcome to take part in the budget process by providing their feedback to their council representatives, there has been a significant effort in recent years to encourage more thorough public engagement in the process.

In 2023-2024, Finance worked with Communications to further involve residents in the budget process by focusing on educational material and direct engagement through surveys, web content, social media and more. Last year's engagement strategy had great success with over 500 responses for the capital budget surveys and over 1,200 for the operating budget surveys. Staff were able to use the responses and input received to develop guidelines for departments to help shape their budgets, and then determine key priorities towards the finalization of the budget.

The surveys also included questions around how people would like to be engaged about the budget. Using the feedback received, staff have built on these efforts for 2025, adding additional strategies to the engagement process such as: additional public education, consolidation of the preliminary surveys to simplify processes and ongoing direct engagement with interested parties in the form of ongoing 'budget education blasts'.

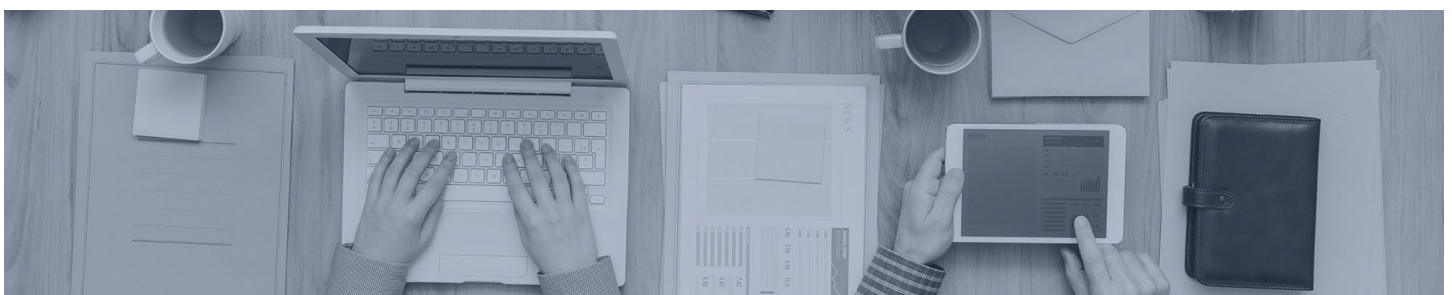
The first phase of the engagement process was a short, high-level Preliminary Budget Survey to gauge residents capital and operating spending priorities. Questions in the survey looked at ranking and prioritizing City services.

The second phase in the engagement approach will come closer to the finalization of the budgets and will be a more specific survey. These surveys will break down each budget and allow residents to weigh in on the specific items identified by staff in their draft budgets.

## Objectives

The goal behind this year's communications and engagement strategy was as follows:

- Provide residents with additional educational material and resources around the budget process.
- Encourage direct engagement from as many residents as possible.
- Provide council and staff with public feedback to help shape a budget and plan that best serves their residents.



# Engagement Strategy

## Timeline

- July & August – Presentation of preliminary survey results to Council and obtain operating & capital budget guidelines.
- October – Draft Capital Budget posted and public survey released to obtain feedback.
- November – Capital Budget Council meeting and presentation of feedback received.
- January – Operating Budget posted and public survey released to obtain feedback
- February – Operating Budget Council meetings and presentation of feedback received.



## Tactics

Communications has used a number of channels to inform and engage the public through this first phase of engagement, including:

- Budget Webpage
- Online Survey
- Budget 101 Document
- Project Email/Comment Card
- Direct Mailouts in Tax Notices
- Media Release
- Email to News Subscribers
- Website Alert
- Social Media (Paid & Organic)
- Community Press Ad
- InQuinte/Quinte News Ads
- Newsletter



# Results & Metrics

Communications around the 2025 Preliminary Budget Survey have garnered the following results:

## Webpage

Total estimated views of webpage during survey period (May 14-June 5):

- Belleville.ca/Budget – 300 (140% increase compared to previous period of April 22-May 13)
- News Release – 340

## Social Media

Social media metrics during survey period (May 14-June 5):

- Facebook (Organic) – 3 Posts Total with Average Reach of 1,873 and Engagement of 64
- Facebook (Paid) – 1 Boosted Post with Reach of 13,919 and Engagement of 1,742
- Twitter – 4 Organic Posts Total with Average Reach of 373 and Engagement of 13

## Digital

- Email to News Subscribers – Reached 355 Subscribers
- Belleville Updates Newsletter – Reached 272 Subscribers
- InQuinte Ad – Ran for 1 Week with 9,085 Total Impressions and 26 Clicks

## Print

- Community Press Ad – Total Reach of Approx. 18,553 Belleville Households
- Informational Buck Slip – Mailed to Approx. 22,000 Belleville Households in Tax Notices

