

**Report from** Corporate Services, Commissioner

**Date of Report:** Jan. 16, 2017

**Date of Meeting:** Jan. 18, 2017

**Report Number:** CSC-B005-2017

**File:** 10.6.99

**Subject:** Telephone Town Hall - Public Engagement Results

## Recommendation

That the Budget Standing Committee (BSC) receive this report for information purposes.

## Background

Budget deliberations involve difficult decision making, as the Budget Standing Committee, City staff and Council as a whole must consider how the needs for services and programs can be balanced with taxpayers' ability to pay.

As such, public input into the process can be invaluable for residents, members of the BSC and Council as a whole. Engaging the public in this process has proven to be challenging through traditional methods such as online surveys and open houses. While the City still hosts Budget Open Houses as part of the public engagement process, the decision was made a few years ago to try a Telephone Town Hall session, whereby residents would be called in their homes and provided the opportunity to participate in a budget discussion.

For the 2015 budget, the Telephone Town Hall included a call-out to 15,000 homes and for the 2016 and 2017 budget engagement process that number of households was increased to 30,000.

## Report

On January 11, 2017, a one-hour Telephone Town Hall was held by provider Front Porch Strategies with a callout to 30,000 random households in St. Catharines to participate. The event was hosted by Budget Standing Committee chair Mat Siscoe and Mayor Walter Sendzik with City staff as support.

Participants were provided an opportunity to listen to information about the budget, answer four polling questions, ask live questions, as well as leave a voicemail message at the end of the Telephone Town Hall.

## Telephone Town Hall Response

With a sample size of 30,000 households for the Telephone Town Hall this year, results show that about 42% (12,468 households) live answered and at peak – there were 751 households participating in the Telephone Town Hall session (700 in 2016 and 500 in 2015).

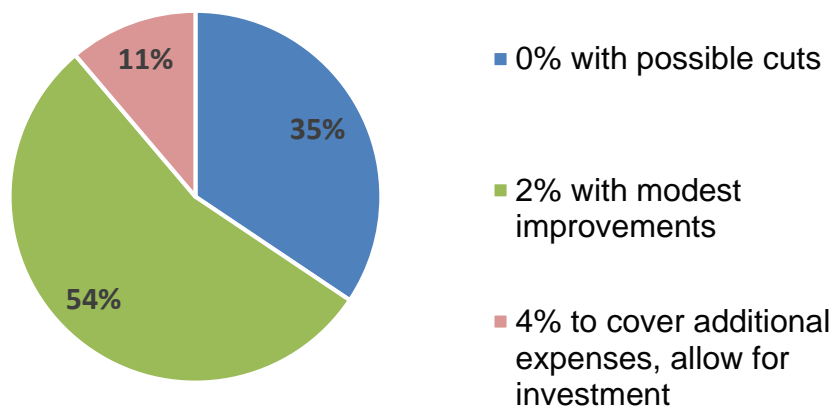
## Polls

For the polling questions, as in past Telephone Town Hall sessions: residents were asked the level of tax increase they would accept, what they felt should be the priority for spending, and what is important to them and/or their family. This year, the fourth question asked is the City secured additional funds, what investment opportunities residents would support.

With respect to the four polling questions, the result for the 2017 Telephone Town Hall demonstrate that anywhere from 350 to 415 people voted/participated in answering each question, which is slightly higher than last year's participation rates.

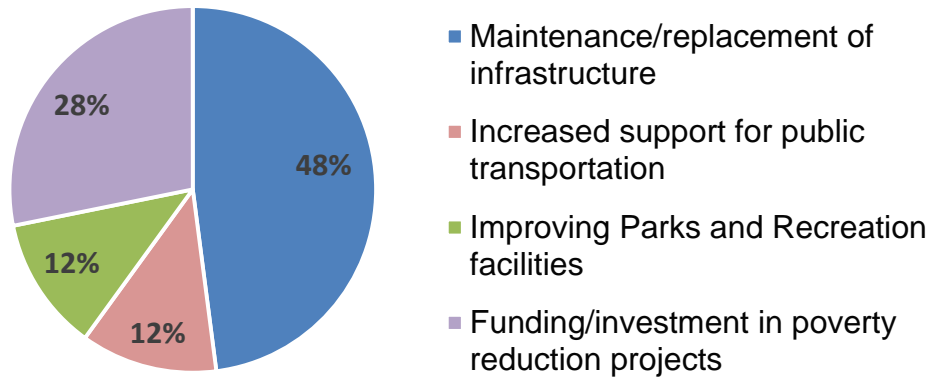
## Polling Results

1. The Budget Standing Committee set an overall expenditure target of 2% for 2017. As part of an overall property tax increase, which option would you support? Total votes: 375



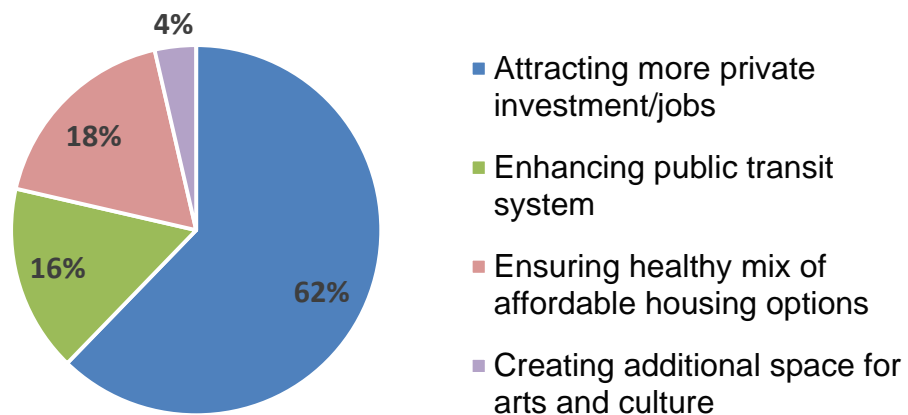
2. In working with the Federal and Provincial government, infrastructure funding has been identified as a priority. What should the City focus on for investment?

