IT'S YOUR FUTURE

BUDGET 2005
Investing in the Next Alberta

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Overview

The *It's Your Future* survey gave Albertans the opportunity to provide advice on the province's policies in a debt-free Alberta. Interim results were reported October 19, 2004. This report provides the final results of the survey.

The final results are based on 282,156 responses received by mail and Internet between September 3, 2004 and October 29, 2004.

A survey response rate of 24.3 per cent was achieved with the results being statistically valid at the Alberta level plus-or-minus 0.2 per cent, 19.8 times out of 20.

Question 1: Relative Priorities

Respondents were asked to place a priority rating on nine key areas. Providing a quality, affordable Alberta health care system was ranked the top priority by respondents, followed by providing an outstanding education system.

Protecting the environment ranked third, followed by investing in infrastructure, reducing taxes, supporting the needy, building a diverse, innovative economy, responding to growth in cities and preserving rural communities.

Question 2: Options for "Windfall Money"

Now that unexpected surpluses no longer need to go to pay down debt, respondents were given three choices on what to do with unexpected surpluses. Making long-term investments in priority areas was the top priority. Providing refunds, and investing in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund followed in that order.

In the space provided for write-in comments, support for health care and education were the first and second suggestions, respectively.

Question 3: Three Things the Government Could Do

When given the opportunity to write-in the three things the government could do for the future, respondents reiterated the importance of health care and education as the two most important areas, followed by social services.

Part I: Response Summary

Response Rate and Confidence of Results

A total of 1,163,055 surveys were mailed to households in Alberta. Based on the 282,156 responses, the overall response rate for the survey was 24.3%.

The results are statistically valid at the Alberta level with a confidence interval of 99%, +/- 0.2% level of precision[1]. Approximately 217,000 responses were required to obtain this high confidence level.

The following table breaks down the response rate and confidence interval by geography.

TABLE 1: Response Rate and Confidence Interval by Geography

Geography	Number of Households[2]	Number of Respondents	Response Rate (%)	Confidence Interval
Edmonton Region	382,409	84,581	22.1	99% (+/- 0.4%)
Calgary Region	379,379	106,185	28.0	99% (+/- 0.3%)
Central Alberta Rural	152,314	35,769	23.5	99% (+/- 0.6%)
Northern Alberta Rural	79,473	8,850	11.1	99% (+/- 1.3%)
Southern Alberta Rural	39,795	15,152	38.1	99% (+/- 0.8%)
Red Deer Region	32,469	7,045	21.7	99% (+/- 1.4%)
Lethbridge Region	32,197	7,846	24.4	99% (+/- 1.3%)
Medicine Hat Region	24,613	5,707	23.2	99% (+/- 1.5%)
Fort McMurray Region[3]	17,345	2,779	16.0	99% (+/- 2.2%)
Grande Prairie Region	15,061	3,425	22.7	99% (+/- 1.9%)
Unknown Geography[4]	8,000	4,817	60.2	99% (+/- 1.2%)
Total Alberta	**1,163,055**	**282,156**	**24.3**	**99% (+/- 0.2%)**

[1] By comparison, standard surveys fulfill a confidence interval of 95%, +/- 5% level of precision.

[2] Household counts were estimated according to the distribution of surveys by Canada Post.

[3] Fort McMurray is now part of the Specialized Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

[4] Unknown geography included surveys with no available geographic information, such as those provided to institutions or those mailed out on a request basis.

Geographic Representation

The survey was coded by 10 standard geographies (based on the 2001 Census of Canada) and configured to represent the province by major urban centres (including their surrounding areas) and central/north/south rural regions.

In addition to the ten standard geographies, an "unknown" category was added to classify responses with no available geographic information. This included surveys provided to institutions as well as those mailed out on a request basis.

The following bar chart compares the response distribution by geography, to the known household distribution by geography. The per cent of respondents for the majority of geographies closely matches the per cent of households by geography. In general, this indicates overall limited bias and enhances the validity of the survey results presented in this report, by making the results an accurate representation of Alberta households.

