



# Citizen Budget Survey

## Summary Report Final

### April 9, 2008

#### Why Think City Conducted the Citizen Budget Survey

- Gather independently the public's views on the budget and priorities for the city
- Encourage discussion on the City's budget
- Determine if there is public interest in being involved in decisions about the city's budget

#### About the Citizen Budget Initiative

- Think City adapted the City Choices survey, adding new questions and expanding answers to give more choice and to cover a wider range of issues.
- Think City reached out to the public to gather their views by using its own and a number of other organizations' email and phone lists, surveying the public on the street and visiting organizations and groups.

#### Comparison of Public Surveys

The City commissioned two surveys as part of its consultation, a telephone poll by Mustel and a self-selecting survey – City Choices – by Kirk & Co. Think City carried out one self-selecting survey – Citizen Budget.

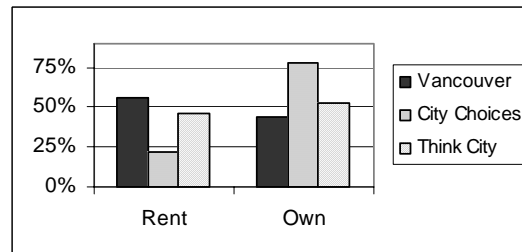
Survey Type	Cost	Response		
		Paper	Electronic	Total
Telephone poll	\$45,000	Not relevant		900
City Choices	\$74,000 + staff time	100	606	706
Citizen Budget	\$17,000	252	1,396	1,648

#### Comparing City Choices and Citizen Budget Surveys

While the response to both surveys was based on self-selection, the Citizen Budget had a much higher response level and is closer to being representative of the city's population in terms of rent/own, property value and age. City Choices was more skewed to older residents who are homeowners with higher-value properties.

#### 1. Property Own or Rent Breakdown

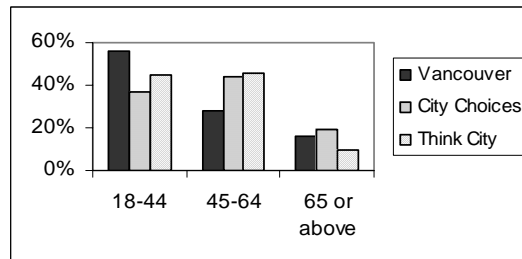
	Vancouver	City Choices	Think City
Rent	56%	22%	46%
Own	44%	78%	53%
Shelter/homeless			1%



#### 2. Average\* Property Value Breakdown

Vancouver	\$700,000
City Choices	\$800,000
Think City	\$700,000

\*Approximate average of resident-owned properties



### 3. Age Breakdown

Group	Vancouver	City Choices	Think City
18-44	56%	37%	45%
45-64	28%	44%	46%
65 or above	16%	19%	10%

### Telephone Poll

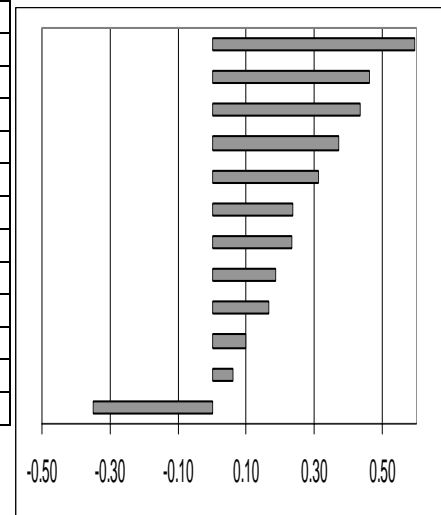
The Mustel telephone poll aimed to be representative of the city using normal sampling and weighting techniques and therefore reasonably represented the city's population. Our main criticism regarding this poll is the lack of questions on particular issues. For example there were no questions about crime prevention actions, the value of legislative services, not increasing police staff, the option of shifting property tax to business, paying higher taxes for increased services, or broad policy priorities. Furthermore, as the telephone poll posed somewhat different questions from those in City Choices, comparisons are difficult.

