

A Report to

Infrastructure Canada

(The Cities Secretariat)

**National Overview of Findings from a
National Survey on the Quality of Life in
Canadian Communities**

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I. Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Strategic Counsel is pleased to provide this report on the findings of a national survey on Canadians' views of the quality of life in their communities. This initiative was coordinated by Infrastructure Canada (the Cities Secretariat) on behalf of an interdepartmental group. Other contributing departments and agencies included: Canadian Heritage, Social Development Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Western Economic Diversification, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Transport Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Environment Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The survey was carried out in December 2004 with the principal objective of soliciting Canadians' opinions about their issues and priorities for community life. The findings are intended to support the Government of Canada's New Deal for Cities and Communities and to provide departments with public input for a range of policy and communications initiatives. Questions in the survey addressed perceptions of overall quality of life, more detailed dimensions of community life, performance of government, awareness and impact of the New Deal and support for various revenue-generating mechanisms at the local level.

This was a major and comprehensive research initiative and the findings establish useful benchmark indicators around quality of life issues in communities for future tracking. In total, 4200 Canadians (aged 18 years and older) from across Canada participated in a 22-minute questionnaire. Certain regions were over-represented in order to attain a reasonable margin of error at the sub-national level. In addition, the sample was stratified across five different community sizes to ensure sufficient sounding from Canadians living in smaller communities. The national findings were weighted by region and community size in order to compensate for this.

Overall, what was discovered? Canadians are generally happy with the quality of life in their communities and believe that their communities "have what it takes" to keep the next generation living and working there. They are also definitely attached to open space, both personal and public. They do have some concerns however, and have a range of nuanced views as to what the issues and priorities are that their communities and governments face.

The most surprising finding was how strong the consensus was, across regions, community sizes and demographic groups, as to the characteristics of the *ideal community* – an important starting point for long-term policy development. The ideal town or city has high quality education, a thriving economy, green spaces, good transportation and affordable housing. Other characteristics, such as recreation facilities, an arts community, highly educated people and cultural diversity were definitely viewed as secondary, but important, characteristics.

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One of the key benchmark measures captured in this survey is a rating of *quality of life*. Most Canadians, regardless of their circumstances, rate their quality of life positively. Interestingly, no one group is particularly critical in this regard.

Another conclusion that jumps out is that if one wants to be happy, move west. Prairie residents (83%) and those in cities between 500,000 and one million in population size (83%) offer the highest ratings in terms of their quality of life. Residents of Calgary and Edmonton are particularly bullish, with 89% and 85% positive ratings respectively. This trend continues in B.C., where an astonishing one-in-five gave the highest possible rating of their quality of life.

Reinforcing Canadians' positive assessment of their quality of life is their equally positive view of *prospects for the next generation* – probably the most useful indicator of optimism. Three-quarters (75%) believe that their city or town “has what it takes” to keep the next generation living and working there. Not surprisingly, regional breaks reflect the relative economic success of different parts of Canada, with confidence highest in Alberta (91%) and lowest (but still not low) in the Atlantic Region (66% – the same as in Saskatchewan). Similar to quality of life, it is those people living in cities between 500,000 and one million that are most optimistic.

There is less consensus and some concern about *immigrants and newcomers* to Canadian communities. Overall, 55% of Canadians agree that “more immigrants and newcomers should be encouraged to live in my city or town”, with support highest in Atlantic Canada (68%) and in towns between 100,000 and 500,000 (60%). Importantly, however, we note that within Canada's largest urban centres, the level of disagreement with the above statement ranges from 20 to 25%. From the standpoint of Canada's longstanding reputation as a multicultural and tolerant society, not to say the contribution of immigration to furthering Canada's social and economic prosperity, this finding is concerning.

The study also revealed that Canadians view *the contribution of volunteer groups* as having the biggest impact on the quality of life in their communities, well ahead of the residents themselves, schools and educators and businesses. Consistent with findings in a later part of the survey, and with growing public cynicism about the efficacy of our elected officials to tackle complex societal issues, governments at all levels were not given terribly high marks with respect to their performance in addressing issues at the local level.

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Questions about Canadians' *priorities for renewal for their communities* also yielded some interesting results. Unsurprisingly, on an unprompted "top-of-mind" basis, Canadians ranked health care as the most important issue that their community faced. This has been an ongoing source of concern for Canadians since the late 1990's. The survey design however followed this up with prompted questions designed to focus survey respondents on specific areas of local responsibility. Again this was an area of less national consensus, but opinion divided more along the size of community and strength of the local economy than it did across regions or demographic groups.

After health care, the most important issues (unprompted), can, in order, be clustered as community infrastructure, social and economic issues, taxes, the environment and then education. Two important variations are that residents of towns under 100,000 are more concerned about economic issues, and those in cities larger than 500,000 are more worried about infrastructure.

Somewhat different patterns emerged under more detailed questioning about possible areas of focus for community renewal. Four areas surfaced as being of most concern. In order, these are the environment, the local economy, community services and infrastructure, including public transit. Cultural issues and diversity were viewed as less important to overall quality of life. These priorities, based on the national results, mask some interesting regional and other variations. Residents of communities less than 100,000 and in the Atlantic Region rank the environment and the local economy to be of equal importance, while those in the major urban centers rank environmental issues to be of more importance. Women are more likely than men to give the environment a higher priority as well.

Several other interesting points emerge from this line of questioning. Issues of the economy, the environment and community services are clearly deemed to be more important than the fourth priority, infrastructure, particularly when we examine the percentage of Canadians who assessed the highest priority rating to each of these broad areas for community renewal. And, expanding cultural programs and increasing openness to minority groups are clearly lower priorities.

One-third of urban Canadians (40% in Atlantic Canada) give the highest priority (i.e. seven points on a seven point scale) to improving access to community-based services. Canadians do not seem to want to "bowl alone" – they most likely want better ice times for their children's hockey teams and more soccer fields!

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The survey also included a gap analysis to augment the discussion on priorities. The comparison of the desired attributes of the “ideal community” with priorities for renewal provided several useful insights. The four areas that make up a desirable community, and where performance falls short of the ideal, are affordable housing, modern infrastructure, public transit and quality educational institutions. The gaps – i.e. percent that rate performance as excellent/very good minus the percent that rate the attribute highly in terms of importance – are – 27 for affordable housing, -16 for modern infrastructure, -14 for public transit and -8 for quality educational institutions. It should be noted however that this last gap may not be as significant, as further analysis indicated that this may be an issue of extremely high expectations as opposed to poor performance.

Public opinion on complex issues, such as quality of life and community renewal, can be expected to be inconsistent. Thus it is not surprising that we found somewhat contradictory results on *stated* versus *derived* priorities, particularly on the issue of infrastructure, including public transit. Given the high profile of public transit issues in many communities, especially in response to traffic congestion and air quality problems, it was interesting that more Canadians did not place a top ranking on infrastructure as a *stated priority*. However, when we conducted a deeper analysis of the data and examined which priorities appeared to drive overall assessments of quality of life, we saw clearer evidence of the link between infrastructure, particularly public transit, and the underlying requirements for a good quality of life in Canadian communities. So, it appears that while Canadians were not clearly demanding investment in public infrastructure, especially transit, it is nevertheless crucial to what they want. In any case, the findings suggest a need for further specific probing, possibly via focus groups, on Canadians’ priorities and their expectations with respect to expanding, modernizing and refurbishing public infrastructure and public transit.

Two challenging conclusions for policy-makers can be drawn from the results on ***building sustainable communities***. The first is that urban Canadians clearly believe that sustainability can be achieved without economic compromise. Almost 80% agree that “I believe we can develop cities and towns that are economically prosperous and environmentally friendly without having to compromise one goal for another”.

The second difficult conclusion is that urban intensification – a key policy for urban sustainability, especially reducing greenhouse gas emissions – is clearly unpopular. Over two-thirds (68%) agree “they would prefer not to live in an area that is densely populated and compact” and only 37% agree that “communities should be designed to be more compact and densely populated to help reduce urban sprawl”. Again, it should be noted that this was an area where there was a remarkably high degree of consensus across regions and demographic breaks. This is another area where we believe further investigation is required to better understand what Canadians believe is meant by the term “sustainable communities,” what they think these communities look like, and what possible trade-offs might be required to achieve this goal.

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Canadians were quite clear in their opinions of *government performance*, and again there was a national consensus but with a bit more variability than in other parts of the survey. The first key conclusion emerged from the questioning on priorities – Canadians do not really care, or distinguish between, which level of government takes action on an issue. They pay taxes, and expect services and the delivery of shared public goods in return. This highlights one of the key findings from the questioning on government performance, that urban Canadians believe that their quality of life would improve if governments were able to more effectively coordinate their actions and provide cities with stable funding.

Under more detailed questioning, Canadians express a more positive view of their local government's ability to address the concerns of their community as compared to the two senior levels of government. Opinions of federal and provincial governments' performance on local issues are similar and mixed.

Specifically with respect to the Government of Canada, 37% are positive about performance on local issues, 27% are negative and another third are indifferent. This is consistent across Canada, although fewer in Quebec gave the Government of Canada a positive rating (29%). Younger (under 34 years of age) and first generation Canadians are most positive (almost half) in their assessments of the federal government. It is not surprising, given this rather mediocre assessment of the federal government's performance, that over half of Canadians say they do not see much visible evidence that the federal government is working to improve the quality of life in their communities.

While top-of-mind awareness of the *New Deal* is relatively low (only one in five), this finding is not unanticipated given lack of public discussion on this issue at the time of the survey and the fact that there has been no formal advertising of this initiative. Awareness is highest in Ontario (24%) and the Prairies (26%), and lowest in Quebec (10%). Regardless, the public's understanding of the *New Deal* is clear – it is synonymous with the transfer of federal money to cities. Most believe that it is about money for infrastructure and transit, and that it involves either a gas tax, a GST rebate, sharing tax money or a financial transfer of some sort. A small percentage (5%) thinks that it is about health and education.

Overall, Canadians are guardedly optimistic about the program. While the majority believe that it will have some positive impact, only 15% thought that it would make a significant impact and 42% some impact. No doubt, Canadians withholding judgement until they know more about the nature of the agreements that are being negotiated between the federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions and how any monies transferred are to be used. Consistent with the rest of the survey, residents of communities less than 50,000 are less optimistic that it will have much of an impact on their quality of life.

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Attitudes towards *local government and funding for local priorities* are clear – Canadians strongly support increased funds and autonomy for their local government, as long as it does not involve any additional taxation or user fees. Seven-in-ten Canadians (70%) agree that local government should have more fiscal independence and authority, but a large minority hesitate at giving them completely free rein – only 52% agree that “local governments should not be told how or on what any funds provided by the federal government should be spent”.

It is also clear, however, that Canadians do not want to pay any more than they are now. While 70% agree that local governments need access to additional revenues, 57% oppose highway or bridge tolls, 62% oppose increasing user fees and 83% oppose raising residential property taxes. Consistent with concerns for the local economy, there is only weak support (47%) for raising business property taxes.

Preferred local financing options are transferring a portion of the gas tax and increasing development charges. There is also some support for more innovative financing – 59% support public-private partnerships. By contrast, there is relatively weak support for bond issues or debt financing (46%).

In short, Canadians enjoy their communities and are proud of them. They do however expect all levels of government to work together to renew and improve the environment, the local economy, community services and infrastructure. And they do not want to pay more taxes for this.

The findings also suggest a number of areas for more in-depth investigation. Further public opinion research, employing a qualitative approach, would help to illuminate Canadians’ views and thinking in the following areas:

1. *Awareness and understanding of the concept and dimensions of sustainability.* In particular, we need to better understand the extent to which Canadians believe there is an issue of urban sprawl within our communities and how this does or does not impact on building sustainable communities. As we noted above, it will also be important to uncover what Canadians view as the key compromises, if any, that will be required to achieve sustainability, assuming this is a goal that most Canadians support, and what trade-offs Canadians are/are not willing to make.
2. *Local priorities.* This survey provides some preliminary input from Canadians on their priorities including housing, infrastructure, and public transit, among others. We need to drill deeper in this area and develop a clearer understanding of what public expectations are, particularly in terms of infrastructure improvements and how any additional funds should be invested within communities.

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3. *Enabling Environments.* The time limitations of a telephone survey also prevented us from examining a larger list of possible priorities, including the demand for and perceived role of public spaces. While we did assess the importance of green spaces and parks, we did not engage Canadians in an in-depth discussion of those factors or features within a community that enable broader civic engagement and participation. This topic lends itself well to discussion within a series of focus groups among community leaders and possibly employing a hybrid methodology that incorporates a deliberative approach. Such a discussion should consider two points of focus, the social and economic impacts of public spaces. For example, a discussion of the social impacts would engage participants in consideration of the impact of public spaces on community cohesion, pride and the desirability of particular communities. The economic focus would draw upon some aspects of economic cluster theory, assessing the importance of informal and unplanned interactions among professionals in a shared field.
4. *The “perceptual” links between culture, diversity and economically prosperous communities.* Although only superficially tested, we see some evidence that the Richard Florida thesis is not well understood or necessarily supported by Canadians. We need to better understand how Canadians view the role of culture in creating vibrant and successful communities, how they define culture and how culture connects with the broader social and economic fabric of Canada and Canadian communities.
5. *Public expectations of the roles of local, provincial and federal levels of government at the community level.* It would be useful to further deconstruct the performance rating of the Government of Canada on community issues, understanding how Canadians want the federal government to work with municipal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions. In particular, while accountability is currently a popular theme, specifically what level of accountability do Canadians seek around a **New Deal**, what conditions are acceptable and how will they know whether monies are being appropriately spent?
6. *Funding options for municipal or local levels of government.* The findings of this survey elicited the expected response from Canadians – don’t raise my taxes or charge me more for services. Do Canadians think that addressing municipal issues should be a shared responsibility of governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses and residents? If so, what role can/should residents play? How should funding for municipalities be secured over the long run? And, what are the relative merits and disadvantages of various funding options?
7. *Governance models.* Related to the above two points, the findings do not address how Canadians feel the administrative and legislative authorities between the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal levels of government should be realigned, if at all, in order to better meet the challenges facing Canadian communities.
8. *Promoting and communicating **The New Deal for Cities and Communities**.* The survey just touched upon awareness and understanding of The New Deal. How Canadians have heard about The New Deal, what they know of it, what their expectations are, the extent to which it is seen to be relevant to addressing real needs at the community level and how best to ensure the long-term viability and modernization of Canadian communities are topics for further discussion.

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Future surveys tracking these benchmark indicators on the quality of community life and exploring additional/emerging issues should consider the ability to break out the data not only by community size, but by key strata within communities. For example, it would be most interesting to examine the extent of variability, if any, in perceptions of quality of life and community priorities from the perspectives of those living in the city core versus those residing in suburbs and those in exurban areas.

II. Introduction

Introduction

A. Research Objectives

The study upon which the following report is based was undertaken as an interdepartmental initiative, led by the Cities Secretariat and including broad participation among Government of Canada departments and agencies. As the Government of Canada embarks upon its New Deal for Canadian Communities initiative, Infrastructure Canada and the Cities Secretariat identified a need for baseline data on public opinion relating to perceptions of the quality of community life. This data was required to provide direction and input into ongoing policy development and crafting of communications with respect to the New Deal.

The reader should note that this study was not intended to replace client or resident satisfaction surveys undertaken in many municipal jurisdictions. Rather, it was intended to provide a broader perspective on the dimensions of and issues pertaining to quality of life as opposed to satisfaction with specific services at the local level. In particular, a key objective of the survey was to analyse the degree of variability, if any, between perceptions of quality of life from one region of Canada to another and between communities of varying population sizes.

Principle objectives of the study were to:

- Assess overall quality of life
- Explore dimensions of community life
 - i. Contributors to quality of life
 - ii. Desired attributes
 - iii. Ratings of communities against desired attributes
 - iv. Priorities
- Evaluate performance of various levels of government
- Gauge awareness of the New Deal and perceived impact
- Assess support for various mechanisms to enhance fiscal sustainability within communities

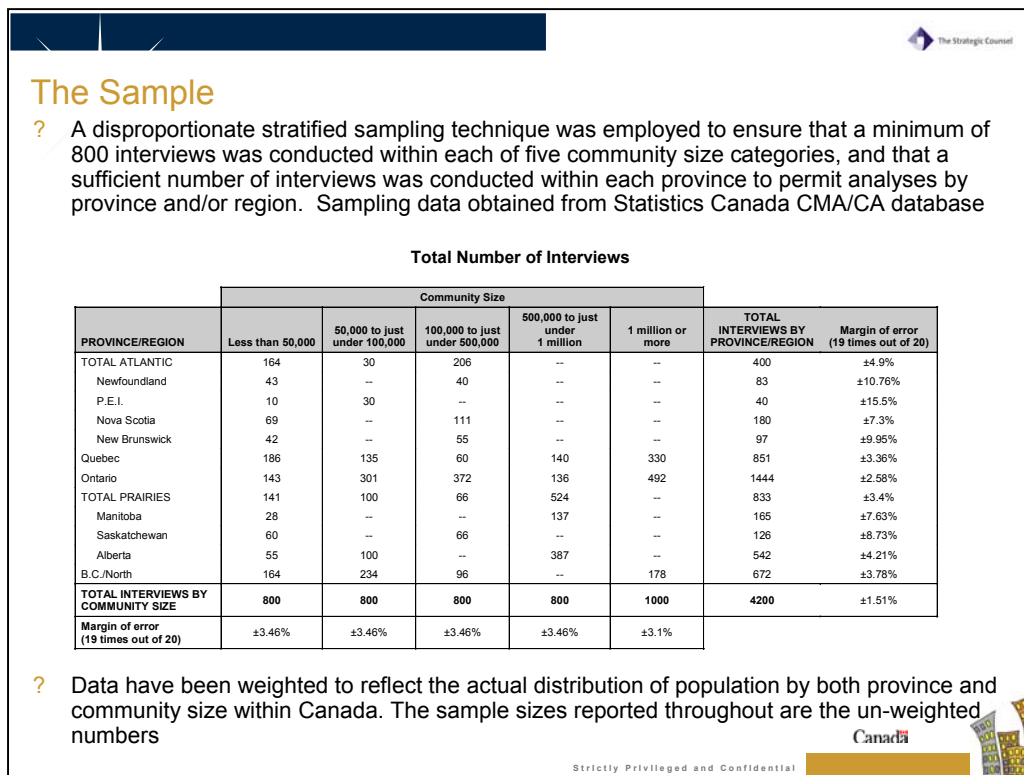
Introduction

B. Methodology

A 22 minute survey was conducted between December 1st and December 22nd, 2004 among 4,200 Canadians aged 18 years and older. The sample was stratified across five community size groups as shown in the chart below. This was undertaken in order to ensure a sufficient number of interviews were completed among smaller Canadian communities than would ordinarily have been the case had the sample been designed to be reflective of the actual distribution of the population across communities. The vast majority of Canadians live in Canada's largest urban centres. However, for purposes of analysing any differences that may exist between community size groups, the sample overrepresented smaller communities. Moreover, an oversample of residents from Atlantic Canada was also undertaken so that regional differences between Atlantic Canada and other regions of the country could be examined within a reasonable margin of error.

The sample frame was drawn from Statistics Canada data on all communities in Canada.

Figure 1



Introduction

As a point of reference for readers of this report, communities of under 50,000 include Whitehorse, Cranbrook, Rouyn-Noranda, Owen Sound, and Labrador City. Communities within the 50,000 to just under 100,000 group include Nanaimo, Medicine Hat, Shawinigan, Cornwall and Charlottetown. Communities of 100,000 to just under 500,000 are represented by communities such as Kelowna, Regina, Sherbrooke, Peterborough, Moncton, Halifax and St. John's. The next largest community size grouping of 500,000 to just under one million includes Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Quebec City. Finally, communities of one million or more include Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa-Hull and Montreal.

III. The Ideal Community

The Ideal Community

Executive Summary Whether living in a modest-size town or a major urban centre, urban Canadians are consistent in reporting that four factors — quality education, green spaces and parks, modern infrastructure and a thriving business community — are key elements that make a city or town a desirable place to live. These factors are prioritized when assessing desirable traits, and are also linked to satisfaction with a specific town or community.

Despite the consistency of these responses, this section also highlights the difference between what is seen as idealistically desirable and what has personal meaning to city dwellers. When asked point blank what makes a city desirable, urban Canadians sometimes chose answers that, when further analyzed, were not strongly correlated to satisfaction with a particular city or town. These attributes, including: Ease of access, Good public transit, and Efficient composting and recycling programs, while seen on an intellectual level to be important, have less personal relevance to respondents.

A. Desired Community Attributes

The idea of an ideal community is as old as urban life. Plato made reference to the Greek ideal of community in the Republic, just as Thomas Moore in Utopia expressed the early renaissance ideal for community life. In our own times, urban philosophers like Jane Jacobs have grappled with how to make cities more liveable and workable. These have been important issues for centuries because communities are an expression of human social needs. Given the importance of community, and the ideal community, our survey begins with this issue as a way of understanding what Canadians want from their community.

In order to understand what Canadians most desire in a city or town, respondents were asked to indicate using a seven-point scale how important a series of 16 attributes are in making a city or town desirable. In reviewing these responses, it is remarkable the level of agreement about what is and is not important. While at first glance almost all the attributes tested are important, it is the distinction between what is very important versus somewhat important that shows real differentiation.

Three attributes are considered of primary importance – education, green spaces and modern infrastructure. Education is prioritized over the other attributes, with 95% of Canadians rating quality schools, colleges and universities to be important, and 57% rating them “very important.” Similarly, over nine-in-ten (93%) rated green spaces and parks important with half (49%) rating it as “very important.” Much the same response is apparent for the third most important attribute – modern infrastructure. Two further attributes - affordable housing and good public transit – form a secondary tier of importance. These attributes were rated as “very important” by over forty percent of Canadians (45% and 43%, respectively). The attributes in the tertiary

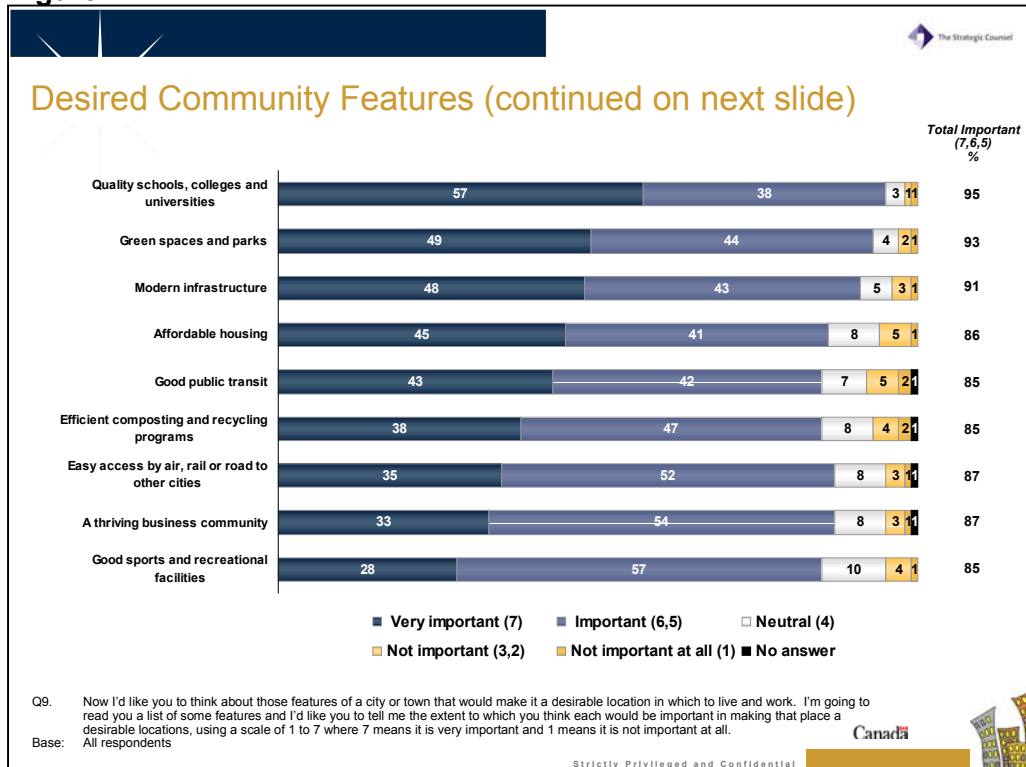
The Ideal Community

tier include: efficient composting and recycling programs, easy access by air, rail or road to other cities, and a thriving business community. All were rated as “very important” by over thirty percent of Canadians (38%, 35%, and 33%, respectively).

The remaining attributes, while rated as at least somewhat important by 60% to 80% of respondents, all received less than three-in-ten ratings in terms of being “very important”. Good sports and recreational facilities (28%), highly educated people (26%), well preserved historic buildings and older neighbourhoods (24%) and high speed Internet access (24%) all were rated “very important” by over 20% of respondents. Finally, a further set of attributes were rated as “very important” by 20% or a shade under this number – an active arts and cultural community (20%), a thriving high technology sector (20%), services for newcomers and immigrants (18%) and diversity in terms of various ethnic, religious and language groups (18%).

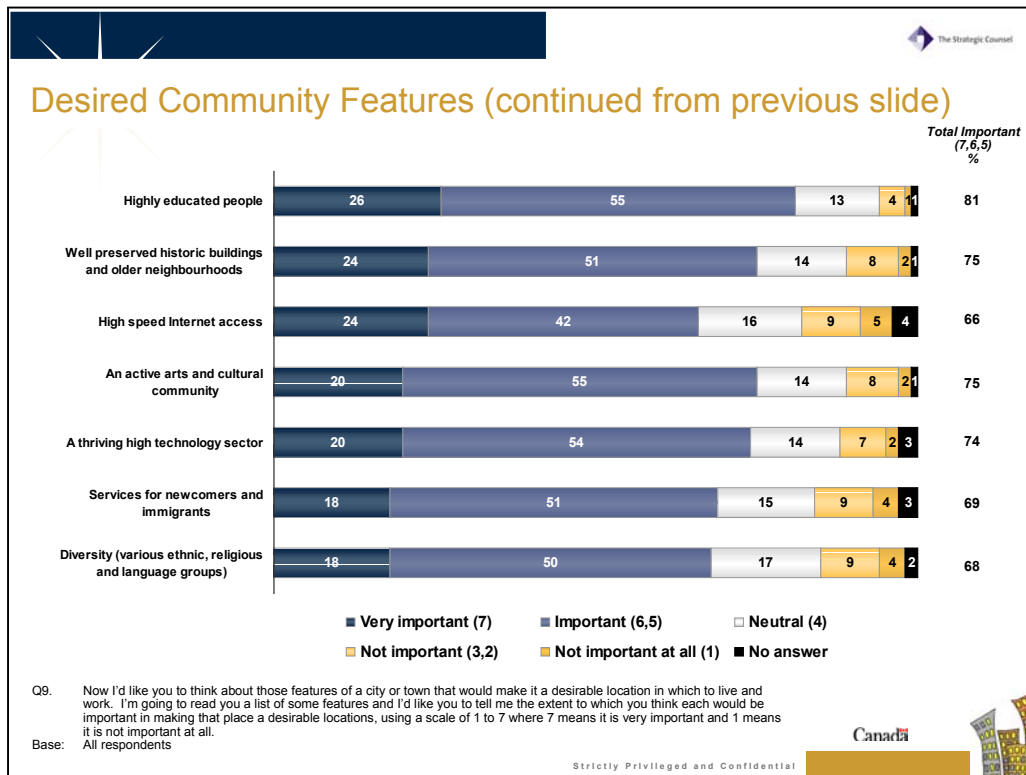
In sum, Canadians report that a desirable community is in large part driven by: high quality education, green spaces, good access to and from the community (including good public transit), a thriving business community, affordable housing, and efficient composting and recycling programs. This suggests that education, jobs, transportation, housing, and access to green spaces are the essence of an ideal community for Canadians.

