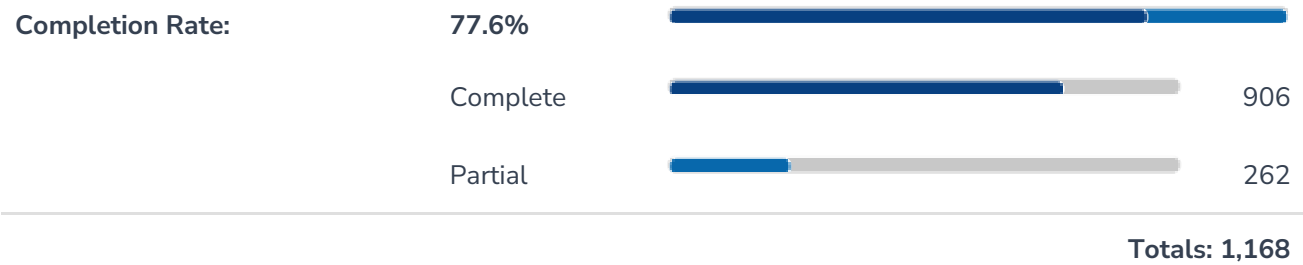
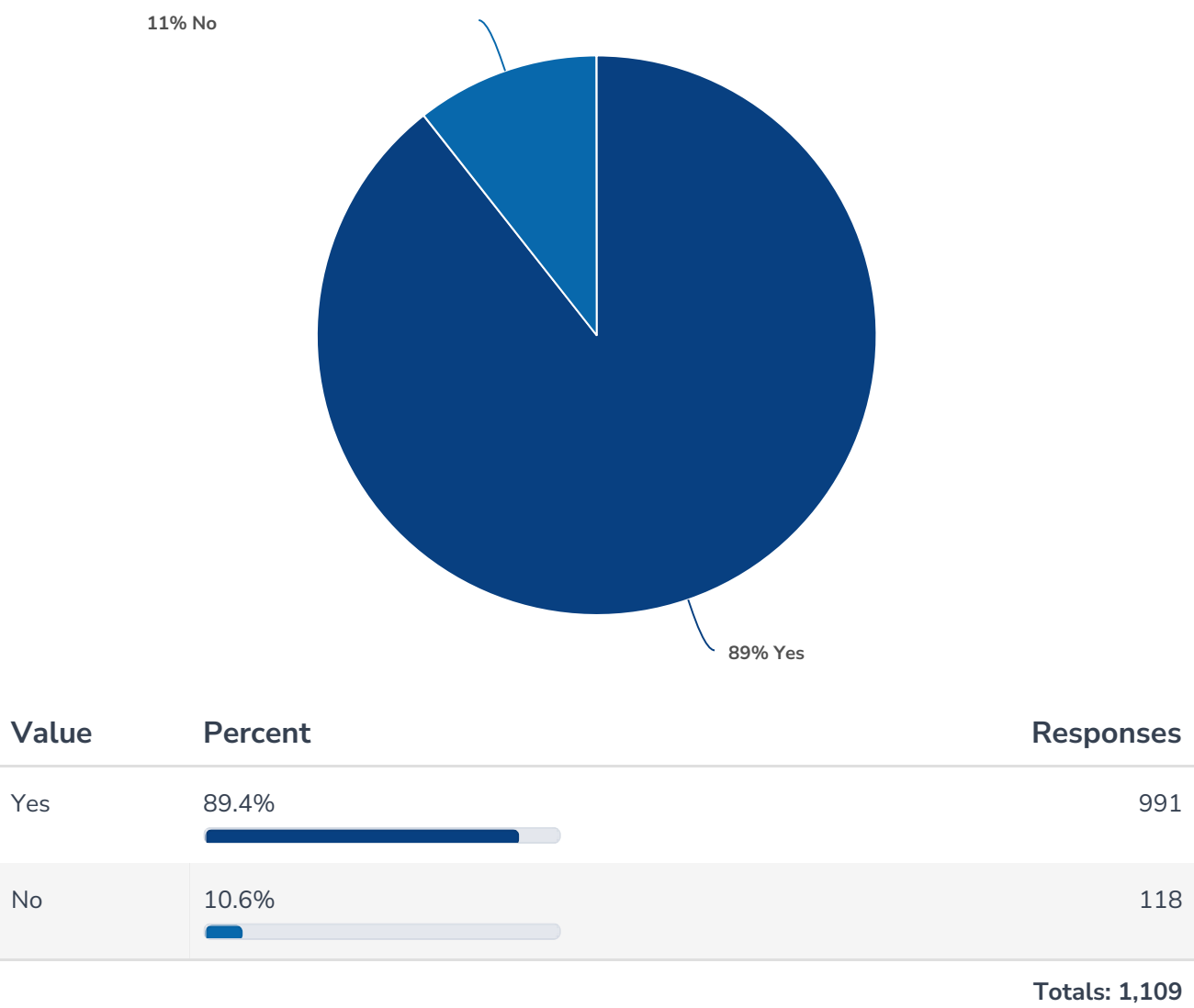