### Overview of Citizen Budget Results

#### 1. What are Your Service Priorities?

	Maintain	Increase	Reduce	Score*
<b>Civic grants</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>1024</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>0.59</b>
Libraries	787	783	40	0.46
Parks and recreation	839	727	33	0.43
Community and cultural services	827	682	88	0.37
Utilities	1027	535	38	0.31
Capital program	819	572	196	0.24
Fire and rescue	1109	436	60	0.23
Police	785	557	259	0.19
Other public safety	1154	350	85	0.17
Engineering	1098	325	167	0.10
Planning and development	991	336	241	0.06
Legislative and support services	866	83	639	-0.35

\*Scoring based on +1 for increase, 0 for maintain and -1 for reduce.



#### 2. Community Safety and Policing Priorities

<b>Street level patrols</b>	<b>47%</b>
Investigative	15%
No preference	23%
Don't know	15%

#### 3. Other Crime Prevention Options

	Yes	No	Don't Know
<b>Do you support increasing non-police types of crime prevention?</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>18%</b>
Do you support increasing police staffing levels	46%	39%	16%
Do you support city funding for the Downtown Ambassadors?	13%	65%	22%

#### 4. Property Tax Increase for Additional Policing

0% No increase in officers or civilians	239	17%
<b>0% Divert some funding from enforcement to prevention programs</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>31%</b>
0.9% Add 48 patrol officers	206	14%
1.1% Add 48 investigative officers and 22 civilians	183	13%
2.0% Add 96 officers and 22 civilians	362	25%
Don't know	174	-

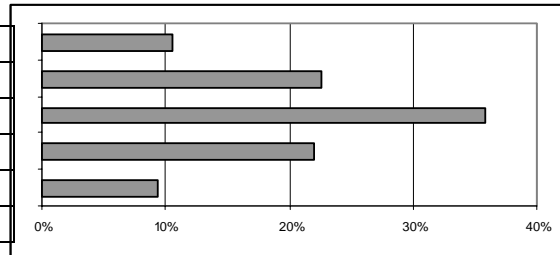


## 5. Property Tax Redistribution

<b>No tax redistribution</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>44%</b>
Redistribute \$5 million in taxes from non-residential to residential	287	22%
Redistribute \$5 million in taxes from residential to non-residential	432	34%
Don't know	275	-

## 6a. Property Tax Increase

0.00% No increase	136	11%
2.71% Inflationary costs	291	23%
<b>3.27% Proposed New/enhanced services</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>36%</b>
4.02% Additional police funding	281	22%
6.02% Property tax redistribution	124	10%
Don't know	257	-

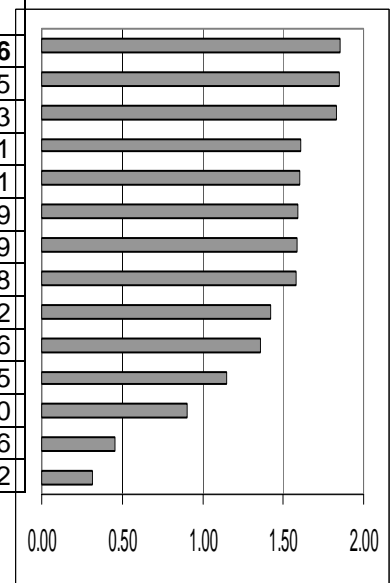


## 6b. Additional Property Tax Acceptable for New/Expanded City Services

% Tax Increase	0%	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	Don't know	Average
Number in support	399	318	233	117	45	84	340	<b>1.5%</b>

## 7. Policy Priorities

	Important			Don't Know	Score*
	Not	Some what	Very		
<b>Public transit</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>1405</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1.86</b>
Affordable housing (social & middle)	45	158	1402	5	1.85
Homelessness and poverty reduction	47	179	1370	18	1.83
Public involvement in planning & policy	85	486	1102	30	1.61
Climate change	110	402	1066	24	1.61
Public libraries	75	505	1018	11	1.59
Childcare and daycare	117	425	1048	24	1.59
Four pillars drug strategy	122	419	1030	38	1.58
Parks and recreation	65	790	740	14	1.42
Community visioning planning process	144	689	685	86	1.36
Policing	284	777	514	21	1.15
Eco-Density	548	540	401	120	0.90
Project Civil City	778	342	109	360	0.46
2010 Olympics civic funding	1165	314	91	34	0.32



\*Scoring based on how important – 0 for not important and 2 for very important.