It should be noted, the Calgary region and the northern Alberta rural region, tend to display a greater level of discrepancy between the per cent of respondents and the per cent of households.

FIGURE 1: Response Distribution vs. Household Distribution
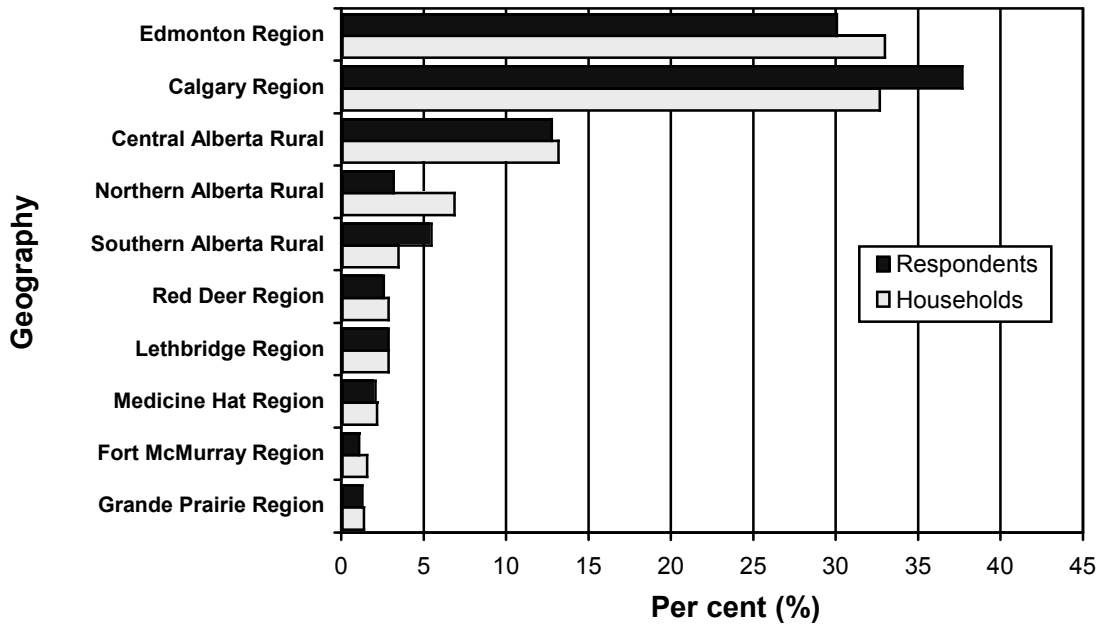
Method of Reply

Of the two methods in which to return the survey, respondents utilized the pre-paid postage mail surveys method (approximately 59.3%) more than the Internet method (approximately 40.7%). The choice of Internet response for this survey showed a marked increase when compared with previous consultation surveys of this nature. Prior surveys have exhibited less than a 10% Internet response rate.

FIGURE 2: Distribution of Responses by Method of Reply
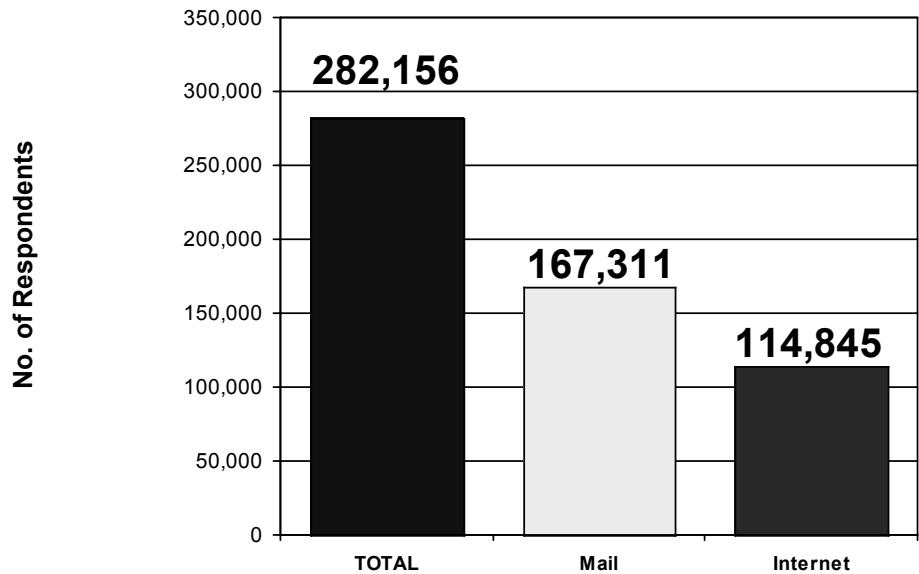
Part II: Priority Ratings