Figure 2



The Ideal Community

Figure 3



Regional Variations

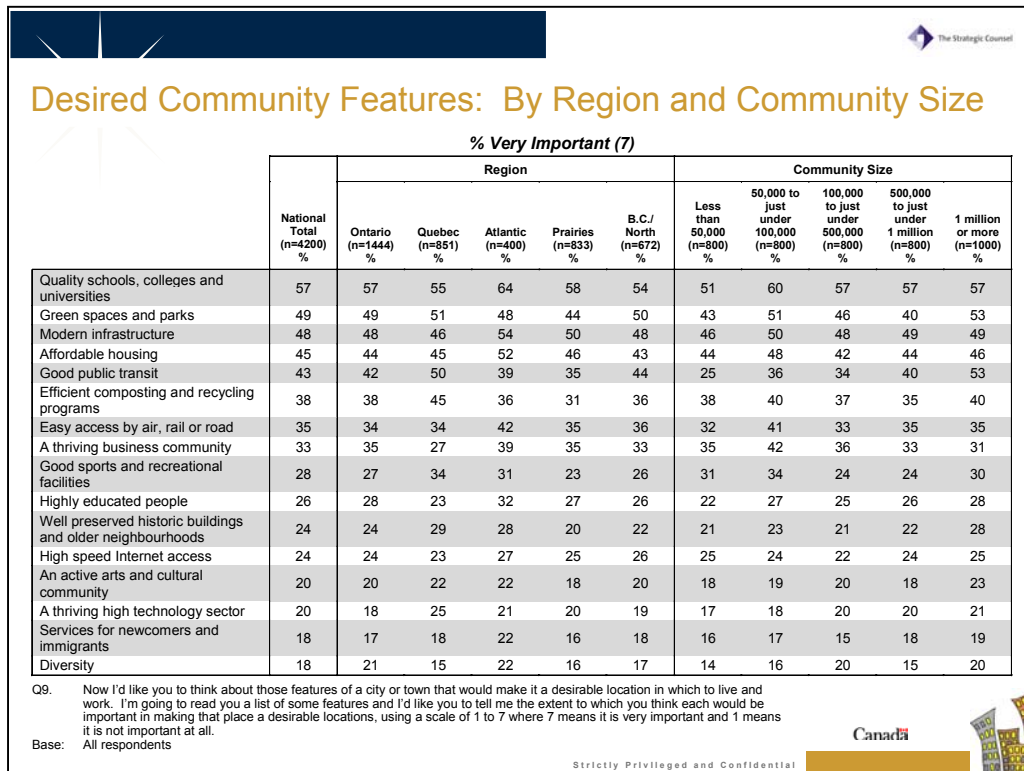
Overall, all regions' ideal attributes are essentially the same and in basically the same order. There are, however, a few exceptions. In the Prairie provinces, public transit is slightly less important than elsewhere. In Atlantic Canada, affordable housing, a thriving business community, and easy access by air, rail or road are somewhat more important than in other regions. Quebec residents give somewhat greater importance to good public transit and efficient composting and recycling programs than elsewhere.

Variations by Community Size

Community size variations are also minimal, and aside from much less focus on a good public transit system among communities of less than 50,000 and more focus in cities of one million or more, residents of Canadian communities, irrespective of size, want essentially the same things and in the same order in their desirable community.

The Ideal Community

Figure 4



Demographic Variations

Demographic variations are not especially significant with the exception of gender differences. In many instances, women are more likely than men to believe that a specific attribute is “very important” as a desirable feature of a community. In particular, women are far more likely than men to stress as “very important” the following attributes: affordable housing (54% versus 34%), public transit (50% versus 36%), quality schools (62% versus 51%), composting and recycling programs (44% versus 31%) and green spaces (54% versus 43%). Other demographic variations in desirable attributes are more issue-specific. For example, those who rent their accommodation (56%) or have a household income of less than \$40,000 a year (58%) are more likely than others to believe that affordable housing is a “very important” attribute of a desirable community, while young people believe public transit is very important (48%). However, in the case of quality schools, those groups without children at home or those who are seniors are just as likely as those with children to stress the importance of education (56% and 54%, respectively, compared with 58% among those with children at home).

The Ideal Community

B. Stated versus Derived Importance

While examining what urban Canadians state as their priorities is key to understanding what is perceived to be working and what is not, another approach is to use these same responses and determine what is most strongly linked to overall perceptions of the quality of life of the communities in which Canadians live. This approach correlates the performance scores with overall perceptions of the quality of community life in order to identify the attributes that most strongly affect satisfaction. That is, which attributes are statistically the most important in determining how urban Canadians overall feel about the community in which they live.

When this multivariate analysis is undertaken, as Figure 5 shows, there is a clear hierarchy of attributes that drive perceptions of quality of life. When analyzing derived importance, three of the four most important are among those that were identified as the most important for a desirable community. These are: a thriving business community, green spaces and parks, and quality schools, colleges and universities. The only new attribute is highly educated people. At the same time, some attributes of importance in identifying a desirable community are not as important when linked to overall perceptions of the quality of community life. In particular, good public transit and efficient composting and recycling programs are not strongly linked to overall satisfaction. Affordable housing also becomes less of a priority when the attributes are correlated with overall satisfaction. This suggests that, while these factors are thought to be desirable, their link to overall satisfaction with the community is (relatively) limited. Essentially, these attributes are more important on an intellectual level than on a personal level.

By contrast, three attributes in particular are more highly prioritized when they are linked with overall quality of life. These include: a thriving business community (up from eighth place to first), highly educated people (up from tenth place to third) and good sports and recreational facilities (up from ninth place to fifth).

The Ideal Community

Figure 5

The Strategic Counsel

Desired Community Features: Derived Importance

Rank	Total	Community Size:				
		<50K	50-100K	100-500K	500K-1M	1M+
1	A thriving business community	Quality schools, colleges and universities	A thriving business community	A thriving business community	A thriving business community	Green spaces and parks
2	Green spaces and parks	A thriving business community	Quality schools, colleges and universities	Highly educated people	Highly educated people	A thriving business community
3	Highly educated people	An active arts and cultural community	Green spaces and parks	Green spaces and parks	Good sports and recreational facilities	Quality schools, colleges and universities
4	Quality schools, colleges and universities	Efficient composting and recycling programs	Good sports and recreational facilities	Well preserved historic bldgs/neighbourhoods	Modern infrastructure	Highly educated people
5	Good sports and recreational facilities	Well preserved historic bldgs/neighbourhoods	Modern infrastructure	Good sports and recreational facilities	Green spaces and parks	Modern infrastructure
6	Modern infrastructure	Green spaces and parks	Highly educated people	Quality schools, colleges and universities	An active arts and cultural community	Good sports and recreational facilities
7	Well preserved historic bldgs/neighbourhoods	Highly educated people	Well preserved historic bldgs/neighbourhoods	An active arts and cultural community	Quality schools, colleges and universities	Affordable housing
8	An active arts and cultural community	Easy access by air, rail or road	Services for newcomers and immigrants	Easy access by air, rail or road	High speed Internet access	Well preserved historic bldgs/neighbourhoods
9	Easy access by air, rail or road	A thriving high technology sector	A thriving high technology sector	A thriving high technology sector	A thriving high technology sector	Efficient composting and recycling programs
10	A thriving high technology sector	Good sports and recreational facilities	Affordable housing	Modern infrastructure	Well preserved historic bldgs/neighbourhoods	Easy access by air, rail or road
11	Affordable housing	Modern infrastructure	An active arts and cultural community	Affordable housing	Easy access by air, rail or road	An active arts and cultural community
12	High speed Internet access	High speed Internet access	Diversity	High speed Internet access	Services for newcomers and immigrants	High speed Internet access
13	Efficient composting and recycling programs	Services for newcomers and immigrants	Good public transit	Services for newcomers and immigrants	Affordable housing	A thriving high technology sector
14	Services for newcomers and immigrants	Affordable housing	Efficient composting and recycling programs	Efficient composting and recycling programs	Efficient composting and recycling programs	Good public transit
15	Good public transit	Diversity	High speed Internet access	Good public transit	Good public transit	Services for newcomers and immigrants
16	Diversity	Good public transit	Easy access by air, rail or road	Diversity	Diversity	Diversity

Canada
Strictly Privileged and Confidential

Variations by Community Size

When community size is considered, there are some variations in terms of priorities. For the smallest communities, green spaces and highly educated people drop out of the top four and are replaced by an active arts and cultural community and efficient composting and recycling. Possibly in smaller towns, community based arts activities have an importance that they do not in larger communities.

For all other sizes of community, while there is some variation, the basic pattern at the national level holds locally.

IV. Assessments of Quality of Life

Assessments of Quality of Life

Executive Summary

Many municipalities conduct regular consultations with their residents on a variety of issues ranging from changes to ward boundaries to transportation and development plans. Surveys of residents are also increasingly employed as a critical tool to gauge the level of satisfaction with services such as public transit, emergency response, public health, social housing, parking, road maintenance, garbage pick-up and recycling, among others. Such surveys provide important feedback for councillors and city officials as they conduct their annual budgetary review and priority-setting processes.

By contrast, the survey of *Canadians' Views on Community Life* considered residents' perceptions of their quality of life and those factors that are seen to contribute, either to a greater or lesser extent, to the quality of life in Canadian communities. In this respect, we did not measure satisfaction with a specific slate of programs and services that are the responsibility of local governments, but rather purposely chose to examine community life through a somewhat wider-angle lens. In particular, as this study was an initiative of the Government of Canada, residents were asked to consider certain community issues within the context of their expectations and understanding of the federal government's role in terms of enhancing quality of life at the community level and its relationship with the other two, provincial/territorial and local, levels of government.

The findings from this survey are intended to complement and enhance our understanding of community life rather than to replace or duplicate the information that is being collected at the local level through consultation exercises conducted by municipal governments. They should be considered in light of the results of municipal surveys with a view to placing community issues and concerns within more of a provincial, regional or national context.

The survey included three benchmark assessments of community life:

- Quality of life;
- Pride in community; and
- Attachment to place.

The intention was to assess the importance or significance of community in the lives of Canadians as well as their perceptions of the quality of life in Canadian communities.

Overall, Canadians say their communities offer a good quality of life. Volunteer groups, residents themselves and schools and educators are viewed as making the strongest contribution to the quality of community life. By contrast, neither the provincial nor the federal government is seen to play a significant role in contributing to overall quality of life.

Assessments of Quality of Life

In considering priorities for improving quality of life, respondents were asked to rate the importance of a series of 16 features as well as to assess the performance of their communities on this same set of features. The degree to which a feature is deemed important and is assessed a lower rating of performance served to highlight a number of priority areas. Interestingly, the cluster of priorities varies only slightly across all community size groups and includes a focus on affordable housing, better public transit and modern infrastructure. Efficient composting and recycling programs are added to the list by residents of communities with populations under 50,000 as well as among communities with populations of 500,000 or more. A thriving business community is a greater concern for most Canadians, with the exception of those residing in communities of 500,000 to just under one million.

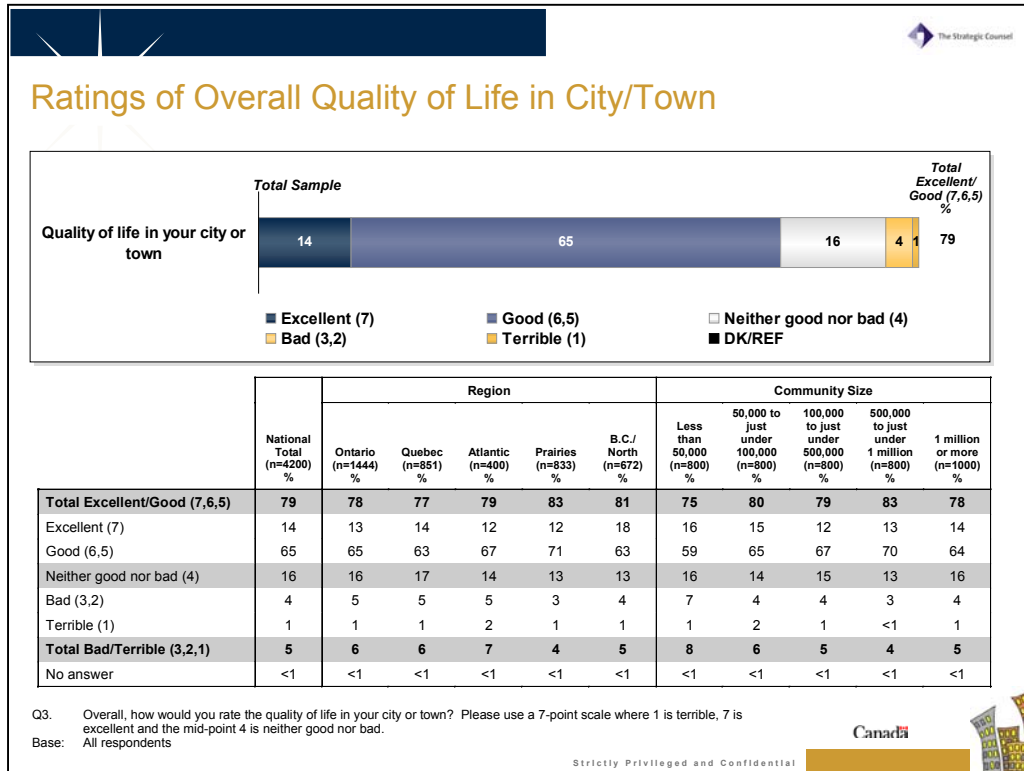
The extent to which Canadians place less emphasis on culture, heritage and diversity, relative to other contributing factors to quality of life underscores an opportunity to further explore their understanding of these issues and the sequence of connections made between diversity and economic vibrancy in communities. Given that Canada's largest urban centres attract and are home to the majority of immigrants and newcomers to Canada, further study in these centres on issues of openness to diversity and views on multiculturalism would illuminate the current findings.

A. Quality of Life in Canadian Communities

By and large, Canadians believe their communities offer a good quality of life. Nearly eight-in-ten (79%) Canadians rate the quality of life in their communities as good to excellent ("5, 6, 7" on a 7-point scale). Across Canada, the results indicate that residents of the Prairies (83%) and those living in communities of 500,000 to just under one million (83%) offer the highest ratings in terms of their quality of life. A deeper look into these ratings, however, reveals that it is principally the views of residents of Calgary (89%) and Edmonton (85%) that are pulling up the overall ratings of quality of life within this community size group and this part of the country.

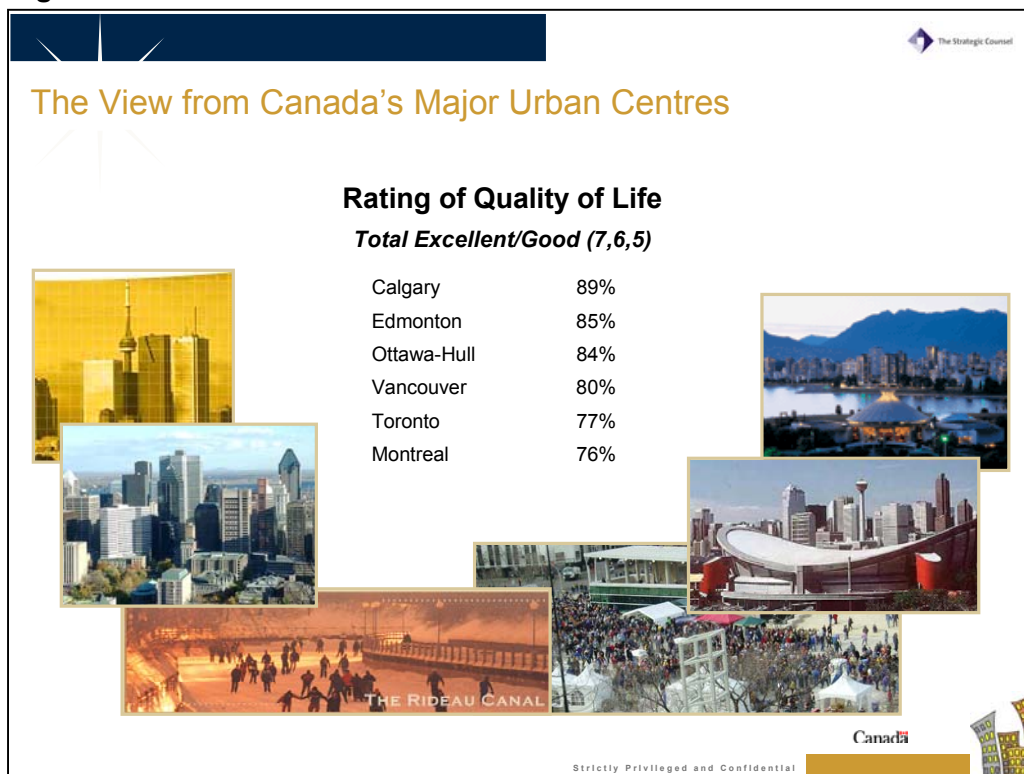
Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 6



Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 7



Variations by Region and Community Size

Combining those respondents who offer a rating of “5, 6 or 7” on a 7-point scale to some extent masks the number of those who rate their quality of life as truly positive, that is a “6” or a “7” on a 7-point scale. While anything above “4” on the 7-point scale represents a positive assessment, we can clearly say that those who offer a rating of “6” or “7” are indeed expressing a highly positive assessment of their quality of life. The following table provides a more detailed breakout by region and community size.

Table 1

% saying	Canada	Region					Community Size				
		Ont.	PQ	Atlantic	Prairie	BC North	<50K	50K-99K	100K-499K	500K-999K	1M+
7	14	13	14	12	12	18	16	15	12	12	14
6	36	34	32	41	43	39	31	37	37	42	35
5	29	31	31	26	27	25	29	29	30	28	29

The findings indicate that about 50% of respondents in all parts of Canada and in all communities consistently offered a rating of “6” or “7”, while between one-in-five to just under one-in-three offered more modestly positive ratings (“5”) of the quality of life within their communities. Interestingly, almost one-in-five residents of British Columbia/North offered a rating of “7,” indicating they would describe their quality of life as “excellent,” the highest possible rating.

Assessments of Quality of Life

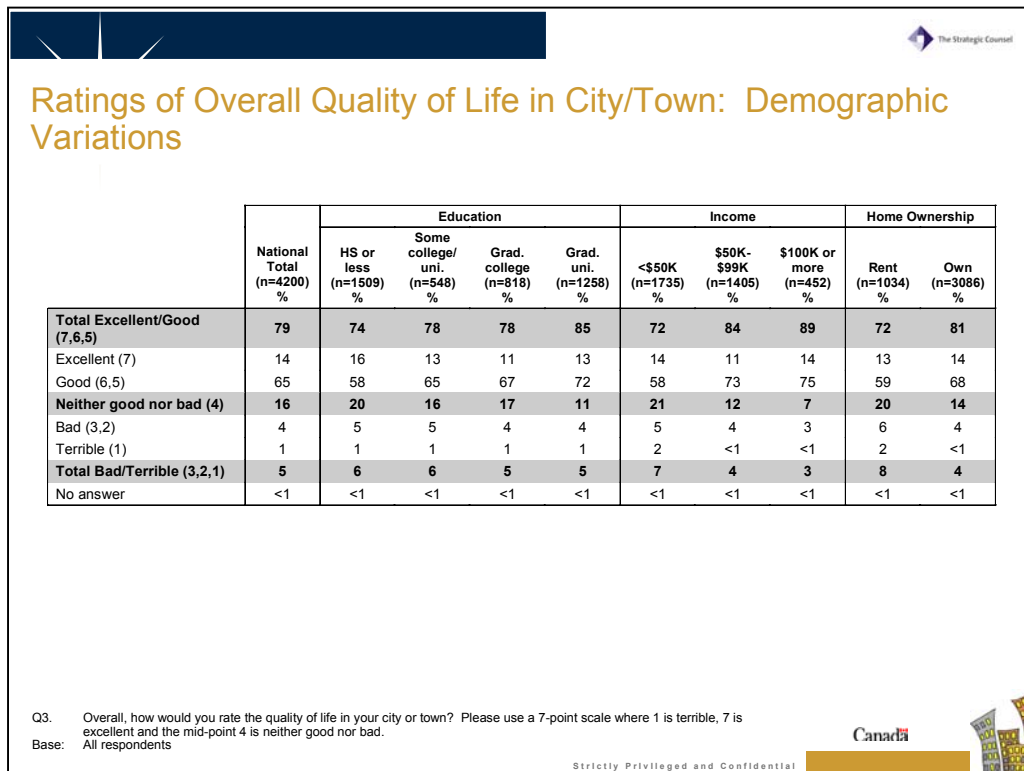
Demographic Variations

Most Canadians, regardless of their circumstances, rate their quality of life positively. Senior citizens, those 65 years of age and older, are more inclined to offer strongly positive ratings (21%), “7” on a 7-point scale, than most other Canadians.

Similarly, higher income earners (90%) are more positive in their assessment (“5,6,7”) compared to those with household incomes of less than \$20,000 per year (68%), as are university graduates (85%) versus those with high school or less education (74%), home owners (81%) versus renters (72%), and married couples (81%) versus single people (76%).

Overall, there is no single group by region, community size or demographic that stands out as being particularly critical of the quality of life in their community.

Figure 8

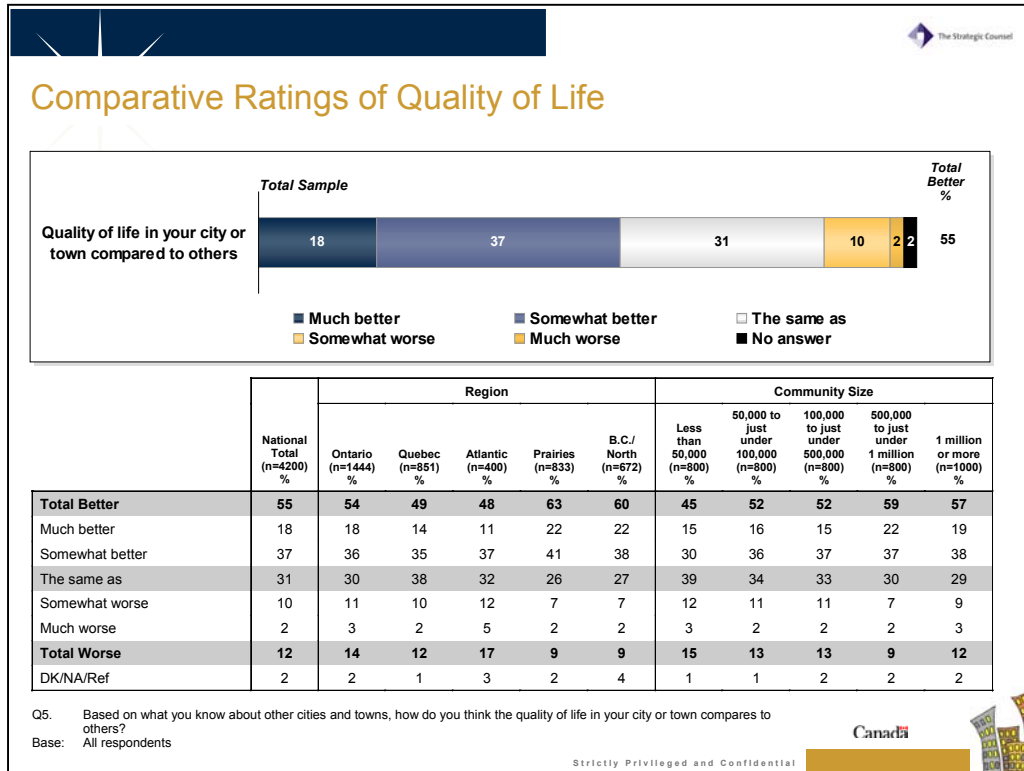


B. Comparative Assessments of Quality of Life in Canadian Communities

While the vast majority of Canadians rate their quality of life as positive, just over half (55%) say their quality of life compares favorably to other cities and towns. Another 31% rate their quality of life as on a par with other communities, while just 12% say they are worse off by comparison to others.

Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 9



Variations by Region and Community Size

Although fewer residents of the Atlantic region (48%) and in Quebec (49%) describe their quality of life as better than others, the vast majority in both these regions do say their quality of life is at least the same as, if not better than others (87% and 80% respectively). Relative assessments of quality of life are also lower among residents in communities of under 50,000 (45%).

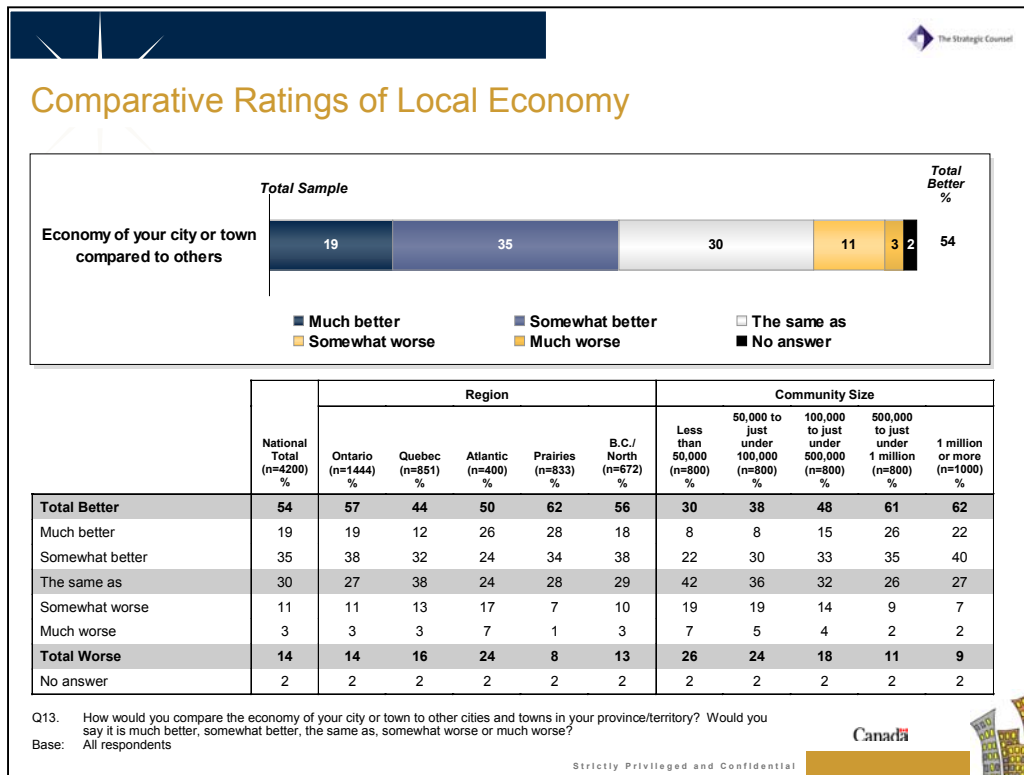
The number of those claiming to have a better quality of life is higher in the Prairies (63%) and British Columbia (60%).

C. Comparative Assessments of Local Economy

Relative assessments of the economic vibrancy of communities track perceptions of the relative quality of life. We observe a similar pattern across regions and communities of various sizes.

Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 10



Variations by Region and Community Size

Residents of the Prairies (62%) as well as those residing in communities of 500,000 or more (61%), largely dominated in this survey by the views of Calgarians and Edmontonians, are more inclined to say their local economy compares favorably to others.

In Atlantic Canada (50%), Quebec (44%), communities of 50,000 to under 100,000 (38%) and under 50,000 (30%), fewer say their local economy compares favorably to other cities and towns.

