

SWMMP Review survey Questions and answers

Why did the City conduct a survey as part of the Solid Waste Management Master Plan (SWWMP) Review?

The City is currently reviewing and updating the 2008 edition of the Solid Waste Management Master Plan. Public consultation is an integral part of the review process. The survey is one tool used to gather input to understand the perspectives, concerns and values of the Guelph community about the City's waste management practices and services.

The objectives of the survey were to:

- understand resident perception about the current programs and services
- understand priorities for future solid waste management practices and services
- determine interest in tax increases to improve multi-residential waste collection and higher waste diversion programs

The survey results, findings from the stakeholder focus groups held in October/November, and other community input received by email, phone and fax will be used by the SWMMP Review Steering Committee to develop recommendations for Council's consideration.

A second open house will take place in early 2014 for residents to learn about the waste minimization and diversion options identified during the review process and to provide feedback.

Why did the City conduct both a random telephone survey and an opt-in, online survey?

To ensure reliable public opinion data was collected, the City commissioned a statistically significant telephone survey administered by Metroline Research Group Inc. This poll was completed by 400 randomly selected Guelph households in September. The feedback is considered accurate to within ± 4.9 per cent, 19 out of 20 times.

To extend the reach of the survey to include everyone interested in participating beyond the 400 households randomly selected by Metroline, the same survey questions were available to all residents and stakeholders groups online. This survey was available from September 12 to October 31. A total of two hundred and nine respondents completed the online version.

Although the online survey findings don't bear the same statistical reliability as those from the telephone survey, both sets of findings are very similar—supporting the same top priorities for improving Guelph's waste management services and practices.

Are the results of survey publically available?

Yes. The survey data is available on guelph.ca/waste.

What are the "key findings" in the survey report?

- The majority of Guelph residents feel the City should continue offering the yard waste collection program (78% "strongly" agree it should continue)
- Residents agree the City should improve its waste collection programs at multi-residential properties, but do not support a property tax increase to fund the improvements
- About two-thirds of residents are willing to support energy-from-waste options if the cost is the same or less than taking the waste to landfill

- Residents don't support a user fee model for waste collection, and feel the cost of waste collection should stay within the scope of property taxes

Why did you ask residents about improving service to the multi-residential sector?

The 2008 SWMMP identified several recommendations to gauge and establish improved opportunities for waste diversion in the multi-residential sector. While most of these recommendations have been implemented and are underway, the Review will build on these recommendations and identify new and enhanced waste minimization and diversion initiatives for this sector. A few of the survey questions were developed to understand the viewpoints and interests of the Guelph community in relation to waste management at multi-residential properties.

The findings reveal that the majority of residents agree the City should improve its waste collection at multi-residential properties (in the random sample, 59 per cent of those currently living in multi-residential buildings "strongly" agree compared to 42 per cent of those living in single family). However these residents don't support a property tax increase to fund these improvements, over half (54 per cent) of the residents interviewed in the random sample are "not very" or "not likely at all" to support a tax increase. This is lower in the online sample, at 35 per cent, but still accounts for over one-third of respondents.

Why did you ask residents about energy from waste options?

An alternative to sending Guelph's garbage to landfill are technologies that produce energy from waste that can't be recycled or composted. A method called energy recovery is considered preferable to disposal based on environmental impact. Energy from waste has been a topic of recent community discussion that's often associated with Guelph's Community Energy Plan. The City posed survey questions to probe community support for energy from waste options.

Three quarters of the residents that took part in the telephone survey support the use of waste-to-energy technology as an alternative to sending waste to landfill; 68 per cent of residents that completed the online survey also agree that the City should support this disposal option. The results also indicate the majority of residents from both surveys would support the use of energy-from-waste options if the cost was the same or less than the cost of sending garbage to landfill.

Why did you ask residents about a user fee for waste collection?

The City regularly researches best practices related to waste management policies. This survey question will provide data for the City to learn how residents prefer to pay for waste collection.

Research has demonstrated that user fees provide economic, environmental and social incentives for waste management. The actual cost of waste disposal can be tied to individual waste production which becomes an effective tool in increasing waste sorting and encouraging waste minimization. Waste collections costs are distributed more fairly among the population, and in proportion to the amount of waste each user generates.

The majority of survey participants' initial perceptions indicate they were not in favour of a user-fee waste management program where residents would receive a bill based on the number and size of grey carts they use, rather than paying for waste collection through property taxes.

Why did you ask residents about the public drop-off?

Survey questions were developed to better understand residents' knowledge of the services and diversion programs available at the public drop-off at the Waste Resource Innovation Centre and how much interest there is for an increase in accessibility of these services in the community.

Eighty per cent (80%) of residents interviewed are aware of the public drop-off and have used it at some point in time. Major uses were for disposing of household hazardous waste, brush or yard waste, electronic waste, and garbage. Sixty per cent (60%) of residents "strongly" or "somewhat" agree with the idea of setting up a second public drop-off location.

How much does this research cost?

The telephone and online survey cost \$13,000 and is funded out of the approved 2013 Solid Waste Resources budget.