Priority Ratings

Survey respondents were asked to rate the degree of priority for each item using a 10-point scale, 1 indicating the lowest priority and 10 indicating the highest priority.

The calculation of a mean (average) priority rating provides a summarized representation of the respondents' choices. The following table (Table 2: Priority Rating Mean Values by Major Geography) displays the average scores of the items in the survey by respondents for four grouped geographic regions within the province (Edmonton region, Calgary region, other urban regions and rural regions).

TABLE 2: Priority Rating Mean Values by Major Geography

Question	Priority Rating Mean Values(/10)				
	All Respondents	**Edmonton Region**	**Calgary Region**	**Other Urban Regions**	**Rural Regions**
QUESTION 1 - PRIORITY AREAS					
A. Provide a quality, affordable Alberta health care system	8.85	8.90	8.79	8.96	8.85
B. Provide an outstanding education system	8.39	8.50	8.39	8.43	8.24
C. Build a more diverse, innovative economy	6.71	6.83	6.63	6.67	6.69
D. Provide support to Albertans who need help	6.86	7.02	6.72	6.89	6.84
E. Respond to growth in cities	6.25	6.37	6.79	6.01	5.26
F. Preserve rural communities	5.94	5.80	5.45	5.85	7.02
G. Protect Alberta's environment	7.55	7.71	7.46	7.55	7.50
H. Invest in Alberta's infrastructure	7.00	7.05	7.05	6.93	6.89
I. Reduce taxes	6.91	6.80	6.83	7.07	7.16
QUESTION 2 - OPTIONS FOR "WINDFALL MONEY"					
A. Provide a refund to every Albertan	5.52	5.54	5.44	5.65	5.58
B. Save the money and invest it in the Heritage Fund	4.85	4.87	4.83	4.92	4.85
C. Make long-term investments in priority areas	6.94	6.96	7.04	6.90	6.80

The following two graphs depict response trends among geographical groups.