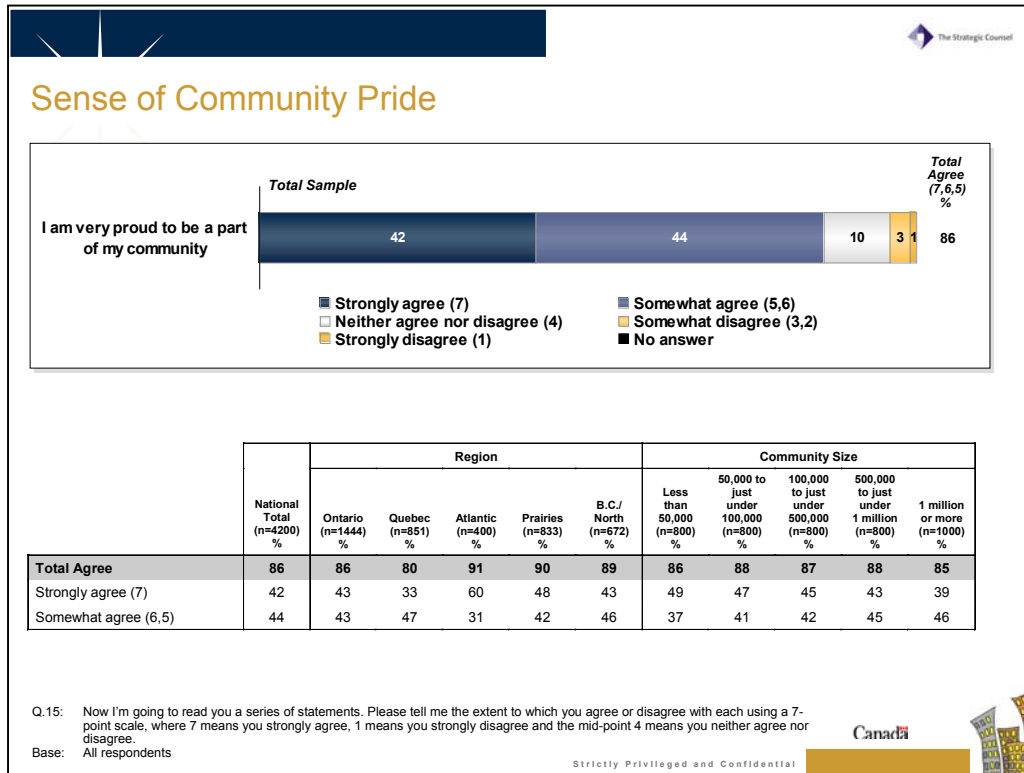
D. Pride in and Attachment to the Community

Canadians are extremely proud members of the communities in which they live. Over eight-in-ten Canadians, regardless of region or community size, agree that they are “very proud to be a part of [their] community.”

Indeed, over four-in-ten strongly agree (“7” on a scale of agreement from “1” to “7”) that they take great pride in their communities.

Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 11



Variations by Region and Community Size

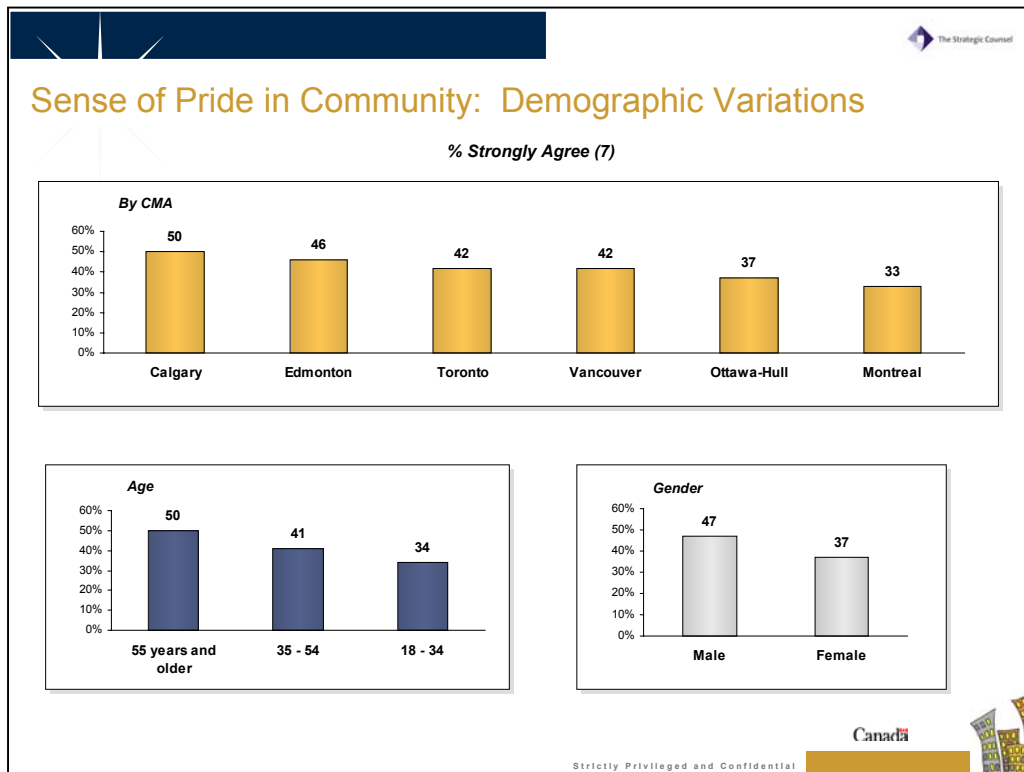
The strongest levels of pride in community, as measured by the highest intensity of agreement with the statement, are found in Atlantic Canada (60% strongly agreed “7” with the statement), while the lowest levels of intensity are found in Quebec (33% gave a rating of “7”).

By size of community, we note a 10-point drop in the level of intense agreement with that statement (“7” on a 7-point scale), from 49% in communities of less than 50,000 to 39% among residents residing in communities of one million or more.

Among key Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), levels of pride vary widely, in terms of those who offer the highest level of agreement with the statement, from 50% among residents of Calgary to 33% in Montreal.

Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 12



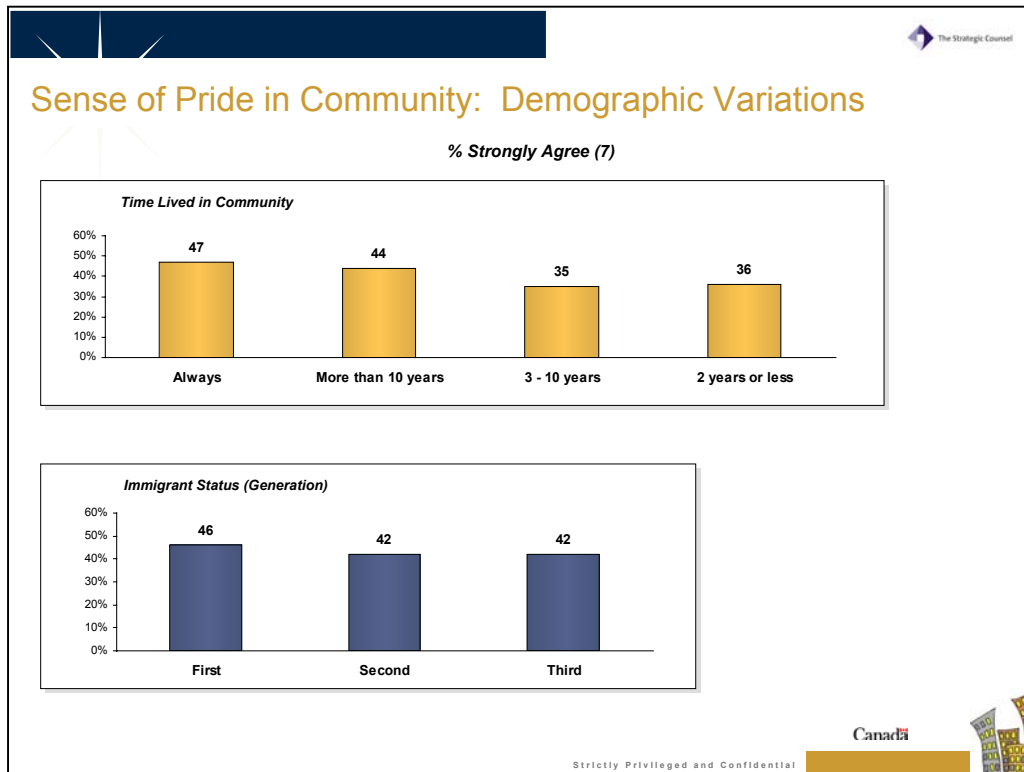
Demographic Variations

The level of intense agreement with this statement also varies by age, gender and time lived within the community. Older residents, aged 55 years and over (50%), express much more intense levels of pride as compared to those aged 18 to 34 years (34%). Men (47%) also exhibit higher levels of pride compared to women (37%).

Levels of pride increase with the length of tenure within communities, as shown below.

Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 13



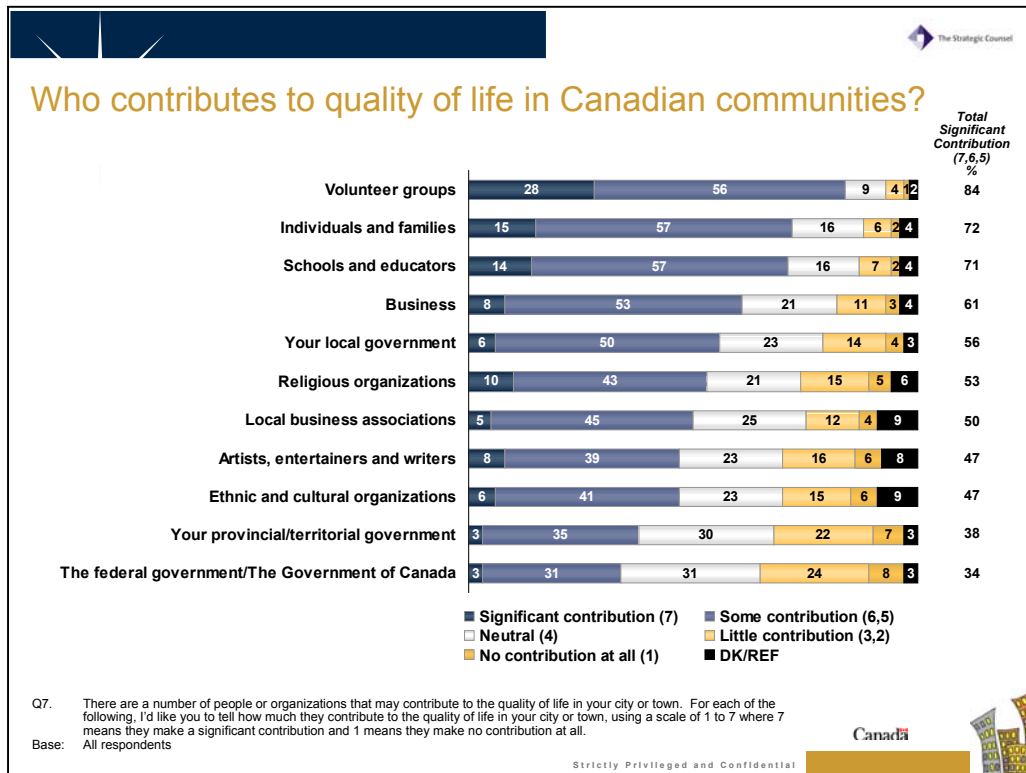
Interestingly, although we might intuitively posit that first generation immigrants would express higher levels of pride in their communities, given data that shows this group demonstrates strong levels of pride in Canada, as shown in the chart below, their level of agreement is not markedly different from other Canadians. This suggests that tenure in communities may be more of a consideration in nurturing a sense of pride.

E. Key Contributors to Quality of Community Life

Volunteer groups are viewed as making the most significant contribution to Canadians' quality of life in their communities, far beyond the perceived contribution of the individuals and families residing within a community. This finding suggests that Canadians feel the quality of life in their communities can be enhanced through greater personal empowerment and through partnerships with organizations that understand and connect at the grass roots level.

Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 14



Variations by Region and Community Size

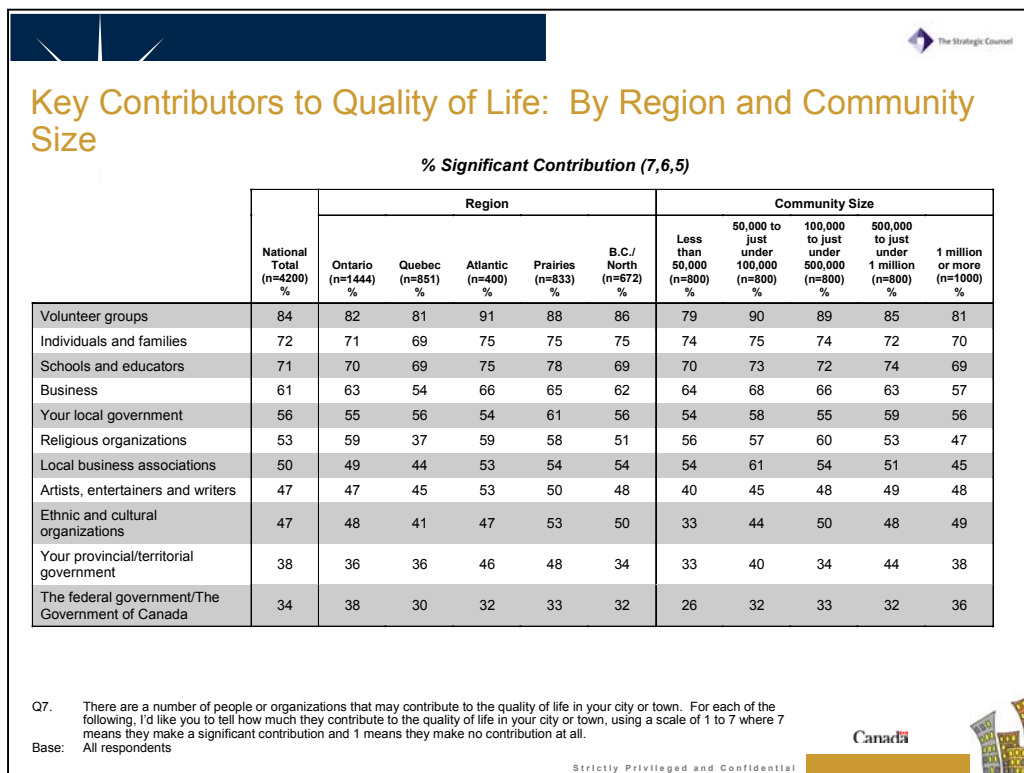
A number of interesting variations in perceptions of who/what contributes most to the quality of life in Canadian communities are apparent across regions and by community size. In general, residents of Quebec are less likely to rate many of the features tested as highly in terms of their contribution as compared to other Canadians, specifically the contribution of business/business associations (e.g. the local Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade), ethnic and cultural organizations, the federal government and religious organizations.

By contrast, Atlantic Canadians rate a number of key contributors higher as compared to the national average, including volunteer groups, artists, entertainers and writers and their provincial governments. Residents of the Prairies, in particular Albertans, are also more inclined to view their provincial governments as making a more significant contribution.

Assessments of Quality of Life

By community size, relatively few variations arise, although residents of Canada's smallest communities are less inclined to suggest that artists and entertainers, ethnic and cultural organizations and both senior levels of government make some or a significant contribution to their quality of life. It is also interesting to note that the return to spirituality and organized religion that we witness south of the border is not as strong a trend within Canada. The contribution of religious organizations is seen to be stronger among smaller communities, those under 500,000 while viewed as a less significant contributor among residents of Canada's largest urban centres, those with populations of one million or more.

Figure 15



Demographic Variations

Few demographic variations exist with respect to views on those organizations and/or individuals that contribute most significantly to the quality of community life with the exception of age.

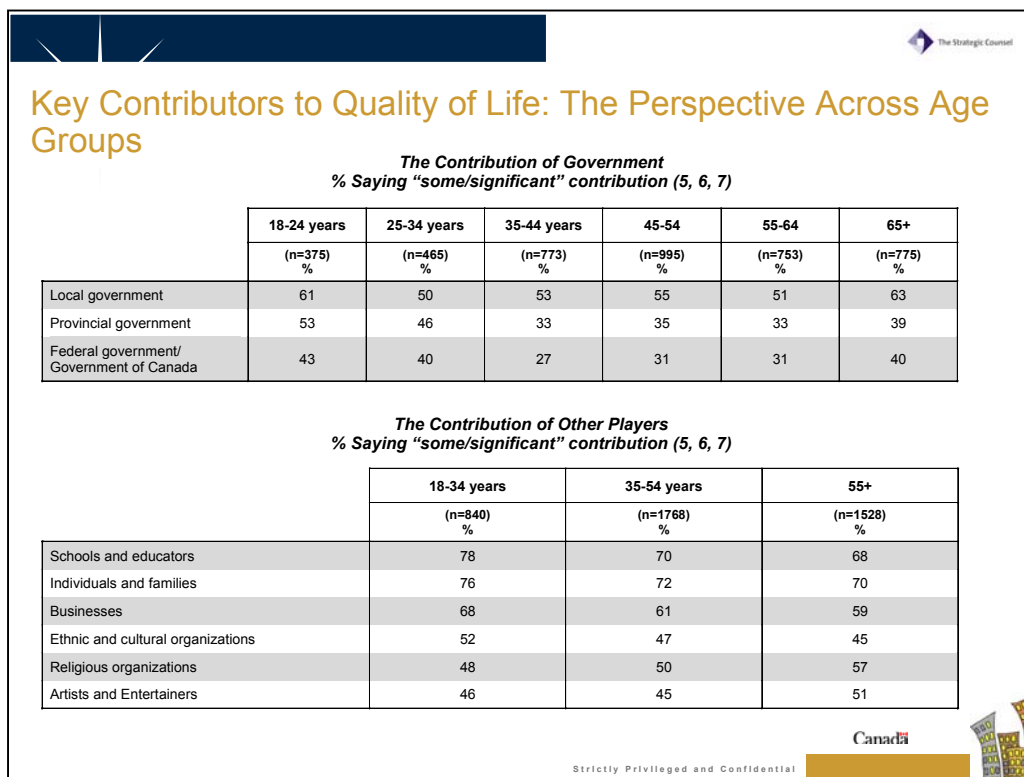
A closer examination of the perceived contribution of the three levels of government reveals that the perceived contribution of local governments remains relatively stable and moderately high across all age cohorts. By contrast, younger Canadians, those under 35 years of age, are more likely to feel their provincial governments make some/significant contribution to their quality of life compared to those aged

Assessments of Quality of Life

35 and older. While there appears to be a slight increase in the perceived contribution of provincial government after age 65 ratings do not return to the level offered by younger Canadians.

Another generational pattern emerges with respect to views on the contribution of the federal government at the community level. Again, those under 35 years of age are more inclined to view the contribution of federal government as somewhat greater and more significant by comparison to the assessments offered among those in other age groups. This view of the Government of Canada drops off quite sharply after age 35 and, unlike views of their provincial governments, by age 65 does return to similar levels as those found among younger Canadians.

Figure 16



In addition, younger Canadians are more likely to rate the contribution of schools and educators, individuals and families, businesses and ethnic and cultural organizations more highly compared to seniors. The reverse pattern is true in terms of perceptions of the contribution of artists and entertainers as well as religious organizations, where those 65 years and older are more inclined to rate the contribution of these groups higher as compared to those aged 18 to 35 years.

Assessments of Quality of Life

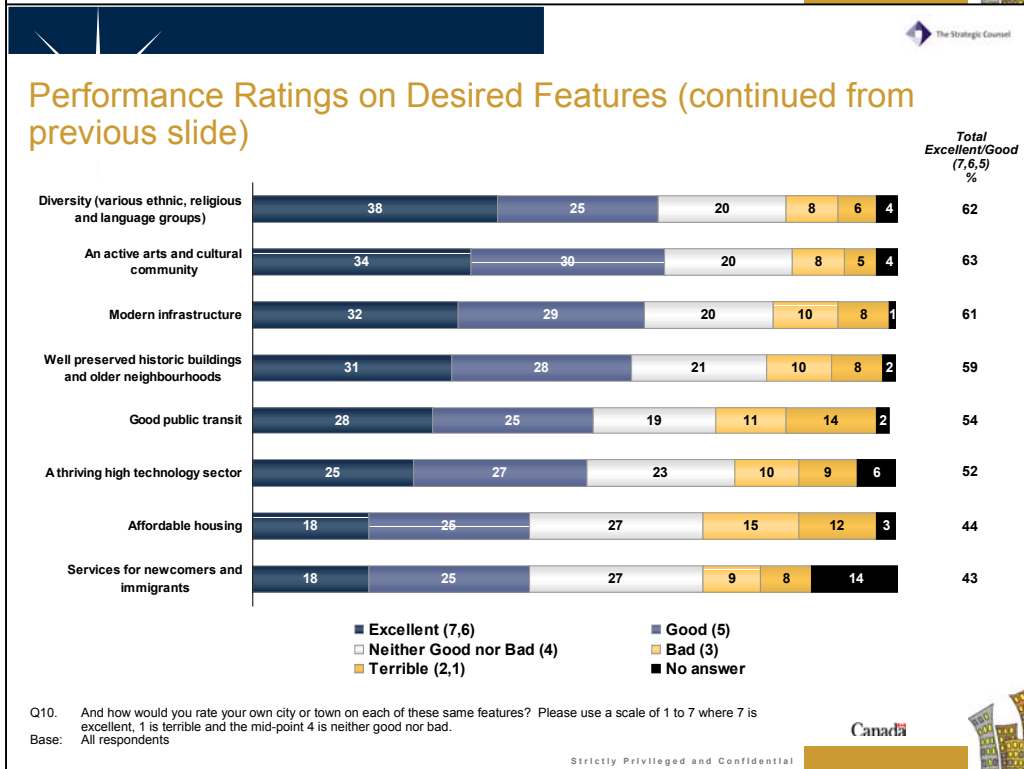
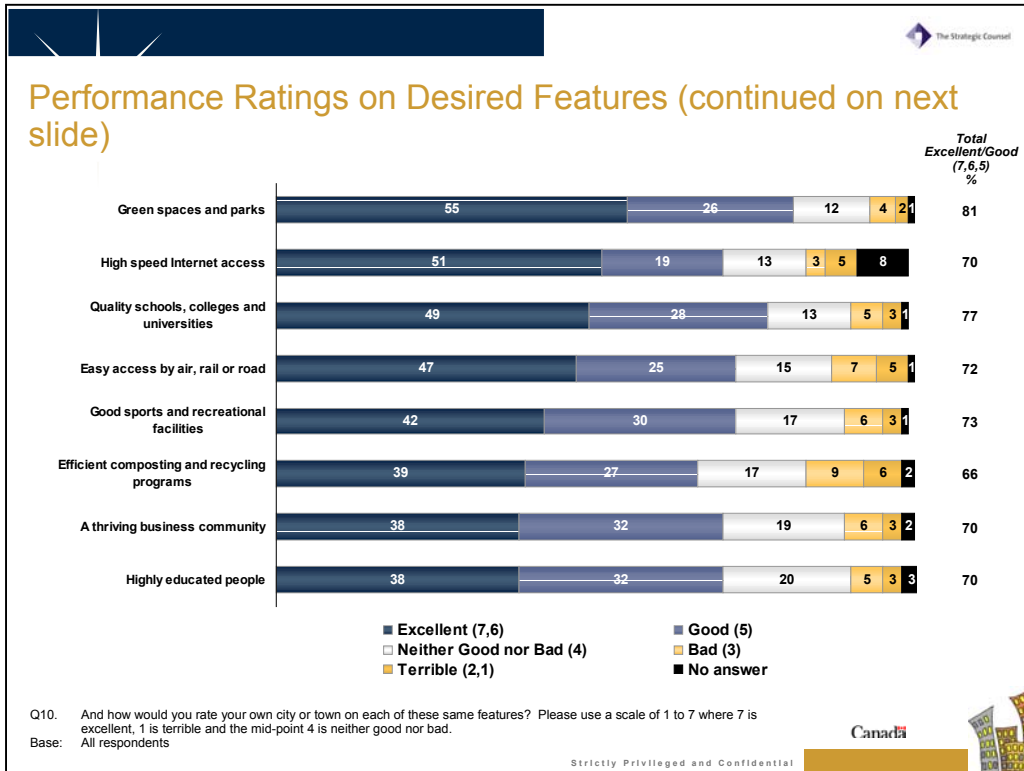
F. How Communities Perform on the Key Attributes

In Section III of this report we reported the ratings of respondents with respect to the perceived importance of a series of 16 attributes in contributing to making a particular community a desirable location in which to live and work. In this manner, we created, albeit on a relatively limited set of features, a composite profile of the ideal community. To begin to identify priorities for improving the quality of life in Canadian communities we re-examined each of these 16 attributes with respondents from the perspective of how well they would rate their own community on each. The national findings are shown below in descending order of performance based on combined (“6, 7” rating on a 7-point scale). We chose to exclude those offering a rating of “5” (although the combined “5, 6, 7” rating is shown in the chart below) in order to highlight the percentage of respondents who offer up a reasonably high rather than mediocre rating of performance.

Most Canadians rate their own communities quite highly on providing ample green spaces and parks. They are also relatively contented with their communities in terms of the availability of high speed Internet access, quality schools, colleges and universities, the ease of access to other centres and the availability of good sports and recreational facilities. Moderately strong performance ratings are associated with the availability of efficient composting and recycling programs, a thriving business community and highly educated people. Just over one-third of Canadians are also likely to rate their communities fairly highly (e.g. “6” or “7” rating of excellent on a 7-point scale) in terms of diversity, having an active arts and culture community, modern infrastructure and well-preserved historic buildings. Performance drops off modestly moving through to assessments of community performance on providing good public transit and a thriving high technology sector and more markedly on affordable housing and the provision of services for newcomers and immigrants.

Assessments of Quality of Life

Figure 17

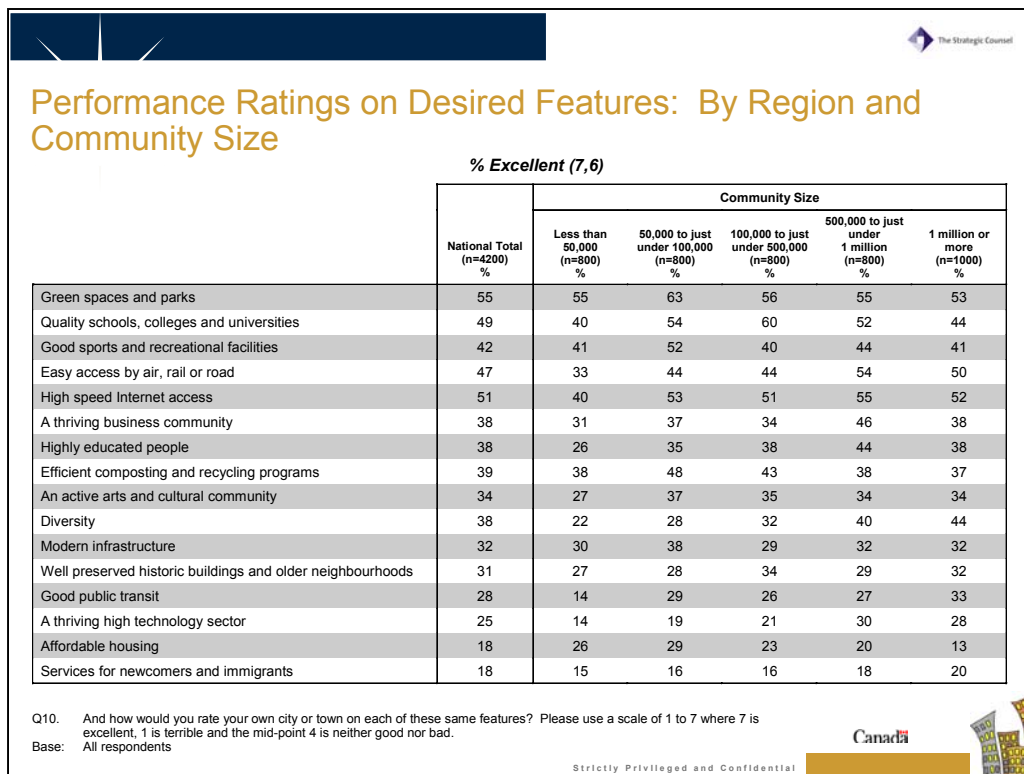


Assessments of Quality of Life

Variations by Community Size

The most significant variations occur within communities of under 50,000 residents. Residents of these communities are more likely to offer a lower rating of performance on many of the items testing including: high speed Internet access, easy access to other communities, a thriving business community, an active arts and cultural community, highly educated people, diversity and a thriving high technology sector.