Total votes: 415

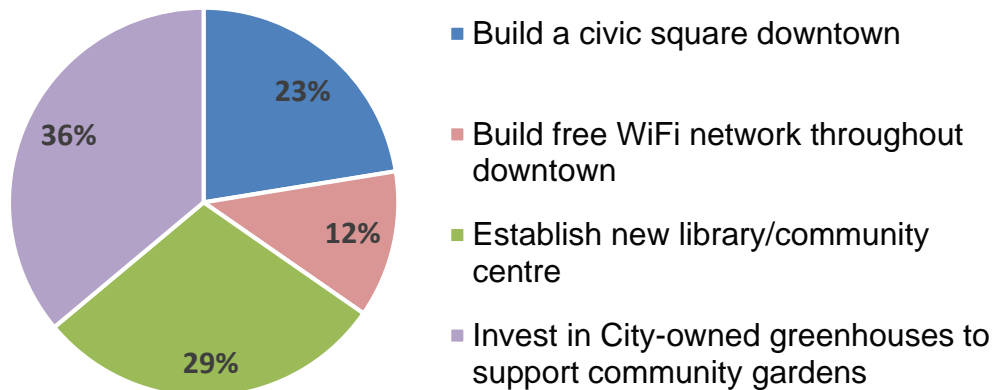


3. Which of the following is most important to you and/or your family?

Total votes: 416



4. If the City secured additional funds to accomplish one major initiative, which would you support? Total votes: 352



## Feedback/Questions

During the Telephone Town Hall, 82 individuals went in the queue with questions to ask, however, time only allowed for 16 to go live. Following the session, 60 voicemails were left and four emails. As with the previous two years, a number of individuals left messages to praise the City for using the Telephone Town Hall format to engage residents, and felt it was beneficial, informative and encouraged it for future years.

A summary of voicemails and emails received from the public following the Telephone Town Hall are summarized in **Appendix 1**. Those comments requiring follow up will be responded to by staff and members of the Budget Standing Committee, where appropriate.

Results from the 2016 and 2015 Telephone Town Hall, included in the report that went to the Budget Standing Committee last year, can be reviewed in **Appendix 2**.

## Financial Implications

The Telephone Town Hall session, as part of the 2017 Budget Engagement Process, will cost \$5,825.

## **Relationship to Strategic Plan**

### **Economic Sustainability**

Be an affordable City for young people, families and retired older adults.

### **Social Sustainability**

Provide excellent customer service and communication with citizens.

## **Conclusion**

The Telephone Town Hall format has allowed the City to expand its community outreach and public engagement in the budget process. The Telephone Town Hall has seen higher response rates than the past interactive online budget and the public open house sessions. The response from the members of the public who participate is positive and many stated they hope this format will continue to be used in the future.

The Telephone Town Hall format is inclusive and provides an opportunity to raise public awareness of the City's budget, as well as garner input from the taxpayers' the City serves. The information gathered through the polling questions may also provide the Budget Standing Committee and Council with a better understanding of the public's opinions on tax levels, priorities and future planning.

### **Prepared by:**

Maggie Riopelle, Executive Research Assistant,  
Commission of Corporate Services

### **Approved by:**

Shelley Chemnitz, Commissioner of Corporate Services

<b>Telephone Town Hall – 2017 Budget Engagement Feedback</b>	
<b>Voicemail messages</b>	
1	Wonderful - enjoyed it. Makes me feel included, engaged and part of the process. Use more often. It's very democratic - allows us to learn from you, ask questions. If we have a committee that look into where we are headed (sustainable and future planning) - I would like to be involved.
2	PRCS invest in water collection system - rain barrels - like residents do. Save parks/recreation a lot of money.
3	We need more accessible parking and less permits issued.
4	Meridian and PAC - why can't people who attend cover the costs instead of taxpayers having to pay? Why more and more tax dollars for those facilities?
5	Garbage pickup - they come on time and do a wonderful job. I had a tree cut down about a year ago but no one has removed the stump out of the ground. I hope they can fix it. Taxes, utility bills too high.
6	Thank you. Liked to be involved. Very informative. Hope to be involved next year, and may have a question then. Mayor is doing a wonderful job. Pleased to say he is our mayor. Thank you.
7	To Mayor: You have done a fantastic job. Sprinklers: if they are still on should be off at this time of year so they don't burst. Pavilion: Is the \$700,000 really the cost for a four-legged roof?
8	I really enjoyed listening on phone and opportunity to participate. Hope you continue to do it.
9	Happy with what is going on in Port Dalhousie. Pavilion - please leave space for people to picnic there, so if it gets rented - please leave a section for the public.
10	Parking on City property - in my neighbourhood - is it illegal? Neighbours have driveways, but the City allows them to park on City property. Makes snow removal difficult and getting in and out of the driveway.
11	Are there federal monies to set up sustainable, good jobs in the community? I thought that was in their mandate when they came into power. I thought there was a grant or funding system in place.
12	By-law enforcement - we pay taxes through region to enforce by-laws? We have a problem on Wilfrid Laurier where we back onto waterway. Taken three and a half years to complain to the police, city, Region, Mayor. Nothing happens. No Trucking here – but it has increased. We as citizens have been calling those truck companies to get a response (helped a bit) - but not because of the police enforcement. Can by-law do something? Maybe some increased enforcement.
13	To the Mayor: Great job - thank you this is fantastic. Optimistic and moving forward, that's what we want.
14	I used to go to Brock (for events). Now I don't go to anything because I don't feel safe (downtown at PAC). I didn't answer poll question 4 - didn't like the

	options. Certainly nothing else should be built downtown. Have there been any issues with Ambulances getting to the new hospital? Is there an opportunity to consider dedicated ambulance lanes?
15	Very educational - thank you to the Mayor and Council. I'm a senior. I live in the south end, with drought, I started having problems with foundation of my home. I've been talking about this with other people in the south end. Surprised to find many other people are experiencing the same problem. I learned we are on a fault line here - and there are tremors. Last summer I did have sinking of my car port (lived here for 9 years). I was told it was the dry weather. Is there any department that looks at this (environment) or under seniors maintaining their homes? Any assistance? Please call back.
16	Telephone Town Hall is an Excellent idea! Q: How long is a "temporary road" - we have had a temporary road surface for 40 years. It's raised, we have ditches - when is Howard Avenue going to have a new road? Councillor please contact us or raise it at Council. Please call me - let me know what is happening.
17	Did not appreciate the call. Do not call next year.
18	Last polling question - I didn't think any options were worth spending money on. Other areas should be addressed. Money could be better spent.
19	Appreciated the call, very informative. Thank you.
20	Leaf collection - wondering if there is an easier way to collect? Like truck vacuuming up and it being recycled. Thanks. I enjoyed this, bye.
21	Is there any money allocated to the Victoria Lawn Cemetery? Specifically Holy Trinity Mausoleum?
22	Why are the poll questions directed at additional spending as opposed to savings? How can we trust the mayor who comingled the budget increase with the region?
23	Thank you, it's innovative and good process. Got to hear a lot of good information. Specifically - I live on a fire lane and half of it is private and the other half is not. We have difficulty getting snow clearance. Can we address some of that as ppl move more on outreaches of St. Catharines? We virtually get no services - but getting the roads clear is priority for us. Also - downtown is coming along so well, I'm really enjoying it.
24	Thank you. Liked the opportunity. Thank you to everyone involved in the program. As always, I worry about nature and natural habitat. I support greening efforts and would hope the City does too.
25	Enjoyed listening to the in-house telephone program on budget. Very informative and certainly worth my time.
26	Burgoyne Bridge - did you accept the wrong bid? And how much attention to detail was given? Look at different quotes and the reality. Sometimes the cheapest is not always the way to go. I know one of our locals bid on it, but didn't get it because the bid was high. Please call back.