FIGURE 3: Response Trends for Priority Areas by Major Geography (Question 1)
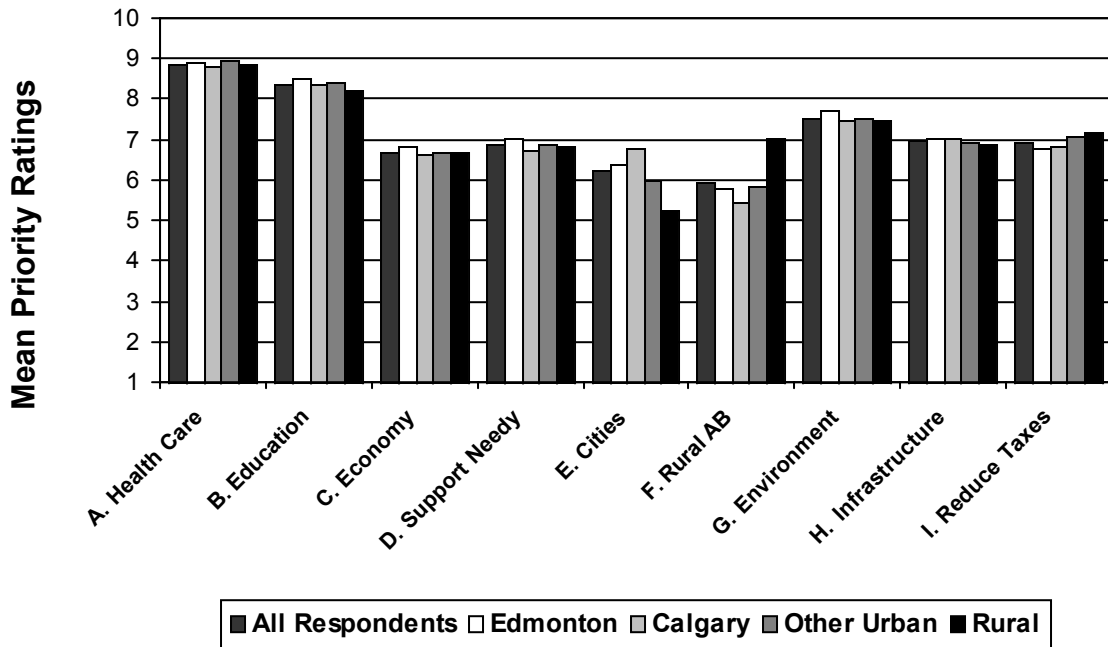
FIGURE 4: Response Trends for "Windfall Money" Options by Major Geography (Question 2)
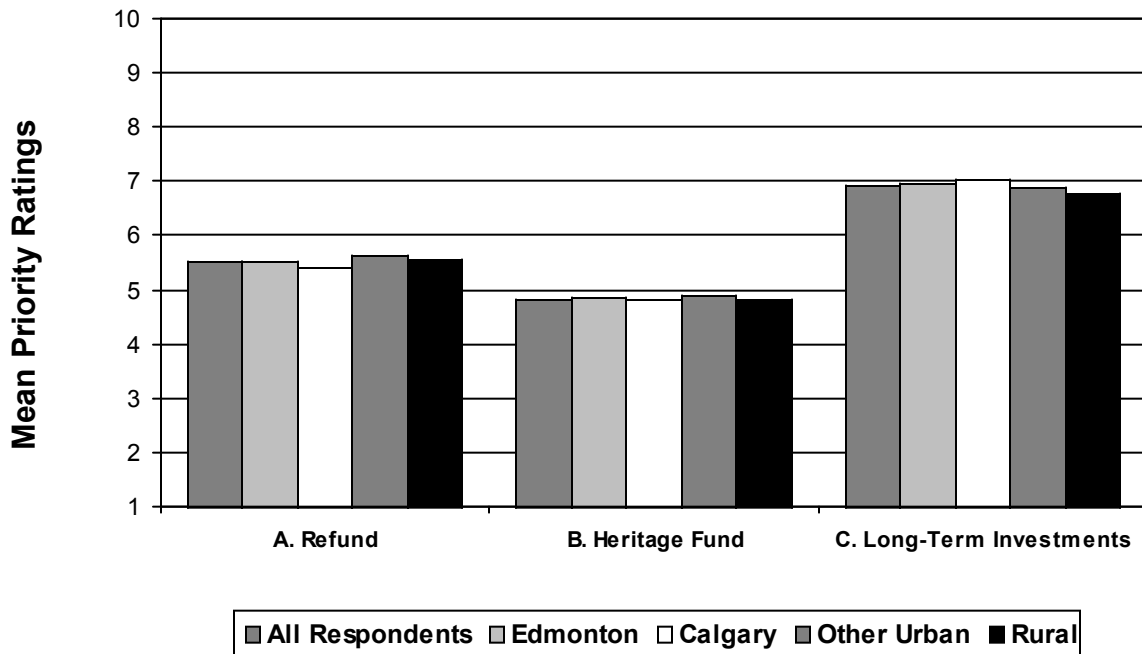
Mean Priority Ratings - General Overview

The results for Question 1 (Priority Areas) shown in Table 2: Priority Rating Mean Values by Major Geography, indicated that Albertans (all respondents), on average, rated the highest priority for "health care" (8.85). The second highest score was for "education" (8.39) and the third highest score was for "environment" (7.55).

