

RE: COMMUNITY ATTITUDE SURVEY - MUNICIPAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendations of the Director Planning & Building Inspection be adopted.

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER 1989 March 08
FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING INSPECTION Our File: 16.012
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY ATTITUDE SURVEY - MUNICIPAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
PURPOSE: The purpose of this report is to seek Council authorization to undertake a community attitude survey to assess the level of citizen satisfaction with municipal programs and services provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council approve in principle the undertaking of a community attitude survey in 1989 to assess the level of citizen satisfaction with municipal programs and services as outlined in Section 3.0 of this report.
2. THAT terms of reference for a consultant proposal call to undertake a community attitude survey be prepared as outlined in Section 3.0 of this report.

SUMMARY

This reports recommends that Burnaby undertake a community attitude survey in 1989 with the assistance of a Consultant to determine the level of citizen satisfaction with municipal programs and services provided.

From the review that this department has undertaken there is overwhelming consensus from those who have conducted such surveys that they are beneficial and worth the cost. From Burnaby's perspective, a community attitude survey would specifically further the implementation of the Corporation's fundamental goals and assist a Committee appointed by Council on 1988 October 17 to review Council practices and procedures in information gathering and prepare its recommendations. In addition, the results of the survey will establish a benchmark and provide a measure of our effectiveness in the provision and delivery of programs and services.

It is estimated that the survey would take about 6 months from initiation to completion. A 'ball park' cost for the consultant's services is about \$50,000.

R E P O R T

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The Municipality is a service provider to the community. It is also committed to public participation in its decision making process. A number of the Burnaby's fundamental goals specifically relate to these two areas.

In an effort to improve the level of service an indication of the level of resident satisfaction with Municipal services is considered an effective means to evaluate our programs and services.

Input received through community attitude surveys is often felt to be better than from most other sources in that it provides a representative cross-section of opinion on a broad range of concerns and issues. Frequently, Council and staff only hear from articulate individuals and organized groups on specific issues. Survey data providing general citizen opinions on municipal activities is the kind of information that usually does not come through other channels. Surveys also provide citizens with an additional opportunity to be part of the decision making process.

This department has undertaken research into community attitude surveys with particular reference to their use in determining levels of satisfaction with Municipal services and programs. The purpose of this report is to summarize the experiences of other jurisdictions and to determine whether Burnaby should undertake a similar type of survey this year.

2.0 THE FINDINGS

2.1 THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ATTITUDE SURVEYS

From a review of literature and contacting a number of cities in Canada and the United States who had previously conducted such surveys there is a general consensus that the data obtained is beneficial and worth the cost. From the Canadian cities contacted most are considering follow-up surveys. The primary reason for not having undertaken follow up surveys at this time have been because of budget considerations or to allow for a sufficiently long interval between surveys to detect trends that may have occurred.

Community attitude surveys on services and programs and the data from such surveys seem to have had the following major uses:

- an important measure of the effectiveness of municipal programs and services
- as a general justification for services and activities in which a Municipality is engaged
- in the decision making process generally and frequently in the budget process specifically
- provides an opportunity for the "silent majority" to express their opinions
- to obtain public input on important municipal policies and issues.

Survey data are generally regarded as supplemental information. They are used in conjunction with information from other sources and are seldom used as the primary basis for decisions.

2.2 SURVEY DESIGN

Questions for surveys undertaken by other jurisdictions have been developed by staff; by staff with the aid of a consultant; through a sub-committee with representation from staff, the Municipal Council and a consultant; and in certain instances questionnaires have been developed with the aid of the community. The advantage of involving the community is that it may help in identifying issues which may not be perceived as important by staff, Council members or a consultant.

Almost all of the cities that we were in touch with used a Consultant to undertake their surveys. Unless there were staff specifically trained in this area, the recommendation is to use an outside consultant with the appropriate skills.

Survey techniques that have been used include telephone interviews, mail-out survey and personal in-home interviews.