Figure 18



Further analysis and a comparison of preferred attributes against ratings of performance highlights a number of priority action areas and is explained in detail in Section VI.

V. Future Viability of Canadian Communities

Future Viability of Canadian Communities

Executive Summary

Overall, urban Canadians have a strong sense of optimism with respect to their community, with a healthy majority feeling that their community “has what it takes” to sustain the next generation.

There is a notable difference in levels of optimism, however, which tends to correspond to the varying economic indicators within regions. Those in Alberta are extremely confident that their city is equipped to maintain the next generation. This is consistent with the recent growth of the business community in this province. By contrast, those in central urban centres (e.g. Ottawa-Hull, Toronto and Montreal) and B.C. display healthy levels of optimism consistent with their relatively healthy economies, but don’t enjoy the unbridled enthusiasm of Albertans.

Optimism is lowest in Atlantic Canada, an area with a relatively high level of unemployment and less development opportunity than the west. However, two thirds still agree that the area has what it takes to attract future generations.

Not surprisingly, optimism about the long-term viability of a city or town is directly linked to perceived quality of life and household income. Interestingly, however, optimism varies little by age group, suggesting that perceptions of a city’s viability are not tied to life cycle.

A. Prospects for the Next Generation

As noted in the previous section, the vast majority (79%) of Canadians rate the quality of life in their communities as excellent or good. Large numbers also rate their own communities as having the same as or a better quality of life (86%) and the same or better (84%) economic circumstances as other cities or towns in their province or territory. So, it is not surprising that three-quarters (75%) believe that their city or town “has what it takes” to keep the next generation living and working there.

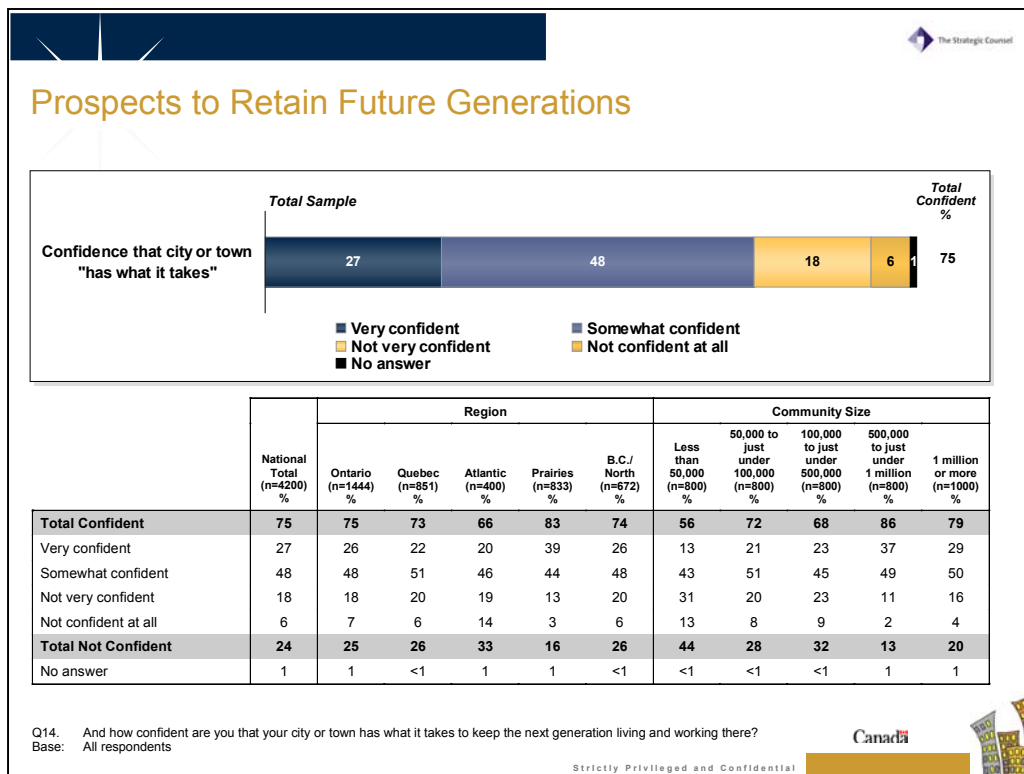
Notably, confidence is higher on the Prairies (83%) and lower in the Atlantic Region (66%). A closer look at the findings across the three Prairie provinces reveals that it is Albertans (91%) who express the highest levels of confidence, while Manitobans (74%) and residents of Saskatchewan (66%) express somewhat lower, but still high, levels of confidence in the prospects for future generations. Note that the sample sizes for the latter two provinces are 165 and 126, respectively, and thus the margins of error associated with these findings are between 7.5% and 8.5%.

Future Viability of Canadian Communities

Variations by Community Size

Residents of mid-sized cities are more likely than those in communities of other sizes to express confidence in their prospects. Residents of Canada’s communities of less than 50,000 (56%) and those in communities of 100,000 to just under 500,000 (68%) express lower levels of confidence, while residents of communities between 500,000 to just under one million (86%) are most confident in the prospects for the next generation.

Figure 19



Residents of Canada’s major urban centres are quite confident about their future. (Table 1) This is particularly true of those in Calgary and Edmonton, in which 97% and 90% respectively express confidence in the future. While these figures are very high, it is notable that half to two-thirds of these report that they are “very confident”. Confidence is still healthy, but more muted, in B.C. and central urban centres, with one-quarter to one-third reporting that they are “very confident.”

Future Viability of Canadian Communities

Table 2
Confidence Community Has What it Takes to Keep the Next Generation

	Calgary	Edmonton	Ottawa-Hull	Vancouver	Montreal	Toronto
% Confident	97	90	83	79	78	78
% Very Confident	65	49	31	32	26	29
% Somewhat Confident	32	41	52	47	52	48

Variations by Assessments of Community Life

Not surprisingly, levels of confidence in the prospects of the next generation vary significantly according to assessments of community quality of life. Those who assess their quality of life as poor are significantly less likely to express confidence in the ability of their community to keep the next generation (42%), as compared to those who rate their quality of life as fair (63%) or good/excellent (80%).

Demographic Variations

Confidence is highest among those with annual household incomes of \$70,000 and above (81%) and lower, but still strong, among those with annual household incomes of less than \$20,000 (66%).

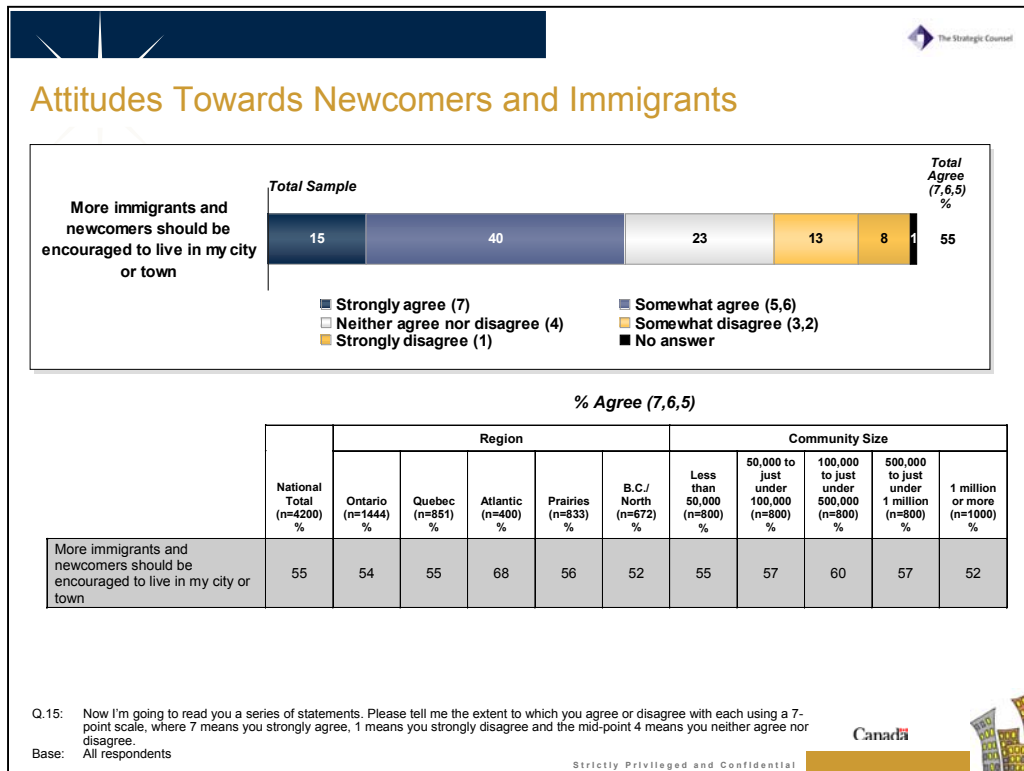
One might expect that any significant variations in opinion on this question would be apparent across generational lines, however, this is not particularly the case. Levels of confidence are similar across all age groups and equally high among those at the younger end of the age spectrum (18 to 24 years of age: 79% and 25 to 34 years of age: 77%) as they are at the opposite end of the spectrum (55 to 64 years of age: 76% and 65 years and older: 78%). Confidence does dip, but not dramatically so, among those aged 35 to 44 years (73%) and those aged 45 to 54 years (72%).

B. Openness to Immigrants and Newcomers

Immigration is a key policy tool in terms of government's role as a nation builder through the enrichment of the economic, social and cultural fabric of Canadian communities. How open and accepting are Canadians and Canadian communities to immigrants and newcomers? There is some level of division on this issue. A slim majority (55%) of Canadians agree that "more immigrants and newcomers should be encouraged to live in my city or town." Agreement with this statement is highest among Atlantic Canadians (68%) and residents of communities between 100,000 and just under 500,000 (60%).

Future Viability of Canadian Communities

Figure 20

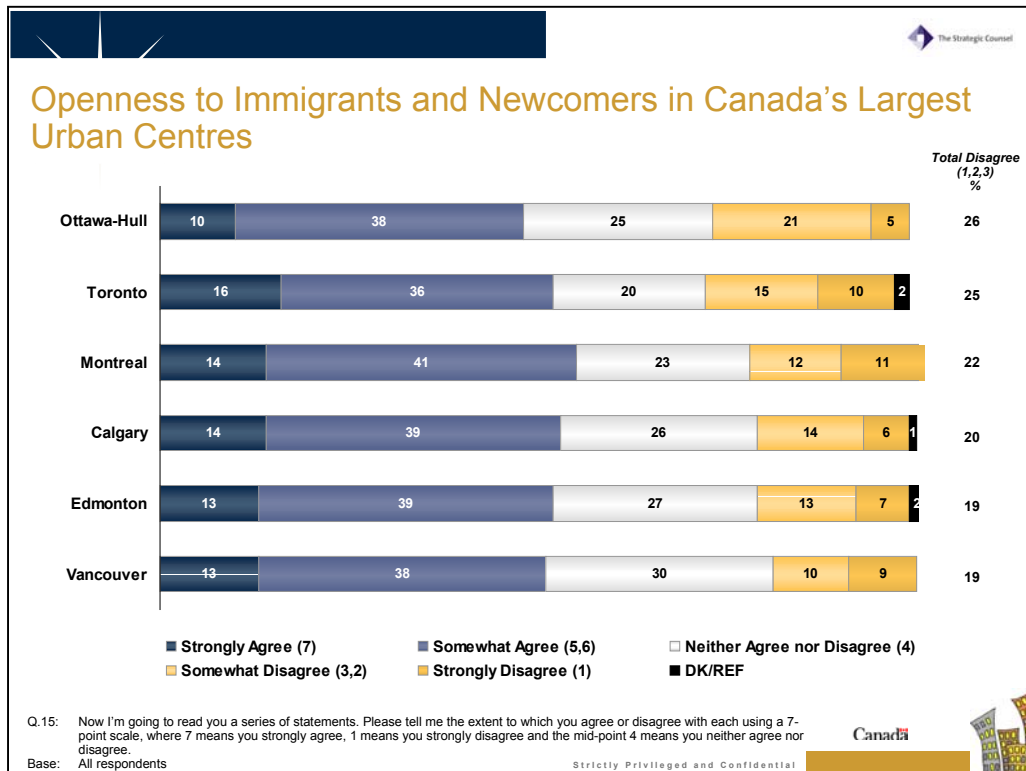


Nationally, about 15% of Canadians strongly agree with this statement (e.g. those saying “7” on a 7-point scale). The intensity of agreement with this statement ranges from 14% in Quebec and B.C./North to 24% in Atlantic Canada. By community size, residents of Canada’s largest centres of one million or more and of communities of 50,000 to just under 100,000 (14%) are somewhat less likely to express strong levels of agreement with this statement as compared to residents of communities under 50,000 and those between 100,000 to just under 500,000 (both 17%).

Within Canada’s largest urban centres, the level of disagreement with this statement (those saying “1,2,3” on a 7-point scale) ranges from one-in-five to one-in-four.

Future Viability of Canadian Communities

Figure 21



Those who rate the quality of life in their community as poor are less likely to say that immigrants and newcomers should be encouraged to live in their communities (39%) in contrast to those who rate their quality of life as good or excellent (57%).

Openness to newcomers and immigrants declines with age, with those in the 18 to 24 age cohort (63%) most likely to agree with this statement, declining to a bare majority (52%) among those aged 65 and older.

Those with a higher education level are somewhat more likely to welcome immigrants and newcomers to their community. University graduates (59%) are more likely to support the promotion of newcomers and immigrants to their communities as compared to those with a high school education, or less (52%).

Notably, however, with the exception of those aged 18 to 24 and residents of Atlantic Canada, levels of agreement with this statement do not surpass six-in-ten among any other demographic group, community size or region.

VI. Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Executive Summary

Urban Canadians see several issues as key considerations for their community. On a top-of-mind basis, healthcare dominates local concerns. This is not surprising, given the emphasis Canadians place on healthcare on a federal level, and media-reported concerns that the quality of healthcare is slowly eroding with the depletion of resources in this area.

When probed on an aided basis, urban Canadians also express other priorities with respect to improving quality of life in their city or town. Chief among these priorities are environmental issues, the local economy, access to community-based services and the local infrastructure. In many ways, these echo the priorities expressed in Section 1 of this report (in which desirable communities were seen to have quality education, green spaces, modern infrastructure and a thriving business community). The consistency underscores the importance of these issues in the development and maintenance of a desirable community.

The perceived health of the local economy holds great sway in establishing community priorities: in those areas where unemployment is traditionally high and economic development is limited (notably Atlantic Canada and very small communities), the health of the local economy is of a higher priority than those areas that enjoy relative economic prosperity.

In-depth analysis of community priorities reveals that there are some priority shifts according to community size. Affordable housing and quality of infrastructure are seen as areas of opportunity regardless of community size. Smaller communities seek easier access while public transit becomes a larger issue as the community size increases.

A. Most Important Issue Facing Communities

On a top-of-mind basis, urban Canadians identify a wide range of issues they believe their communities face. No one issue dominates concern, although health care is the single most frequently cited issue that Canadians believe faces cities or towns. In all, just over a quarter (27%) make reference to this concern. Aside from health care, the biggest concerns are community infrastructure, social and economic issues, taxes, the environment and education. These issues cover almost all the remaining responses. In more detail, when municipal services are included (these are typically infrastructural) then 16% of responses focused on infrastructure, with most comments focusing on roads and public transit. Social issues, typically homelessness, poverty and crime were mentioned by 11% of urban residents, while economic issues were

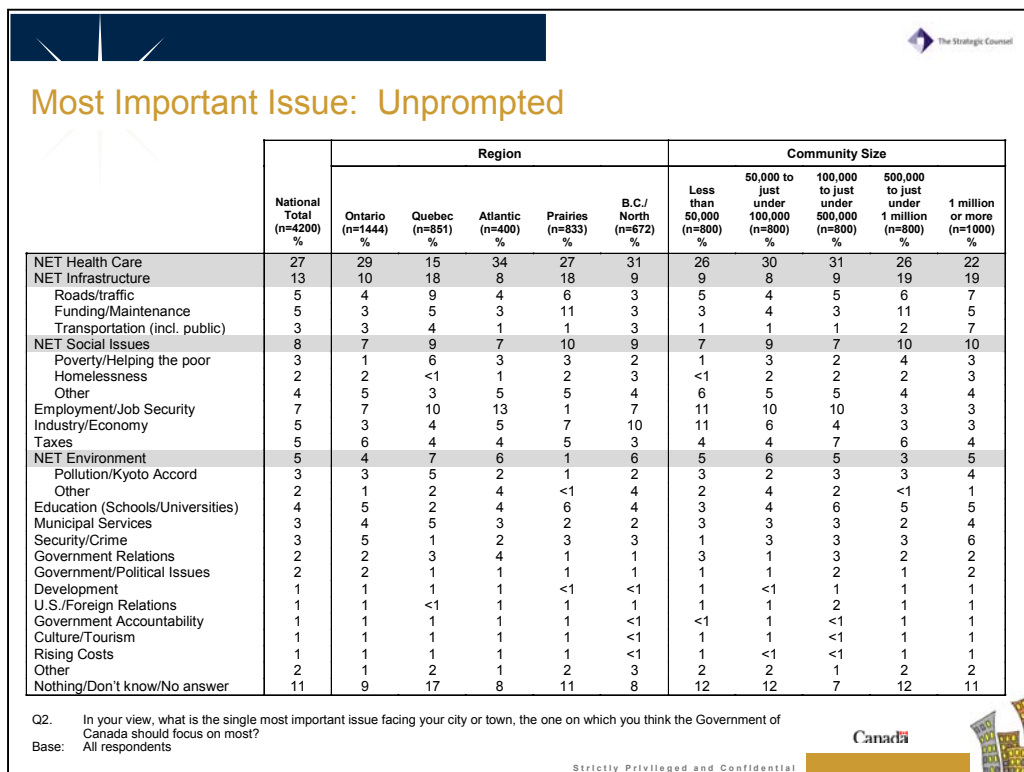
Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

cited by 12%. Government mentions, which included taxation references as well as accountability and relations between the three levels of government, accounted for 9% of responses. An issue related to the environment was cited by 5% and an aspect of the education system was named by a further 4% of urban residents.

When regional variations are explored, health care is the number one priority in all regions except Quebec, where only 15% cite it as the most important urban issue. Instead, infrastructure type issues tend to be more dominant with 18% citing these. The only other regional variations of note are employment in the Atlantic region (13%) and the greater focus on infrastructure in the Prairies.

Community size variations also indicate that, to some extent, smaller communities identify different issues than their larger counterparts. While healthcare is always the most frequently cited issue irrespective of size, cities of under 100,000 tend to be more focused on economic issues than elsewhere. This is especially true in the case in those communities of 50,000 people or less, where 22% of comments make reference to these issues as being their main concern. By contrast, in larger communities of 500,000 or more, infrastructure issues (22%) are more top of mind.

Figure 22



Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

B. Broad Priorities for Renewal

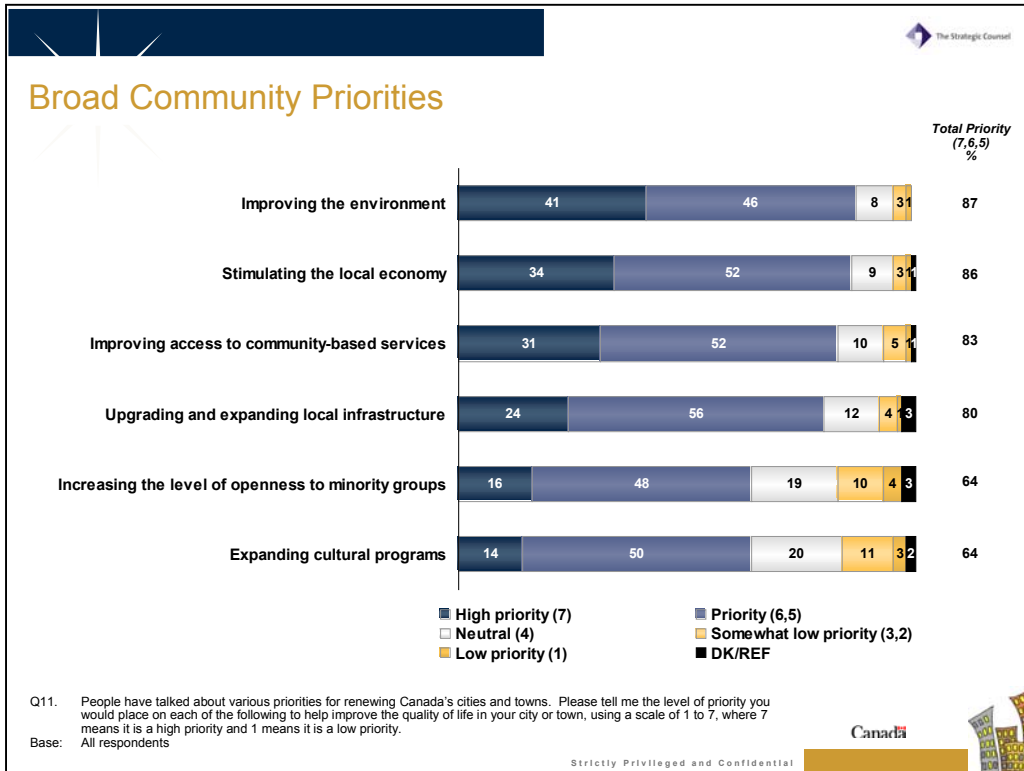
Although infrastructure and social issues were more frequently mentioned than environmental and economic issues on a top-of-mind basis, very different pattern emerges when Canadians are prompted on specific issues. As Figure 9 makes clear, four areas are identified as important by eight-in-ten of the population: the environment, the local economy, community services, and infrastructure. By comparison, cultural issues and diversity are considered much less important issues.

Closer examination reveals that there is a clear hierarchy in terms of the strength of which each is a priority. Improving the environment is rated by more Canadians as having a high priority (7 on the priority scale) with 41% rating this highly. Compared with this, nearly equal numbers, one-third, of urban Canadians rate stimulating the local economy (34%) and improving access to community based services (31%) this highly. In contrast, upgrading and expanding the local infrastructure, which had been cited frequently when urban Canadians were asked to identify the most important issue facing their community, is only rated as a seven by 24% of the urban population.

Two areas, while given some priority, are only rated a seven (indicating a high priority) by fewer than one-in-five urban Canadians – increasing the level of openness to minority groups (16%) and expanding cultural programs (14%). This suggests that these two areas are much less important than the others mentioned above.

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Figure 23



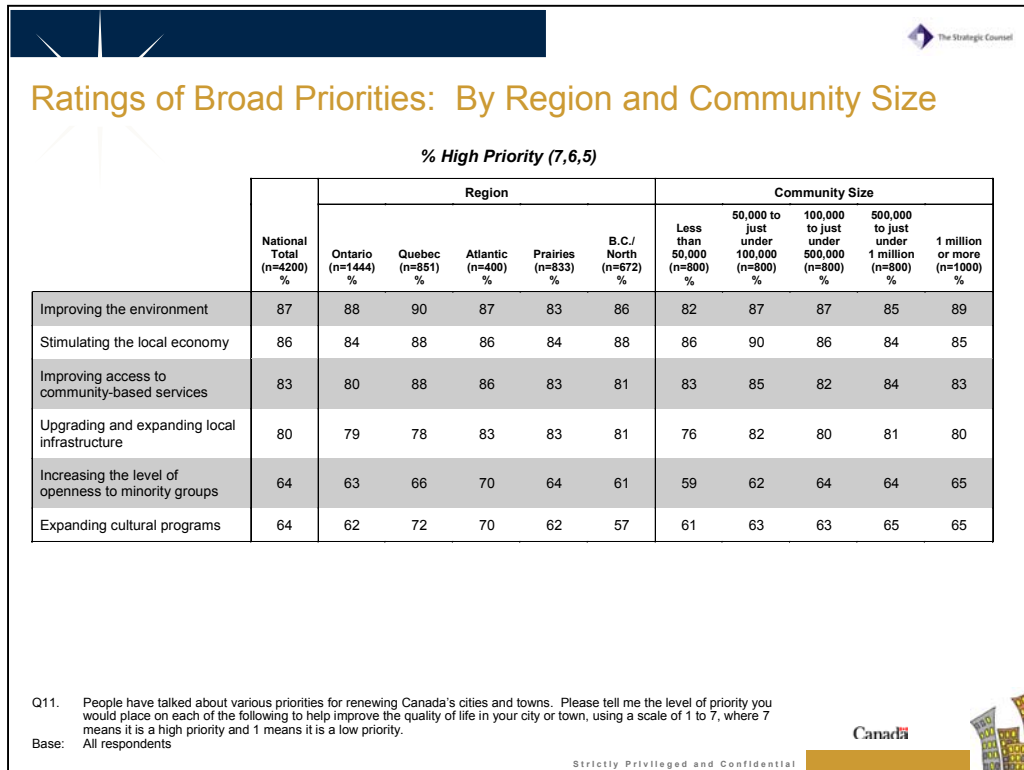
Variations by Region

Although the environment is the key priority overall, this is not the case in all parts of the country. When those rating an issue a seven (meaning they give it a high priority) are examined separately, a somewhat different picture emerges.

Certain regions and community sizes, particularly those where unemployment is often high and economic development is limited, are more likely to see the economy as a high priority (rated a 7 on a 7-point scale). Communities with less than 100,000 people, and those in Atlantic Canada, for example are equally likely to prioritize the economy as the environment. In the Prairies and BC/North, the gap between mentions of the environment and the economy is quite narrow. This suggests that economic hardship may be driving, to some extent, the strength of priorities. This is supported by the fact that in the main urban centers the environment is far and away more important as a priority than economic concerns.

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Figure 24



Demographic Variations

There are important gender variations that are also shaping the intensity of priorities. Specifically, women are far more likely than men to rate the environment as a high priority (rated a 7 on a 7-point scale). In fact, while half (48%) of women give a seven for the environment and one-third do for the economy, equal numbers of men (one-third) rate the environment and the economy a seven in terms of priority.

The other priority that one-third of urban Canadians rate a seven in terms of its level of priority deals with improving access to community-based services. This is an especially important priority in the Atlantic region, where four-in-ten rate it a seven.

Expanding cultural programs and increasing the level of openness to minority groups are, in all regions, the lowest rated priorities. Even in major urban centres like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, the importance of these priorities is low. For example, while the figures are above average, in Toronto only 23% of residents rated openness to minority groups a seven and in Montreal only 21% rated cultural programming a seven.

Finally, while infrastructure was important to a number of urban Canadians, it is not of major importance relative to the top three issues raised for most Canadians.

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

C. Gap Analysis – Performance versus Importance on Key Attributes

The priorities cited above are to some extent mirrored in the importance attached to desirable features of a community that was reviewed in Section 3. Improving the environment is, in some ways, linked to green spaces and parks and a very desirable feature identified by most urban Canadians. Stimulating the local economy is related to a thriving business community, also a desirable attribute. The importance of modern infrastructure in a desirable community is reflected in the priority given to upgrading local infrastructure and improved community services as a priority is also reflected in the importance given to affordable housing.