Although the fourth and fifth priority rankings residing with "infrastructure" and "reduce taxes" appear to be very close scores (7.00 and 6.91 respectively), statistical tests indicate "infrastructure" to be higher (statistically significant) than "reduce taxes." For additional analysis of "infrastructure" and "reduce taxes," see Table 5: Per cent of Respondents by Grouped Priority Level.

The order of priority for Question 2 (Options for "Windfall Money") from highest to lowest was "make long-term investments in priority areas" (6.94), "provide a refund to every Albertan" (5.52) and "save the money and invest in the Heritage Fund" (4.85). (See Table 2: Priority Rating Mean Values by Major Geography).

Mean Priority Ratings - Grouped Geography

Results for Question 1 (Priority Areas) showed the two major cities rated a higher priority on "growth of cities" than did the rural Alberta regions. In contrast to this, the rural regions placed a higher priority on "rural communities." [See Figure 3: Response Trends for Priority Areas by Major Geography (Question 1)].

Mean Priority Ratings - Individual Geography

The following table (Table 3: Priority Rating Mean Values by Specific Geography) provides an overview of the different opinions expressed by Albertans for the various geographic regions of the province.

The highest mean scores across all geographies for each item are in a shaded box, while the lowest mean scores are in a clear box.

TABLE 3: Priority Rating Mean Values by Specific Geography

Priority Rating Mean Values(/10)

Question	Edmonton Region	Calgary Region	Red Deer Region	Lethbridge Region	Medicine Hat Region	Fort McMurray Region	Grande Prairie Region	Central Alberta Rural	Northern Alberta Rural	Southern Alberta Rural
QUESTION 1 - PRIORITY AREAS										
A. Provide a quality, affordable Alberta health care system										
	8.90	8.79	8.90	9.01	8.97	8.95	8.95	8.82	8.86	8.90
B. Provide an outstanding education system										
	8.50	8.39	8.46	8.53	8.02	8.74	8.56	8.22	8.15	8.33
C. Build a more diverse, innovative economy										
	6.83	6.63	6.70	6.68	6.60	6.64	6.72	6.69	6.66	6.74
D. Provide support to Albertans who need help										
	7.02	6.72	6.88	7.04	6.83	6.61	6.91	6.81	6.91	6.86
E. Respond to growth in cities										
	6.37	6.79	6.04	5.88	5.69	6.74	6.14	5.35	5.24	5.03
F. Preserve rural communities										
	5.80	5.45	5.93	5.84	5.80	5.64	5.98	6.93	7.17	7.13
G. Protect Alberta's environment										
	7.71	7.46	7.77	7.52	7.24	7.51	7.70	7.55	7.20	7.55
H. Invest in Alberta's infrastructure										
	7.05	7.05	6.95	6.80	6.80	7.28	7.10	6.88	6.84	6.91
I. Reduce taxes										
	6.80	6.83	7.02	7.03	7.28	6.99	7.02	7.11	7.33	7.16
QUESTION 2 - OPTIONS FOR "WINDFALL MONEY"										
A. Provide a refund to every Albertan										
	5.54	5.44	5.45	5.66	5.80	5.70	5.74	5.45	5.81	5.75
B. Save the money and invest it in the Heritage Fund										
	4.87	4.83	5.02	4.90	5.03	4.73	4.73	4.90	4.86	4.72
C. Make long-term investments in priority areas										
	6.96	7.04	6.95	6.90	6.66	7.10	6.97	6.84	6.71	6.78

[ ] Highest Values [ ] Lowest Values

Part III: Response Distribution

Response Distribution

The following table shows the distribution of responses, indicating the response frequency for each priority level from 1 (very low priority) to 10 (very high priority).