27	Is anything going to be done in the City to deal with hydro and utility rates? Seniors can't afford it. Pls call.
28	I thought this was an excellent discussion. I applaud the ppl who put it on. It's a great breakthrough. Thank you very much.
29	Cost of using a full size bus rather than half size bus? Why not encourage smaller buses for routes not widely used? Pls call or email back.
30	Consider toll at Burgoyne Bridge? That's the way the Skyway was built. Would like response.
31	What do we have in place to protect us from tenders - such as the four-pad - so this doesn't happen again? We should tender for people who can sustain our properties and do the job properly. The Burgoyne Bridge - I know it's the Region - should look at what Hamilton did and make the City and Region one entity.
32	Water bills: Last year my bill tripled because I didn't want brown grass. If it will be the same this year, I will have the brownest grass. Please call back about rates.
33	Would like to see the City get rid of the Niagara Regional Police and put the RCMP in charge.
34	This is St. Catharines: The Garden City. I find it to be more like "The Garbage City." Need someone with the City driving around picking up garbage or assign to prisoners. People who own homes and don't shovel should be fined. Should also enforce grass levels like NOTL. Needs to be higher property standards.
35	Sewers (?) I notice in my area lots of tree and leaves covering the sewers. Wondering if someone can look into it and keep them up better.
36	Is there a way to use shorter buses for routes not well used? Thank you, I found this very worthwhile.
37	Red light cameras are badly needed - so many vehicles and cyclist run red lights. Serious safety issue and possible profit?
38	Debacle we have in Port Dalhousie. What are we doing with the developers to get them to move forward and follow through? Pls call back.
39	Re: parking meters. Please don't forget about ppl who don't have smart phones, so pls keep that in mind when you are making decisions.
40	Thank you for the invitation to participate. I'm so appreciative of being involved in the decision making process. My nine-year-old joined me - and enjoyed it. Maybe I have a little politician on my hands. Walter - don't know how you do what you do every day. You work tirelessly and it is noticed and appreciated. Thanks for representing us well and making us proud.
41	We need to slow down here. We built arena, PAC, four pad, Burgoyne bridge over budget. I would prefer a face to face meeting rather than over the phone.
42	Wondering about bike lanes down Ontario Street. It's cramped. Any way to improve ability for bikes in that area?
43	Is the City trying to work out transportation between Hamilton and St. Catharines? I'm asking because I'm a senior and in bad weather, I won't drive. Why is there no service to get to Hamilton? Please respond.
44	It was excellent. Very interesting. I want to know about the process and how items become a levy on the tax bill. The one that annoys me is the hospital.



	Don't want to see one for the pier or any other. There must be another way to find money. Please respond.
45	I found it very interesting. I think Mayor, Council and staff are doing a super job for sports/entertainment, downtown, FirstOntario PAC. Everything been improved over the last eight years. Re: St. Catharines Hydro: Just want to know about the fraud - Is there insurance that will protect the taxpayers? Also, the Garden City sign, needs to be improved. The spotlights on sign has to be clearer. Minor issue, please look into it.
46	Is the City looking at the timing and volume of traffic? I find there are a lot of bottlenecks. As St. Catharines continues to grow it's only going to continue to be a problem. Great call to listen in to tonight - thanks.
47	Charge \$40 if car on street during major snowfalls. It would make money and make it easier for crews to clean up safer and faster.
48	Parking downtown for Meridian - surprised there is a committee to do a study. Transit buses at night time, they can have a shuttle going to different parking lots. Make an app - location of parking areas, if full, shuttles. Like City to consider smaller buses for low usage routes. I have a number of ideas to share.
49	I am a firm believer we do good maintenance on our recreational facilities. There was plans to hire a maintenance person specifically for the four-pad. I have noted a number of deficiencies at four-pad. Let staff know. Too many people deal with it. If you have a dedicated person there, they can just deal with it. Are you planning to have a full-time skills maintenance person for four-pad?
50	Congrats to the Mayor who is very hard working and trying to do the best for our city. Thank you.
51	Is it possible our City employees can be cross trained to do a job that is not their job? Can they not do that? In the trades areas: plumbing, heating, electrical and mechanical.
52	Appreciate the forum, it's a great opportunity for community to participate. Concern: I go to Jaycee park and for many years two wonderful men looked after the park. Even though there is a lot of work done to the park, it seems that these men have been replaced by students. Great opportunity for the students. But I think you need to see if level of service is adequate and investigate for other efficiencies.
53	Budget Committee has proposed extended parking meters to 9 p.m. and beyond. Isn't this shooting yourself in the foot when you are trying to attract new businesses, and people to the Meridian and PAC? I am a season ticket holder and go downtown for a beer before going to Meridian Centre. I don't have a phone to access a parking meter. Also, What happened to Shickluna? Is it ever going to come to fruition?
54	Inner City schools are lacking in funds around play area and also health care there has been outbreaks in school and daycares - what is being done there?
55	We have a great hospital, but just wondering if the problems with staff and issues weren't carried over to the new hospital.

56	I have concerns with engineering of the traffic lights and bottlenecks. It's hard to get from one end to the other. Would like to discuss it. Another thing more frustrating - lack of street signs (Geneva going north towards the lake). Absolutely no street signs in some areas should be fixed.
57	Re: parking in the downtown, going to phone only, would really not be appropriate for ppl without cellphones. Also, email - for you to acquire email, some are not into that technology. Don't neglect population that doesn't access technology (email, internet, cellphone) for various reasons. Appreciate a response.
58	Very great, well planned - happy with event. Is there anything in the budget to have an outdoor rink? Think St. Catharines should take the lead on it.
59	Walking trail behind us - every summer City comes to cut the grass. Don't need it cut so often. Why not spend the money on watering flowers or other areas? City is great and you do a great job. Thank you.
<b>Email messages</b>	
60	Queenston Street itself requires major repair and the garbage strewn hospital property is a disgrace. How long is city council going to let this area remain in the state that it is in? The citizens that live in that area deserve better. How can an area such as this even begin to improve when it is fighting city hall? What entrepreneur would want to move a business down there?
61	Where can I find Revenues? I have a copy of the Draft Operating Budget but there are no Revenues in there. I would like to know the Revenue generated by the City and more specifically, how much money is collected from the Water Bill.
62	One thing that is an issue from time to time is the water bill for a landlord when a tenant leaves and does not pay the amount owing. This balance due falls to the responsibility of the landlord. This is not the case for gas (Enbridge) this is not the case for hydro (Horizon) but for some reason it is the case for water with the City of St. Catharines. Can you provide a response as to why this burden falls on the landlord? More to the point I would like this policy to change and make the tenant responsible for the water bill. How can this be done?
63	My question is regarding the West Park field: In the few years the Niagara Olympic track and field have vigorously have been going after any person that go out for a jog or running on the track. Often in a very combative manner they ask for a fee to buy a "shoe tag" or be subjected to trespassing. As I mentioned before I grew up playing in that park and as far as I remember I don't remember this track being a private property. Has it been sold? If so, why? If it is sold was the track not built using the city's taxpayers' money?