While there is broad consensus about what is important in a community, it is also apparent that the gap between the ideal and the real is, in some cases, significant. When detailed comparisons are made, as they are in Figure 25, there are four attributes where the ideal is not being met.

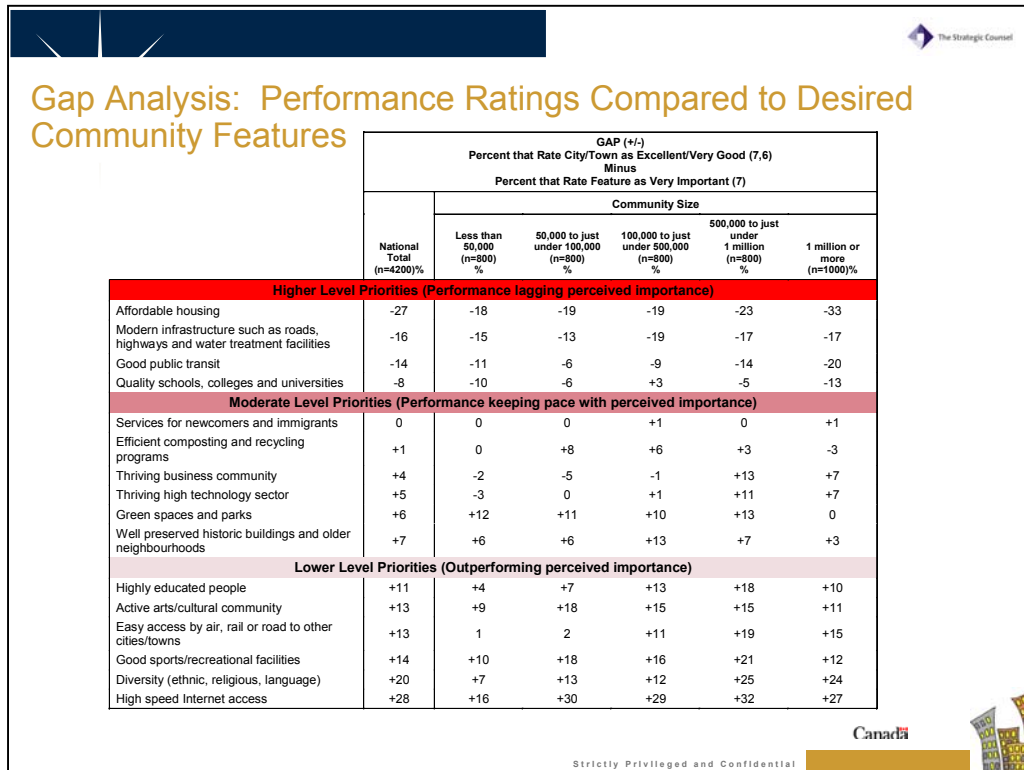
In order to determine the extent to which a gap between the ideal and actual exists, the ratings of 6 and 7 on the seven point scale of desirability in an ideal community (as outlined in Section three) were subtracted from the 6 and 7 ratings on the seven point performance scale that measured how well urban residents believed their community performed on each of the attributes used to create the ideal community. These scores are shown in Figure 25.

According to urban Canadians, the four areas that make up a desirable community and where performance falls short of the ideal are: affordable housing, modern infrastructure, good public transit, and quality educational institutions. Significantly, three of these areas are the priorities rated most highly in the section above.

In the area of affordable housing the gap is quite large, being 27 points (while 86% of urban Canadians rated this attribute as important in a desirable community, only 43% rated the performance of their community as excellent or good in this regard).

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Figure 25



Similarly with modern infrastructure, while 91% rated this as important only 61% rated their community as excellent or good along this attribute. The same pattern is apparent for the attribute of good public transit, where what is perceived as falling short of what is desired.

The one area where a gap exists that is not as troubling is that of quality education. While a gap exists, this is not as much because of poor performance, but because of very high ideals. In all, 57% of urban residents reported quality schools, colleges and universities to be an important attribute. Yet, when rating the performance of their community on these attributes, 49% rated the quality of schools, colleges and universities as excellent or good. This was the second highest of 16 attributes tested. This suggests that it is the very high expectations that are not being met rather than a poorly performing education system.

While the gap between expectations and performance exists across communities of all sizes, it is especially apparent in our major urban centers.

For many desirable attributes, there is no gap between expectations and performance and this suggests that the importance of an attribute and how performance is evaluated is in harmony. In other words, performance matches expectations. Such is the case with green spaces and parks, efficient composting and recycling, a thriving business community and others shown in Figure 25.

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

There are also instances where performance is well ahead of the importance assigned to an attribute. That is, residents of urban Canada do not ascribe this attribute with a lot of importance relative to other areas, but they are fairly positive regarding the performance on this attribute. Examples of these attributes include: highly educated people, an active arts community and diversity in the form of ethnic, religious and language groups. These attributes were not especially valued as important but urban Canadians rated the performance of their community in these areas as quite positive. This gap is especially large in the larger urban centers.

Of interest here is the fact that the areas cited above – diversity, an educated population, and an active arts and cultural community – are all the attributes that Richard Florida, in his work on what gives cities a competitive edge, has cited as key. It seems that urban Canadians do not value these attributes to any great extent although they believe their communities possess them and perform reasonably well along these attributes.

D. Importance/Performance Grid- Identifying Opportunities

In order to more graphically illustrate the gap between performance and expectations, Figures 26 to 31 present the gap analysis by community size on a grid. The axis of the grid consists of two scales – the importance of each attribute in a desirable community is plotted along the vertical axis and the performance rating is plotted along the horizontal axis. This yields four separate quadrants that demonstrate varying levels of importance versus performance – low importance high performance rating, low importance low performance rating, high importance high performance rating and most importantly high importance and low performance rating. It is this last quadrant that the analysis will focus on.

As Figures 26 to 31 show basic patterns of specific attributes being highly important but being evaluated poorly in terms of performance holds across most sizes of community. Affordable housing and modern infrastructure are consistently rated as important and poorly evaluated in all sizes of community. This is particularly the case for affordable housing in the largest communities where residents evaluate the performance as especially weak.

For the smallest communities, one unique attribute that does not repeat as a problem in larger communities is easy access to other cities. Smaller communities may feel poorly served by air or rail, or even bus routes and may also not have especially good access to excellent highways.

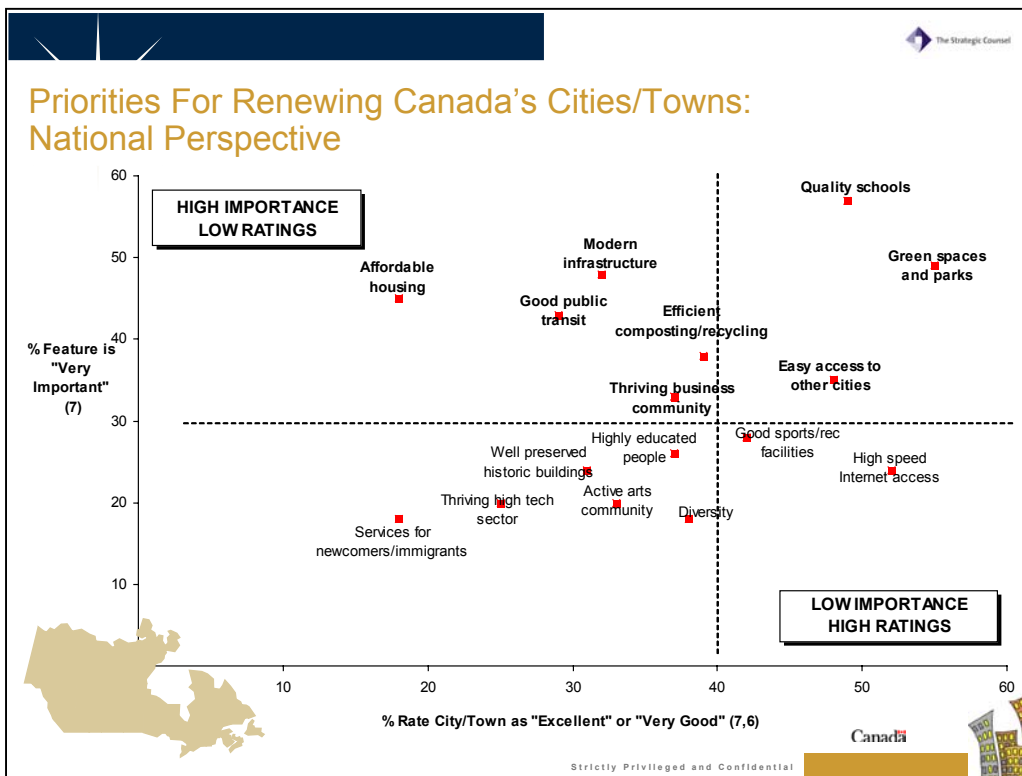
A thriving business community is also rated as important in all sizes of communities and, in most of them, the performance does not meet the importance placed on this area. The exception is medium sized cities of half a million to a million where the performance on this attribute is rated quite positively.

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Efficient composting and recycling is another area where, for some, performance falls short of the importance ascribed to an attribute. In this case, it is the larger communities of half a million residents and up where the gap is largest, and in the smallest communities surveyed (50,000 or less).

Finally, good public transit is an attribute that shows a considerable gap in the larger urban centers. In those communities of half a million and over, the importance placed on public transit that works is not matched by how well the public transit system is perceived to perform.

Figure 26

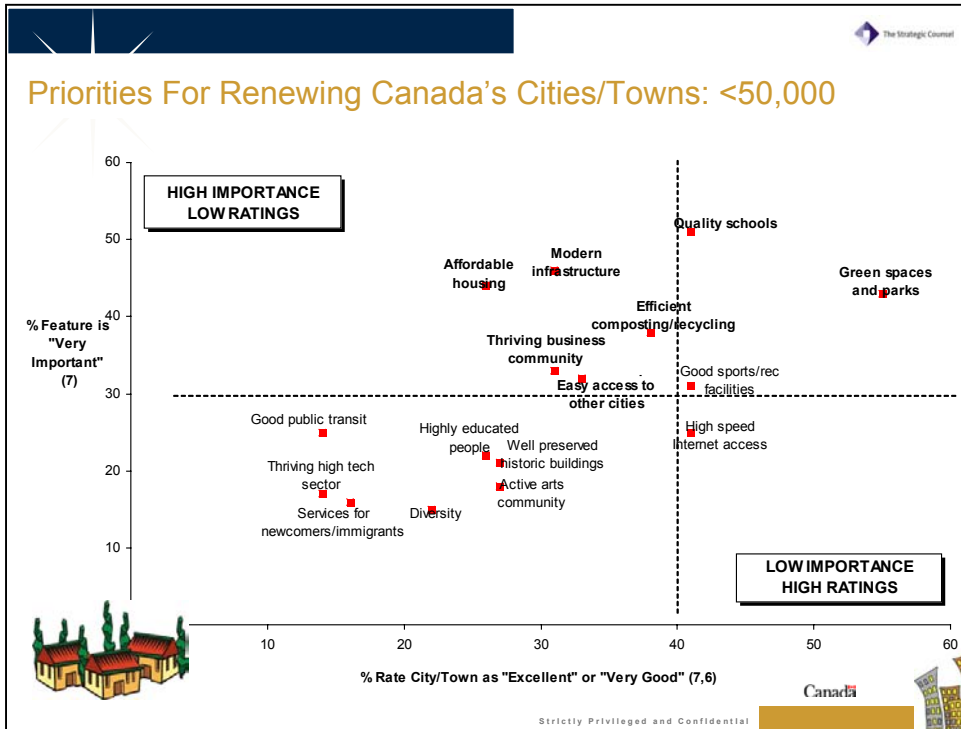


Urban Canadians identify a few key areas of opportunity:

- Affordable housing
- Modern infrastructure
- Good public transit

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Figure 27

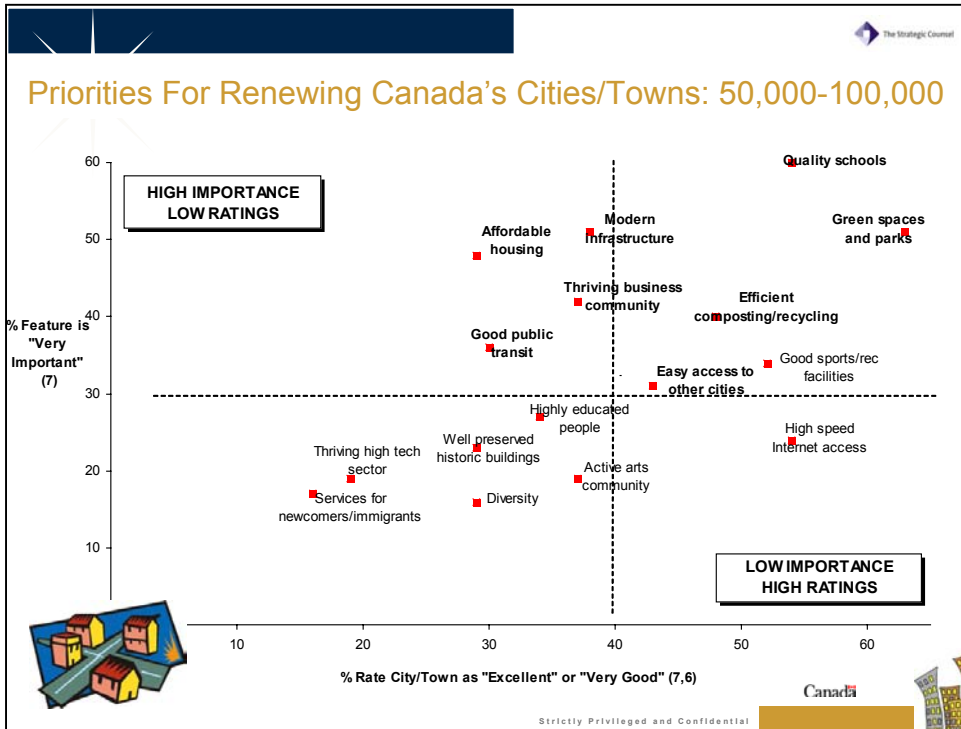


Priorities are similar to those expressed nationally, except that:

- Easy access is seen as an opportunity
- There is **less focus** on Public transit and somewhat less focus on Affordable housing.

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

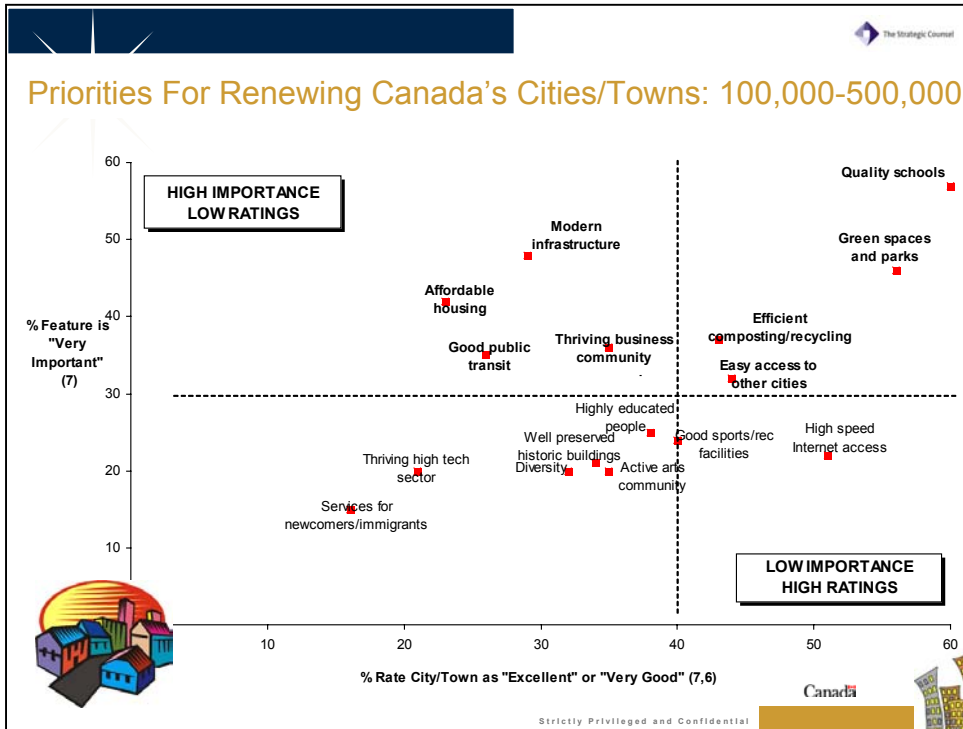
Figure 28



As the community grows, ratings of composting/recycling systems and sports and recreational facilities improve. Public transit becomes more significant.

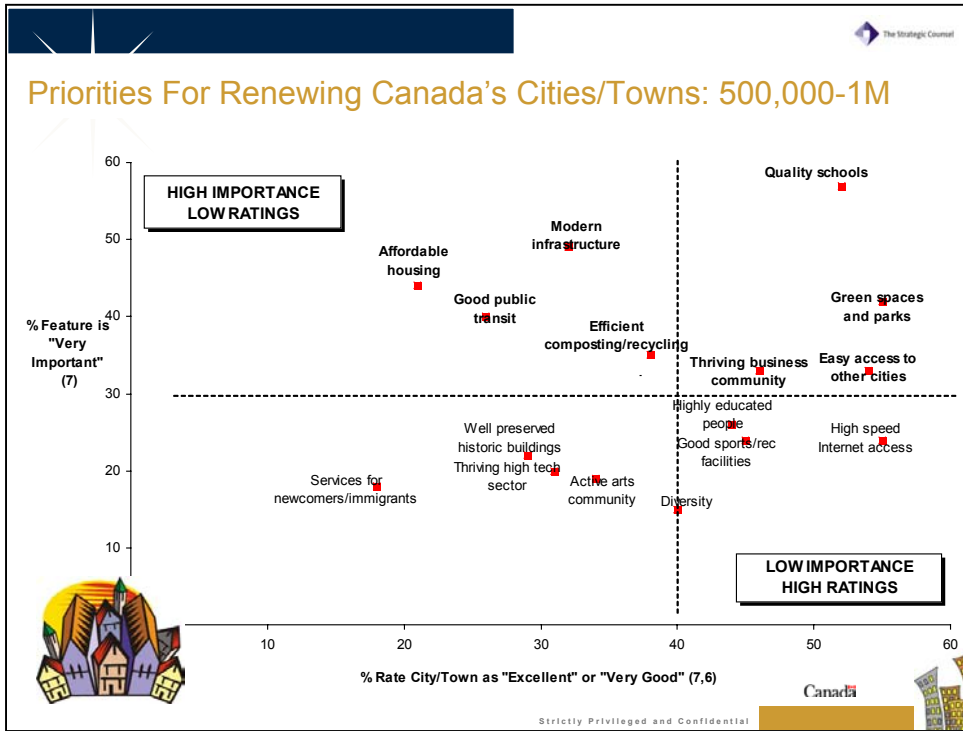
Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Figure 29



Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

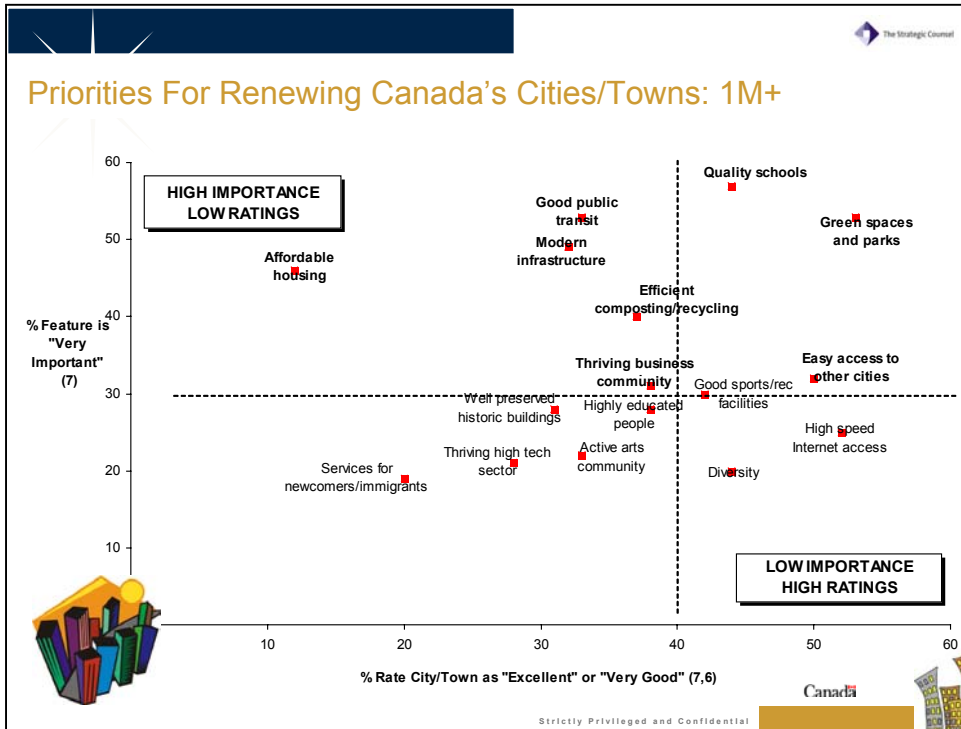
Figure 30



In mid-sized cities, residents begin to see affordable housing as a key issue. In addition, composting/recycling gains some importance.

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Figure 31



Emphasis on affordable housing is highest in major urban centres. Public transit becomes something of an issue and an opportunity.

E. Who is Responsible?

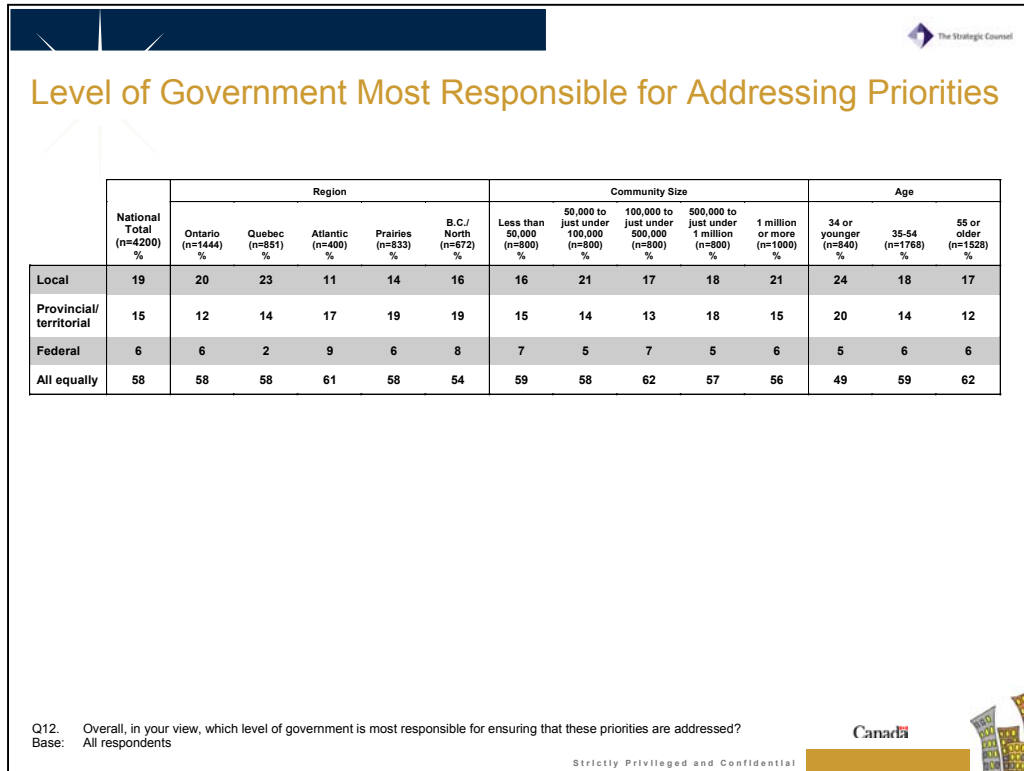
A number of key priorities and areas for improvement have been identified. One obvious question is - who is responsible?

According to public opinion, there is no clear answer to this question. Figure 32 shows that, if anything, all three levels of government are held equally responsible. In all, close to six in ten (58%) give this response. Where one level of government is identified, it is local and provincial territorial levels of government rather than the federal government. Presumably, these two levels are seen to be closer to the situation than the federal government.

However, the response that all levels are responsible is also likely the public indicating that it does not really matter which level of government is responsible – that the problem just needs to get fixed.

Priorities for Renewal of Canadian Communities

Figure 32



VII. Building Sustainable Communities

Building Sustainable Communities

Executive Summary

The findings in this section clearly reveal that urban Canadians believe that sustainability can be achieved without compromise. Specifically, Canadians believe that two of their special interests, a thriving business community and green spaces, can peacefully co-exist, despite the fact that environmentalists often view industry as a threat to green initiatives.

Almost 8 in 10 urban Canadians agree that “I believe we can develop cities and towns that are economically prosperous and environmentally friendly without having to compromise one goal for another.”

Further proof of Canadians’ somewhat idealistic view of sustainable communities is their lack of acceptance of urban intensification. Despite the economic benefits of intensification, the majority of Canadians do not support increasing the density of the urban population, preferring more sprawling communities. Sixty-eight per cent (68%) report that “They would prefer not to live in an area that is densely populated and compact” while only 37% agree that “Communities should be designed to be more compact and densely populated to help reduce urban sprawl.”

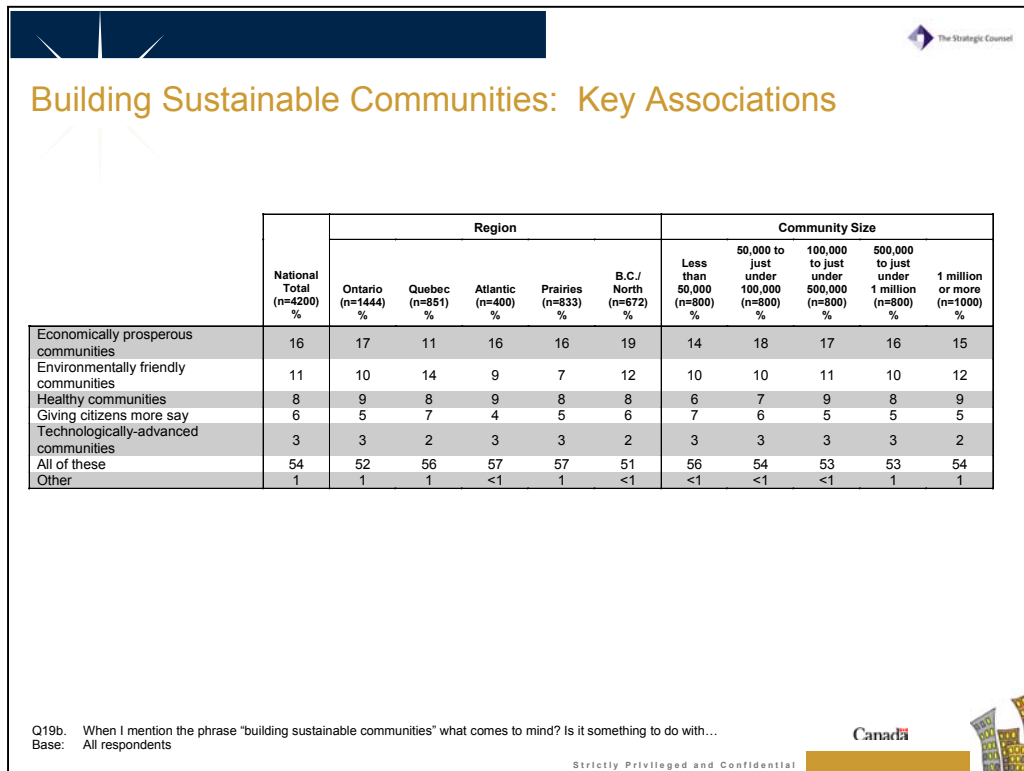
A. Understanding the Concept of Sustainability

The concept of sustainable communities seems to be well understood by many urban Canadians. When offered a choice of descriptions of sustainable communities, few could not give an answer to the question. Further, a majority (54%) of urban residents have a multidimensional view of the concept. This is evident from the fact that rather than choose just one descriptor, urban Canadians opted for the view that sustainability includes: the economy, the environment, a voice for citizens, the use of advanced technologies, and healthy communities, rather than any one of these elements.