TABLE 4: Response Distribution by Priority Level for Questions 1 and 2

Mean Values (/10)	Priority Frequency	Very Low Priority 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very High Priority 10	Total[5]
QUESTION 1 - PRIORITY AREAS												
A. Provide a quality, affordable Alberta health care system												
8.85	%	1.0	0.4	0.6	0.7	3.2	3.1	6.9	15.1	13.9	54.9	100.0
	No.	2,924	1,051	1,797	2,082	8,940	8,685	19,415	42,376	39,036	153,714	280,020
B. Provide an outstanding education system												
8.39	%	1.5	0.7	1.2	1.5	5.7	4.9	9.3	17.1	14.5	43.7	100.0
	No.	4,122	2,050	3,431	4,213	15,838	13,698	25,845	47,587	40,430	121,865	279,079
C. Build a more diverse, innovative economy												
6.71	%	3.4	2.3	3.9	4.8	14.6	12.9	17.5	19.4	8.8	12.5	100.0
	No.	9,232	6,318	10,594	12,946	39,703	35,028	47,739	52,730	23,903	34,012	272,205
D. Provide support to Albertans who need help												
6.86	%	3.1	2.5	4.3	5.1	14.2	11.7	15.3	16.6	8.5	18.7	100.0
	No.	8,613	6,809	12,041	14,237	39,402	32,582	42,456	46,248	23,611	51,969	277,968
E. Respond to growth in cities												
6.25	%	4.2	3.0	5.2	6.6	17.0	14.5	17.8	17.0	7.0	7.7	100.0
	No.	11,505	8,263	14,353	18,262	47,123	40,116	49,319	46,941	19,401	21,408	276,691
F. Preserve rural communities												
5.94	%	6.7	4.6	7.1	7.7	17.0	13.1	14.0	13.4	6.5	9.9	100.0
	No.	18,643	12,863	19,666	21,355	47,164	36,269	38,741	37,086	18,046	27,459	277,292
G. Protect Alberta's environment												
7.55	%	1.9	1.4	2.6	3.3	10.2	9.0	13.9	18.8	12.5	26.5	100.0
	No.	5,172	3,953	7,078	9,280	28,421	25,050	38,530	52,240	34,769	73,561	278,054
H. Invest in Alberta's infrastructure												
7.00	%	2.2	1.6	2.9	3.9	12.4	12.6	18.9	21.8	10.9	12.8	100.0
	No.	6,179	4,306	7,904	10,884	34,334	34,976	52,412	60,339	30,313	35,314	276,961
I. Reduce taxes												
6.91	%	9.4	3.8	4.6	4.1	10.7	7.0	8.5	10.5	8.3	33.1	100.0
	No.	26,386	10,550	12,946	11,517	29,893	19,666	23,648	29,236	23,048	92,575	279,465
QUESTION 2 - OPTIONS FOR "WINDFALL MONEY"												
A. Provide a refund to every Albertan												
5.52	%	25.7	5.6	5.9	4.2	9.6	5.2	5.6	7.3	5.0	25.9	100.0
	No.	70,615	15,513	16,233	11,548	26,354	14,256	15,516	20,136	13,652	71,268	275,091
B. Save the money and invest it in the Heritage Fund												
4.85	%	18.8	6.6	8.7	7.7	18.8	9.8	9.8	9.2	4.3	6.3	100.0
	No.	51,231	18,054	23,738	20,975	51,292	26,610	26,694	25,106	11,841	17,060	272,601
C. Make long-term investments in priority areas												
6.94	%	6.3	2.4	3.8	4.1	12.7	8.5	12.4	17.0	10.7	22.3	100.0
	No.	17,150	6,580	10,239	11,066	34,698	23,125	33,690	46,067	29,117	60,800	272,532

[5] Totals may not add due to rounding.

Grouped Priority Levels

The table below denotes levels of response distribution summarized by the per cent of respondents grouped into low (priorities 1 to 4), medium (priorities 5 to 7), and high (priorities 8 to 10) priority categories.

