

LIFE IN ALBERTA'S MUNICIPALITIES

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One-third (34%) feel the quality of life has improved over the past three years

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Calgary, AB – A new Ipsos Reid poll conducted for the National Post and CanWest News Service/Global News finds that Albertans feel positively towards their quality of life. Overall, 98% of Albertans say the overall quality of life in their community is good and one-third (34%) feel the quality of life has "improved" over the past three years.

Ipsos Reid's "Hope Index" (a measure of near-, mid-, and long-range expectations about well-being) also shows that the majority (64%) of Canadians are hopeful for the future. In Alberta, the level of hope is even higher, standing at 74%. Putting this in context with Ipsos Reid's comparative data from across the world reveals that Canada (and Alberta in particular) is the world leader in hope. For example, the level of hope is 61% in the United States, 45% in Australia, 38% in the United Kingdom, and 23% in Russia.

While Albertans feel positively towards their quality of life and are hopeful for the future, their perceptions of local governments are more tempered, indicating local governments may have little to do with Albertans' overall positive attitudes towards quality of life. This same trend is consistent across the country, with Canadians giving their local government a "C" grade for spending, responsiveness, and leadership.

Overall, local governments receive the highest marks for “spending taxpayers money wisely”; here, Albertans are split as to whether their local government deserves a “B” grade (38%) or a “C” grade (38%), while Canadians as a whole are most likely to rate their local government’s performance in this area as a “C” (42%). Local governments are seen as performing slightly less well at “being responsive to the real needs of the community” (41% of Albertans and 40% of Canadians provide a “C” grade), while the lowest grade is reported for “showing leadership where it counts” (36% of Albertans and 38% of Canadians provide a “C” grade).

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted for the National Post and CanWest News Service/Global News between February 24th and March 2nd, 2006. The poll is based on a representative sample of 8,431 Canadians who were interviewed via the Internet. Of this, 819 interviews were conducted in Alberta. With a sample of this size, overall results for Canada are considered accurate to within ± 1.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions (margin of error for Alberta results is ± 3.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20) and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

Albertans overwhelmingly say the quality of life in their community is good (98%)

Despite increasing costs of living, the vast majority (98%) of Albertans rate the quality of life in their community positively. Of this, 49% feel the quality of life is “very good”, while another 49% say the quality of life is “good”. Only 2% of Albertans feel otherwise, with 2% saying “poor” and 0% saying “very poor”.

Albertans’ overall perceptions of quality of life are consistent with what is reported by Canadians as a whole (97% of Canadians rate their overall quality of life positively); however, Albertans are more likely to rate their quality of life as “very good” (only 44% of Canadians provide a “very good” rating). Furthermore, Albertans are more likely than those living in Ontario to feel positively towards their quality of life, both overall (96% in Ontario) and in intensity (42% of Ontarians provide a “very good” rating).

- Albertans earning higher incomes are the most likely to feel they have a good quality of life (98% of those earning \$60,000 or more compared to 95% of those earning less than \$30,000).

One-third (34%) feel the quality of life has improved over the past three years

Not only are Albertans' overall perceptions of quality of life positive, but there is a sense that quality of life has improved over the past three years. In total, 34% of Albertans feel the quality of life in their community has "improved" over the past three years; this is three times the proportion who feels the quality of life has "worsened" during this same time frame (11%). Meanwhile, just over half (55%) of Albertans feel the quality of life in their community has "stayed the same" over the past three years.

Perceptions of how quality of life has changed over the past three years are more positive in Alberta than Canada as a whole; 27% of Canadians say the quality of life has "improved", 13% say it has "worsened", and 59% say it has "stayed the same". Furthermore, Albertans are also more positive than those living in Ontario, where 24% say the quality of life has "improved", 15% say it has "worsened", and 61% say it has "stayed the same".

- Albertans' perceptions of how quality of life has changed are consistent across all key demographics.

Ipsos Reid's "Hope Index" shows that Canadians, including Albertans, are the World Leaders in Hope

Ipsos Reid's "Hope Index" (a measure of near-, mid-, and long-range expectations about well-being) finds that the majority (64%) of Canadians are hopeful for the future. In Alberta, the level of hope is even higher, standing at 74%.

Putting this in context with Ipsos Reid's comparative data from across the world reveals that Canada (and Alberta in particular) is the world leader in hope. Canadians' level of hope is higher than we have seen in any other country, including the United States (61%), Australia (45%), the United Kingdom (38%), and Russia (23%).

- Younger Albertans are more hopeful for the future; 82% of those aged 18 to 34 feel hope and 76% of those aged 35 to 54 feel hope compared to 60% of those aged 55 plus.

Local governments across the country receive a “C” grade when it comes to spending, responsiveness, and leadership – no different in Alberta

While the poll finds that Canadians - Albertans included - feel positively towards their quality of life and are hopeful for the future, they hold a more tempered view of their local government’s performance. Overall, local governments receive the highest marks for “spending taxpayers money wisely”; here, Albertans are split as to whether their local government deserves a “B” grade (38%) or a “C” grade (38%), while Canadians as a whole are most likely to rate their local government’s performance in this area as a “C” (42%).

Local governments are seen as performing slightly less well at “being responsive to the real needs of the community” (41% of Albertans and 40% of Canadians provide a “C” grade). The lowest grade is seen for “showing leadership where it counts” (36% of Albertans and 38% of Canadians provide a “C” grade to their local government in this area).

While local governments across the country receive a “C” grade in the above areas, Canadians as a whole are slightly more critical of their local governments’ performance than are Albertans. Specifically, 23% of Canadians provide a grade lower than a “C” for “spending taxpayers money wisely” compared to 19% of Albertans; 23% of Canadians provide a grade lower than a “C” for “being responsive to the real needs of the community” compared to 19% of Albertans; and, 27% of Canadians provide a grade lower than a “C” for “showing leadership where it counts” compared to 23% of Albertans.

- Albertans aged 55 plus are more likely to say their local government deserves an “A” grade in the above areas.

-30-

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