## Telephone Town Hall Budget Standing Committee January 26, 2016

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### Background

Budget deliberations involve difficult decision-making. All participants in the process, Council, the Budget Standing Committee, and City staff must consider how the needs and requirements for services can be balanced with taxpayer affordability.

In the process of making difficult decisions, it is important to consult the public. By engaging the public, the City of St. Catharines increases the community's knowledge and understanding of the budget including any identified opportunities and challenges, as well as the allocation of resources.

As well, public involvement allows for a fuller understanding of which municipal services are important to the taxpayer. Garnering participation from our community, however, has proven to be a challenge. Traditionally surveys and open houses have been the principal methods to solicit public input. To encourage additional public engagement, last year a Telephone Town Hall session was hosted for the first time with a callout to 15,000 random homes. The participation was such that the Budget Standing Committee supported a Telephone Town Hall as part of the overall public engagement plans for the 2016 Budget. The callout was increased to 30,000 random homes.

### Report

On January 18, 2016, a one-hour Telephone Town Hall was held by provider Front Porch Strategies with a callout to 30,000 random households to participate. It was hosted by Mayor Walter Sendzik and Budget Chair Mat Siscoe with City staff as support.

Participants were provided the opportunity to listen to information about the budget, answer four polling questions, ask live questions, as well as leave a voicemail message at the end of the Telephone Town Hall.

As in 2015, the decision was made to poll the residents in two specific areas: the level of the tax increase they would accept, as well as what they felt should be the priority areas for spending. The two remaining poll questions were selected to get an indication of public opinions on issues of the day.

When comparing the two years' results, in each case, 51% of the respondents favour the lower tax increases. Taken in a broader view, 49% of the respondents would support a higher tax increase, providing there is a clear justification as to the value derived from the additional funds. The answers to the second question, give clear indications as to which type of services and/or investments would be supported. These results are illustrated in **Appendix 1**. Scoring highest in both years are funds for attracting additional private investment. The next highest category is funding for replacement and maintenance of roads, sidewalks.

## Telephone Town Hall Response

With a sample size of the 30,000 households for the Telephone Town Hall this year, results show that about 49% of those calls were live answers and 6,000 participants stayed on the line for more than a few minutes. In comparison, in 2015 the call was made to 15,000 random households; 50% were live answers and 2,900 stayed on the line for more than a few minutes. In 2016, the average participant remained on the line for 19 minutes (18 minutes, 2015) and at the peak – nearly 700 people were on the phone participating compared with 500 individuals in 2015.

With respect to the four polling questions the results for 2016 show that anywhere from 300 to 350 people voted in each polling question while in 2015 the votes per question ranged from 130 to 150 votes. The results of the 2016 polling questions are detailed in **Appendix 2**. The original report from the provider, including the full text of the questions, can be found on the City's website.

The City received a total of 67 voicemail messages following the Telephone Town Hall, as well as three emails. As with 2015, the respondents praised the City for hosting the Telephone Town Hall, offered suggestions on how to improve the format and provided comments or questions on a variety of City matters. This Telephone Town Hall format has allowed the City to expand its community outreach and has been positively received by the public. An overview of the types of comments from the voicemail messages is attached as **Appendix 3**. Individuals whose messages required responses have received additional information from the Mayor's Office, Budget Chair Mat Siscoe and City staff.

## Conclusion

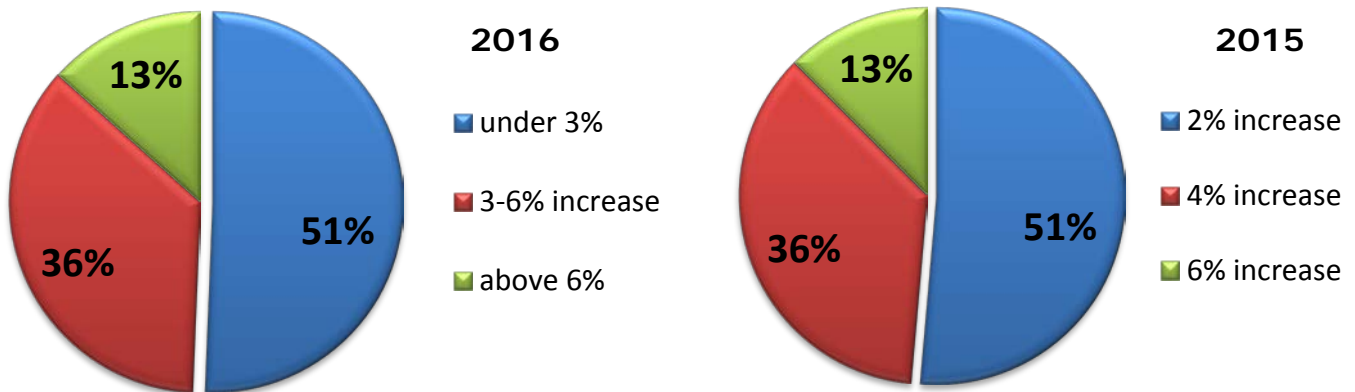
The Telephone Town Hall format has allowed the City to expand its community outreach and public engagement in the budget process. It has seen more response in its second year than with other formats of public engagement that have been used, namely the online interactive budget and the public open house sessions. The event provides an opportunity for the Budget Standing Committee and City staff to garner input on tax levels, priorities and future planning.