TABLE 5: Per cent of Respondents by Grouped Priority Level

Question	% of Respondents[6]		
	Low Priority 1-4	Medium Priority 5-7	High Priority 8 - 10
QUESTION 1 - PRIORITY AREAS			
A. Provide a quality, affordable Alberta health care system	2.8	13.2	84.0
B. Provide an outstanding education system	5.0	19.8	75.2
C. Build a more diverse, innovative economy	14.4	45.0	40.6
D. Provide support to Albertans who need help	15.0	41.2	43.8
E. Respond to growth in cities	18.9	49.4	31.7
F. Preserve rural communities	26.2	44.1	29.8
G. Protect Alberta's environment	9.2	33.1	57.7
H. Invest in Alberta's infrastructure	10.6	43.9	45.5
I. Reduce taxes	22.0	26.2	51.8
QUESTION 2 - OPTIONS FOR "WINDFALL MONEY"			
A. Provide a refund to every Albertan	41.4	20.4	38.2
B. Save the money and invest it in the Heritage Fund	41.8	38.4	19.8
C. Make long-term investments in priority areas	16.5	33.6	49.9

[6] Totals may not add due to rounding.

Part IV: Questions 2D and 3

Respondents were given the chance to offer other options for "windfall money" for Question 2D besides the three already mentioned (Question 2A: provide a refund to every Albertan, Question 2B: save the money and invest it in the Heritage Fund and Question 2C: make long-term investments in priority areas).

Question 3 asked Albertans for three things the government could do for Alberta's future.

The following two tables indicate the per cent and number of responses for each of the major categories developed for Questions 2D and 3. Since there were three response options available for Question 3, respondents may have indicated ideas, which were included in a particular category more than once.

Within the "Other" category for Questions 2D and 3, additional subcategories were developed based on a sampling of survey submissions to provide a more detailed look at the "Other" category responses.

TABLE 6:   Per cent and Number of Responses for Question 2D (Options for "Windfall Money") Categories[7]

Categories	% of Responses	No. of Responses
Health Care	18.7	18,327
Education	14.5	14,248
Reduce Taxes	10.4	10,218
Infrastructure	6.7	6,568
Environment	3.9	3,785
Other[8]	45.8	44,868
Seniors	13.7	13,460
A.I.S.H.	10.5	10,320
Agriculture	4.6	4,487
Cost of Energy (Reduce)	4.1	4,038
Restore Program Funding	3.7	3,589
Incentives for Stay at Home Mothers	3.2	3,141
Arts	2.7	2,692
Sports/Athletics	2.7	2,692
Additional Comments	0.5	449
ALL CATEGORIES	**100.0**	**98,014**

[7] Totals may not add due to rounding.

[8] Subcategory estimates for "Other" are based on a random statistical sampling of response submissions.

TABLE 7: **Per cent and Number of Responses for Question 3 (What the Government Could Do for Alberta's Future) Categories[9]**

Categories	% of Responses	No. of Responses
Health Care	19.8	136,510
Education	17.8	122,753
Social Services	9.4	64,703
Reduce Taxes	7.8	53,960
Infrastructure/Transportation	6.1	41,714
Environment	5.9	40,520
Economy	4.6	31,831
Energy/Gas Prices	3.7	25,609
Agriculture	1.9	13,260
Heritage Fund/Investments	1.6	11,062
Minimum Wage	1.4	9,896
Other[10]	19.8	136,204
Inter-provincial/Federal-provincial Relations	2.8	19,069
Government Performance	2.0	13,620
"Don't Go into Debt Again"	1.6	10,896
Law Enforcement	1.6	10,896
Refund Albertans	1.6	10,896
Royalties on Oil and Gas (Increase)	1.4	9,534
Auto Insurance Rates (Decrease)	1.4	9,534
Arts	1.2	8,172
Government Reform & Responsibility	1.2	8,172
Sports/Athletics	1.2	8,172
Judicial Reform	0.6	4,086
U.S.A. Relations	0.6	4,086
Additional Comments	2.8	19,069
ALL CATEGORIES	**100.0**	**688,022**

[9] Totals may not add due to rounding.

