

Date: November 3, 2020	Originator's files:
To: Chair and Members of Budget Committee	
From: Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer	Meeting date: November 23, 2020

## Subject

**2021 Budget Engagement Results**

## Recommendation

That the 2021 Budget Engagement Results report dated November 3, 2020 from the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer be received for information.

### Report Highlights

- The 2021 Budget Engagement campaign targeted residents based on their needs, activities and communication channel preferences to increase the City's reach about Budget communications regarding what programs and services residents and businesses receive for their tax dollars.
- Budget key messages had an exposure rate of approximately 11.6 million views (up by 4.1 million views from 2020) across all communications channels (advertising, digital, social media, media relations and Budget Engagement Sessions) with 35,835 direct interactions (up by 8,907 direct interactions in 2020).
- The Budget Allocator was well received with 1,014 respondents submitting their opinions using the Budget Allocator. 425 written comments were received from those who used the allocator tool.
- In total, 7,671 residents participated in the City-wide and two ward Budget Engagement Sessions. This year, 9,736 people received the session on their Facebook feeds with 191 video views and 158 engaged in the session (likes, comments, shares).

## Background

The 2021 Budget Engagement campaign included a variety of communications elements aimed at continuing to improve resident understanding of the value they receive for their property tax dollars. This type of engagement is an important element in helping decision makers prepare the budget in a transparent manner as well as ensuring responsiveness to residents' needs and views.

In July, the City put out a pre-engagement survey asking residents what was important to them regarding the City's 2021 Budget. Out of the 260 respondents, 92 per cent agreed or strongly agreed to having an interest in the City's annual budget. More than half of the respondents (51 per cent) have provided feedback on the City's Budget in the past and 80 per cent of respondents were interested in learning more about the City's budget with 43 per cent wanting to always be updated and 37 per cent interest in specific areas of the budget.

The majority of respondents (95 per cent) wanted to learn more about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the City's Financial Recovery plan. In addition, respondents were also interested in receiving information on City services (52 per cent); property taxes (51 per cent) and general information about budget decision-making (40 per cent).

When asked, respondents mentioned they prefer to connect about Budget through the City's website (79 per cent); a dedicated budget email ([budget@mississauga.ca](mailto:budget@mississauga.ca)) (68 per cent); an eNewsletter story (59 per cent); an interactive online budget tool (56 per cent); Online news (50 per cent) and social media (44 per cent).

Based on the feedback obtained from the pre-engagement Budget survey, staff in Strategic Communications used a multi-phased and multi-channel strategy to ensure that residents received information that was clear, accessible, timely and relevant. The overall approach to reach residents was based on their needs, activities and specific communications channel preferences.

This year's Budget Engagement period ran from September 14 to October 23, 2020. The six-week outreach included updating the Budget website – [mississauga.ca/budget](http://mississauga.ca/budget) with a new Budget Allocator Tool and refreshed content; three new videos about the Budget; stories in the city's eNewsletter and two targeted eBlasts. In addition, a targeted social media campaign, advertising (including diverse communities ads in print and online) and media relations were implemented. Each of these tactics contributed to achieving a meaningful level of engagement for the 2021 Budget cycle.

## Comments

### Tools Used

**Advertising & Promotion** – A print ad ran in multicultural publications as part of the City's Diverse Communities Promotions Plan. Online ads ran in Kijiji, MSN.com, DailyMotion.com and Kik Messenger. In addition, mobile road signs were used and messages appeared digitally and on the City's website, eNewsletter, indoor and outdoor screens and signboards in Celebration Square.

**Budget Allocator** – Located on the City's website, the budget allocator provided the opportunity for the public to choose from among 12 City services and indicate the level of spending they would support (i.e., increase proposed spend, reduce proposed spend or agree to proposed spend).

**Budget Engagement Sessions** – To provide more flexibility for residents, the Budget Engagement Sessions were moved online this year. Three sessions were conducted which enabled a large

number of residents to hear from and interact with elected officials and the City's leadership team on budget-related issues. Mayor Crombie led the City-wide 90-minute online/telephone budget session with Facebook Live on October 7 and two ward-specific sessions were conducted on October 13 (Wards 1 and 2) and October 22 (Wards 3 and 6). Each session included questions from residents using a queued approach.

**Social Media** – A comprehensive social media campaign included posts on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Ads were also posted on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. Messages encouraged residents to try the budget allocator, register for a Budget Engagement Session, view the Budget videos and learn more about what they get for their property tax dollars.

**Videos** – The Mayor's annual budget message was created and promoted on the Budget Allocator Tool, the City's budget website and the City's YouTube channel. In addition, based on the pre-budget engagement survey, and knowing that residents wanted to learn more about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the City's Financial Recovery plan, a second video was created and narrated by Gary Kent, the City's Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer.

### Results

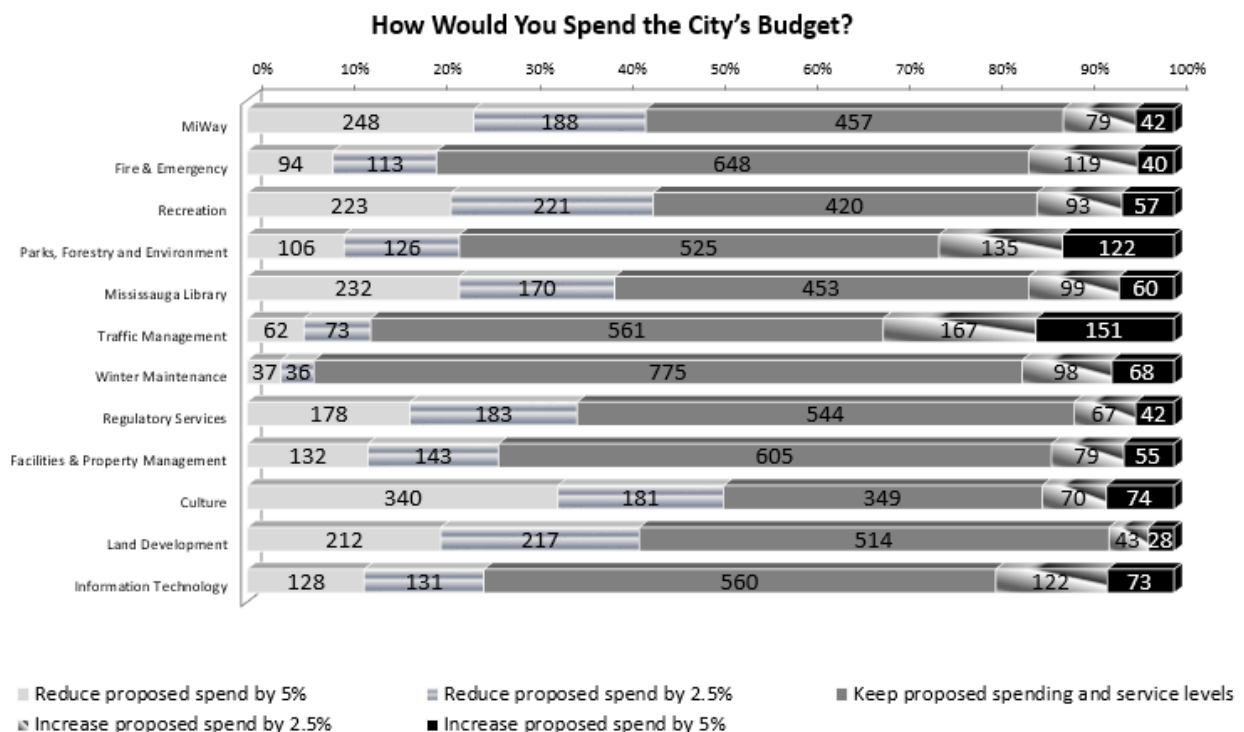
Staff used social media, digital outreach, advertising and media relations throughout the City's Budget process to raise awareness and interest. The following results are as of October 23, 2020: Budget key messages had an exposure rate of approximately 11.6 million views (up by 4.1 million views from 2020) across all communications channels (Advertising, Digital, Social Media, Media, Budget Engagement Sessions) with 35,835 direct interactions (up by 8,907 direct interactions in 2020).

Budget Engagement Tactics	Metrics (As of Friday, October 23) <i>*Direct interactions relate to advertising, digital, social media, media, 311 and Budget Engagement Sessions.</i>
<b>Advertising &amp; Promotion</b>	Print Ads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse Communities Print Ad: a reach of 235,050</li> </ul> Online Ads*: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programmatic Ads (21 Ads): a reach of 10,086,401 and engagement of 8,882</li> <li>• Diverse Communities Programmatic Ads (48 Ads): a reach of 764,483 and engagement of 1,066</li> </ul>
<b>Digital Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor/outdoor screen/sign reach: 396,948</li> <li>• eBlast* to City Subscribers: 56,662; 1,674 clicks on Budget stories</li> <li>• eNewsletter Distribution*: 66,481; 353 viewed the Budget stories</li> <li>• Budget Website* (unique visits): 9,291</li> <li>• Budget Allocator*: 1,014 respondents; 425 comments; 7,910 page views</li> </ul>

<p><b>Social Media Platforms</b> (includes posts on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn and ads on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach: 574,167 times posts were seen</li> <li>• Engagement*: 5,978 interactions with posts</li> <li>• Posts: 79 posts created</li> <li>• Mayor + Budget Update Video*: 418 views</li> </ul>
<p><b>311</b> (Inquires and information)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiries and information requests to 311* (telephone/email): 8 (calls/emails into 311 about the Budget were down from 2020 by 50 per cent. The Budget website, the Budget Allocator Tool, social media, media relations and the eNewsletter for Budget-related information was targeted to residents based on their specific communication channel preferences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Media Relations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earned media: 18 news releases with 1,552,219 reach; 100 per cent neutral coverage</li> </ul>
<p><b>Budget Engagement Sessions</b></p>	<p>Budget Engagement Sessions* (City-wide and two-ward sessions):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7,671 participants; 45 questions answered</li> <li>• 9,736 people received the session on their Facebook feeds with 191 video views and 158 engaged in the session (likes, comments, shares)</li> </ul>

**Budget Allocator** (Service Area results appear in Appendix 1; comments appear in Appendix 2)

- 1,014 respondents used the allocator
- 425 comments were provided
- 42 per cent of respondents left comments



The following chart shows the selections in the 12 service areas recorded on the budget allocator: In completing the allocator, respondents can provide comments. The following is a breakdown of the comments by service area.

<b>Comment Topic</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
MiWay	65	15%
Roads (Traffic Management and Winter Maintenance)	64	15%
Recreation	42	10%
Culture	42	10%
Library	40	9%
Parks, Forestry & Environment	40	9%
Fire & Emergency Services	34	8%
Regulatory	28	7%
Information Technology	22	5%
Facilities & Property Management	20	5%
Land Development	17	4%
General	11	3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Trends/Observations**

- 76 per cent of respondents proposed to maintain spending on Winter Maintenance
- 31 per cent of respondents proposed to increase spending on Traffic Management
- 25 per cent of respondents proposed to increase spending Parks, Forestry & Environment
- 20 per cent of the comments reference or mention COVID-19 or the word “pandemic”
- Participants leaned toward keeping proposed funding or increasing it for services such as Fire, Winter Maintenance and Traffic Management
- Participants leaned toward decreasing funding for Culture

### Next Steps

As Budget Committee receives and deliberates the proposed 2021 budget, City digital channels, media and social media will continue to promote:

- updates during budget deliberations
- the approaching Council budget vote
- Council approval of the 2021 Business Plan & Budget

### Financial Impact

An external vendor was engaged to conduct the City-wide and two ward Budget Engagement Sessions with Facebook Live at an approximate cost of \$80,745. To reach out to a wider variety of residents in Mississauga, \$34,500 was allocated to support the use of mobile signs, programmatic advertising (English and Diverse Communities) and social media ads. This year a new Budget Allocator tool was also introduced with a five-year contract at a cost of \$9,600/per year.

### Conclusion

During this extraordinary time where Mississauga is facing a global pandemic, there is heightened interest and engagement that is distinct from other budget years. The Mayor and Members of Council held over 65 community outreach virtual sessions and all that feedback was also captured.

Using our approach of reaching out residents and businesses, based on their needs, activities and specific communications channel references, the 2021 Budget engagement cycle achieved 11.4 million exposures through various communications tactics. More than 35,835 direct interactions were received, as people participated in the major outreach initiatives such as the Budget Allocator Tool, website, eNewsletter/eBlast, social media and Budget Engagement Sessions.

The findings from the 2021 Budget Engagement outreach efforts, primarily received through the Budget Allocator Tool, show that the majority of respondents agree with the City's funding allocation within the proposed 2021 Budget. The findings also confirm the desire of many residents to be engaged in the City budget process.

### Attachments

Appendix 1: 2021 Budget Allocator Service Area Results

Appendix 2: 2021 Budget Allocator Comments



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Gary Kent, CPA, CGA, ICD.D, Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer

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