## Prepared by:

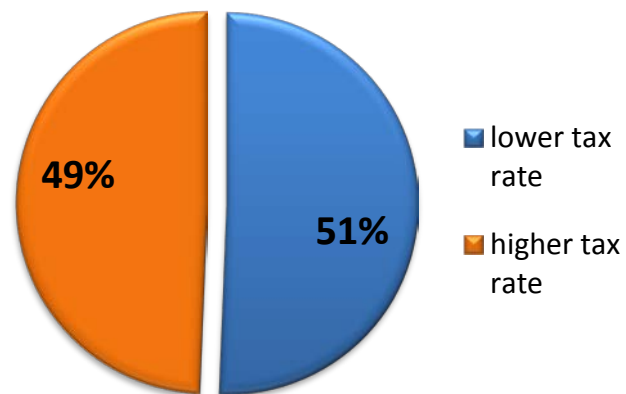
Maggie Riopelle, Executive Research Assistant,  
Commission of Corporate Services

## Polling Questions Comparison 2016 and 2015

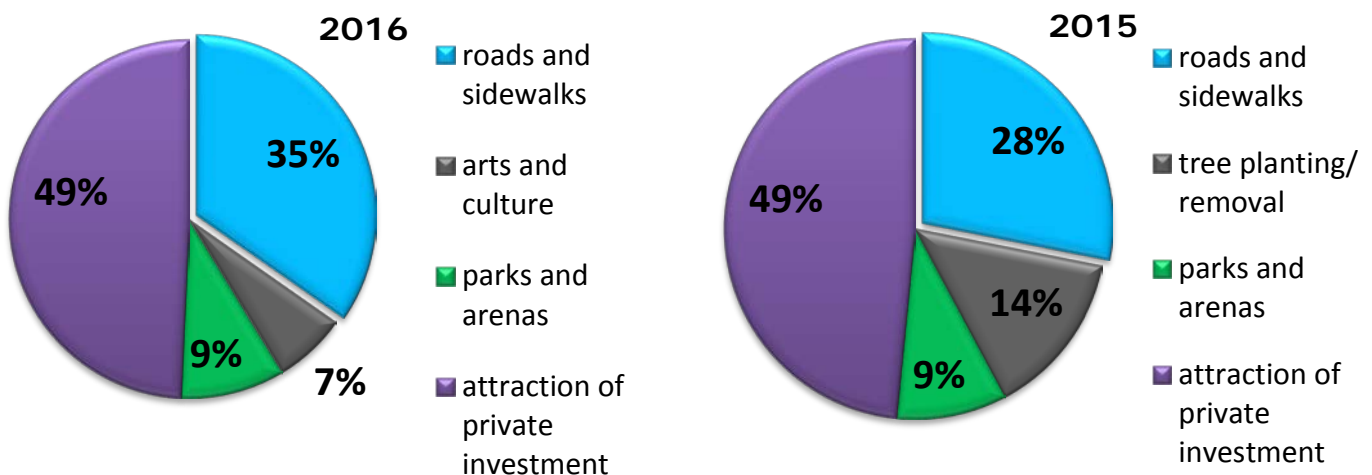
With the City's financial challenges in mind, which of the following property tax scenarios would you support?



In a broader sense, in both 2016 and 2015, about half of the respondents supported the lower tax increase option, while the other half were willing to accept a higher tax increase as long as it was justified and didn't result in delayed project/service improvements or cuts to service. This is demonstrated in the graph to the right.



With respect to priorities for City tax dollars, in 2016 and 2015 respondents selected the same top two answers: attracting private investment to the City and, secondly, maintenance and replacement of City infrastructure, namely in the areas of roads and sidewalks, etc.



## APPENDIX 2



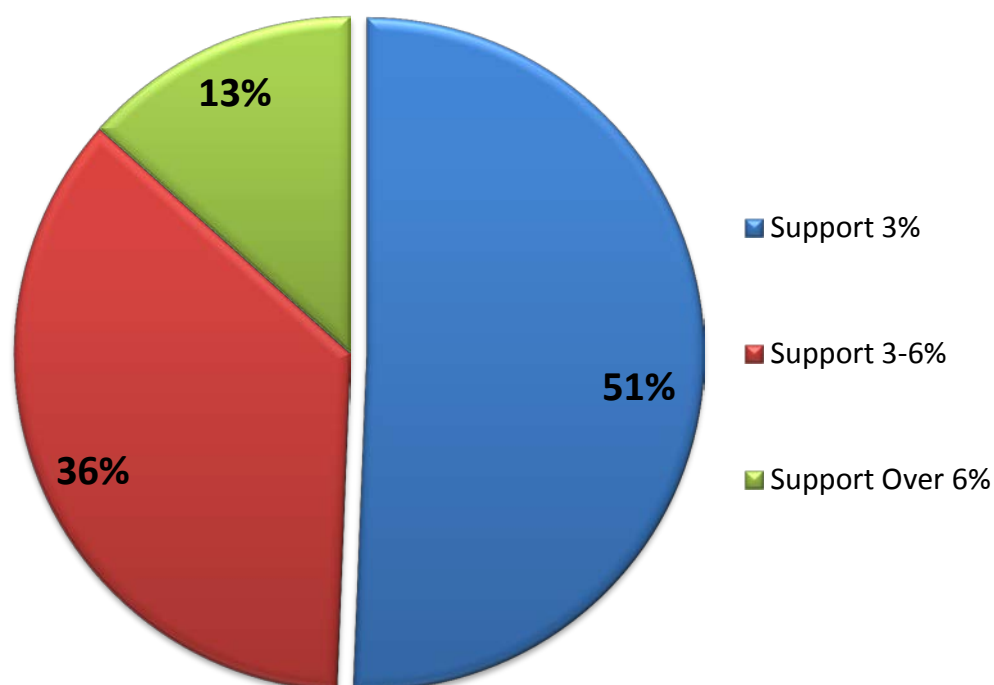
**Telephone Town Hall**  
**January 18, 2016**  
**Budget Input – Poll Results**

As part of the community outreach and public engagement into the City of St. Catharines' budget process, the Budget Standing Committee hosted a telephone town hall session where 30,000 random homes were contacted to participate. People were provided the opportunity to listen to information about the budget, as well as answer four polling questions. Below are the results of the polls.

1. With the City's financial challenges in mind, our question is which of the following options would you support? Would you support a tax increase:

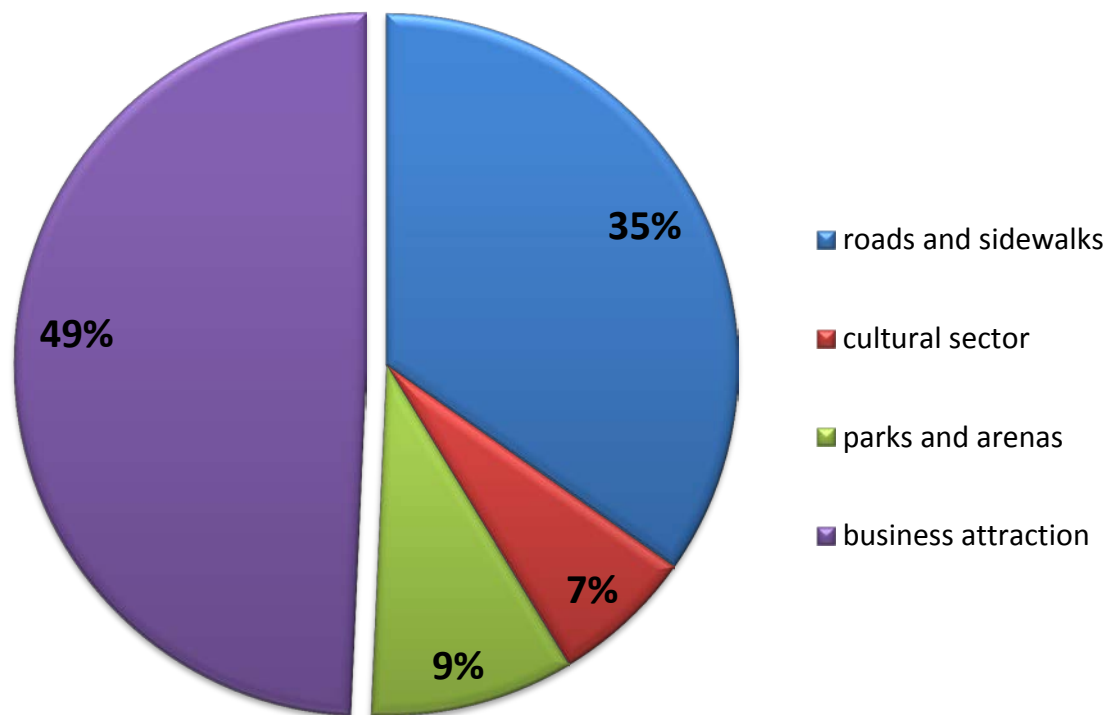
	<b>%</b>	<b>Votes</b>
a. Under 3% that would result in cuts to services and delaying projects and infrastructure improvements	51%	159
b. Between 3% to 6% that accounts for expenses associated with the Meridian Centre and PAC and provides for modest improvements in service delivery	36%	113
c. Above 6% to cover the expenses of the Meridian and PAC as well as create new opportunities for financial stability moving forward	13%	42

**Total votes: 314**



2. In the event of the City approving an above average 3% tax increase, what should be the top priority for City investments?

	<b>%</b>	<b>Votes</b>
a. Replacement and maintenance of roads and sidewalks	35%	122
b. Increased support and investment in creative/cultural sector	7%	23
c. Improve community parks, sports fields and arenas	9%	33
d. Investment in business attraction and retention	49%	173

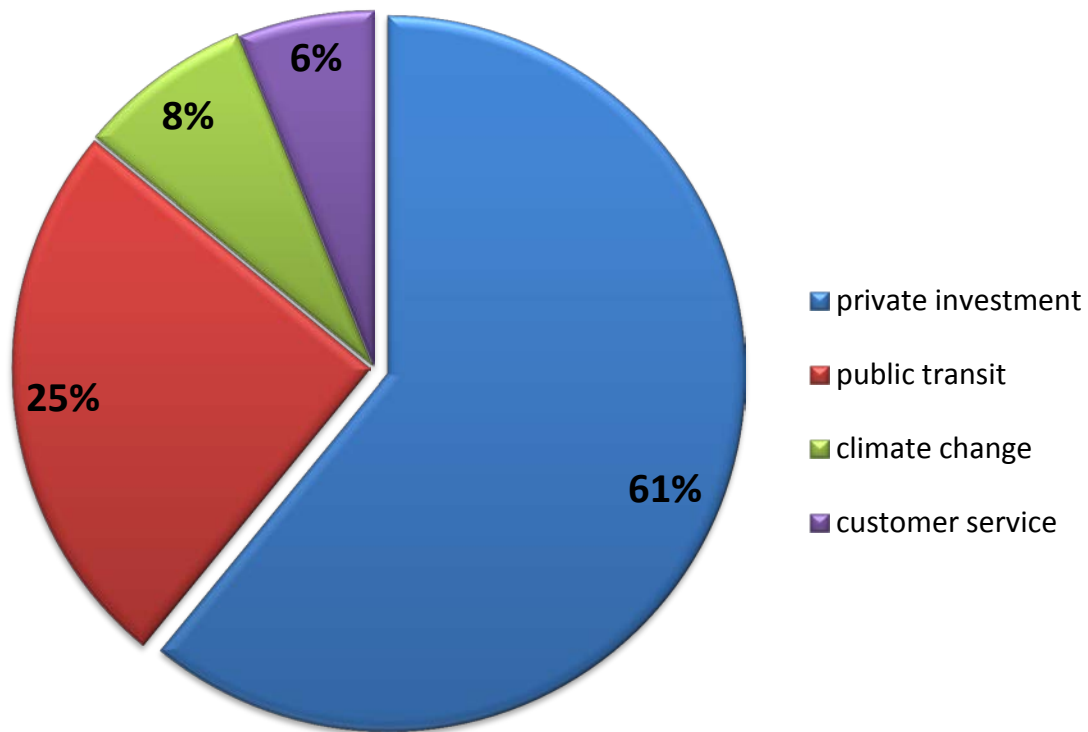


**Total Votes: 351**

3. Which of the following is important to you and/or your family?

	<b>%</b>	<b>Votes</b>
a. Attracting more private investment, business and jobs	61%	209
b. Enhancing our public transit system to better connect Niagara communities and Niagara to the larger urban centres	25%	86
c. Preparing infrastructure for climate change	8%	27
d. Investing in improved customer service	6%	21