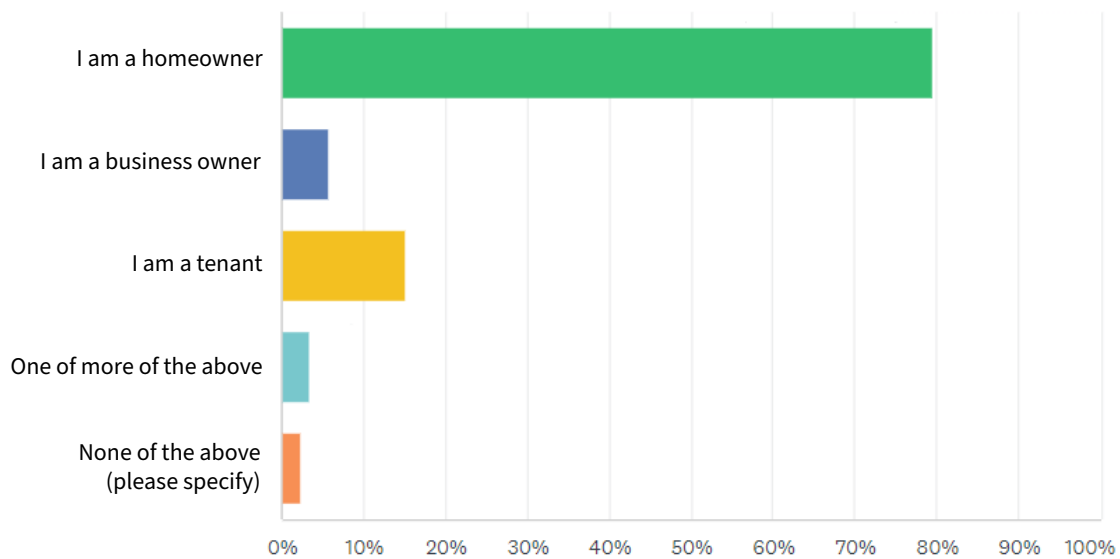
The results above were collected using Google Analytics, Meta Business Suite, Twitter Analytics, iCreate reporting and annual average daily traffic (as last reported in 2014).



# Survey Summary

The 2025 Preliminary Budget Survey ran from May 14 to June 5. Below is a summary of the 781 total responses and feedback received through the survey period. Highlights of comments under “Please Specify” for questions 1 and 9 can be found beneath each question. See Appendix A for detailed responses.

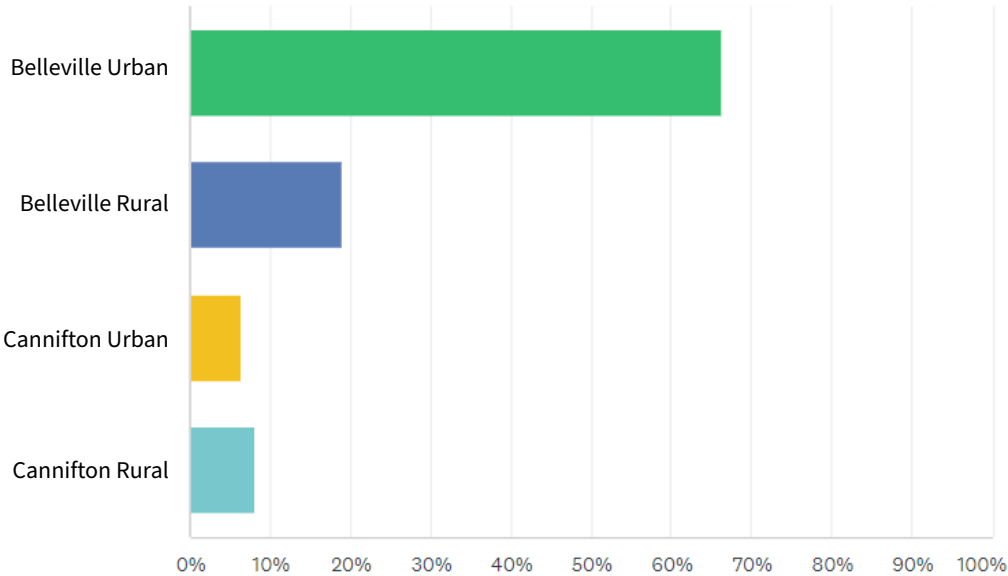
## Q1: Do you live and/or own a business in Belleville?



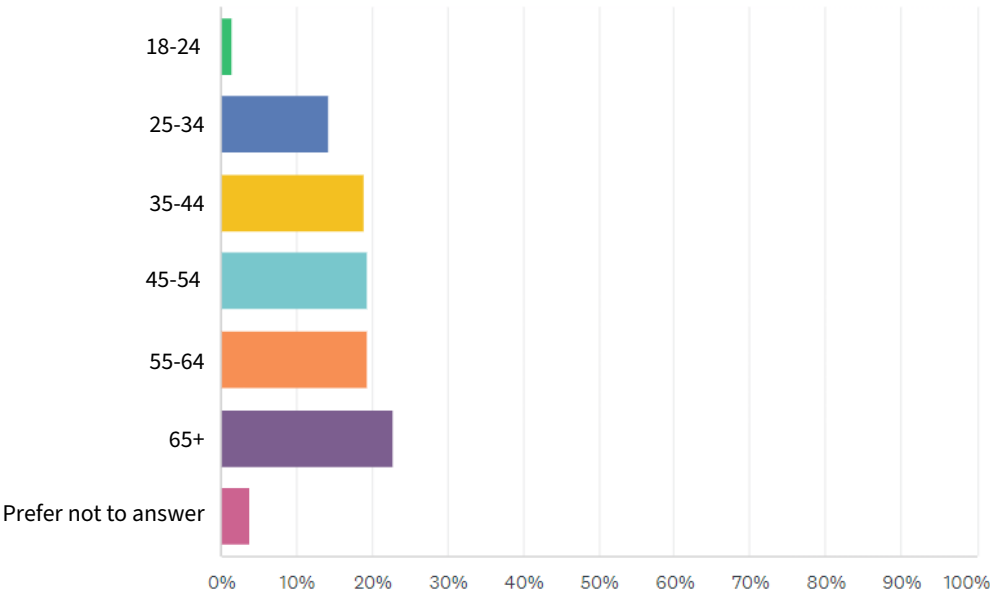
Highlights/trending responses under “None of the above (please specify)”:

- Involved in sports/recreation/organizations in Belleville
- Work in Belleville
- Live in neighbouring community

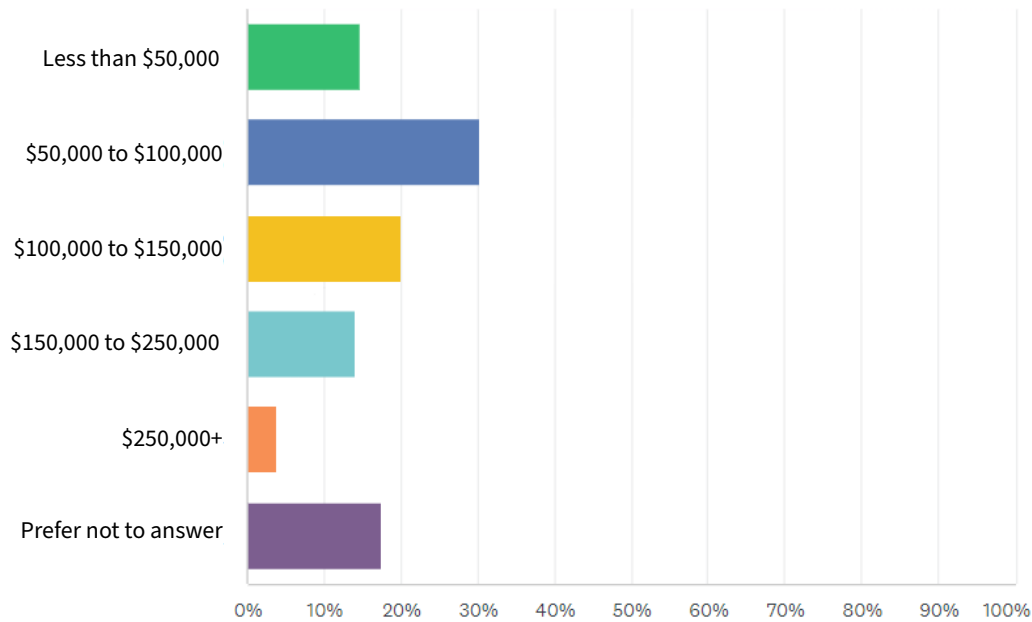
## Q2: What is your tax billing area?



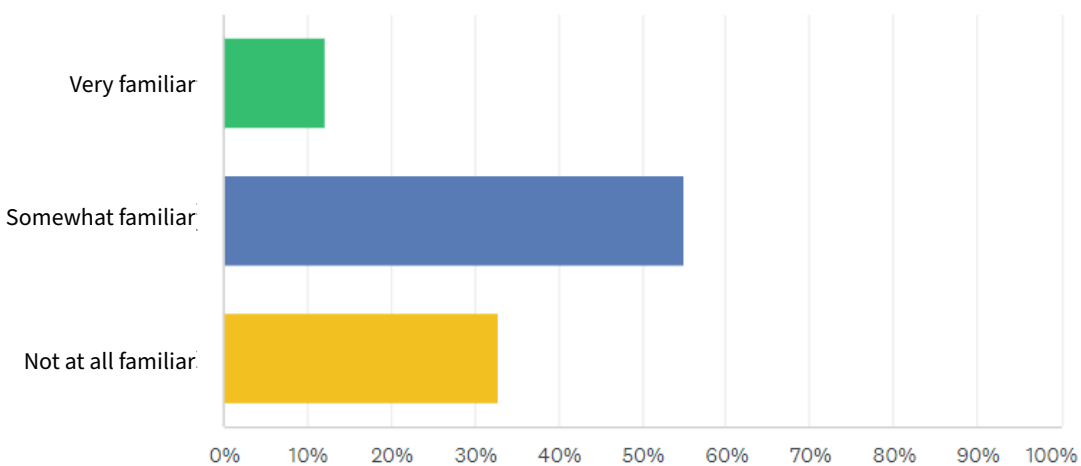
## Q3: How old are you?



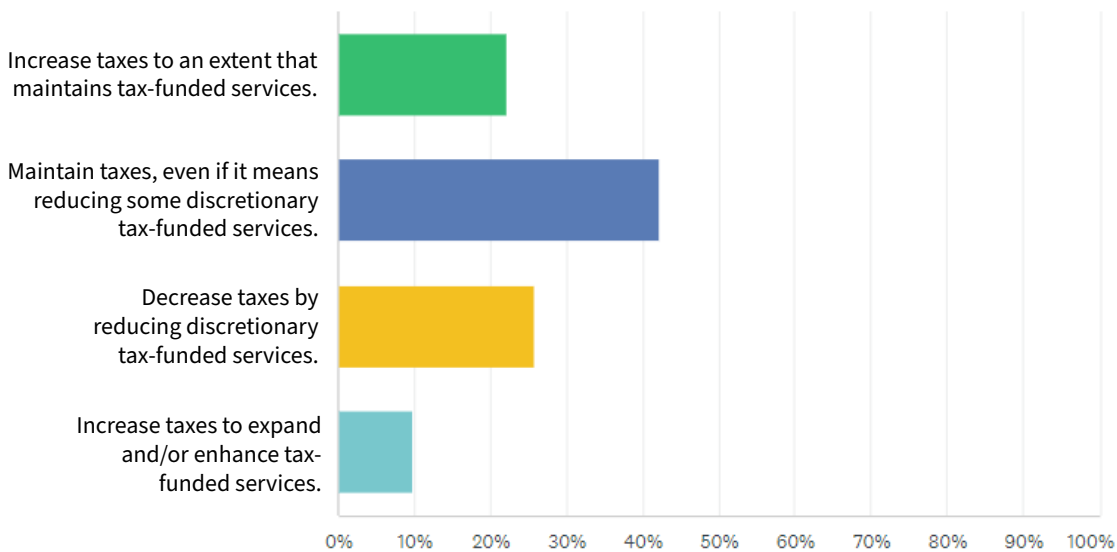
## Q4: What is your annual gross household income?