[10] Subcategory estimates for "Other" are based on a random statistical sampling of response submissions.

Part V: Summary of Methodology and Analysis

General Verification Procedures

- To ensure the validity of all survey responses, each submission was reviewed and checked for administrative accuracy and multiple response patterns prior to scanning, coding and keypunching.

  - Mail-in responses (167,621) were checked for batch submissions with identical markings and response patterns. Consecutive, multiple survey submissions with identical markings and response patterns were removed, allowing only two responses to be counted from the group. This precaution was taken to ensure surveys delivered in batch to non-single family dwellings (i.e., institutional residences) were fully reviewed to detect multiple submission irregularities.

  - For Internet submissions (115,487), multiple responses from the same IP address were checked for time and frequency of submission, and variability of response. Where response patterns were identical for a single IP address, and submission time was consecutive and displayed only a marginal interval between submissions, only two responses were accepted. This precaution was undertaken to eliminate any invalid mass submissions that could potentially skew survey results. In addition, any non-Alberta IP addresses, where identifiable, were removed.

  - Prior to survey analysis, 310 responses were removed from paper survey submissions while 642 were removed from Internet submissions, for a total of 952 submissions removed.

- For survey analysis purposes, each survey returned with a useable response was considered to be a valid submission. As some households chose not to respond to all questions fully, frequency response rates varied for each part/question of the survey.

Analysis and Statistical Tests

- As two forms of survey responses were allowed (mail-in and Internet), comparisons were conducted between the two response methods and the total response (both mail-in and Internet). The rankings of the priority rating mean values for each item of Question 1 (Priority Areas) and Question 2A-C (Options for "Windfall Money") were examined. It should be noted, all results within this report are based on the total response, where mail-in and Internet are considered equal response methods.

  - When mail-in response was compared with the total response, the rankings for each item were nearly identical. The single exception was "invest in Alberta's infrastructure" (Question 1H) ranked fourth for total response, but fifth for mail-in response, while "reduce taxes" (Question 1I) ranked fourth for mail-in response, and fifth for total response.

- To assess the Internet response method for multiple submissions from a respondent, a test was conducted by extracting only one submission from each Internet IP address, thereby reducing the possibility of multiple submissions. The rankings of mean priority ratings were the same for all valid Internet responses verses the extraction of single IP address Internet responses. The rankings were also identical for total mean priority ratings (both mail-in and Internet) using all valid Internet responses verses total mean priority ratings using only single IP address Internet responses.

- A variety of statistical tests (i.e., ANOVA, T-Test, Chi-Square) were employed to provide a statistically valid basis for reporting the survey results.

Part VI: Survey Form

It's Alberta's future. What choices would you make?

1. There are important challenges to address, but we can't afford to do everything. Tell us what you think the priorities should be. Please use the scale below to indicate your opinion for each item, where 10 means you think it should be a very high priority and 1 means you think it should be a very low priority. **(FILL IN ONE NUMBER FOR EACH).**

Priority Scale:	Very Low								Very High	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Provide a quality, affordable Alberta health care system
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Provide an outstanding education system
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Build a more diverse, innovative economy
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Provide support to Albertans who need help
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Respond to growth in cities
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Preserve rural communities
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Protect Alberta's environment
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Invest in Alberta's infrastructure
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Reduce taxes
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

2. Now that unexpected windfall money no longer has to go to pay down the debt, what priority would you place on each of the following options? Use the same scale as above.

Provide a refund to every Albertan
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Save the money and invest it in the Heritage Fund
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Make long-term investments in priority areas
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

*Other:*_____

3. If there were three things your government could do for Alberta's future, what would they be?

_____

_____

_____