



Ipsos Reid

Report for:
CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

Submitted by:
IPSOS REID CORPORATION
600 – 635 Eighth SW
Calgary, AB T2P 3M3
Phone: 403-237-0066
Fax: 403-294-1535

Contact:
Peter Wylie – Vice President
Direct Line: 403-390-7052
peter.wylie@ipsos-reid.com

August 08, 2005



CITY OF
Lethbridge



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Key Findings	3
Methodology	5



Key Findings

Quality of Life

Firstly, this research should be viewed in the context of a positive and satisfied populace, with virtually all residents (98%) rating the quality of life in the City of Lethbridge favourably. Furthermore, a relatively large proportion (45%) say their quality of life is “very good”, suggesting positive perceptions of quality of life run deep in many residents. Compared to municipal norms, Lethbridge residents are slightly more likely than those living elsewhere to feel they have a good quality of life.

There is also a sense that quality of life in Lethbridge has improved over the past three years. One-third (34%) of residents say the City’s quality of life has improved during this time period, while just 6% say that it has worsened. Residents who perceive an improvement in their quality of life primarily attribute this to City growth - 22% mentioning “new construction/City is expanding”, 16% mentioning the “growing economy, including more businesses are opening”, while another 16% feel that quality of life has improved due to “better government/leadership”. On the other hand, residents who feel their quality of life has worsened over the past three years attribute this to an “increase in crime” (21%) or an “increase in the cost of living” (14%).

Top-of-Mind Issues

When asked to identify the most important local issue facing Lethbridge, 25% of residents point to transportation – specifically “transit” (10%), “roads/road construction/road upgrades” (10%), and “traffic” (5%).

Municipal government services (21%), social issues (17%), education (13%), taxation/municipal government spending (11%), and the economy (10%) are also identified as important issues facing the City of Lethbridge. Compared to other municipalities, Lethbridge residents tend to place less emphasis on crime and growth, but demonstrate greater concern over issues related to municipal government services and social areas.

Perceptions of City Services

Lethbridge residents are remarkably satisfied with City services, with 98% of residents saying they are satisfied with the overall level and quality of City services (39% “very satisfied”). This compares favourably to other Canadian municipalities surveyed, both overall and in intensity.

Residents are also quite satisfied with the specific City services tested in this research. The City of Lethbridge appears to be doing particularly well in terms of “fire protection and ambulance services” (96% satisfied), “parks and open spaces” (96% satisfied), and its “public library” (92% satisfied). Other services score somewhat lower, yet still achieve the satisfaction of at least eight-in-ten residents – these include:

- “Recreational and cultural facilities” (87% satisfied);
- “Maintenance, cleaning, and upgrading of streets and sidewalks” (87% satisfied);
- “Garbage collection and recycling” (86% satisfied);

- “Police services” (86% satisfied);
- “Land use and community planning” (83% satisfied); and
- “Bylaw enforcement, including animal control” (81% satisfied).

Although still deemed satisfactory by the majority of Lethbridge residents, “social housing” (72% satisfied) and “public transit” (69% satisfied) achieve the lowest ratings.

Looking at the importance attached to these services shows that Lethbridge residents feel that all of the tested services areas are quite important. ‘Essential’ services, such as fire protection, garbage/recycling, street upkeep, and police, receive the highest ratings. Overall, nine of the eleven services are deemed important to at least 90% of residents:

- “Fire protection and ambulance services” (100% important);
- “Garbage collection and recycling” (99% important);
- “Maintenance, cleaning, and upgrading of streets and sidewalks” (99% important);
- “Police services” (98% important);
- “Parks and open spaces” (98% important);
- “Recreational and cultural facilities” (94% important);
- “Land use and community planning” (94% important);
- “Public library” (91% important); and
- “Bylaw enforcement, including animal control” (91% important).

In comparison, “social housing” (83% important) and “public transit” (79% important) are relatively less important to residents, but still achieve respectable scores nonetheless.

Lethbridge residents generally feel they receive good value for the user fees they pay for specific services, although some user fees are perceived as delivering higher value than others. User fees for drinking water and wastewater treatment receive the highest scores (in both instances, 93% rate these user fees as delivering good value), followed by fees paid for garbage pick-up (89% good value), swimming (80% good value), and skating (77% good value). Perceptions of the value of fees for transit places slightly lower (65% good value).

Financial Planning

Overall, Lethbridge residents appear pleased with the value they receive for their tax dollars. In total, 85% of residents feel they receive good value for their taxes, although perceptions appear somewhat tempered in this regard (only 10% feel they receive “very good value”).

Given budgetary pressure, Lethbridge residents show a preference for increasing taxes (65%) over cutting services (23%). Specifically, 42% would prefer a tax increase to maintain services at current levels, while 23% would rather increase taxes to enhance or expand services. The preference for tax increases over service cuts is also noted in other municipalities surveyed, although Lethbridge residents’ tolerance for tax increases is higher than average.

Growth and Development

Residents have a generally optimistic attitude when it comes to growth and development in the City.

Overall, 94% of residents agree “it is possible for the City of Lethbridge to grow while maintaining the

quality of life we have come to enjoy in this City”, while 85% agree “the City of Lethbridge does a good job managing the level of development and growth in the city”.

Downtown

Clearly, Lethbridge’s downtown area has value to residents, with 90% agreeing “the downtown area is important to the community as a whole”. However, residents’ perceptions of the downtown core are mixed. On one hand, residents generally feel the downtown area offers a range of entertainment options (77% agree “there are a range of arts, culture, and entertainment opportunities in the downtown area”). However, residents are less inclined to feel the downtown area is vibrant (54% agree “the downtown area is vibrant and active”), is appealing to businesses (48% agree “the downtown area is attractive to businesses”), and safe (45% agree “the downtown area is safe”).

City Priorities

Residents have a clear vision of their top priorities for the City of Lethbridge. Of the items tested, residents place the greatest importance on “managing growth and development” (79% feel this should be a high priority), followed by “supporting sports and recreational initiatives that promote an active and healthy lifestyle” (68% high priority) and “revitalizing the downtown core” (59% high priority). Residents are less likely to feel that “supporting arts and cultural initiatives” should be a high priority (40%).

Overall, the City of Lethbridge appears to be doing well with meeting its goals. The City receives highest scores for “being welcoming to residents and businesses alike” (88% good job), “cultivating a positive community spirit” (86% good job), “developing productive relationships and partnerships with community and business organizations” (83% good job), and “earning your trust and respect” (80% good job).

While slightly lower ratings are noted for the following areas, the City is still performing well overall: “following through with decisions and putting plans into action” (79% good job), “being accountable to the community for leadership and good governance” (77% good job), “creating a clear, shared vision for the community” (71% good job), and “engaging the community in municipal decisions” (68% good job).

The City is also doing well when it comes to environmental issues. In total, 85% of residents feel the City is doing a good job with “dealing with environmental issues overall”. Specific in particular with initiatives or actions are also rated favourably including: – “balancing the needs of a growing and changing community with the need to protect environmentally sensitive areas and sustainable use resources” (83% good job), “encouraging alternative methods of transportation such as walking, cycling, or public transit” (72% good job), and “offering easy and convenient recycling programs for households and industry” (71% good job).

Methodology

In total, 400 telephone interviews were conducted with a randomly selected representative sample of Lethbridge residents aged 18 years or older. All interviews were conducted between the dates of June 15th to June 21st, 2005. Overall results are accurate to ± 4.9 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.