Report for Let's Talk: 2024 Budget Engagement Survey

Response Counts



1. Do you live in, or own a business in, Niagara Falls?



2. Balancing competing priorities can require decisions about service levels. Service levels are defined as the scope or measurement of the service being delivered. The level of service can be increased or decreased by changes, such as reducing operating hours or frequency of service. Service level changes drive changes in your property taxes. As a result, increasing services would likely increase taxes, maintaining service would result in inflationary increases, and decreasing a service level could reduce taxes. For the items below, consider the importance of the services and programs provided to you and the community. Please tell us if the City should increase, decrease or maintain its budget investment in the following programs and services:

	Increase	Maintain	Decrease	Responses
Cultural programs and facilities (for example, holding cultural events such as concerts, art exhibits or other activities at the Niagara Falls History Museum and The Exchange) Count Row %	109 12.5%	442 50.6%	322 36.9%	873
Economic development (for example, attracting new business to the area or assisting to expand existing business, strategic opportunities such as new sector development, and business support services) Count Row %	293 34.0%	396 46.0%	172 20.0%	861
Facility maintenance (for example, rehabilitation and repairs to community centres, arenas, and other facilities) Count Row %	243 28.3%	563 65.5%	54 6.3%	860
Libraries Count Row %	173 20.2%	520 60.8%	162 18.9%	855
Parks and trails (for example, new development, playground rehabilitation) Count Row %	272 31.8%	470 54.9%	114 13.3%	856

	Increase	Maintain	Decrease	Responses
Pools and splash pads Count Row %	167 19.5%	561 65.5%	129 15.1%	857
Recreation programming (for example, Older Adults programming and recreation activities offered at MacBain Community Centre) Count Row %	240 27.9%	505 58.8%	114 13.3%	859
Road maintenance and replacement (for example, pothole repair, resurfacing) Count Row %	562 65.0%	280 32.4%	22 2.5%	864
Sports facilities and fields (for example, Oakes Park, soccer pitches and baseball diamonds) Count Row %	125 14.5%	578 67.1%	159 18.4%	862
Totals Total Responses				873

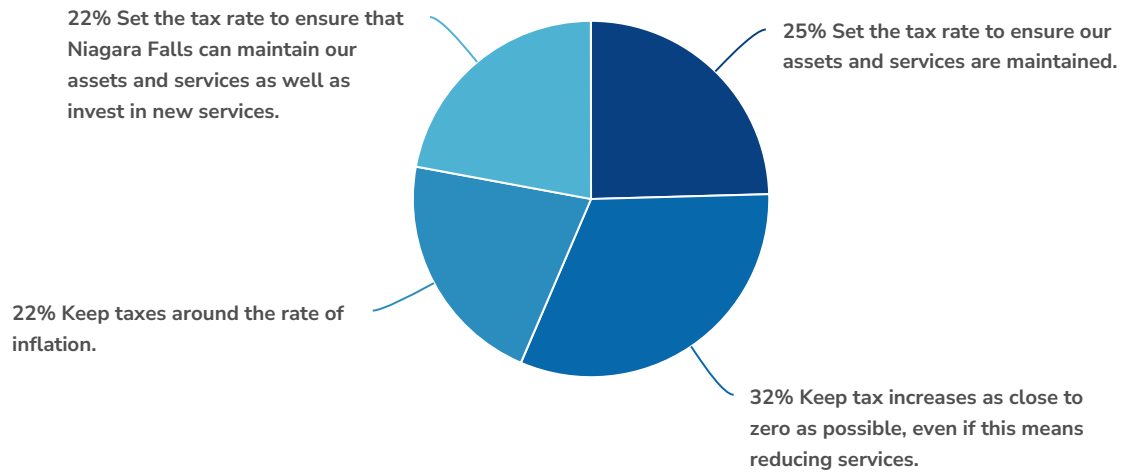
3. From the list below, please rank your infrastructure/other priorities for the next five years (1 is highest priority, 9 is lowest priority):

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Roads & bridges	1		5,427	789
Water, sewer and storm infrastructure	2		5,325	809
Affordable housing	3		4,906	760
Energy efficiency	4		3,967	769
Funding to assist with homelessness and drug addiction	5		3,896	762
Park and trail development	6		3,441	768
Climate Change mitigation and protection	7		3,100	741
Athletic fields (soccer, baseball, cricket)	8		2,619	743
Arenas	9		2,265	732

Lowest Rank

Highest Rank

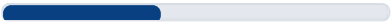
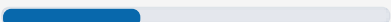
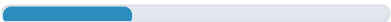
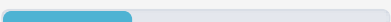
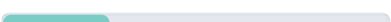
4. Municipal property taxes are the primary way to pay for assets and services provided by the City. How should Niagara Falls set its taxes? Select the statement you most agree with from the list below:



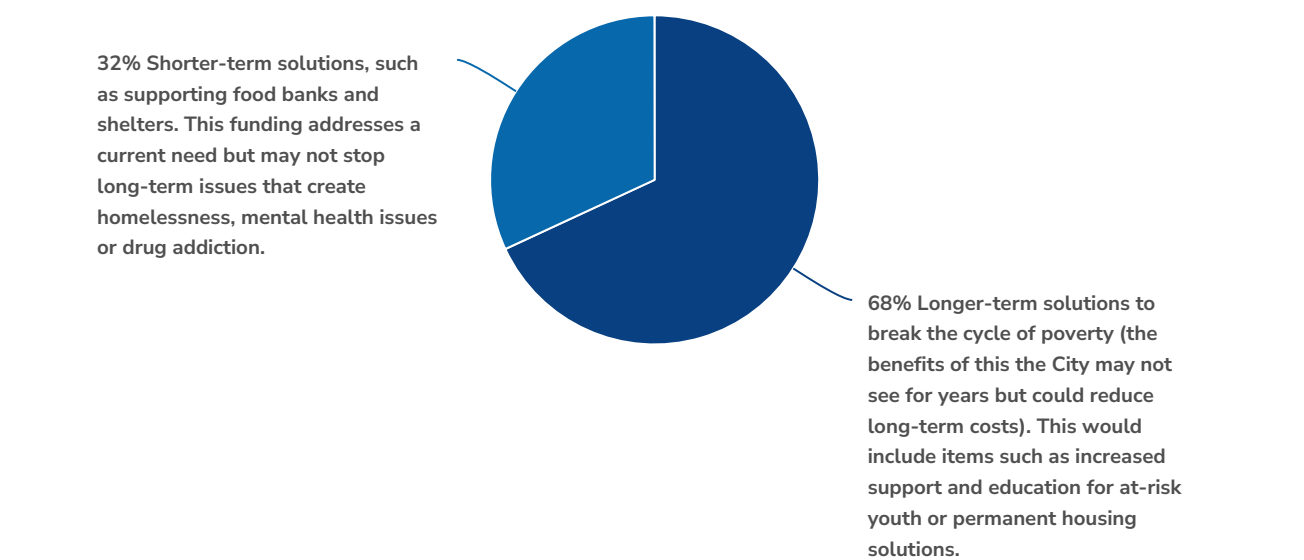
Value	Percent	Responses
Set the tax rate to ensure our assets and services are maintained.	24.6% 	206
Keep tax increases as close to zero as possible, even if this means reducing services.	31.9% 	268
Keep taxes around the rate of inflation.	21.5% 	180
Set the tax rate to ensure that Niagara Falls can maintain our assets and services as well as invest in new services.	22.1% 	185

Totals: 839

5. No tax increase would mean a decrease in service levels. If the City wanted to undertake service level reductions, there are only a few areas where it is realistic to undertake these reductions. In 2023, the City portion of taxes for the median residential property assessed at \$279,854 is \$1,597.60. Of this amount, it is difficult to make cuts in the following areas: 1) Fire – 427.36 (26.7% of the City levy) 2) Roads and Bridges - \$328.77 (20.6% of the City levy) These two areas make up 47% of the budget. To have a year with no increase for City services, the City would have to make more significant cuts in other areas. In which areas are you comfortable reducing service levels:

Value	Percent	Responses
Recreation and Cultural programs (for example, pools, arenas, gyms, arts programs). In 2023 this cost is \$166.59 or 10.4% of the City levy.	41.4% 	342
Libraries. In 2023, this cost is \$84.29 or 5.3% of the City levy.	35.7% 	295
Economic development (for example, strategic opportunities such as new sector development, enhancement and growth of existing sectors, and business support services). In 2023 this cost is \$16.82 or 1.1% of the City levy.	34.2% 	283
Parks and athletic fields (for example, new development, playground rehabilitation) In 2023 this cost is \$48.20 or 3.0% of the City levy.	33.5% 	277
I do not agree with reducing service levels.	28.1% 	232

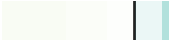
6. As an upper-tier municipality, Niagara Region is responsible for social services in our two-tier government structure. Although not a designated role for lower-tier municipalities, homelessness, affordable housing, mental health and poverty are issues that the City of Niagara Falls has spent tax dollars on annually. In 2023, Council agreed to initiate a panel to consider where \$500,000 in social service funds should be invested. When considering funding, the City can choose to fund items that address current needs or longer-term solutions. Please select where you think these social service funds should be invested:



Value	Percent	Responses
Longer-term solutions to break the cycle of poverty (the benefits of this the City may not see for years but could reduce long-term costs). This would include items such as increased support and education for at-risk youth or permanent housing solutions.	68.1%	517
Shorter-term solutions, such as supporting food banks and shelters. This funding addresses a current need but may not stop long-term issues that create homelessness, mental health issues or drug addiction.	31.9%	242