## Selected Survey Comparisons

### A. Top Five and Bottom Two Service Areas

Citizen Budget	Telephone Poll	City Choices	
		Residents	Business
1. Civic grants	Not ask comparable questions	1. Police	1. Police
2. Libraries		2. Parks	2. Parks
3. Parks and recreation		3. Libraries	3. Engineering
4. Community and culture		4. Engineering	4. Libraries
5. Utilities		5. Fire	5. Fire
11. Planning	Not ask comparable questions	8. Civic grants	8. Civic grants
12. Legislative		9. Legislative	9. Legislative



## B. Policing and Community Safety Priorities

There were views both in favour of and opposed to an increase in policing. What Think City found, which the City did not ask, was that there was strong support for crime prevention actions, which was also indicated in the comments in the telephone poll. There was also little support for City funding of the Downtown Ambassadors.

	Citizen Budget	Telephone Poll (Residents)	City Choices (Residents)
Street-level patrols	47%	70%	59%
Increase police staff (net score)	+7%	+56%	+20%
Increased crime preventions (net score)	42%	Not asked	Not asked
Tax Increase for police (most support)	0% divert to prevention (31%) 0.9% (52% cumulative)	0.9%	2%

## C. Tax Redistribution

Residents were clearly opposed to the tax redistribution proposal in the telephone poll and both surveys. Think City asked about a reverse redistribution which gained significant support. In the City Choices survey, only business owners supported the tax shift, and only just, at 51.5 per cent. The telephone poll did not differentiate where business owners lived, so they may well not live in Vancouver or use many of the city's services.

	Citizen Budget	Telephone Poll (net score on increase)		City Choices	
		Residents	Business	Residents	Business
No redistribution	44%	Not asked	Not asked	62%	34%
5% tax increase on residences	22%	- 37%	40%	30%	52%
5% tax increase on businesses	34%	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked

## D. Policy Priorities\*

Top 5 Priorities	Score**	Bottom Five Priorities	Score**
1. Public transit	1.86	10. Community visioning	1.36
2 & 3 Housing: social and affordable	1.84	11. Policing	1.15
4 & 5 Climate change and public involvement	1.61	12. Eco- Density	0.90
		13. Project Civil City	0.46
6 & 7 Libraries, childcare and daycare	1.59	14. City funding for Olympics	0.32

\*Only Think City asked. \*\*Scoring based on how important – 0 for not important and 2 for very important.

## Conclusion

The City should see the views of residents and businesses expressed in the priorities and decisions of city council.

Think City's Citizen Budget survey adds to the available knowledge to help inform council about the budget priorities of Vancouverites. Overall, the public consultation revealed that:

- There is strong support for increased crime prevention, support for a modest tax increase for policing and little support for funding the Downtown Ambassadors in the Citizen Budget survey.
- There is opposition from residents, and surprisingly low support from business, for the five-year tax shift in the Citizen Budget survey.
- Libraries and parks are near the top of City and Think City surveys.
- Legislative services are the bottom of City and Think City surveys.

There is a real interest in the budget and citizens wanted to be involved. Yet the response to the City's survey and attendance at the council's public meetings were low. Clearly, there is a need for more effective public engagement. While surveys are useful, they have limitations in supporting a more in-depth discussion on the budget and citizen priorities. The city should explore techniques such as citizen juries, participatory appraisal and deliberative inquiry to develop a more comprehensive conversation with the public. It is vital the public know their views are valued and considered when the City deliberates the annual budget.