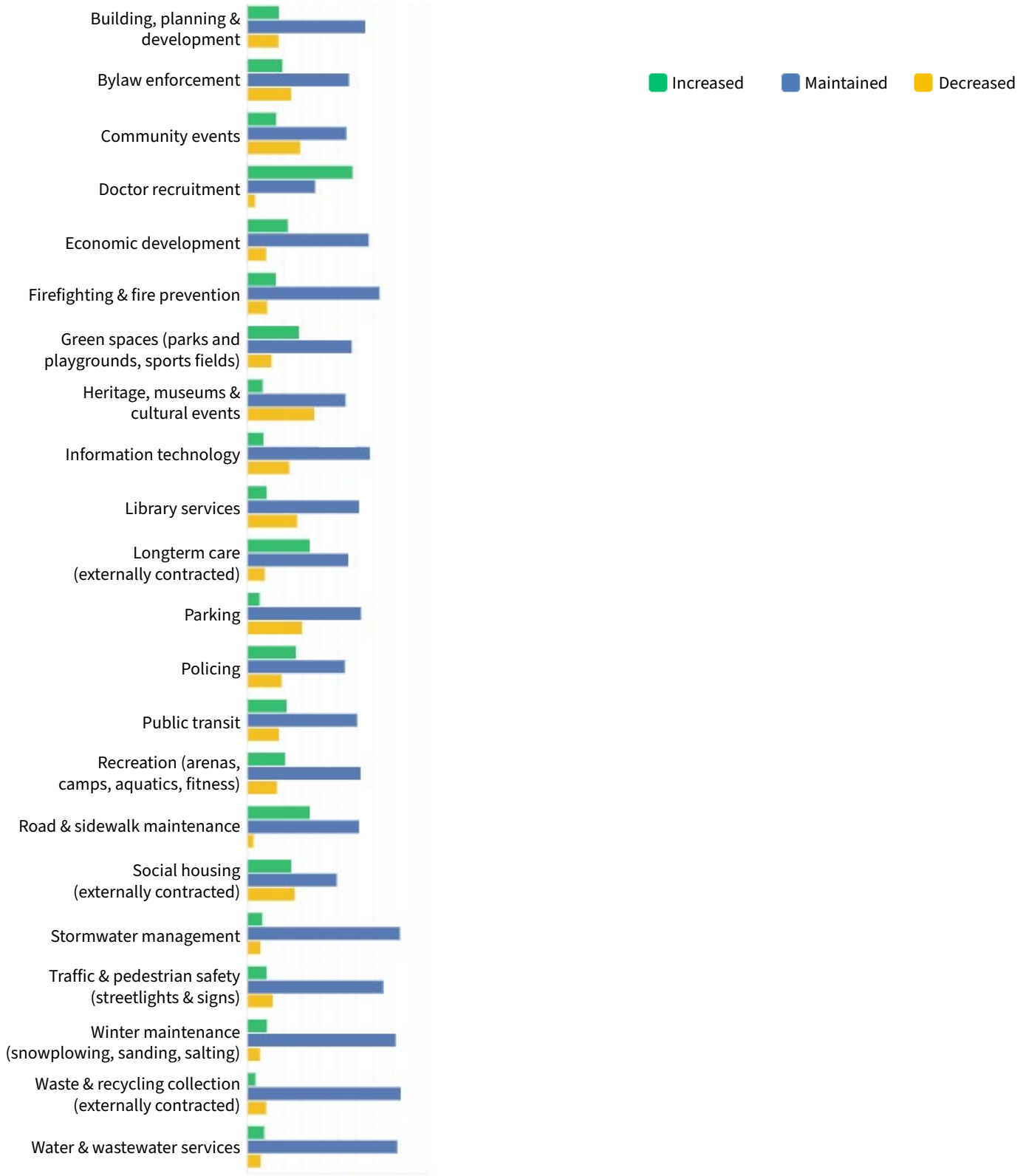
## Q5: How familiar are you with how the City develops the annual Capital and Operating Budgets?



