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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** January 10, 2023  
**To:** Finance and Labour Relations Committee  
**From:** Karmen Krueger, CPA, CA, Director of Corporate Services  
**Report #:** FIN23-003  
**Attachments:** 1. 2023 Budget Survey Results;  
2. Summary of Other Comments Received for 2023 Budget Survey.

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**Title:** 2023 Budget Survey Results

**Objective:** To provide the Finance and Labour Relations Committee and Council with summarized results from the 2023 Budget Survey.

**Background:** On Monday, December 5, 2022 a survey consisting of 16 questions was issued to seek resident feedback and sensitivities around the upcoming budget. The intent was to gauge participation, and get a sense of overall tone and reception relating to the process and overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with City services. Specific initiatives were not targeted, as Council had not had an opportunity to review any of the draft documents, however respondents had the opportunity to provide specific comments on some of the questions.

The survey was open until Tuesday, January 4, 2023, allowing a full four week period for residents to get involved and provide their feedback.

Different from previous years, the 2023 draft budget survey was launched on the Engage Stratford public engagement site. Due to the 2022 election, and general timing of the budget process, staff proceeded with the preliminary survey without Council involvement, however, in future years, we hope that Council members can help shape the types of questions in the survey so the responses may provide guidance on specific initiatives or other feedback to help Council guide the City forward.

**Analysis:** The Engage Stratford platform recorded 454 visitors relating to the links provided to look at the budget survey. There were 177 responses to the survey on the platform plus 1 received on paper, which is a significant increase over previous years (2022: 24, 2021: 95). This is likely attributed to the ease of use for the platform.

The tool provides a summary document that is attached to this report for your review. We have also attached a few comments we received by email or paper, outside of the

platform. For questions that had a finite number of choices, the responses are summarized into a chart, and for those where providing comments was appropriate, each comment is included in the report. All responses are unedited, with the exception of redacting inappropriate comments towards specific individuals, and personal information provided.

One observation is that many of the residents who took the time to complete the survey provided thoughtful and constructive feedback. Some comments are too brief or lack context to guide Council decisions, but we hope to build upon the survey questions and format going forward to gain more and better insights.

Another observation is that some comments identify areas where we can do better in communicating, educating and disseminating information that is important to residents. Examples include providing information on how provincial and federal funding works, how we categorize and structure our budget, and why the City does or does not provide certain services. Sometimes, residents assume certain things that are untrue or invalid, but perhaps by providing additional communications, some of these can be resolved.

A significant challenge that remains is that the City is a multi-million dollar corporation, with many services and many budget areas. It is almost impossible to deliver a comprehensive walk-through on every line item, and as such, unless interested parties take the time to review the many and detailed supporting documents, or reach out to staff and ask questions, there can be misinformation and a lack of understanding for many service areas.

That said, there are some positive takeaways from this survey for staff, in bettering the communication. For the 2022 budget survey, staff prepared a response document to address specific questions. It isn't something that happens in very short order, and during the budget process, due to timing, but we would like to do this again, to use the opportunity to educate, inform and provide increased awareness of the budget process, City services, and respond to specific questions that were posed.

This information is intended to show Committee members some of the feedback from this public engagement, and in some cases give a sense of what priorities are important to residents. It should be noted that while 177 responses is very high in comparison to previous surveys, this still only represents a small sampling of all the residents in the City so all responses should be considered in this context.

### **Financial Implications:**

#### **Not applicable:**

There are no financial implications to be reported as a result of this report.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

**Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships**

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

**Alignment with One Planet Principles:**

**Culture and Community**

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "2023 Budget Survey Results" (FIN23-003), be received for information.**

<b>Prepared by:</b>	Karmen Krueger, CPA, CA, Director of Corporate Services
<b>Recommended by:</b>	Karmen Krueger, CPA, CA, Director of Corporate Services Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer