

TOWN OF COBOURG



# 2023 OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGET



**ENGAGE COBOURG**  
Your voice, your town.







# Preliminary Survey Results

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## Phase 1: 2023 Budget Preliminary Public Engagement

A preliminary survey was circulated through Engage Cobourg to provide insight from taxpayers on the programs and services that are most valued, the level of satisfaction in service delivery and the issues they feel are most important for our community at this time.

-  Survey was active from December 15, 2022, to January 4, 2023,
-  70 responses
-  111 people informed (Clicked on/interacted with content on the page)
-  181 people aware (clicked through to the Engage Cobourg page)

## Phase 2: Feedback on the Draft 2023 Budget

A secondary survey will be circulated following the presentation of the draft budget. This survey will provide taxpayers the opportunity to weigh in on the capital projects identified by staff in their draft budgets.

# Survey: Programs and Services

We asked participants to rank the level of importance of Town-provided programs and services:



"The town budget should concentrate on the must do's, need to do's, Giving my tax dollar away to groups and development, culture are nice to do's. The nice to do's need to be self sustaining".

There needs to be more safe public spaces for people who are unsheltered to go. The town should also focus on affordable housing projects...  
"Essential/required services for health and well being of community and its members."

"Infrastructure is more important than discretionary items..."  
"Harbour restoration is overdue."  
"My focus for 2023 is infrastructure (e.g. getting on with the pier), development and good governance."

**Question 2: Please use the space below to share any additional feedback about why you selected certain answers in the question above. (Key themes mentioned here.)**

"Most of these services when considered in isolation are very important to the sustainability and growth of our community"  
"Planning is especially important as it has such a large impact on our future."  
"should prioritize the hiring of the Sustainability Coordinator."

"It's debatable how important Tourism is. More analysis should be done on this."  
"It's important to maintain programs and services that contribute to the quality of life of residents...cultural organizations; parks/recreation.."

"Every year I have said don't hire so many consultants and don't hire so many new staff and every year the same things happen; lots of consultants hired and lots of new staff..."

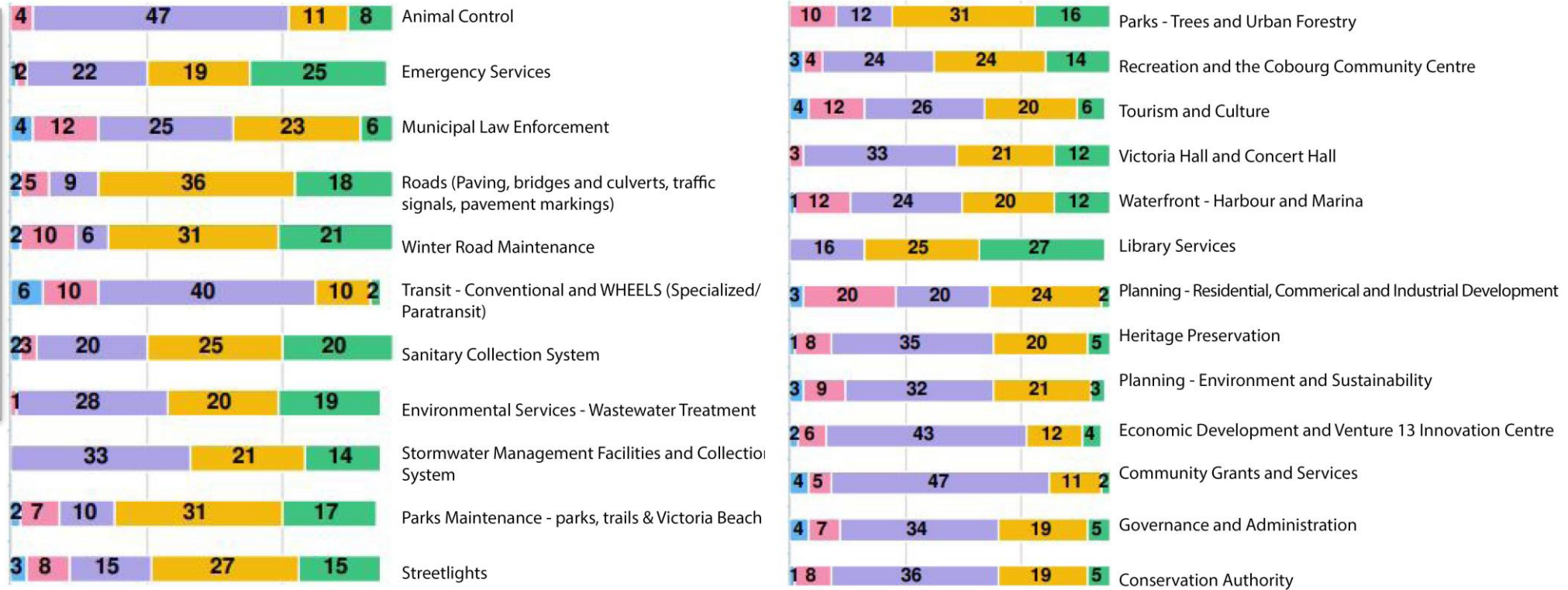


# Survey: Service Delivery

We asked participants to rank their level of satisfaction with Town-provided programs and services:

### Question options

- Very Dissatisfied
- Not very Satisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Very Satisfied



**Question 4: Please use the space below to share any additional feedback relating to the question above. (Key themes mentioned here.)**

"What constitutes 'very satisfied' etc. No performance metrics provided. For example, V13: how many new businesses has it started in the past year?

- how many are located in Cobourg?
- how many jobs have been created in the past year?
- how many of the prior year V13 businesses are still in operation?
- how many are still in Cobourg?"

"I would be more satisfied with Roads (question 4) if it included better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and with Winter Road Maintenance (question 5) if it included the same attention to walking spaces as it does to driving spaces."

"Where I selected 'neutral', I did so because: I have not used the service and don't know, or it is not that important to me personally. It was also somewhat difficult to answer the question in that I may not have been satisfied in the past (harbour and marina) and yet, am pleased with the current municipal climate and direction in which it is moving."

"From my experience living in the town, sustainable development is very poor historically. Active transportation doesn't seem to be taken seriously, neither does sustainable zoning, or even environmental stewardship!... the town's transit system is unusably awful."

"Planning is failing to ensure that there is enough housing that is affordable at all income levels. It's become so difficult to navigate the planning red tape that only large corporations with no local connections are able to develop fast-profit housing. That means someone with no interest in the wellbeing of the Town is defining the kind of housing/community being built, and taking the profits out of the local economy."

**Question 4: CONTINUED Please use the space below to share any additional feedback relating to the question above. (Key themes.)**

"Please stop closing down bathrooms and then paying more money for port-a-potties because issues of addictions and homelessness. These are two separate issues, and the town is not addressing the social needs of vulnerable groups by closing down buildings so 'they can't congregate there.'"

"We disproportionately allocate \$\$ to the County, Police and Parks while all other services are challenged to justify their existence."

"Enforcement of the Town's sidewalk snow clearing by-laws seems to be non-existent."

" what is the plan for environment and sustainability balanced with economic development? Innovation should balance the heritage, environmental and cultural aspects of the town with economic sustainability; many countries/communities are now looking at wellbeing indicators vs GDP indicators; Cobourg is a perfect place to incorporate wellbeing indicators into the budget."

"In instances where I indicated "not very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied", it is not because I feel that the service provided is poor it's that there isn't enough funding to support that services. If there was more invested in those areas than those delivering those services and programs would be able to do more thereby providing more to the community."



# Survey: Issues

We asked residents to rank the issues they believe to be the most important issues facing the Town of Cobourg at the present time.

Here are the results, listed from **most important to least important**.



Safety and Crime Prevention



Cost of Living



Economy / Jobs / Economic Issues



Property Taxes



Access to Housing / Accommodations



Environmental Issues / Sustainability



Governance and Transparency

*eg. Bylaws, Government Relations, Community Engagement*



Quality of Transportation Infrastructure



Community Emergency Preparedness



Culture and Heritage Conservation





# Survey: Issues

Recognizing that not all issues fall under the Town of Cobourg jurisdiction, if you believe the most important issue facing the Town at the present time was not listed above, please use the space below to identify this issue. **Here's what the community told us:**

*“Safety and security as well as non-traditional social safety net services, like the library.”*

*“The last thing anyone wants to hear is that 'affordable housing' falls under Northumberland County. We want to hear how the Town of Cobourg is working with the County on the focus.”*

*“Issue: Avoidance of wants vs needs. Focus for this Council (during their tenure) and Staff should be observably successful implementations of needs not wants.”*

*“Drug addiction, homelessness.” [multiple responses]*

*“Implementation of the AODA.”*

*“Cobourg should not be involving itself in the Housing/Accommodation problem - especially with the tiny cabin project. This issue should be directed to either Northumberland Council or more importantly, the Provincial Government. Cobourg's focus should be on the more serious issue - our Drug and Mental Health problem. Going down the tiny home project path will ultimately create a Shanty Town in Cobourg which will inevitably de-value ALL residential homes. Cobourg Council's focus should be on their highest percentage of taxpayers - it's Senior Citizens.”*

*“Municipal taxes are too high.”*



# Survey: Issues

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## Issues facing the Town, continued:

*“Sustainable community design, in regards to social inclusion, public health, equal access to opportunities, and efficient transportation + complete streets (this is different from transportation infrastructure quality, because this is referring to capacity, space efficiency, and safety for all users).”*

*“The crime and homelessness in the downtown area makes residents feel unsafe and we generally avoid the area and shops downtown because of it.”*

*“Access to health care. Need to attract more health care professionals to the Cobourg/Northumberland area to meet the current and growing need in the future; as well as collaborating with the hospital to expand their services.”*

*“Economic development drawing larger employers to the town which in turn will drive a stronger local economy and bring more residents.”*

*“As we age and rely on our car more parking is a major concern. Apparently, some of the downtown lots will disappear. Parking garages are not the answer. The downtown core will continue to rot. I suggest a MAJOR tax on unoccupied premises, ground level and above. Its a crime that owners get tax breaks for letting their buildings deteriorate.”*

*“Key portal communications that can function during community wide electricity shut down. Related to emergency response planning.”*



# Survey: Issues

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## Question 6, Issues facing the Town, continued:

*"Police & parks budgets must be reigned in. Economic development should be left to the County."*

*"Social services- people don't know how to navigate the system. I realize it falls under the county, but the Town could do more."*

*"Overdevelopment . Destruction of natural environment."*

*Re: Homelessness, addictions, crime etc. "We need our leaders to direct the narrative for this town based on inclusiveness and creative problem solving, to show compassion and some humanity, and to ACTIVELY work with the accessibility and DEI strategic plans to make necessary changes. Education and awareness is important, however 'activities' (like naming important dates, or raising a flag) will never bring about the necessary changes needed to promote the rights of all citizens in Cobourg. Implementing a rights-based approach to programming might be a good place to start, instead of the opposite, which currently seems to be who can we keep out of this space, out of our town, etc."*



# Survey: Asset Management

**Asset Management:** Communities across Ontario, including the Town of Cobourg face the ongoing task of replacing aging infrastructure. Would you be willing to pay an additional, dedicated tax levy if you knew that these funds would only be drawn upon for infrastructure upgrades?

Note: The idea of the dedicated tax levy is to protect your annual tax rate from larger than average increases when these major projects arise.

Here's what the community told us:

## Question options



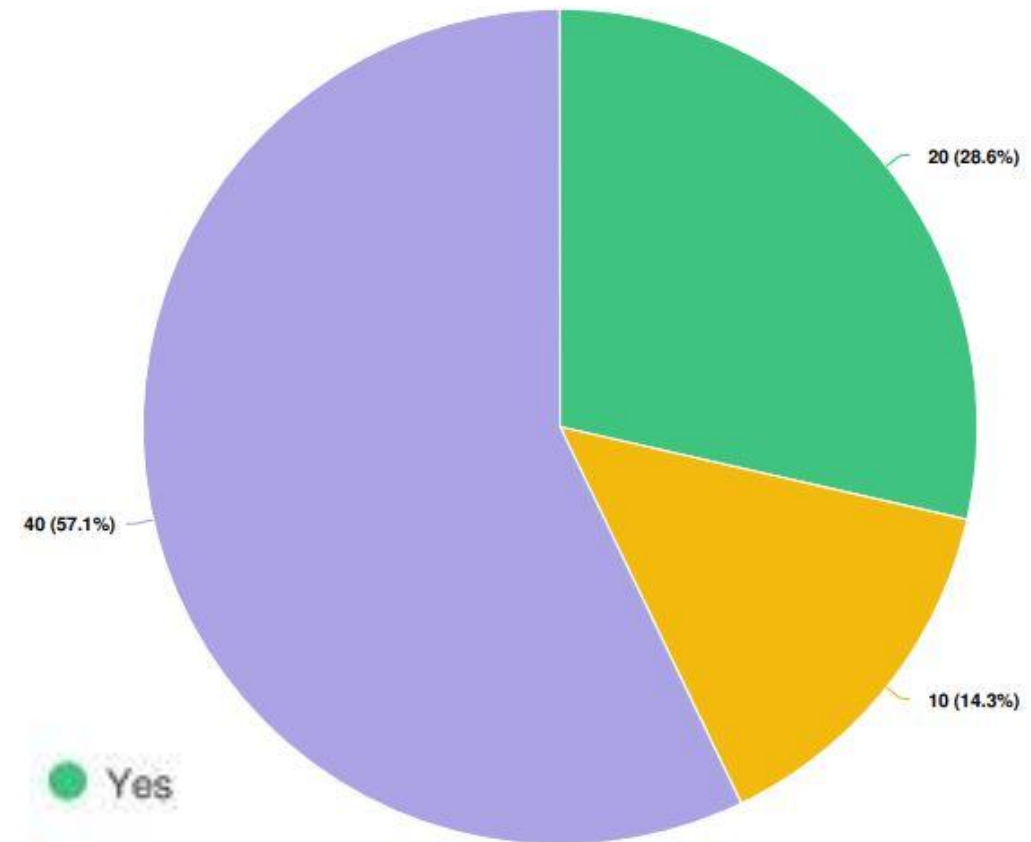
Need more information



No



Yes





# Survey: Key Considerations

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**Question 8:** Are there any other key considerations you would like staff to keep in mind during the financial planning process? *(Selection of most responses are below.)*

*“Keep services status quo rather than cutting. Property taxes are high, but represent a number of different interests, and considers all citizens of Cobourg.”*

*“Understand where the money is truly going first. How many consultants are we paying, do we need to spend tens of thousands on flowers for the town? If you're looking at any special tax levy let's tax those building owners with vacant storefronts, tax homeowners with vacant homes to address the housing issue. Think bigger, doing things as they have always have been done simply doesn't cut it anymore.”*

*“Municipal staff consider taxpayers a bottomless well but the fact is that with increases in the prices of home heating fuel, gasoline, groceries, etc. many people, particularly seniors, simply cannot afford some of the grandiose plans staff are promoting, i.e. stormwater run-off.”*



# Survey: Key Considerations

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**Question 8:** Are there any other key considerations you would like staff to keep in mind during the financial planning process? Continued.

*“User fees for CCC instead of increase in everyone's taxes to pay for it. Tax rebate for the portion of taxes for sewer for those on private septic systems within the town (like me). Expand services towards HWY 2 West will encourage more retail and industry coming to town. Try to get a University to set up a satellite campus in Cobourg.”*

*“The Culture Master Plan should be implemented. It was a good one. Shelving it reinforces public dislike of using consultants to help the Town.”*

*“Better planning and foresight is key to taking care of aging infrastructure. 5-year, 10-year, 15-year look ahead should be on the books and followed through. A good planning process through governance is imperative.”*



# Survey: Key Considerations

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**Question 8:** Are there any other key considerations you would like staff to keep in mind during the financial planning process? Continued. (Key themes)

*“Reaching citizens not on social media or those who have use of the internet for input.”*

*“Participative democracy where the residents get 10% of the budget and get to decide how they would like to spend that.”*

*“Staff should consider additional savings that would result from the implementation of certain initiatives within the ICSP (assuming this is not already being taken into consideration). For example, the GHG reduction item will likely result in energy savings in buildings as they are retrofitted to be more energy efficient.”*

*“I feel that developers should share more of the cost of the supportive infrastructure that new communities need.”*