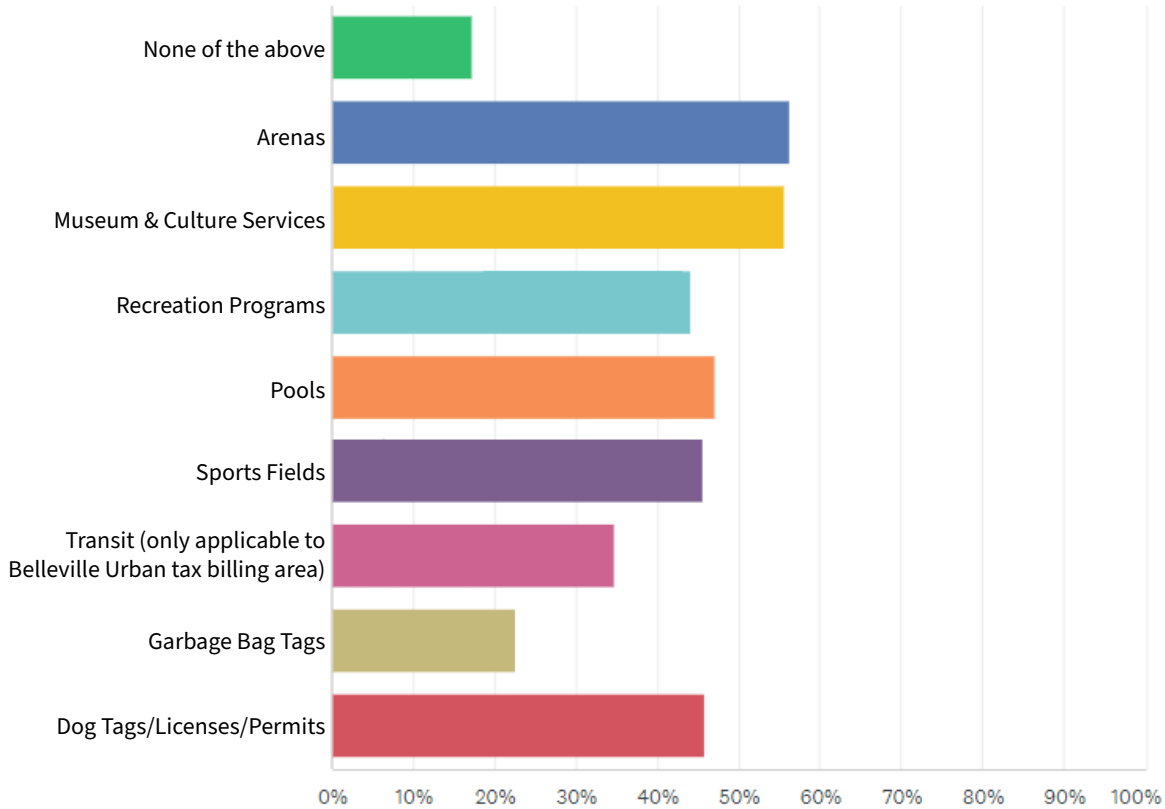
**Q6: Due to the increased cost of maintaining service levels and supporting infrastructure, the City must balance property taxes with increasing demand for services. The City has a number of options when balancing the budget, which includes the management of discretionary services (services to which costs are within the City's control; examples and further information can be found at [belleville.ca/budgetdefinitions](http://belleville.ca/budgetdefinitions)). Please indicate which of the following statements below comes close to capturing your point of view:**



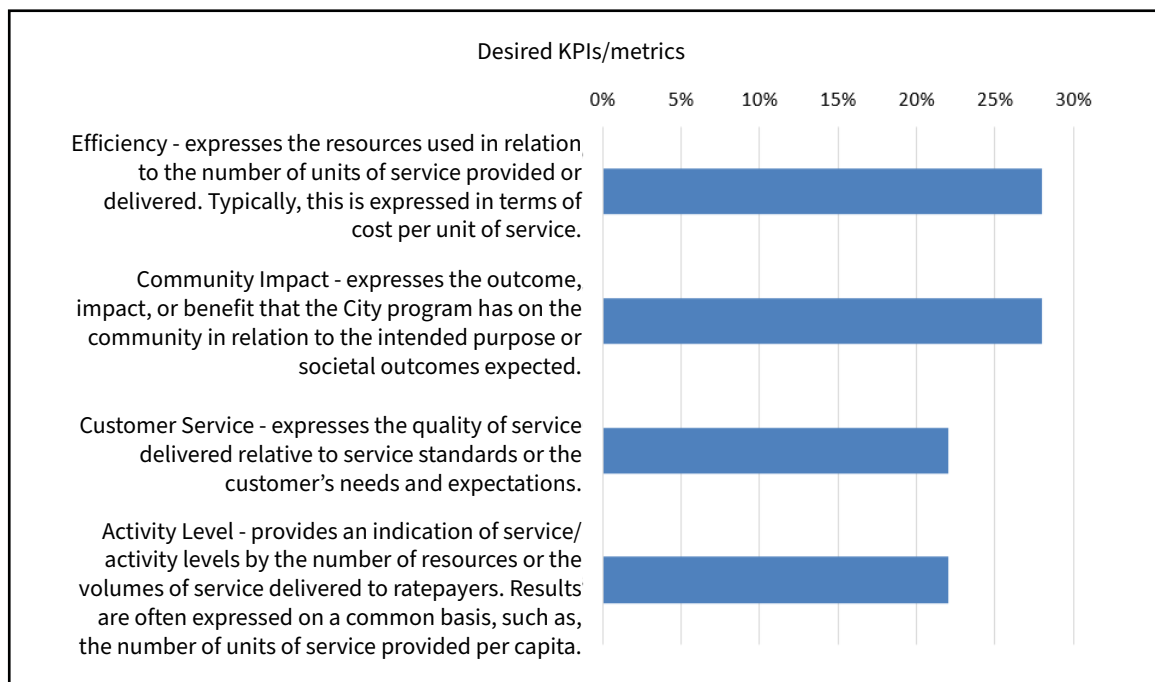
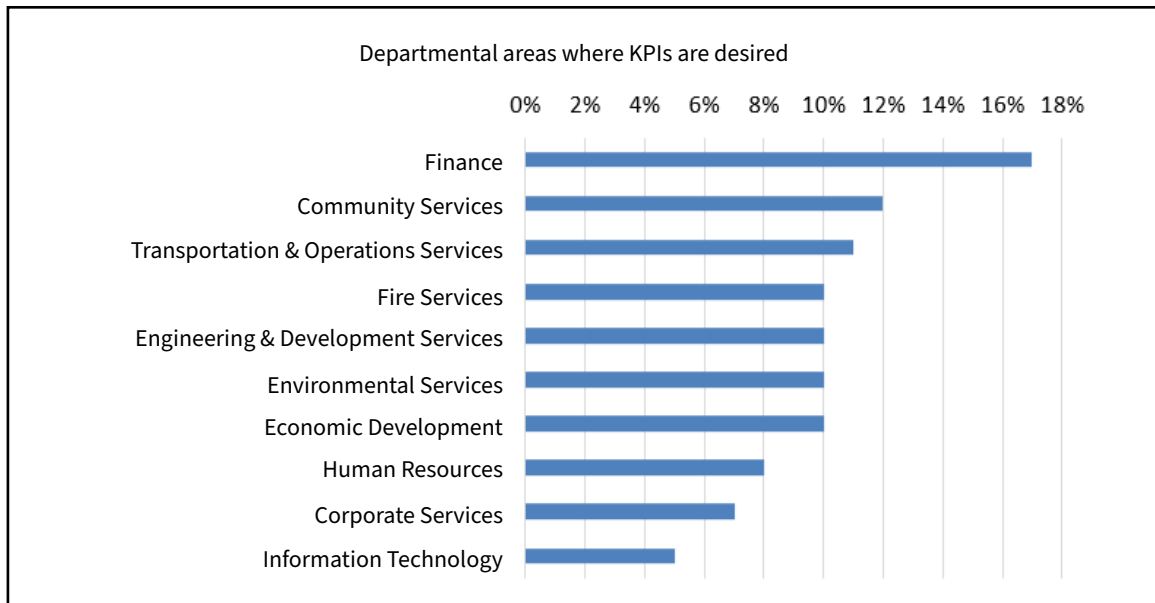
# Q7: For each of services listed below that are directly or indirectly provided by the City, please indicate whether the level of service should be increased, maintained, or decreased...



**Q8: The following services are partially funded user fees. Please identify which service(s) you would support an increase in user fees to reduce reliance on property taxes (select all that apply).**



## Q9: Please select the types of performance metrics and departmental areas you believe are most relevant and beneficial for tracking performance (select all that apply).

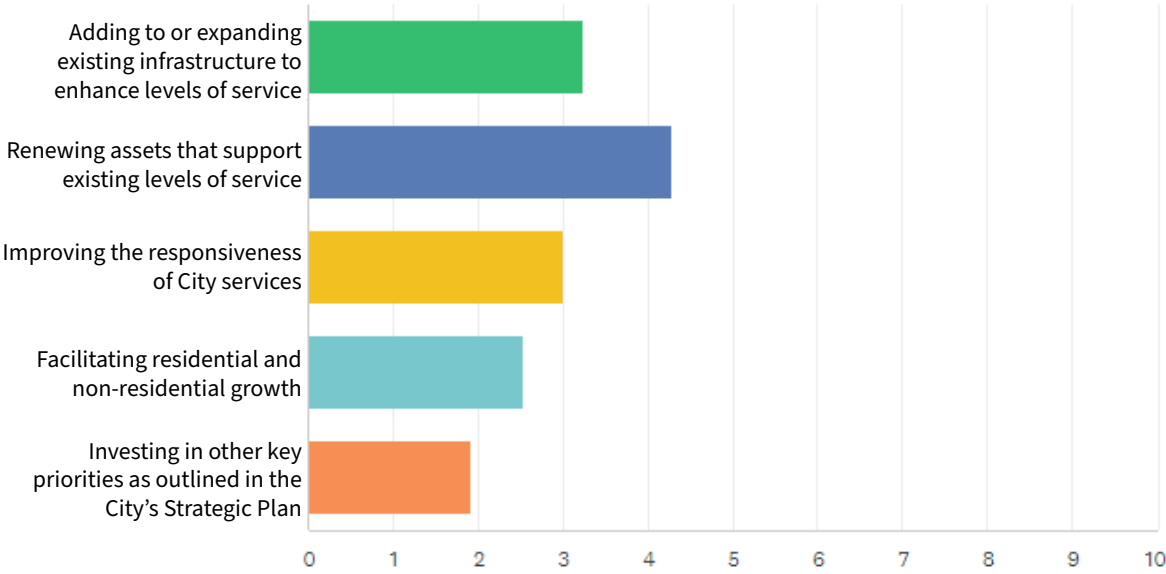


Highlights/trending responses under “Other (Please Specify)”:

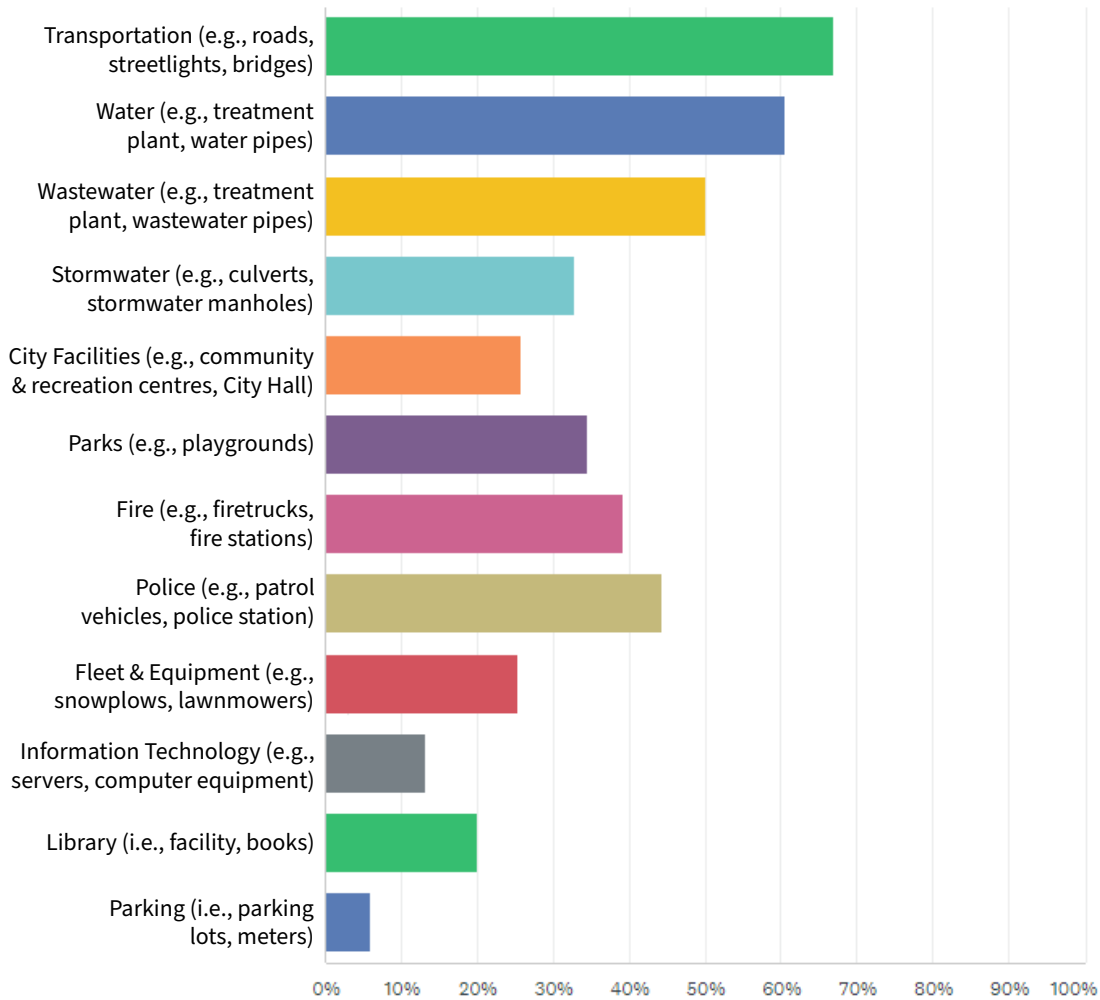
- Policing
- Use/spending level of casino funds
- Implementation of environmental impacts/climate change
- Health Services



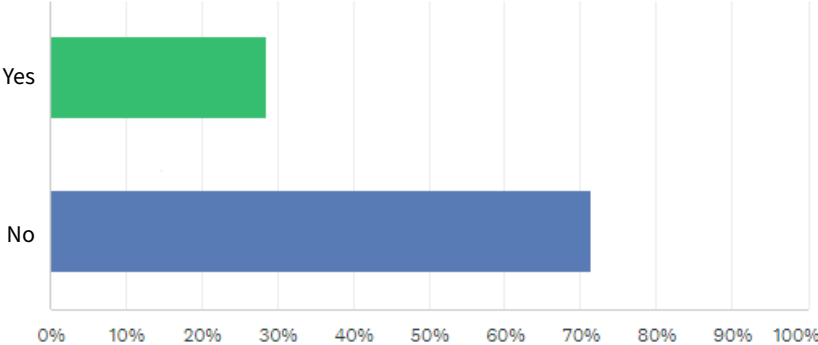
# Q10: In your opinion, how would you rank the following areas of the City's capital investment?



**Q11: In accordance with the Asset Management Plan, the City must prioritize Capital projects to develop its 10-year capital plan. In your opinion, select the most important infrastructure areas.**



**Q12: Would you like to sign up to receive ongoing updates on the City's budget?**



# Appendix A

Below is a detailed look at the responses from questions 1 and 9 of the survey.

## **Q1: Do you live and/or own a business in Belleville? None of the above (please specify)**

- My three sons play football in Belleville.
- I live in Quinte West but work in Belleville
- I am a coach and executive of a local youth sports group
- Belleville Amateur Baseball Association
- Prince Edward County
- I live outside of Belleville
- We live ruraly outside of Belleville, our children go to school in Belleville, all of our athletics, recreation, health care, shopping, etc. is done in Belleville
- Centre Hastings
- I'm a mooch
- Rental
- I live in a retirement home
- I live in Belleville
- Work in Belleville
- I will be a homeowner in the near future
- Corporate Board of Directors
- Live at home

## Q9: Please select the types of performance metrics and departmental areas you believe are most relevant and beneficial for tracking performance. Other (Please Specify)