2.3 COSTS

Of those Canadian jurisdictions that have used Consultants, the survey costs have ranged from about \$10,000 to \$60,000. Surveys involving in-home interviews are likely the most costly.

2.4 DURATION

From preplanning to completion, the survey could be expected to take up to 6 months depending on the complexity.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is our conclusion that a community attitude survey to determine the level of citizen satisfaction with municipal programs and services is both desirable and beneficial. It provides a representative cross-section of information that is not elsewhere available. The results of the survey will establish a benchmark and provide a measure of our effectiveness in the provision and delivery of programs and services.

A community attitude survey would assist in furthering the implementation of the Corporation's fundamental goals. Specifically with regard to citizen participation and opportunity, the survey will provide the citizens of Burnaby with a major additional opportunity to be part of the decision making process.

Highly specialized skills are required in the preplanning, conducting, processing and analyzing the data of a community attitude survey. Therefore, it is our view that the retention of a consultant well versed in the areas of conflict resolution, questionnaire development, survey techniques and data processing and statistical analysis skills would best meet Burnaby's needs in undertaking a survey. A two part commission is recommended as this would allow the survey sample, survey size and survey method to be specifically designed to meet the questions developed in Part 1.

The effective use and implementation of information obtained through a survey is contingent on the survey design. A function of the Consultant will be to assist in this part of the process in Part 1 of the commission.

It is our conclusion that participation by the community in identifying issues to be addressed in the survey would help ensure that issues considered important by the community are not excluded from the questionnaire. This can be accomplished by the consultant meeting with a "Focus Group" (a group comprised of a cross-section of the community - e.g. representatives from the community-at-large; labour, business and professional groups; neighbourhood associations; human service agencies etc.) to identify issues for consideration by Council and inclusion in the questionnaire. The group can also be used to test the questionnaire prior to embarking on the survey.

Council will recall that on 1988, October 17 it adopted a motion to review all aspects of Council practices and procedures through an ad hoc committee that includes three members of Council. It is our view that a community attitude survey could incorporate questions that would assist the committee in its information gathering and recommendations. In addition to working with the "Focus Group", it is recommended that the consultant meet with the Council appointed Committee as well as staff to identify issues they wish to incorporate into the questionnaire.

In general, surveys have taken from 2 to 6 months and have cost between \$10,000 to \$60,000 to complete where consultants have been involved. Because of the depth of the program and the complexity of issues facing Burnaby, it is our belief that a survey in Burnaby as proposed would take about 6 months with costs closer to the upper rather than the lower range experienced by other jurisdictions.

On the basis of our review it is recommended

1. THAT Council approve in principle, the undertaking of a community attitude survey in 1989 to assess the level of citizen satisfaction in the following general areas:
 - degree of citizen awareness of Municipal services and programs
 - degree of satisfaction with services and programs
 - priorities for improvements
 - satisfaction with expenditures on various programs and services
 - areas where expenditures should be reduced or increased
 - degree of citizen success in obtaining information and assistance.
 - attitudes towards other Municipal issues and trends

2. THAT terms of reference for a consultant proposal call be prepared on the basis of a two part commission.

Part 1

That the Consultant develop in consultation with the Municipality the specific purpose of the survey and the preparation of the related questionnaire.

That the Consultant with the aid of a "Focus Group"; the Council Committee reviewing Council practices and procedure; and staff help identify issues for inclusion in the questionnaire.

Part 2

That following completion of Part 1, the consultant recommend the sample composition and size; survey method; conduct the survey; and process and analyze the data.

A further report will be submitted to Council for approval of the consultant and the budget. At this time, the Municipal Manager has tentatively included an amount of \$50,000.00 in the 1989 Annual Budget in anticipation of the survey.



A.L. Parr
DIRECTOR PLANNING &
BUILDING INSPECTION

BLS/mcb
Attach:

cc: Director Administrative & Community Services
Director Engineering
Director Recreation & Cultural Services
Director Finance