Totals: 759

7. Please rank the following issues for investment (1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest priority):

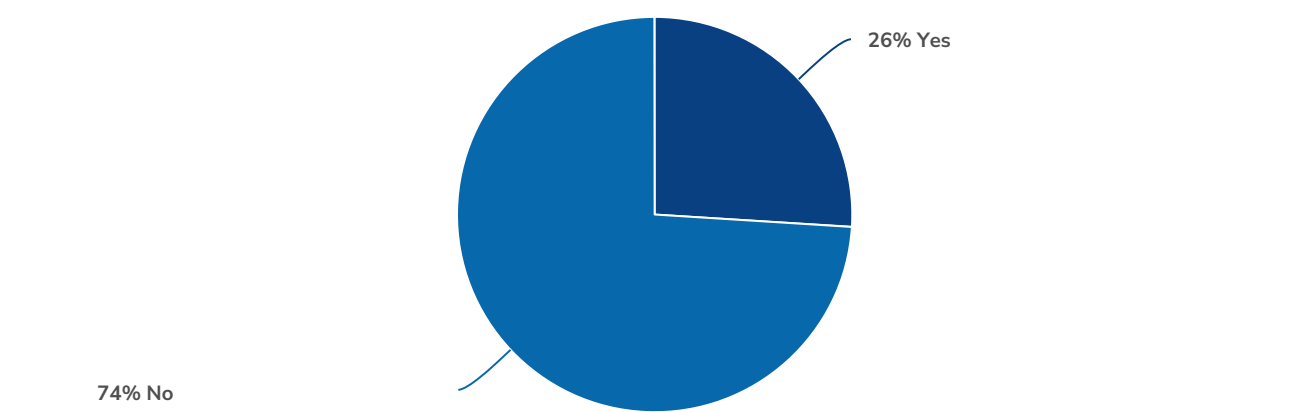
Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Affordable housing	1		2,857	757
Mental health services	2		2,525	749
Poverty reduction	3		2,159	754
Homelessness reduction	4		2,124	739
Addiction services	5		1,644	735



Lowest Rank

Highest Rank

8. Would you pay more for the City to use and/or pilot more environmentally sustainable practices (i.e., electric vehicles, etc.)?



Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	26.0%	204
No	74.0%	581

Totals: 785

9. Please rank the following potential environmental sustainability projects (1 being the highest priority and 6 being the lowest priority):

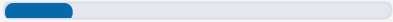
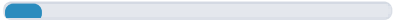
Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Increasing the environmental quality of our green spaces (tree plantings, pollinator habitats, etc.)	1		3,276	740
Providing incentives to homeowners and builders to build more sustainably	2		3,119	734
Increasing emphasis on walkable and bikeable communities	3		2,982	723
Performing energy audits and pursuing retrofits and alternative energy sources at our City-run facilities.	4		2,556	729
Greening more fleet vehicles with hybrid or electric vehicles	5		1,755	700
Increasing vehicle charging stations	6		1,669	712



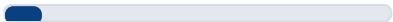
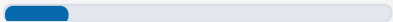
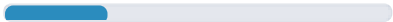
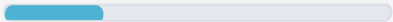
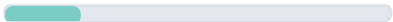
Lowest Rank

Highest Rank

10. The City of Niagara Falls will be home to a state-of-the-art hospital that will be a key contributor to the quality of life for Niagara Falls residents across the Niagara Region. The construction of the hospital is funded substantially by the Province, but the equipment and some other items are funded by “local share.” This is a standard practice that has been undertaken for decades. The City of Niagara Falls has committed \$30 million for its local share, the Niagara Region has committed \$44.5 million, and Fort Erie has committed \$3 million. If the \$30 million contribution is not paid upfront, Niagara Health charges 6.00% interest per year. The City of Niagara Falls has proposed three payment options. Please select the option you agree with most:

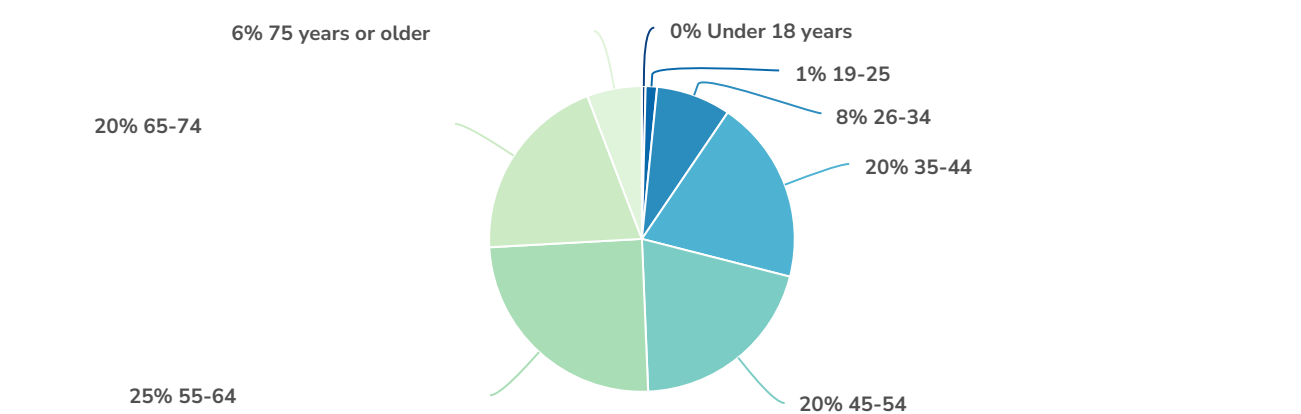
Value	Percent	Responses
Take \$30 million from City reserves to pay the City's contribution upfront, avoiding interest costs, and slowly pay back our reserves with a 1.5% levy over 25 years. The cost of a 1.5% increase in levy annually to a \$500,000 residential assessed home is \$43 a year. In the first year, the City will lose over \$1million per year in interest, but the special levy will replace the interest that is lost, and by the end of 25 years, the City's reserves will be stronger than when it started. The benefit of this approach is it is transparent, consistent and predictable.	71.8% 	556
Save City reserves for other City initiatives and projects and pay the Hospital in installments over a 20-year period, levying the taxpayer for principal and interest costs totalling \$1,297,871 per year. The cost to a \$500,000 residential assessed home of adding a budget line of \$1,297,871 per year to cover the principal and interest costs of a loan is \$44 per year. Although a similar per year cost as option 1, at the end of the 25 years, our reserves will be smaller than option 1. Overall, this is the highest total over the long term to the City. The benefit of this approach is in the near term, our reserves stay strong but it will cost the most over the short term.	18.1% 	140
Take \$30 million from City reserves and figure out how to meet the future needs of the City with significantly reduced reserves. In this case, we will lose our interest income each year, and the City will ultimately have to raise taxes to replace the interest. This would result in a tax impact of \$42 per year for a house assessed at \$500,000. Then each year, to meet future needs for roads, bridges or other services, the City will need to increase taxes to meet these needs. Though this costs the least in the short term, the long-term impacts are not transparent or predictable.	10.1% 	78
Totals: 774		

11. The City of Niagara Falls charges fees for a variety of services. This situation occurs in every municipality, as these services add to the resident's quality of life and the city's overall attractiveness to residents and prospective residents. For example, there are fees for using an ice rink, baseball diamond, or soccer field, attending swimming lessons and other recreation programs, licencing (business and wedding licence) and cemetery fees. In most cases, the cost associated with providing the service is significantly higher than the user fee charged. Due to this, the difference between the cost of providing the service and the user fee charged to the user is borne by all taxpayers through their property taxes. Based on the above, what level of support should be provided by the user and the general property taxpayer for these types of services? Please select the option you agree with the most.

Value	Percent	Responses
There should be no user fees. These are all valuable services and should be free of charge, with the general taxpayer absorbing the entire cost.	10.0% 	78
The user of the service should pay 25% of the cost of the service, and the general property taxpayer the majority.	16.9% 	131
The user of the service should pay 50% of the cost of the service, and the general property taxpayer pay 50%.	26.9% 	209
The user of the service should pay the majority of the cost of the service that they are using.	26.0% 	202
The user should pay all of the cost to provide the service that they are using.	20.2% 	157

Totals: 777

12. What is your age range?



Value	Percent	Responses
Under 18 years	0.4%	3
19-25	1.2%	9
26-34	7.9%	62
35-44	19.5%	152
45-54	20.4%	159
55-64	24.8%	194
65-74	20.1%	157
75 years or older	5.8%	45

Totals: 781