**Total votes: 343**

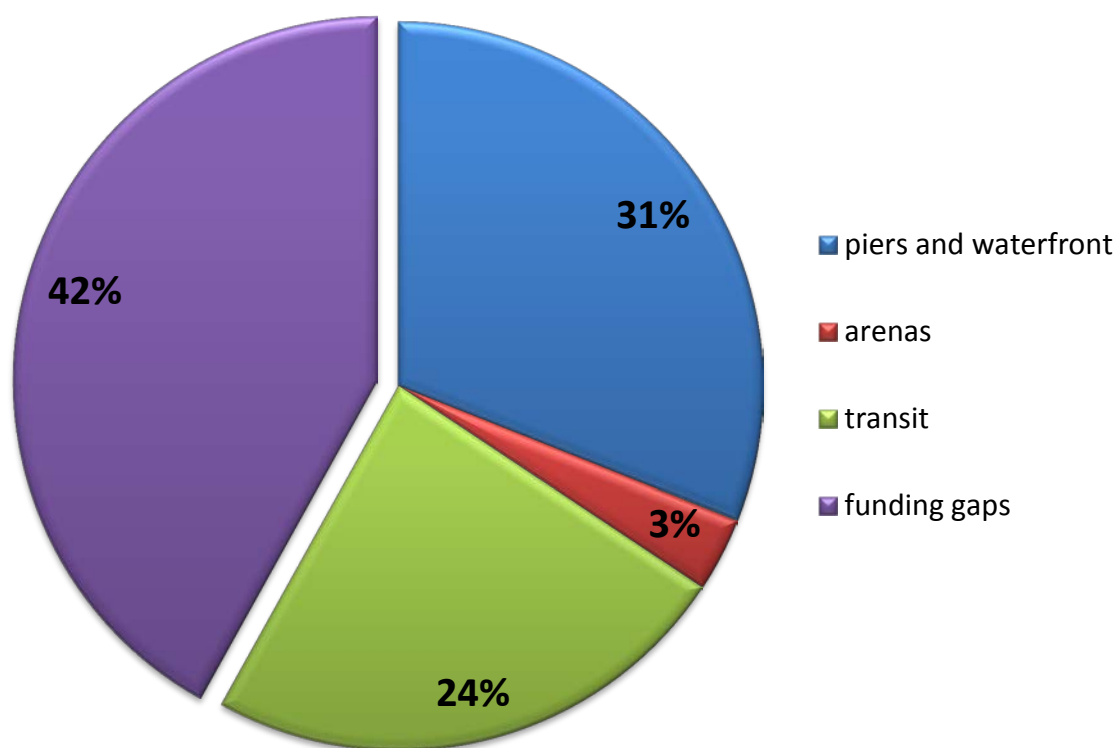




4. If the City were to secure federal/provincial funding, what project would you consider to be a priority?

	<b>%</b>	<b>Votes</b>
a. The Port Dalhousie Piers and waterfront improvements	31%	94
b. Arenas - including replacement of the Jack Gatecliff, the Rex	3%	10
c. Transit – more investment for an integrated and inter-municipal public transit system	24%	72
d. To offset the funding gap for municipal infrastructure replacement and improvements to roads, watermains, sewers	42%	127

**Total votes: 303**



## Telephone Town Hall Voicemails - Comments/Concerns - Summary of Comments

Great town hall - recommend bike path on Gale Crescent and improvements to the park to create a gateway to nature.

Extremely excited about advancements. Like interaction, budget committee. Love what is happening downtown. One concern- downtown parking. Parking has always been a difficult thing - limited amount and finding it for out of town visitors. (More signs needed) Is it in the budget? When will we see advancement in this area?

Firefighters salaries. Concerns with arbitration process - why do they keep awarding them more? We can't afford it. Like the telephone town hall, found it very informative.

To generate added revenue - ever consider licencing or tax homes that are rentals. They create an income. Would love to hear back.

Ideas for Jaycee Park and Port Dalhousie island area. Kayak boat rentals, zip line, teens activities - increase use of water. Bring more tourists in. Have volunteers clean it up.

## Business and other issues I would like to discuss

This is the only city where people say good morning and goodbye to bus drivers. Kudos. PAC - like to get involved in getting entertainment to St. Catharines. Bands are moving to small venues, so possible revenue generator. And other ideas to generate revenue

Very happy to be included. Enjoyed all the calls and answers. I do think the mayor and Council have a good vision and attitude and work towards making St. Catharines a better city.

Concerned how much is being spent to round up Geese and possible injuries. Spending way too much money. Get other opinions. Keep with dogs and spraying. Don't spend the money. Happy for the call. Hope you do it again soon.

Do we need all these arenas? Are they used to their potential? Can we do without Rex Stimer?

I voted for 3% increase. I'm thinking outside of the box. Wanna talk about ideas. Wants call back.

I am on grant review team for Niagara Trillium Foundation. As Ontario Trillium Foundation offers grants - has City explored criteria? Great town hall meeting. You're doing a great job.

Parking concerns. Hospital site parking. Farm it out to third party. Even the maintenance of the property seems to be out of town ppl. Why is it necessary to do this instead of keeping it this way? Doesn't seem like a best solution to bringing revenue in for city.

Excellent initiative - having the town hall. Worthwhile expenditure. Value for money is what it is all about. When we look at revenue generation, attracting youth - that is vital. On the other hand, multi generations - particularly - older persons coming into Niagara/St. Catharines. Will the Economic Development Strategy tap into this area and promote City to other communities, ways of attracting older adults. Walkable communities.

Port Dalhousie - I am a walker. 1. Would like to know if there could be more garbage cans (nicely designed). 2. Glad to hear about Port Tower - hope it turns out to be more in line of heritage. 3. Love changes to downtown - gang activity? Is there more funding for police? Mental health that can help? I'm a teacher. Kids get beaten up by don't report it.

Would like an update on the mayor's task force regarding poverty

Great call... invite the mayor for a drink (coffee or beer)? We are concerned about the green space being interconnected to retain - walkable, playable cities. Determine whether minimum standards (green space) or retain active living space. Cultural class demands more of us. New investment have larger green space, rather than arena. Like to see different approach. Would like to chat with Mayor further.

Aquatic Centre - garden well maintained by Kiwanis looks great. Rest of the property looks pathetic. Any thought given to volunteers helping the gardens? What can be done about it. Would like a response. Enjoyed the opportunity.

Phone Town Hall - great idea. I didn't have any questions, some came up but were answered. Walter, great job.

Really appreciate the opportunity to listen in - it really helps me to feel involved in the community. I really appreciated it.

Cutting of one hour a day for seniors centre - will have to cancel activities. These activities are the only for our group. Not sure what you are saving as it is being subsidized.

Homeowner - has a fixed income. Budget is based on my income. If you only have a certain amount of income, why not change expenditures. People being paid too much money. Your expenditures keep going up. Why not review operations and expenditures to find savings? Be more than happy to look at expenditure plan and operational plan.

Thank you for the telephone town hall. Protect natural habitat and old buildings and land around them. Part of our character and identity. Appreciate opportunity and open door policy. Everyone at City Hall is really, really nice.

Concerned about energy use - cut by 80% not 20%. Energy waste is in malls, idling, smog and climate change, what do you plan to do? Educate, give tickets for idling - would bring in money. Hope that is addressed. City buses and City vehicles idling - as well. Excellent conference call, thank you.

Disappointed tonight that you gave questions as to priorities for certain things. Obviously most important thing we have in this City is growth. To achieve it, we need better infrastructure, which is tied into the environment. Transit is really big as well. Having to choose between those is difficult. Hard to rate them over the phone. Appreciate the new facilities in the City. Can't bring in people to a city with pot holes in the roads, sidewalks in disrepair, or water over the street (like mine) when there is a heavy rainfall.

In Toronto they are making it a fine for jay walking, people here do not get fines. Should consider it for here. Had to put new pipes in and lawn dug up. Can I get reimbursed for some of this work - is it possible?

What is the percentage of seniors in St. Catharines (65 and over).