There were, though, some who selected one of the above options to describe sustainability. The largest number selecting just one view were those selecting “economically prosperous communities” (16%) as closely associated with the term sustainable communities. This was followed by 11% believing that the term applied to “environmentally friendly community”. Fewer than one-in-five Canadians selected the other three descriptors – only 8% defined the term as meaning healthy communities, 6% said it meant “giving citizens more say”, and just 3% applied the term to “technologically-advanced communities.”

Building Sustainable Communities

Figure 33



Regional Variations

There are few regional and community size variations in terms of how the sustainable communities phrase is used.

Demographic Variations

Demographically, there are few variations with the exception of those over 34 years of age (55%) and women (56%) who are somewhat more likely to view the concept of sustainable communities as multi-dimensional.

Building Sustainable Communities

B. How Realistic is the Concept of Sustainability?

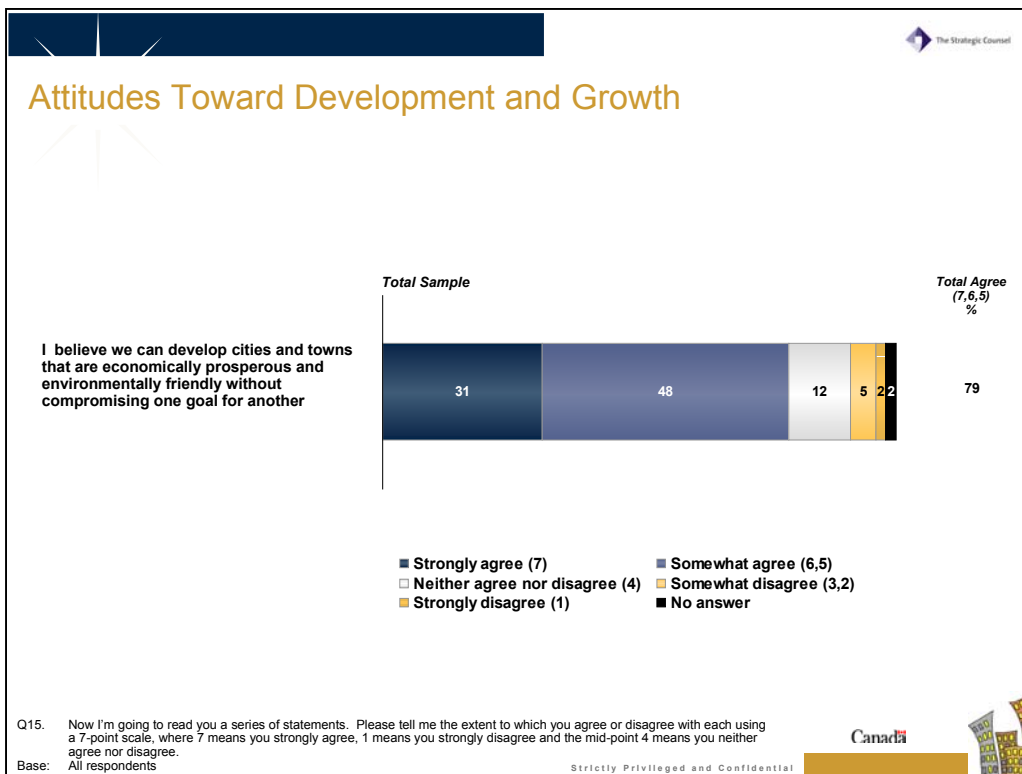
One obvious issue in any agenda and debate about cities is the relationship between economic development, a clean environment and the extent to which the environment is sacrificed in the name of development. When this issue was raised with urban residents, they saw no contradiction with two of the key objectives of a sustainable community being locked together as partners. In all, eight-in-ten urban Canadians agreed with the view that:

“I believe we can develop cities and towns that are economically prosperous and environmentally friendly without compromising one goal for the other.”

The fact that 31% strongly agreed with this view also suggests that many Canadians see no contradiction between these two objectives and believe that we should strive to achieve both objectives.

Regional, community-size and demographic variations are minimal on this statement, suggesting that there is broad general agreement across the entire country and across demographic segments.

Figure 34



Building Sustainable Communities

C. Support for Urban Intensification

As industries move out of city centres seeking cheaper land and services, The eroding tax base of many major cities coupled with the steadily increasing need for tax money to pay for ever more expensive services has forced a significant debate regarding the merits of intensification.

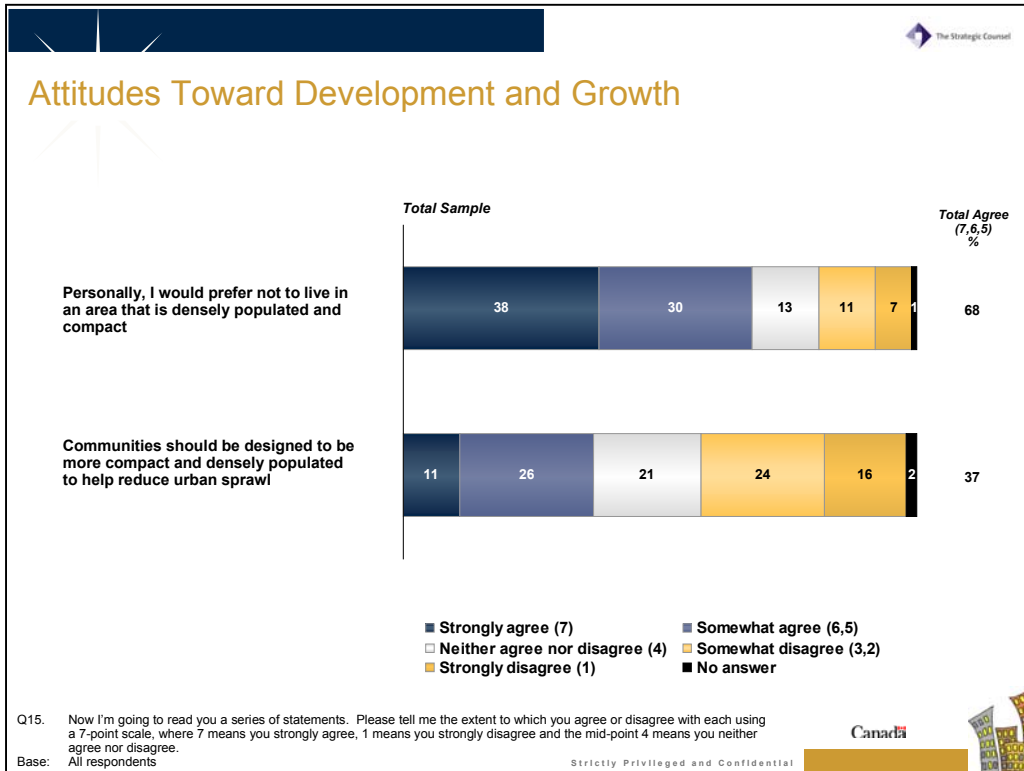
Urban residents are in agreement that high density urban environments are not the ideal.

To begin with, large numbers (68%) of urban Canadians clearly agree with the view that they would prefer not to live in a densely populated area. What is especially interesting about this response is the large proportion who strongly agree (38%) with this viewpoint, which clearly indicates some strong feelings on the matter. This statement clearly evokes a NIMBY type response.

When the issue is phrased in terms of designing compact and densely populated communities to reduce urban sprawl, consistent with the view expressed above, few agree (37%) with this viewpoint and only 11% do so strongly. This again suggests that urban Canadians have little enthusiasm for high density communities even in the name of reducing urban sprawl. The fact that only four-in-ten disagree does suggest some opportunity for turning around public opinion, but the strong response to the first statement suggests that changing the tide of public opinion may prove difficult.

Building Sustainable Communities

Figure 35



Variations by Community Size

Community size variations suggest that residents of the larger urban centres (half a million and over) are a little more willing to consider intensification. But, even here, the proportions agreeing that they prefer not to live in densely populated areas are still high (two-thirds agreeing) and the proportion agreeing that communities should be denser and more compact is only four-in-ten.

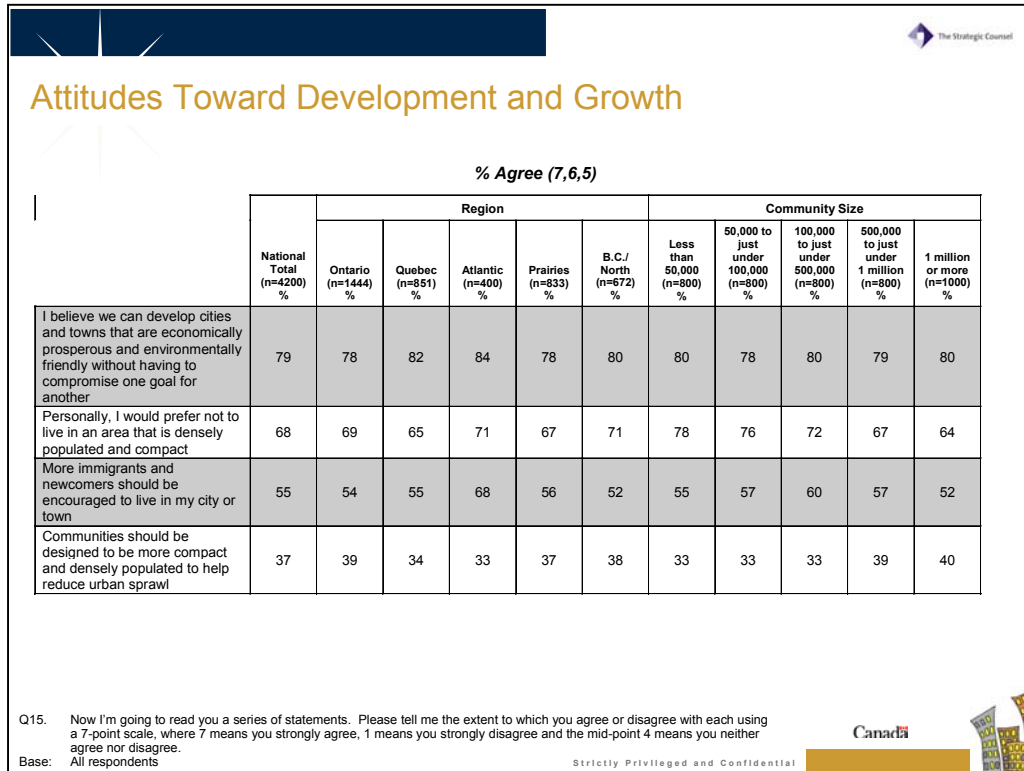
Demographic Variations

Demographically, the only groups who are below average in terms of their negative response to the first intensification statement are the young, the old, and men. However, seniors, youth and men are not supportive of the idea, they are just slightly less opposed.

In the case of intensification as a way of reducing urban sprawl, only seniors are well above average in agreeing with this perspective (47% agree). Elsewhere, there are few other demographic variations.

Building Sustainable Communities

Figure 36



VIII. Performance of Government on Community Issues

Performance of Government on Community Issues

Executive Summary

As this section of the report shows, Canadians clearly enjoy deeper bonds with their local government and, as a result, believe that this level of government is stronger in addressing community issues or concerns. In contrast, they have a much lower regard for either the provincial or federal governments. Even in Quebec, the provincial government receives negative ratings for its performance in looking after community issues and concerns compared to local governments.

Another trend emerging in the findings is that residents of smaller communities (with a population of less than 50,000 residents) are less likely to be satisfied (compared to the residents of larger communities) with the performance of government and more likely to be sceptical about the impact of a New Deal initiative in improving quality of life in their communities.

In sum, Canadians have a higher regard for local government given its relative proximity to them and their focus on services (i.e. roads, public transit, parks, garbage, policing) that affect their daily lives. This suggests that given the goodwill toward municipal governments, the federal government should seek to find opportunities to partner with this level of government in undertaking the New Deal. This study confirms that most aspects of life are perceived locally.

A. Overall Performance of the Government of Canada

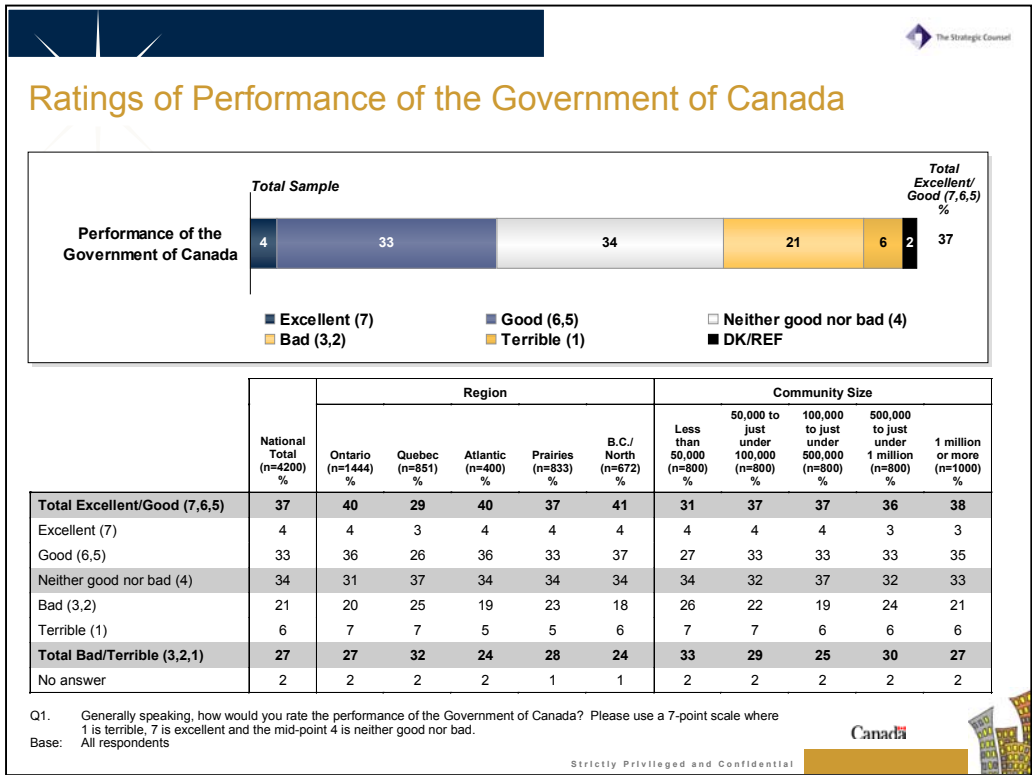
Canadians are divided on their opinions of the performance of the federal government. Just over one-third (37%) indicate that the Government of Canada's performance is either excellent or good, while about one-quarter (27%) believe that the federal government's performance is either bad or terrible. Another one-third (34%) are currently indifferent on the federal government's performance.

Opinions of the federal government are consistent across most regions: among British Columbians, Atlantic Canadians, and Ontarians, about 4-in-10 give the federal government either an excellent or good performance rating, while just under 40% of Prairie residents give this type of rating. Quebecers are the least positive with only 29% giving Ottawa an excellent or good rating.

Consistent with other findings in this report, residents of communities with a population under 50,000 are more negative about the federal government's performance compared to the residents of larger communities.

Performance of Government on Community Issues

Figure 37



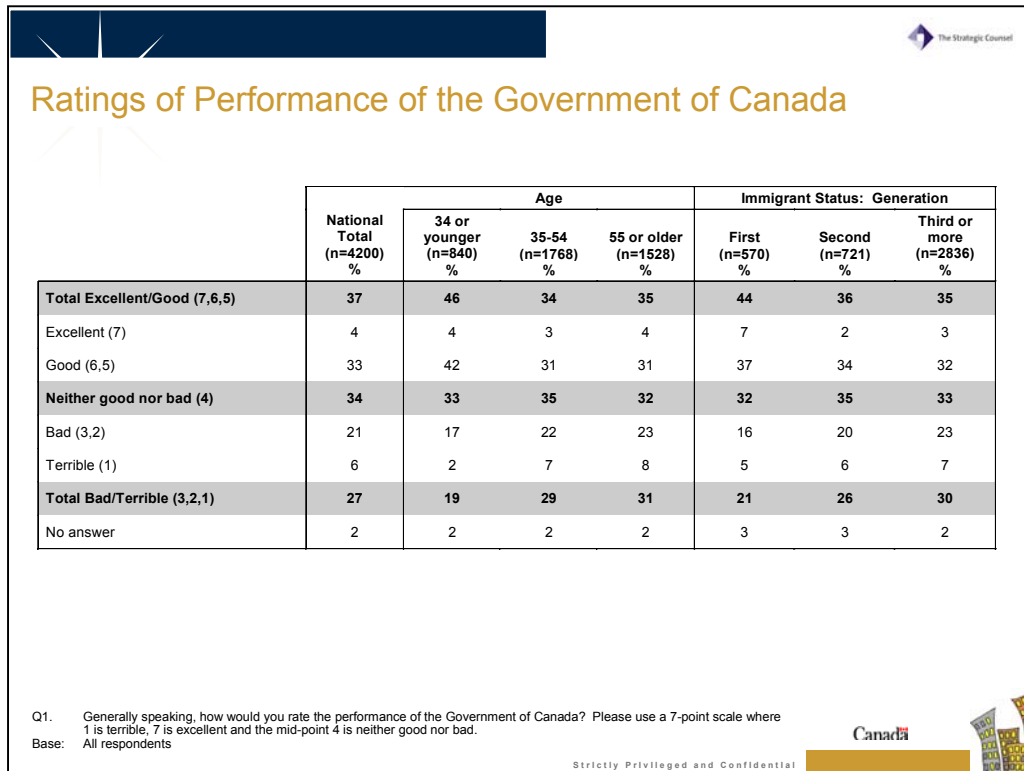
Demographic Variations

Canadians who are under the under of 34, and first generation Canadians, hold the most positive impressions of the federal government’s performance. Almost one-half of Canadians under the age of 34 hold a positive view of Ottawa’s overall performance, while less than 1-in-5 (19%) have a negative perspective. In contrast, older cohorts (35 to 54 and 55+ age segments) are more likely to be critical.

While 44% of first generation Canadians have a positive view of the federal government’s overall performance, only 21% hold a negative perspective. This differs with second and third or more generation Canadians who are just modestly less positive about Ottawa’s overall performance.

Performance of Government on Community Issues

Figure 38



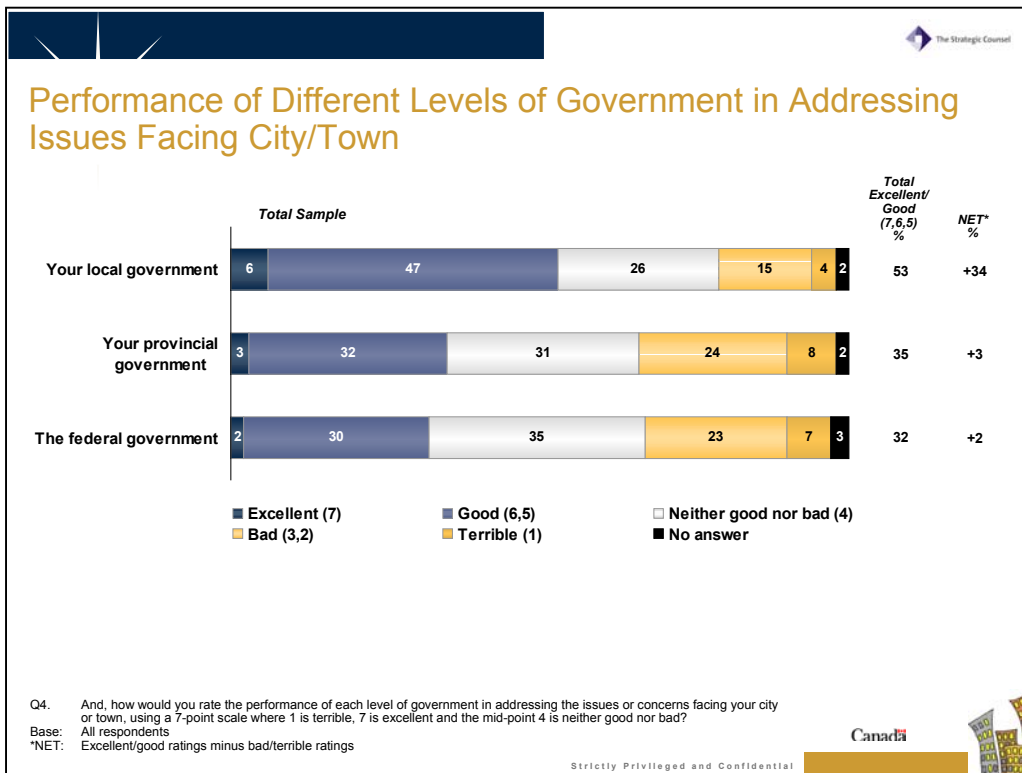
B. Comparative Assessment of Government's Performance in Addressing Community Issues/Concerns

It is not surprising that Canadians have a much more positive view of their local government's performance (in comparison with the provincial or federal governments) addressing the concerns of their community. Over one-half (53%) give an excellent or good rating to their local government, while only 19% indicate a negative rating on the performance of their municipal authority. In contrast, 35% believe that their provincial government's performance was either excellent or good, whereas 32% give similar ratings on Ottawa's performance. These results are not particularly surprising as, clearly, local governments are much more involved in the day-to-day delivery of municipal services. Moreover, the favourable ratings of the federal government on dealing with local issues and concerns (32%) are only marginally lower than Ottawa's overall performance (37%).

Performance of Government on Community Issues

Even though the provincial government retains constitutional authority for municipal affairs, performance ratings of provincial governments are virtually on par with the federal government's on a net basis. In contrast to the provinces, these ratings for the federal government have been obtained even though Ottawa has largely been absent from municipal issues since the days in the 1970s when the federal government had a Minister responsible for Urban Affairs. As noted earlier, this suggests that the federal government has an opportunity to improve its positive perceptions about its responsiveness to communities by becoming more visibly involved with these types of issues.

Figure 39



Performance of Government on Community Issues

Community and Regional Variations

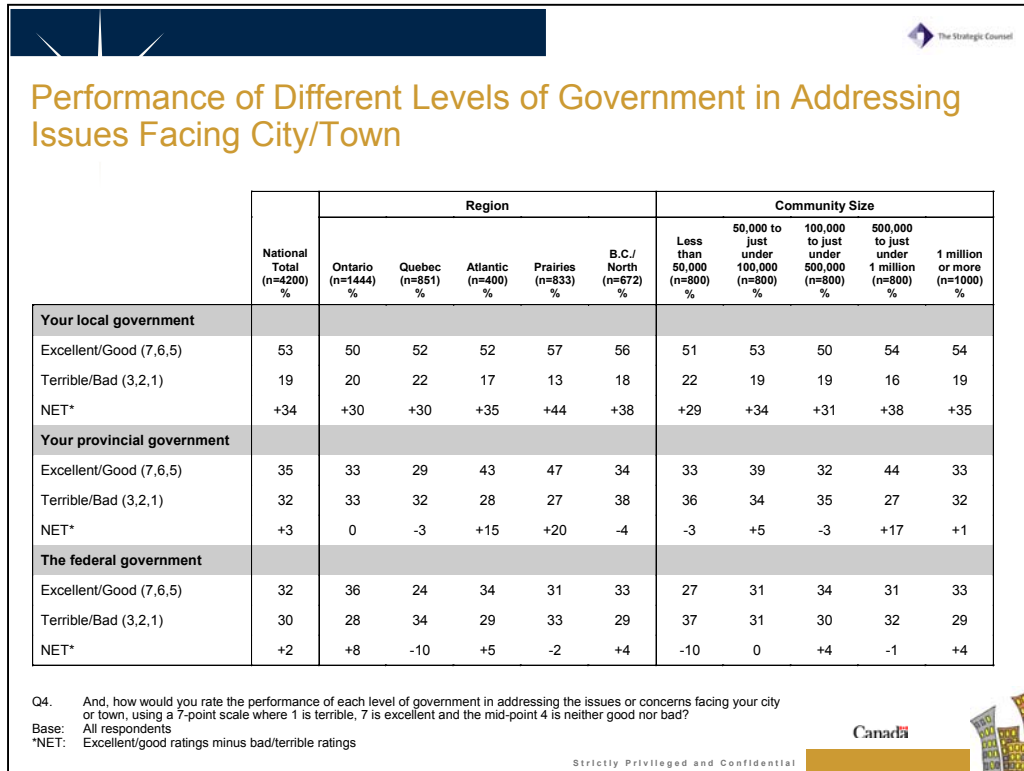
Residents of communities with a population less than 50,000 tend to be more critical of government as a whole. This group is slightly more critical (with a net rating of +29) of local government than those people living in larger centers. Interestingly, residents in these smaller communities are also the most inclined (compared to people living in larger communities) to give negative ratings of the federal government's performance dealing with local issues and concerns. These ratings are consistent with the perceptions toward the federal government's overall performance.

In contrast, the most positive (with a net rating of +38 for the local government and +17 for the provincial government) are those residents living in centers with populations between 500,000 and one million. These higher ratings are consistent with other findings in this study. However, these residents are no more likely to give a positive rating of Ottawa's performance than those people living in larger or smaller communities.

As shown in Figure 40, the most positive perceptions of the local government in addressing community issues are from residents in the Prairies (Net: +44), BC (Net: +38) and Atlantic Canada (Net: +35). In contrast, Ontarians and Quebecers are less likely to be positive about local government performance. Interestingly, while Ontarians are more likely to be positive about Ottawa's performance in addressing local issues or concerns, Quebecers are much more likely to be negative about this performance.