- No clue what you are asking for
- Services provided by Conservation Authorities
- Stop wasting money people don't have extra
- Nothing
- I want to see an association that oversees everything health related. From preparing for a consultation to how much compensation the government gives yearly.
- Cost effective, did it find ways to reduce costs
- This is meaningless babble . therefore no rational answer is possible.
- Non Traffic Policing, B&E, Robbery Success Rate at Obtaining
- Not sure how you quantify water systems environmental update but maybe per user fee (water
- None
- Belleville needs to improve open and the bright space cleaning up Bellville the weeds fixing a rose especially in winter time the East End only gets snow plows down Bridge Street and Victoria it's 8:00 at night before the side streets are done one of these days seniors is going to have a heart attack and the ambulance won't be able to get in it's been like this for years taxes are very high of this end so get with it and fix the side of town also the East End is being run down businesses are going out where the West End is multiplying in lots of stores and stuff plus there's not enough services for the seniors in this town seniors are still paying high taxes for homes that needs to be addressed
- Number of housing units built
- City of Belleville is JOKE. There is NO Accountability.
- Review Staffing Levels
- Parks and Recreation facilities (West Hill) community lacking
- Value -- subjective evaluation that measures Community Impact relative to cost
- to expand on "community impact," please do not underestimate the impact of green spaces INTEGRATED (not only separated) from where we work and where we live. At no cost to the city, businesses and home builders are the place to start. Businesses also include investment property owners. Landscaping requirements/minimal standards are within your authority. Further, you will notice that my answers in later questions prioritize other mental health/healthy lifestyle measures. Currently, and unfortunately, we do not live in an inspired city. We live in a place that lets business (see Royal Bank on North Front Street, and many other such establishments) asphalt directly to their doorway. Home builders are "encouraged to," but not required to plant trees in their for-profit housing areas. Home owners are given no incentive to plant trees either. Please, but the belle/beauty into Belleville. She, and her taxpayers, deserve it. It is also ironic to look to climate change initiatives while ignoring the carbon dioxide to oxygen exchange that trees provide. And when measures are in place for builders, as they should be, please also make it retroactive to any community they developed in the last ten years. Finally, don't WAIT for homeowners on corner lots to LOOK INTO and APPLY FOR trees from the city, JUST DO THE PLANTING AS A CITY-PROVIDED PRIORITY SERVICE. It astonishes me how little a priority--to the point of measures to ensure avoidance--tree planting within residential areas actually is for council and for the building and planning sector (again, integrated trees, not separated and relegated to a park down the street or within a 5-10 minute walk).

- No Tax Increase
- Roadwork- This relates to having streets torn up to replace water and sewage lines, which is needed. What isn't needed is tearing up sections the following year because something was either not completed properly or was missed the first time. Repairs need to be done and COMPLETED the first time. It's a waste of funds to redo a section. There are streets that really need work done on them, like repaving, that are not looked at so the streets that are decent are torn up or repaved. Necessity people!! Get the worst ones done first!! Thank you.
- Revenue from the casino
- Policing
- All of the above
- Need to better understand to answer
- Policing audit be nice, lots of Improvements needed there, and transit what a joke .not to mention fees for parks and stuff, hard working community members and families already work hard to pay, contribute sweat equity and yet you want us to pay more ya right
- We do NOT have city water or sewage and I was told that we would NEVER get it on our road. We are paying huge taxes for nothing. The excuse “frontage?” Really. We don’t even have sidewalks or city lights or paved road. We are paying over \$5,000 for one house!!!!!! Budget properly! The kick backs you get from the casino! The expansion of Belleville borders that’s more houses and more land tax! If you really took all the properties in this little city you would have a surplus of money for your operating budget! What are you doing with the \$\$?
- TAXES SHOULD NOT HE RAISED WHAT SO EVER FOR PARKS AND RECREATION, ITS DISGUSTING TO EVEN ASK IT TO BE INCREASED... PEOPLE DONT NEED MORE TAXES ADDED TO BASIC LIFE GARBAGE THROWN AT THEM!
- How about less money laundering with countless unqualified “consultants” and actually put our tax dollars to use.
- Re-do bus routes - I've had to wait over an hour at night (twice,) for 5A/B buses that were cancelled last-minute, without proper notice to passengers
- Using targeted mental health and crisis counsellors to decrease Policing budget.
- The first 10 options arent measurable kpis
- Policing
- get nothing for our taxes.. I do not see it.. 2 councillors berate me on social media and use it for city business.
- is it within jurisdiction
- KPIs of comparator municipalities to compare relative performance
- Discretionary reductions
- Maintain present tax level- all new building tax income should handle existing level of service if not poor management.
- Police Services - this is seriously lacking in Belleville
- Return on investment in all service lines.
- Policing
- Environmental impact/benefit
- Sanitation plant updates

# Appendix B

The comments below were received through emails and posts relating to the operating budget on the City's social media channels throughout the consultation period:

- Hello, I just filled out the Budget Survey and noticed that there was no mention of active transportation infrastructure. I hope that my selection of "transportation" in priorities includes a focus on this. When roads and sidewalks are resurfaced, we need to be thinking about the variety of road users who could/ should be able to use them.
- I am from Cannifton are we n staikos homes . We are looking for splashpad park in my subdivision . We have very big community with not much kid's activities around here.
- Cut every dept by 10% & get the 90% left to start working. So Simple. The lawns in Belleville need cutting. Why are the By Law Officers sleeping.
- Fix the roads.
- Roads are horrendous
- People can barely afford to pay their mortgage and now one of the biggest hikes in property taxes that I can remember. Not the best place to live anymore. Roads are horrific. Homeless situation worsening. Do your job.
- Have buses run before 7am on Sundays so people can get to work and not pay for a cab. Or bring On Demand back
- Entire health sector needs to be redone now. We get third world care here now
- More busses and drivers
- Rural taxes go down would be great
- More ball diamonds would be great!!
- HEALTH. SERVICES.
- Please pave the path at Hillcrest c.s.b park. We will have a basket ball court and skate dot that you won't be able to dribble a ball or rollerblade /skateboard to.
- MoRe FiRe StAtIoNs and FiRe FiGhTeRs! Or houses will burn and people will die!
- Stop increasing rural...now changed status for more taxes..we DON'T have all the luxuries the city enjoys just a little more property to maintain. Get very little for our taxes.
- Pot holes!!!!