Burgoyne Bridge project still going ahead? Status? Would you consider a Carlton to Grapeview Drive bridge once GM closes. Fourth Ave and Martindale road improvements to help? Offramp/onramp near hospital... is that happening?

Tax increase - PAC and Meridian Centre - I don't want my taxes increased. I didn't answer first poll. Can you not just charge a fee for people who use PAC and Meridian? Like they do at an airport? Pay extra \$10 and money can go to the City instead of increasing my taxes. There are no good jobs in this city. My household income has not changed in last five years. Not as much as what you are asking. Roads and infrastructure, need to be upkeep. They are terrible. Don't like paying higher taxes for facilities that should be making revenue.

Great telephone town hall - but I don't understand why its only Siscoe and Mayor. I think all other wards should be included and represented. Get entire Council to be involved. Why did that not happen?

Our contribution to pollution concerns me. The non-flow of traffic lights and idling. People going through red lights - every day. Wasting fuel and air pollution. I'm a school bus driver.

Port Dalhousie Pier? Ppl might be staying away from Port because of the need for repairs to pier. Affordable housing - glad it came up. Water - last few years I noticed the water tastes like the beach. Sandy, seaweed taste. I know it might be the Region. If so, how do I forward the comments to them? I would have grouped them differently - public transit is a large part of climate change. I think it's important we focus on climate change.

I think the Haig Bowl is not as much use anymore, I think it would be a good idea to do a small development there. It will be adjacent to former GM plant... perhaps small subdivision, townhomes, condos. Other thought is about the flowers - I think they are very attractive in this City. We are the garden City and flowers should continue.

Will they clean off my sidewalk and up to the mailbox? They (Snow Buddies) currently clean the sidewalks. Has disabilities/health concerns that limit her ability to clear snow.

Tourism - I have my own small business in tourism - can we make St. Catharines like Buffalo? Making it a destination. Happy to participate (in committee on this issue).

When would transit increase its times from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m. to increase to every half hour. Possible for children to ride free from 5 to 9 p.m.

Last polling question - I support infrastructure. What is happening with pools? Is it being reduced further? What is City doing to attract private sector to the City? I'd like to know.

First poll, provided an option of 3% and cuts in service. Why not find efficiencies? Inflation is lower than 3%. (wants to speak to someone about it)

I've talked to the mayor. We're moving a little too fast. We have to slow down. I will send an email as well. Seems to be contest going on on who can spend the most money. Only culture I'm interested in is in my fridge. It takes time - Rome wasn't built in a day. A lot is a want - not need - being brought in by Councillors.

I'm impressed that we were able to participate in this... Difficult infrastructure schedule on Lakeshore Blvd. with Region. As we roll out infrastructure - could there be a budget to have a committee to work with business and Region and their contractors? Mayor's Office was receptive, but did not correct the behaviour. We struggled desperately. Appreciate a call back.

About the budget - you budget out for downtown to have lights downtown, to revitalize downtown. Half those lights don't work. Queenston is terrible. Other sections needs to be looked at outside of the downtown.

Go to hospital - have to go downtown to transfer to another bus to get to the hospital - so you back track. Any consideration of bus service from St. Paul Street that could bring straight to hospital or improve services?

I bought memorial bench (\$1700) - contacted Garcia about it. The bench is deteriorating, its not even a year old. I'm very disappointed. PAC - enjoyed it. Outside needs some TLC, benches, flowers, Academy Street.

Seymour - concrete issues. I've talked to ppl, I understanding we are ripping all four up (two one year, then two later). I have concerns with the contractors or decisions made to shut off pipes (heating system). Hard to believe. What happened?

Pleased to participate and I learned a lot. Very impressed with Mayor. Fire services - I noticed overall budget 4.85% versus desire of 2.85%. Lots of money in benefits and salaries... but with sick time, it seems high. I don't know what the print centre does? Please contact.

Questions - Merritton Arena? Under the impression that the City would take over control from the Lions for management of arena. What is the status? Is this happening? When will City get control and start getting revenue?

Suggested cutbacks - flower beds on Fourth Ave., very often traffic blocked with ambulances and ppl going to work and they close a lane to tend to gardens and fire to deal with butts setting it on fire. Concrete medians to cut maintenance costs. Martindale at Elderwood... traffic stopped to maintain flowerbeds. Also - water truck, during rainfalls comes by to water flowers. I think crews can be given a different job - no reason to water during rainfall. Channel money into other areas.

Congratulations - I think you are trying to do an excellent job. Regional government looks after affordable housing- they could learn some things from our City.

Sports facilities - a lot of rinks, what about other sports? Tennis, basketball, volleyball. Tennis courts are in disrepair. Is anything being done to support other sports development or activities in city?

Bike paths and walkways in the city. I want the city to maintain old railway right of ways so they can become recreational trails. Don't sell those - can be used for a linked system. Telephone town hall was great.

First poll question should be disqualified because you didn't leave an option for Zero increase. I would like to see a reduction in property taxes by 3-4%. We need you to challenge yourselves to come in with budgets that are less than the year before. Increasing by rate of inflation - just not acceptable.

Measures taken to make sure that private investments can't come in and leave a mess behind. GM land cannot be repurposed immediately, has to be cleaned and repurposed. Why not make it a park and have them tear down the buildings.

Thank you, I found it interesting. Do you have anything to do with rent control? And what would rent be for a one bedroom? In extendicare.

Traffic in front of Pen Centre - Chesnut and entrance to Sobeys six feet. No way it could not be paved for another exit. Need to improve the roads. Glen Morris... Glendale - why is there no right turn lane to the 406? Review expected in 2 years. It is not working since they did the work in the bridge. Timing of the lights has to be changed too.

Every question should have a none of the above answer. Why is planning permission given for new buildings in my area when old buildings are empty and derelict? (Easy home businesses - not acceptable) We need real businesses in our area not vacant storefronts. We need real services. Something about Meridian Centre - not being accessible to her? (Not sure, she was cut off by phone system)

I will send an email. Impressed by the Mayor. St. Catharines Transit needs to have more public consultation. I will email my concerns.

Love the idea, great comments, great questions. It would have been nice the identify themselves before answering. Hope these continue.

Grateful for opportunity to participate. Thanks for offering it. Q: For people interested in better City in arts and culture, is there funds for community projects? (Ex. Outdoor fitness equipment). About application process? Cycling ... not a lot of bike lanes. Burgoyne Bridge is too small and narrow for bikes and cars. Is the bridge finished and is there a way to expand it?

I realize rate of inflation fluctates. Right now between 1.4 to 1.8 per cent. Budget Committee is giving the direction for 2.85% to keep with the rate of inflation. Is this correct? Please explain.

Upkeeping the gardens - can citizens volunteer to weed gardens?