Performance of Government on Community Issues

Figure 40



Demographic Variations

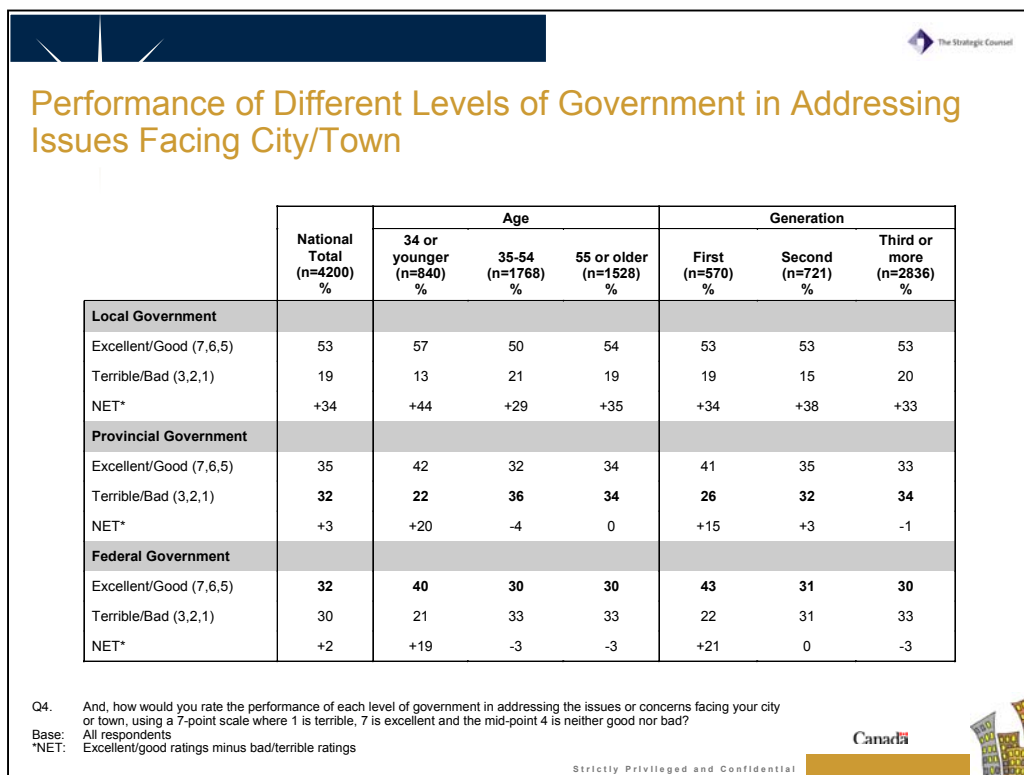
Perceived government performance is linked to age. Respondents under the age of 34 are much more positive about the performance of all three levels of government in dealing with local community issues or concerns, whereas older age cohorts are less likely to be positive. This younger age cohort is more positive about the local government's performance (Net: +44) than their provincial (Net: +20) or federal government (Net: +19). The older cohorts are more likely to be positive about their local government's performance (age 35-54 Net: +29; age 55+ Net: +35) and much less positive about their provincial (age 35-54 Net: -4; age 55+ Net: 0) or federal government (age 35-54 Net: -3; age 55+ Net: +3).

Performance of Government on Community Issues

There are also significant differences between generations when it comes to the performance of governments in dealing with community issues and concerns.

First generation Canadians are generally most positive about the performance of the provincial and federal governments on local issues and concerns compared to those second or third or more generation Canadians. First generation Canadians are much more positive about the federal government (Net: +21), while this is much less true for second generation (Net: 0) and third or more generation (Net: -3). Provincial governments receive relatively similar performance ratings: second generation (Net: +3); third or more generation (Net: -1). These findings are consistent with Ottawa's overall performance.

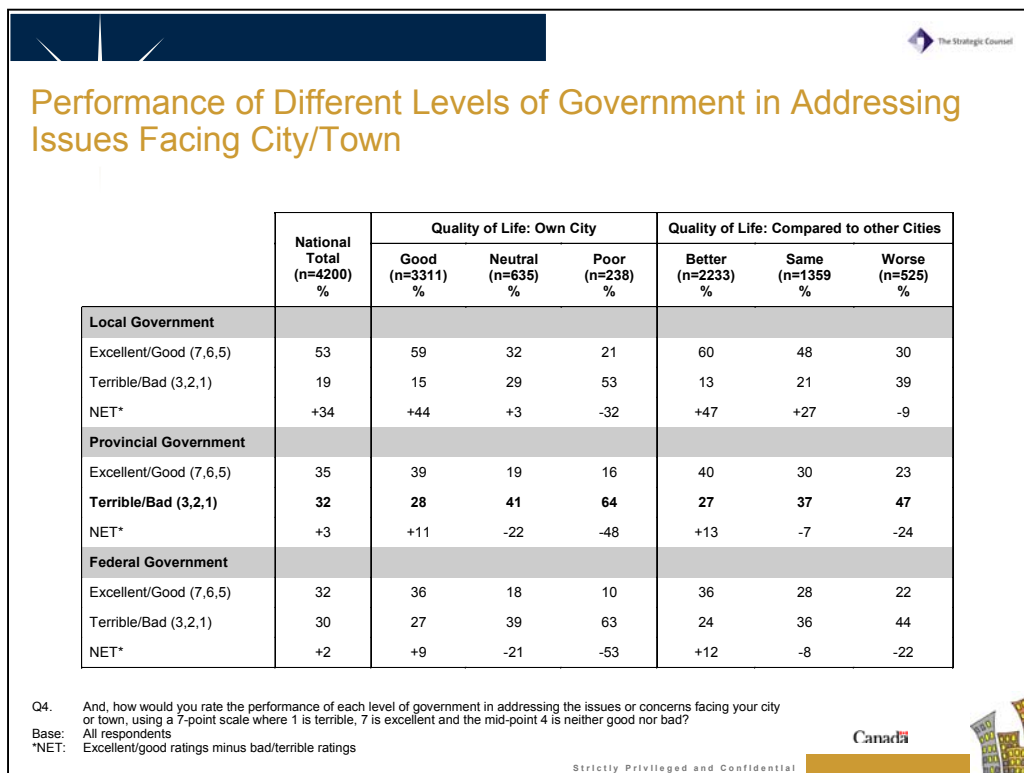
Figure 41



Performance of Government on Community Issues

The following tables underscore the fact that local governments enjoy significant equity when it comes to addressing local community concerns and issues. Local governments are likely to be viewed more positively (than either provincial or federal governments) when it comes to managing local issues and concerns even among those Canadians who believe that the quality of life in their own community is poor or worse than other communities. Not surprisingly, those Canadians who see their communities' quality of life as good or better than other communities are typically more positive toward all levels of government, including local government.

Figure 42



Performance of Government on Community Issues

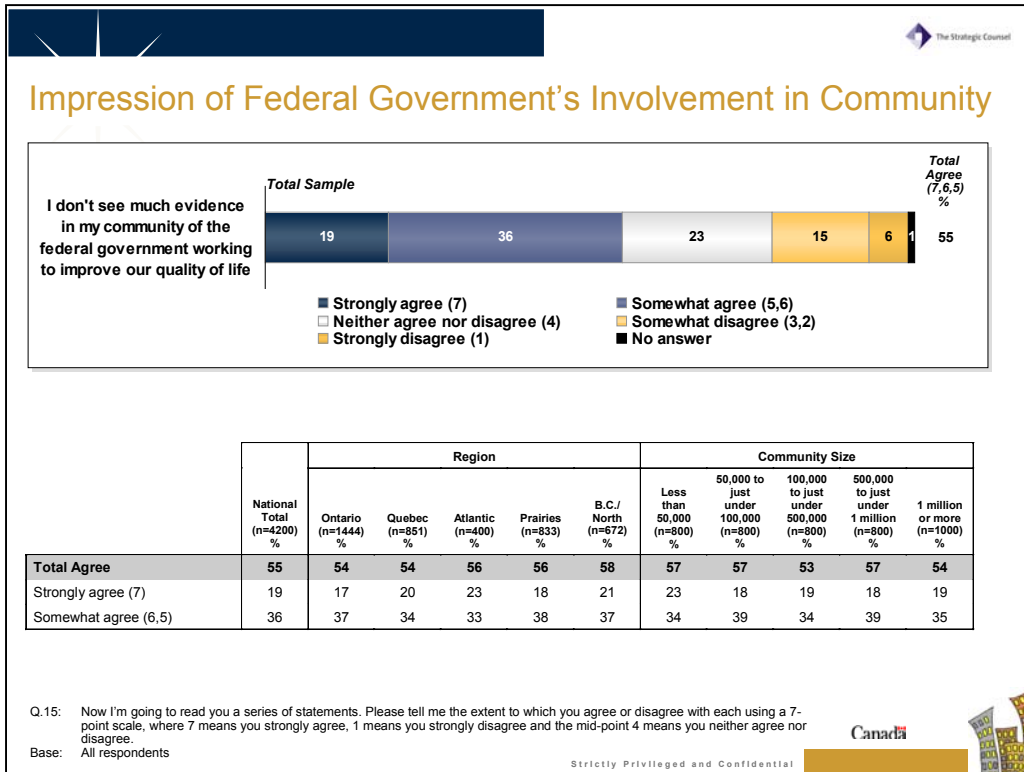
C. Visibility of the Federal Government

Clearly, the performance of the federal government in responding to local community issues and concerns is closely linked with the perceived visibility of the federal government.

Over one-half (55%) of Canadians do not see much visible evidence that the federal government is working to improve the quality of life in their communities. By contrast, about 1-in-5 (21%) believe that there are visible signs of the federal government’s involvement in the community.

Interestingly, there is virtually no variance in terms of region, community size, income, age, education or gender. In fact, Quebecers are really no different than the residents of other regions when it comes to the perceptions that the federal government is not particularly visible in working to improve the quality of life in their community.

Figure 43



IX. The New Deal

The New Deal

Executive Summary

Top-of-mind awareness of the New Deal may be somewhat weak, however, the majority of Canadians feel that it will have some positive impact on their community.

Awareness of the New Deal is relatively low, with only 1 in 5 urban Canadians reporting awareness of the initiative. Despite limited prompted awareness, understanding of the ramifications of the New Deal is relatively strong: to urban Canadians, the New Deal is synonymous with the transfer of money to the cities.

Canadians are optimistic about the New Deal, however, there is still some scepticism surrounding the initiative. The majority feel that the New Deal will have some impact on their community, although expectations are somewhat limited (4 in 10 report it is likely to have “some impact”). Not surprisingly, those who are more optimistic about their city’s prospects and those who give the government a higher rating are more likely to say that the New Deal will have an impact on their community.

A. Awareness of New Deal

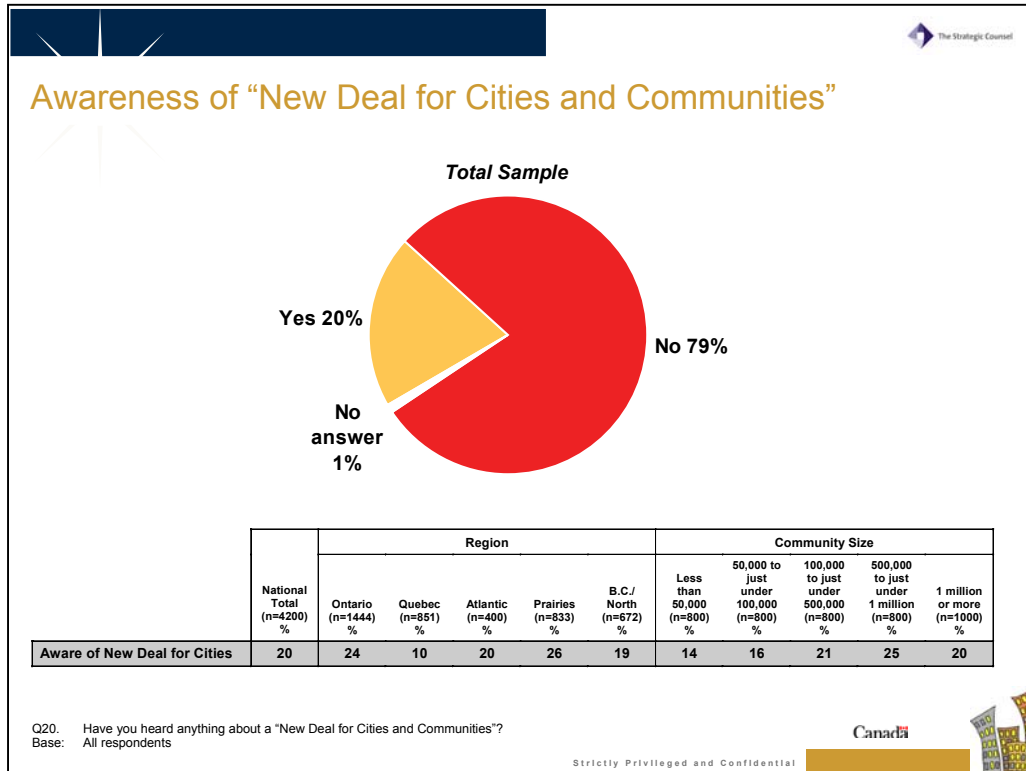
About 1-in-5 (20%) indicate some level of awareness about the “New Deal for Cities and Communities”. This level of awareness is not high, but likely reflects the level of media coverage that has been extended to the issue of a new deal for cities. To put this level of awareness into context, high (mid-60% range) awareness of government initiatives can be obtained when there is been a significant media coverage associated with a First Ministers Meeting.

There are some significant regional differences in awareness of the proposed new deal for communities. Residents of Ontario (24%) and the Prairies (26%) are the most aware of the proposed deal, while Quebecers (10%) are the least aware.

Moreover, residents living in cities with a population between 500,000 and one million (25%) are most aware, while the least aware are those people living in the communities with a population less than 50,000 (14%).

The New Deal

Figure 44




The New Deal

Awareness of the New Deal varies substantially by demographics: those age 55+ (25%), those with household incomes \$50,000-99,000 (25%) and \$100,000+ (33%), men (28%), and homeowners (23%) are much more likely to be aware of the “New Deal for Cities and Communities”.

While awareness of the New Deal is relatively low, there is a reasonably high level of understanding about what this new proposal represents. Clearly, the public thinks that it is about the transfer of money: money for infrastructure, funding for transit, gas tax, GST rebate, sharing tax money, and generic financial transfers were all cited. A small percentage also thinks it is about more money for health and education.

It is clear that understanding of the ramifications of the new deal decreases among Quebecers: indeed, there are small attributions to a whole variety of non-related considerations.



Figure 45



What Canadians Have Seen, Read or Heard about the New Deal for Cities

	National Total (n=809) %	Region					Community Size				
		Ontario (n=320) %	Quebec (n=82) %	Atlantic (n=76) %	Prairies (n=203) %	B.C./North (n=128) %	Less than 50,000 (n=116) %	50,000 to just under 100,000 (n=126) %	100,000 to just under 500,000 (n=171) %	500,000 to just under 1 million (n=198) %	1 million or more (n=198) %
NET Money	38	35	40	43	42	35	31	31	35	43	38
NET Infrastructure	27	24	28	37	31	30	25	26	29	33	24
Money for infrastructure	20	16	27	28	26	20	18	21	19	28	18
Development of infrastructure	7	7	2	11	6	9	5	6	9	5	7
Funding for transit	2	2	1	2	2	4	2	1	3	2	2
Gas Tax	28	31	9	14	29	34	29	31	24	27	29
NET More Money (transfers)	15	17	6	12	17	15	9	10	11	15	19
Sharing tax revenue	9	8	4	5	11	11	6	9	6	9	12
NET General Awareness	11	15	7	12	8	9	5	11	13	8	13
Heard about discussions/promises	6	9	3	2	3	2	1	4	7	3	7
Heard about “New Deal”	3	2	1	8	4	6	2	5	3	3	3
Cities/Communities Agenda	9	12	2	4	6	10	5	11	10	6	11
NET More Money (specific)	5	7	4	9	2	3	4	3	8	3	5
Improving health care	4	5	2	8	2	2	3	2	7	3	3
More for education	1	2	--	--	1	1	--	--	2	2	1
GST Rebate	5	5	5	5	5	7	4	2	4	5	7
Power/Independence for Cities	4	4	3	5	4	3	4	3	3	5	4
Local development	3	3	3	8	3	<1	5	5	4	2	2
Negative comments (general)	2	2	7	2	--	1	3	1	2	2	3
Mayors	1	1	--	--	2	--	--	--	1	2	1
Other	9	7	25	9	7	4	15	7	8	6	10
Nothing/not specified	4	3	--	5	7	3	4	5	4	6	3
Don't know/no answer	7	4	18	5	7	8	7	9	8	8	6

Q21. What have you seen, read or heard?
Base: Among those who said they have heard about a “New Deal for Cities and Communities”

Strictly Privileged and Confidential

The New Deal

B. Perceived Impact of the New Deal

There are broad expectations among Canadians that if governments are able to more effectively co-ordinate their actions and provide cities with stable and predictable funding, quality of life in communities will improve.

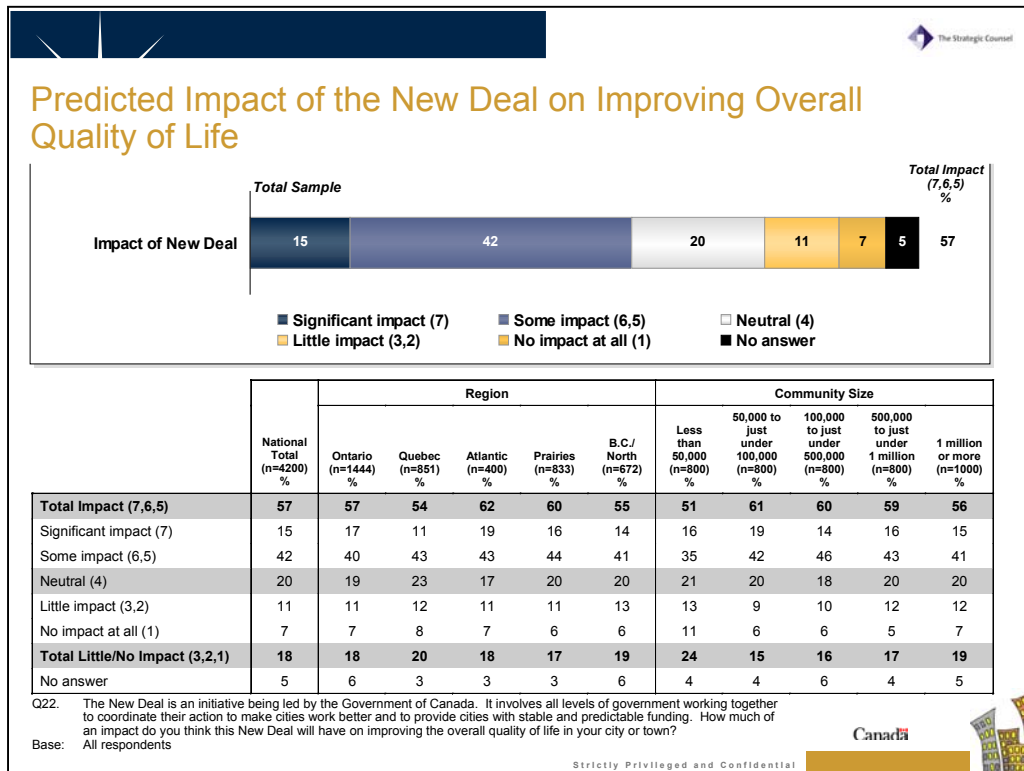
Almost 6-in-10 (57%) indicate that the New Deal would have a significant or some impact on improving the quality of life in their communities, while only 18% felt that it would have minimal impact.

Residents in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies are the most optimistic about the impact of the new deal, while Quebecers and British Columbians are slightly less optimistic than the rest of Canada.

Consistent with the rest of the survey, residents of small communities with populations less than 50,000 are less optimistic that the new deal will have much impact on the quality of life in their communities. Just over one-half (51%) say that the new deal will have significant or some impact, while residents of larger communities are much more optimistic about the impact of this new initiative. For example, about 6-in-10 residents of communities with populations between 50,000 and one million believe that this initiative would have significant or some impact on their communities. In contrast, 56% of residents of cities with a population of one million or more share this perspective.

The New Deal

Figure 46

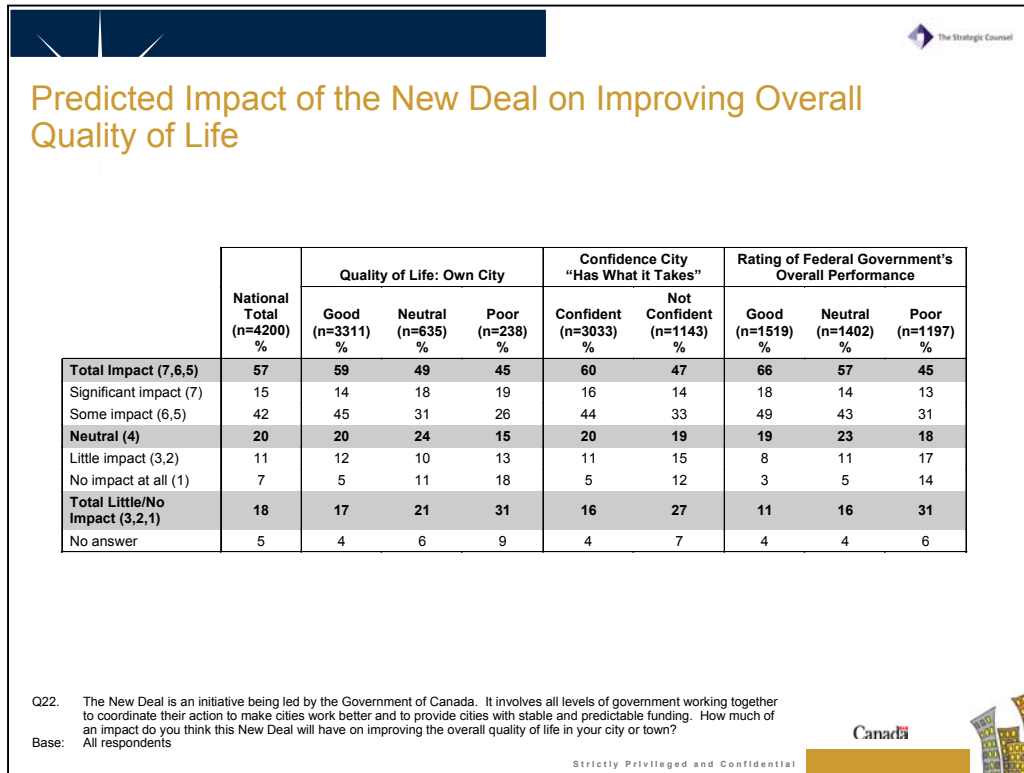


As shown in Figure 47, Canadians who have positive perceptions about the current quality of life in their communities are, not surprisingly, optimistic (59%) about the impact of the new initiative to help cities. In contrast, those with a more neutral or poor view of the quality of life in their communities are less likely to be enthusiastic about the potential impact of the New Deal for cities. Despite this, a plurality of these two segments (Neutral: 49%; Poor: 45%) of public opinion is much more likely to believe that the initiative will have a significant or some impact on improving their communities' quality of life. About one-third (31%) of those who feel that quality of life in their community is poor believe that this initiative would have little or no impact.

Similarly, those Canadians who have a positive view of the overall performance of the federal government are much more likely to believe that the new deal initiative would have a significant or some impact (66%) on improving the quality of life in their communities. Even those Canadians who have a poor assessment of the federal government's performance are fairly likely to be optimistic (45%) that this initiative will have a positive impact. But, it is clearly evident that this group is also more likely to be sceptical (31%).

The New Deal

Figure 47



**X. Attitudes Towards Local
Government and Funding for Local
Priorities**

Attitudes Towards Local Government and Funding for Local Priorities

Executive Summary

Urban Canadians strongly support increased funds and autonomy for their local government – as long as the additional funding does not come from their pockets.

The support shown for local government throughout this report is in evidence here as well: 7 in 10 urban Canadians agree that “local government should have more fiscal independence and authority to raise funds for essential programs and services”. However, a significant minority hesitate to give local government free rein: only 52% agree that “local governments should not be told how or on what any funds provided by the federal government should be spent”.

Despite supporting a larger role for local government, most do not want the additional funds to be pulled from their own pockets: 7 in 10 agree that local governments need access to fundraising methods other than property taxes, while 8 in 10 agree that a portion of gas tax should go to local governments. By contrast, only 41% support highway and bridge tolls, and a mere 15% agree with raising property taxes.

A. Support for Increased Funding to Local Governments

There is a broad consensus that local governments need to have access to other methods of generating tax revenue in addition to property taxes. In fact, 7-in-10 (70%) believe that local governments need to be given other tax-generating methods. Only 12% disagree with this idea.

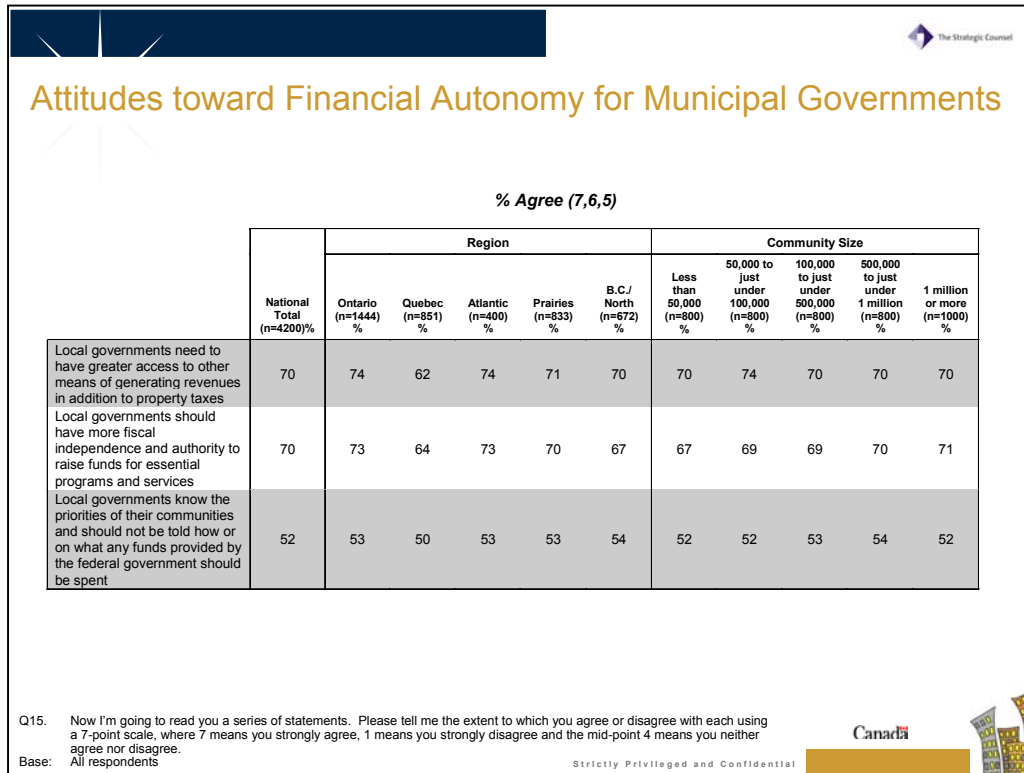
While support for this idea is evident in all regions, agreement is strongest in Ontario (74%) and Atlantic Canada (74%). Support for this concept is weakest in Quebec, where only 62% support this proposed option.

This consensus also extends to that policy idea that local government should have greater freedom, independence and authority to raise funds for essential services and programs. Again, 70% of Canadians support this concept. Support is evident in all regions, but agreement level is weakest in Quebec where only 64% share this opinion.

However, Canadians are much less supportive of the concept that local governments should be free to spend funds on priorities without any direction or conditions imposed by the federal government. Just over one-half of Canadians (52%) agrees with this policy option, while 26% do not support this option. On this policy option, there is virtually no variance by region or community size.

Attitudes Towards Local Government and Funding for Local Priorities

Figure 48

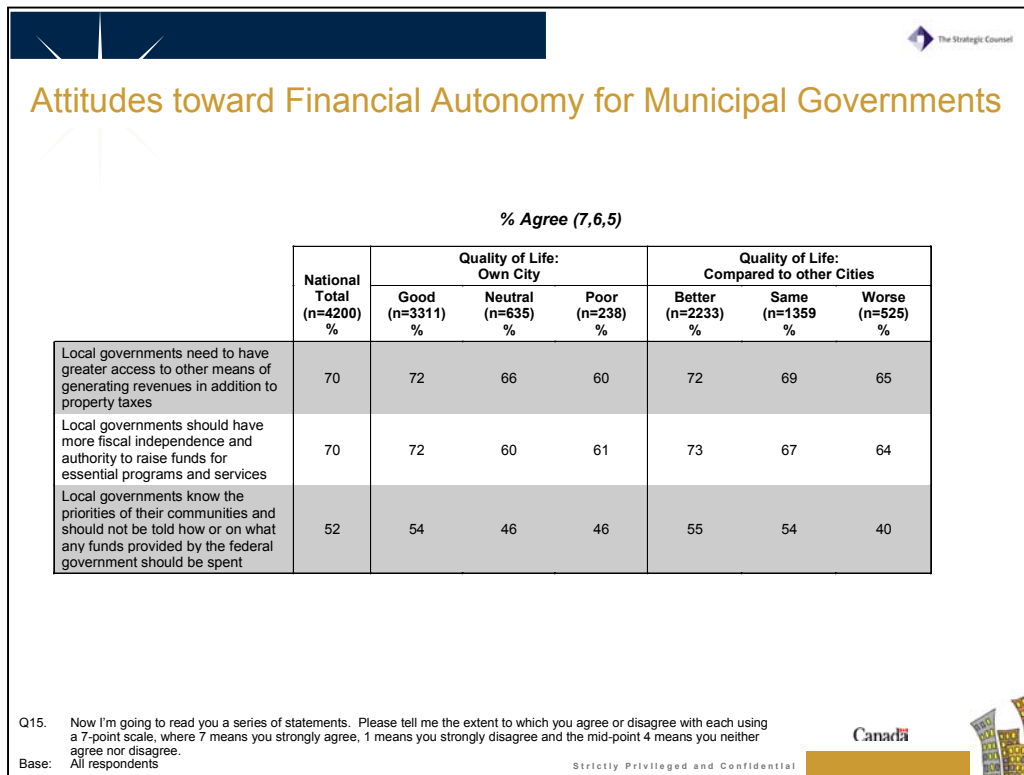


Even those Canadians who hold a poor assessment of the quality of life in their own community, or feel that that the quality of life in their community is worse than other communities, believe that local governments need to have other methods of raising revenue. Moreover, these Canadians also believe that local governments need more fiscal independence and authority to raise revenue.

However, those Canadians dissatisfied with the state of their communities are also more divided about whether local governments should receive financial assistance which is unconditional: While about 4-in-10 (40%) say that the federal transfer should be untied, 30% disagree that it should be unconditional. This suggests that those Canadians dissatisfied with the state of their communities are more likely than others to look to the federal government to ensure that money given to local governments is well spent.

Attitudes Towards Local Government and Funding for Local Priorities

Figure 49



B. Funding Options

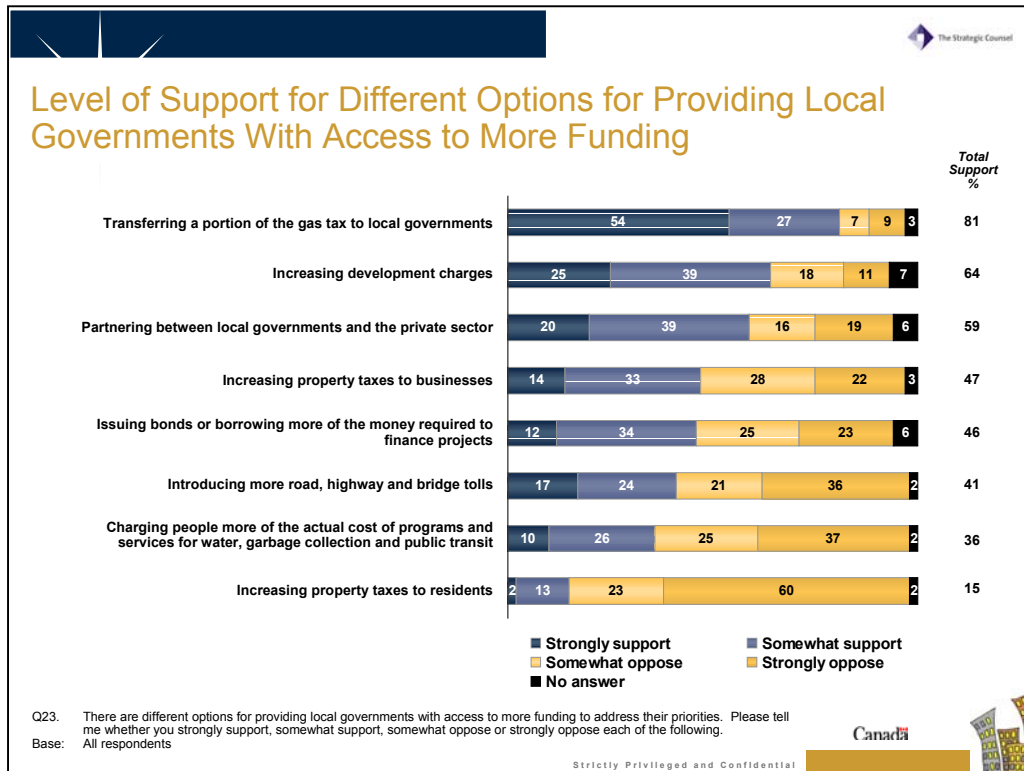
While there is a broad consensus that local governments need other revenue-generating methods to fulfill their responsibilities, it is clear that the public sees transferring the gas tax to local government as their preferred option by a significant margin. Some 81% of Canadians say that this method is their preferred option, whereas only 16% do not like this idea.

Other potential options that garner broad public support are increasing development charges (64%) and local government-private sector partnerships (59%).

However the public is much more divided over increasing business property taxes (47%) and using debt instruments such as issuing bonds or financial borrowing (46%). Imposing tolls on roads and bridges (41%) and charging user fees (36%) are less acceptable options. Increasing residential property taxes (15%) is clearly the least acceptable method.

Attitudes Towards Local Government and Funding for Local Priorities

Figure 50



Regional Differences

There are very few regional differences with respect to preferences for types of new methods for generating additional revenue for local governments.

One of the more notable trends is in Quebec. While they still express a strong desire for a gas tax transfer, Quebecers are just modestly less likely to prefer this method compared to the residents in the rest of Canada.

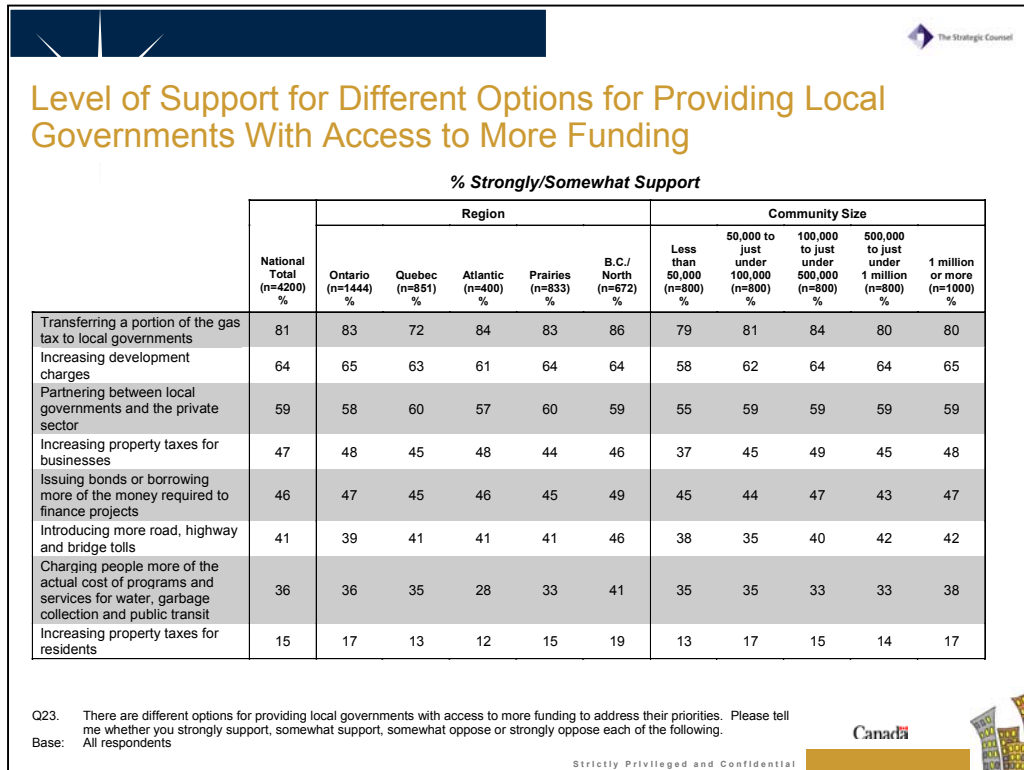
In addition, British Columbians are just slightly more likely to prefer highway/bridge tolls and user fees on actual usage of water, garbage and public transit.

Differences by Community Size

As shown in Figure 51, there are also minimal differences in community size with respect to preferences for different methods of generating additional revenues. Consistent with their concerns about the health of businesses in their community, residents of communities with populations of less than 50,000 are less keen on the options of increasing development charges and business property taxes.

Attitudes Towards Local Government and Funding for Local Priorities

Figure 51



Demographic Differences

While there are only modest regional and community size differences on preferences for different methods for raising new revenue for local governments, there are significant variances on education and household income.

For the most part, better-educated Canadians are more likely to prefer these proposed revenue-generating methods than those who have less education. For example, better-educated Canadians are definitely more likely to prefer transferring the gas tax, increasing development charges, and charging users fees to cover the actual costs of programs and services. At the other end, those with a high school education or less tend to be systematically less likely to prefer any of these methods of raising additional revenue.

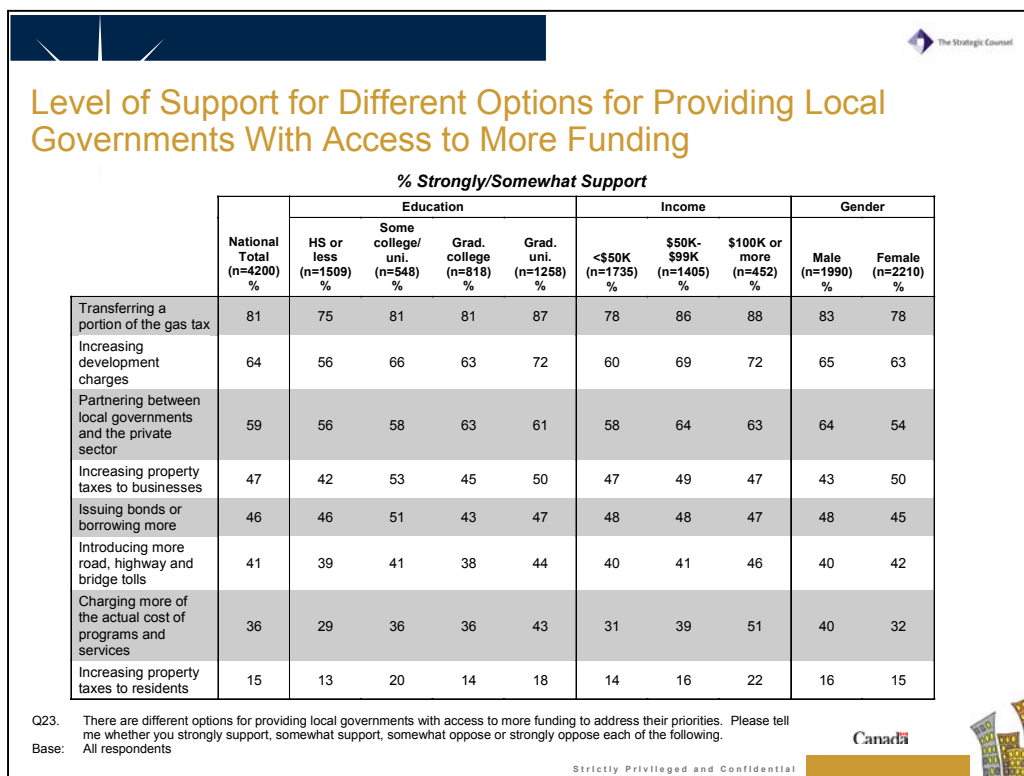
A similar pattern is evident on household incomes. Across the board, those Canadians with household incomes greater than \$100,000 are more likely to prefer most of the proposed ways for garnering additional revenue for local governments. There were only two exceptions where this higher income segment was no different than the lower income segments – raising property taxes on business and issuing bonds or borrowing more.

Attitudes Towards Local Government and Funding for Local Priorities

Again, those with incomes less than \$50,000 are generally less likely than those with a higher household income to prefer any of these means for garnering additional revenue.

There are some differences between men and women. Women are modestly less likely than men to prefer private sector-local government partnership, a gas tax transfer, and user fees to pay for the actual costs of the programs. In addition, women are slightly more likely than men to think that raising business property taxes would be appropriate.

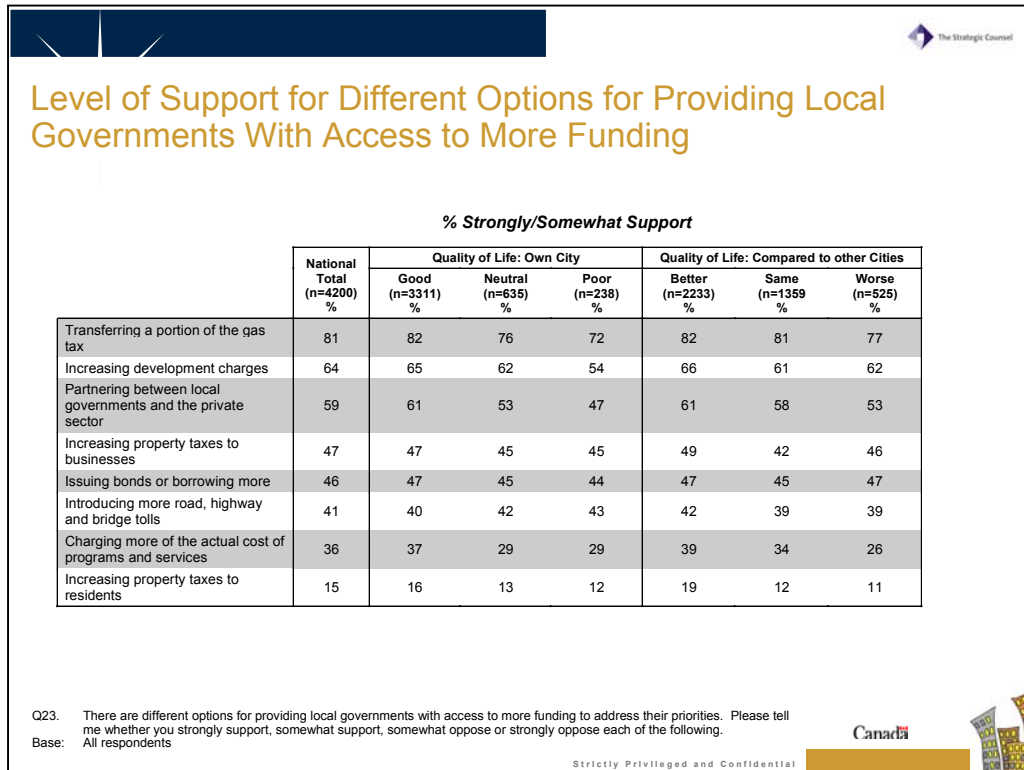
Figure 52



Canadians who have a positive perspective of the quality of life in their community are generally more likely (compared to those who have a neutral or poor view) to favour most of the proposed options for finding additional sources of revenue. This stronger preference is particularly notable for the following proposed options: transferring the gas tax, increasing development charges, private sector-local government partnerships, user fees to cover actual programs costs, and increasing residential property taxes.

Attitudes Towards Local Government and Funding for Local Priorities

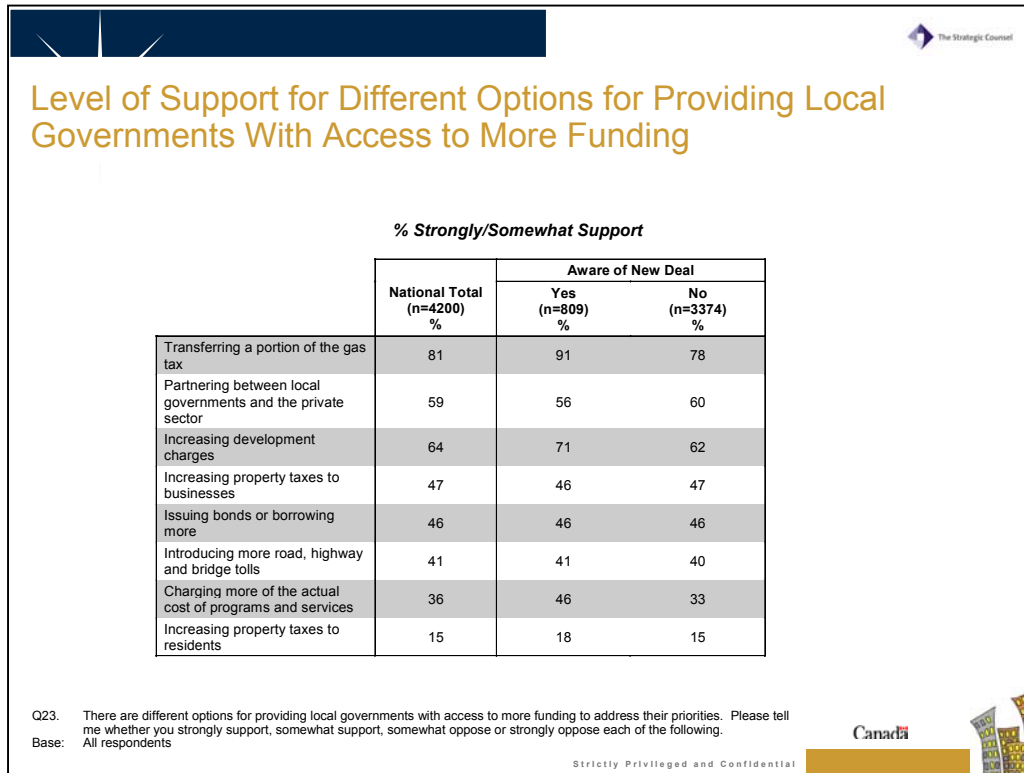
Figure 53



Among those who indicated that they were aware of the proposed new deal for communities, there was very strong appeal in transferring the gas tax to local governments. In addition, this group is also more likely to support increasing development charges and charging user fees to cover the actual costs of programs and services.

Attitudes Towards Local Government and Funding for Local Priorities

Figure 54



XI. Insights and Recommendations

Insights and Recommendations

The findings from this survey of 4,200 Canadians establish some important benchmarks with respect to how Canadians view life in the communities in which they reside, and those factors that are seen to contribute most to their quality of life. The survey was intended to provide some preliminary insights on priorities at the local level for the benefit and edification of policy makers and others tasked with (or interested in) renewing Canadian communities. The findings serve to further inform the public debate and dialogue on the state of Canadian communities and to assist those currently negotiating and implementing *The New Deal on Canada's Cities and Communities* in better understanding the needs and desires of those living in municipalities from under 50,000 to over 1,000,000.

Despite Canada's vast geography and its international reputation as a land of open spaces and natural beauty, Canada is mostly an urban nation. Approximately 80% of Canada's population now live in centers of 10,000 or more. And two thirds of Canadians reside in the top 27 Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA's), large urban areas with populations of 100,000 or more. The rate of urbanization, although steady for most of the latter half of the 20th century, surged in the 1980's and 1990's. Indeed, Canada's rapidly changing rural-urban map also bore witness to cityscapes that reflected an increasing phenomenon of suburbanization and the creation of exurban communities as residents fled from inner cities in search of lower-priced accommodation, lower density living and the relative quiet of the suburbs. These trends have stressed local infrastructure, municipal budgets and have led to a host of challenges, economic, social and cultural in nature, relating to the effects of urban sprawl. Tackling these problems requires rethinking not only the way in which municipalities are planned, but by how they provide and pay for services delivered to their residents, in addition to the kinds of administrative and legislative authorities they hold particularly with respect to the ability of local governments to charge user fees, levy property taxes and enter into public-private partnerships.

Combined with the impact of demographic projections that paint a picture of a future Canada with a growing and aging population, the challenge of renewing Canada's cities, the nation's principal economic motor, is both urgent and complex. Reversing the erosion of Canadian municipalities and meeting the challenge of building sustainable and enabling communities requires policy-makers to consider a combination of inter-related factors with social, economic, cultural and political consequences. Expert urban planners know that great cities are those that are both economically and culturally vibrant. Indeed, studies have shown that the two are integrally intertwined. Scanning the globe, the world's "economic hubs" are home to strong financial services sectors. These companies in turn seek locations that offer a stable political environment, supporting business infrastructure, and a legal and regulatory framework conducive to the free movement of capital and currency. But they also seek highly developed infrastructure, proximity to other markets and a good quality of life, including schools, affordable housing and diverse cultural activities.

Insights and Recommendations

This baseline survey of Canadians set out to examine the extent to which Canadians place importance on these elements of community life and how they rate their own communities in this regard. The findings were both expected and surprising. They serve to highlight not only what Canadians believe is important to the quality of life in their communities, but also some areas where citizens may have different, or less well-formed views on the issue of what makes for an “ideal” community, relative to experts, urban planners and policy-makers.

This report and the recommendations outlined below reflect an analysis of findings at the national, regional and community size levels and highlights significant demographic and sub-group variations in responses. Given the extensive sample, additional recommendations will be developed as the data set is further explored and analysed from a regional/provincial perspective, looking at community size variations within regions, where sufficient data exists to do so.

A. Key Insights

- Canadians are proud members of their communities with moderate levels of attachment to place, notably higher in Quebec. The vast majority rate their quality of life as high. This is true in all regions and across all community sizes where at least three-quarters or more rate the quality of life in their community or town as good or excellent. Upper income, more educated Canadians and home owners offer the highest ratings, although at least 7 in 10 among lower socio-economic groups also give a positive rating of good or excellent. The results found no one particular region, community or group that stands out as particularly critical of their quality of life.
- Residents of the Prairies and those living in communities of 500,000 to just under 1 million appear most contented (mostly residents of Calgary/Edmonton), based on their generally more positive assessments of community life on several key indicators. They are more likely to:
 - Say they enjoy a higher quality of life compared to others;
 - Rate their local economy as better than others; and
 - Express confidence in the prospects of retaining future generations within their communities.

The key priorities for community renewal include a combination of social, economic, infrastructure and environmental concerns. Notably, the contribution of arts, culture and diversity to the creation of vibrant and prosperous communities is not widely acknowledged. While not fully explored, the findings suggest that the Richard Florida thesis may not resonate with most Canadians. In a limited fashion, we tested some aspects of this theory in reverse. If successful places are characterized by higher “bohemian” and “mosaic” indices, then one might expect that Canadians would recognize the importance of artistic, cultural and ethnic groups in addition to diversity as desirable features that contribute significantly to their overall quality of life. The findings, although superficial, suggest these kinds of connections are either not well understood or are not widely valued by most Canadians.

Insights and Recommendations

- The principal priorities within communities do not vary substantially by community size. Across most communities, the main priorities include:
 - More affordable housing;
 - Modernization of infrastructure;
 - Better public transit;
 - Promotion of a thriving business community; and
 - Efficient composting and recycling programs.
- These baseline findings suggest that the public commitment to sustainable development exists more in theory than in practice. There is little desire for more compact communities, and potentially limited understanding of the issues and impacts related to urban sprawl.
- The Government of Canada is not highly visible nor is it seen to be a key contributor at the community level. Interestingly, however, the ratings for provincial governments on their contribution to communities as well as their performance on issues at the community level are not much different from that given to the federal government. And, the rating of the Government of Canada on community issues is slightly lower, by five points, than its broad performance rating, suggesting that this may be a “weak” link in terms of its overall reputation. Notably, younger Canadians and first generation immigrants offer the highest performance ratings for the Government of Canada, both globally and in terms of addressing community issues.
- The public expresses a strong belief in the power of volunteers and individuals to effect change within communities. Apart from the role of schools and educators, the results show greater trust in individuals, the private and voluntary sectors, as compared to public institutions, particularly the three levels of government, with respect to contributing to the quality of life in Canadian communities.
- There is a modest level of awareness of *The New Deal*, especially given no direct advertising or media coverage at the time of polling. However, responses show that there is a risk that the public will view it as simply a transfer of money rather than leading to real, tangible improvements in communities. The public associates *The New Deal* with money: gas tax, infrastructure monies and more funding to communities. There is also some expectation that this initiative will have an impact on quality of community life, although a significant minority (just under half) believe it will have little to no impact.
- Canadians want their local governments to have greater fiscal autonomy but also some degree of accountability for monies that are provided by the federal government. At the same time, there is little support for user-pay or tax increases to fund local priorities.

Insights and Recommendations

B. Recommendations and Possible Next Steps

As is often the case, the findings of public opinion surveys can raise additional questions beyond those that are answered. While further refinement of these recommendations will be forthcoming in subsequent sub-level (e.g. within region and community size profiles), preliminary analysis suggests a number of areas for more exploration:

Awareness and understanding of the concept and dimensions of sustainability. In particular, we need to better understand the extent to which Canadians believe there is an issue of urban sprawl within our communities, and how this does or does not impact on building sustainable communities. As we noted above, it will also be important to uncover what Canadians view as the key compromises, if any, that will be required to achieve sustainability, assuming this is a goal that most Canadians support, and what trade-offs Canadians are/are not willing to make.

Local priorities. This survey provides some preliminary input from Canadians on their priorities, including housing, infrastructure, and public transit, among others. We need to drill deeper in this area and develop a clearer understanding of what public expectations are, particularly in terms of infrastructure improvements, and how any additional funds should be invested within communities.

Enabling Environments. The time limitations of a telephone survey also prevented us from examining a larger list of possible priorities, including the demand for and perceived role of public spaces. While we did assess the importance of green spaces and parks, we did not engage Canadians in an in-depth discussion of those factors or features within a community that enable broader civic engagement and participation. This topic lends itself well to discussion within a series of focus groups among community leaders, and possibly employing a hybrid methodology that incorporates a deliberative approach. Such a discussion should consider two points of focus: the social and economic impacts of public spaces. For example, a discussion of the social impacts would engage participants to consider the impact of public spaces on community cohesion, pride and the desirability of particular communities. The economic focus would draw upon some aspects of economic cluster theory, assessing the importance of informal and unplanned interactions among professionals in a shared field.

The “perceptual” links between culture, diversity and economically prosperous communities. Although only superficially tested, we see some evidence that the Richard Florida thesis is not well understood or necessarily supported by Canadians. We need to better understand how Canadians view the role of culture in creating vibrant and successful communities, how they define culture, and how culture connects with the broader social and economic fabric of Canada and Canadian communities.

Public expectations of the roles of local, provincial and federal levels of government at the community level. It would be useful to further deconstruct the performance rating of the Government of Canada on community issues, understanding how Canadians want the federal government to work with municipal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions. In particular, while accountability is currently a popular theme, specifically what level of accountability do Canadians seek around a *New Deal*, what conditions are acceptable and how will they know whether monies are being appropriately spent?

Insights and Recommendations

Funding options for municipal or local levels of government. The findings of this survey elicited the expected response from Canadians – don't raise my taxes or charge me more for services. Do Canadians think that addressing municipal issues should be a shared responsibility of governments, non-governmental organizations, business and residents? If so, what role can/should residents play? How should funding for municipalities be secured over the long run? And what are the relative merits and disadvantages of various funding options?

Governance models. Related to the above two points, the findings do not address how Canadians feel the administrative and legislative authorities between the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal levels of government should be realigned, if at all, in order to better meet the challenges facing Canadian communities.

*Promoting and communicating **The New Deal for Cities and Communities**.* The survey just touched upon awareness and understanding of The New Deal. How Canadians have heard about The New Deal, what they know of it, what their expectations are, the extent to which it is seen to be relevant to addressing real needs at the community level, and how best to ensure the long term viability and modernization of Canadian communities are topics for further discussion.

Future surveys tracking these benchmark indicators on the quality of community life and exploring additional/emerging issues should consider the ability to break out the data not only by community size, but by key strata within communities. For example, it would be most interesting to examine the extent of variability, if any, in perceptions of quality of life and community priorities from the perspectives of those living in the city core versus those residing in suburbs and those in exurban areas.