



# **Draft Budget 2025 As-We-Heard-It Report**

**December 13, 2024**

## **Finance and Corporate Services Department**

Disclaimer: The Draft Budget 2025 survey results are one of many ways the City of Ottawa collects budget input from the public. Survey results are reflective of those who participated and may not reflect the overall views shared across the many forms of input offered during the budget process. Residents are welcome to participate in Committee meetings, attend Councillor-led public consultations, get in touch with their Councillor or share their thoughts through the City of Ottawa social media channels. The results of all feedback platforms are carefully considered by Council and the budget planning team.

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## Executive summary

Every year, the City of Ottawa produces a municipal budget. One of the City's most important documents, the budget is the blueprint that defines how resources are collected and allocated. The overall budget comprises two main components – the Operating Budget and the Capital Budget.

Public engagement and feedback are critical to the budget process, to guide and direct investment of public funds. As part of the pre-budget process, the city offered online resources to raise awareness about the budget process, including a survey to understand priorities and gather feedback.

The online survey was designed to gather resident's opinions on City services. The focus of the consultation was on services reporting to the City of Ottawa Standing Committees. Ottawa Police Services, Ottawa Public Library and Ottawa Public Health were not considered service topics within this consultation as they create and table their own budgets independently. The As-We-Heard-It Report summarizes resident feedback collected through the online survey, including themes of the most common sentiments shared by respondents. The survey was open from August 6, 2024, to September 13, 2024. In total, 1,111 submissions were received. Demographic and ward data was collected to better understand trends within Ottawa. The online survey was promoted through social media, Ottawa.ca and public service announcements.

The Engage Ottawa survey showed that the majority of respondents consider paramedic services (57.2 per cent), drinking water (55.0 per cent), public transportation (53.7 per cent), affordable housing (45.3 per cent) and fire services (44.4 per cent) as very important priorities.

We also heard that funding, community agencies and non-profit organizations (13.0 per cent), sustainable transportation (i.e. cycling, walking, e-bikes, e-scooters) (13.1 per cent), arts and culture (14.0 per cent), media relations (20.6 per cent) and parking (23.7 per cent) were considered priorities that were noted as least important.

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## Background

Every year, the City of Ottawa produces a municipal budget. One of the City's most important documents, the budget is the blueprint that defines how resources are collected and allocated. The overall budget comprises two main components – the operating budget and the capital budget. The focus of this report is on the consultation related to Draft Budget 2025 for services reporting to the City of Ottawa Standing Committees. Ottawa Police Services, Ottawa Public Library and Ottawa Public Health were not considered service topics within this consultation as they create and table their own budgets independently.

## Operating budget

The operating budget is designed to ensure the dependable delivery of a broad array of programs and services that residents rely on every day. The municipal government is responsible for over 100 lines of business, including emergency services (fire, by-law and paramedics), roads, clean water, parks and recreation, garbage and recycling programs, and the buses and light-rail that take residents to work and home. To keep Ottawa both affordable and prosperous, City staff needs to determine how best to deliver all these services while balancing revenues and expenditures as guided and directed by Council.

Ottawa is one of the largest cities in Canada – larger than the areas of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton combined. Ottawa covers an area of 2,760 square kilometres. Only 10 per cent of that is urban while the remaining 90 per cent is agricultural land, villages, marginal and forested lands, and wetlands. Given the sheer scale and diverse requirements of the city, it's no wonder that a majority of City funds are spent on delivering essential services, many of which are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Capital budget

In order to progress and grow, Ottawa must look beyond simply providing essential services. A City needs to be guided by a clear and overarching vision of what it is to become. The capital budget funds City infrastructure as well as [Council's Strategic Initiatives](#), which support the Term of Council Priorities.

The capital budget is developed in accordance with the Council approved [Transportation Master Plan](#), [Infrastructure Master Plan](#), [2024 Development Charges Amendment Background Study](#) and the [Long Range Financial Plans \(LRFP\)](#). The City funds its capital programs through a combination of tax supported and other reserve funds, rate supported reserve funds, development charges, debt and grants from senior

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levels of government. Debt funding used to fund eligible components of the capital program will be in accordance with the Fiscal Framework and are well below the provincial debt limit.

The bulk of infrastructure funding goes into maintaining and rehabilitating existing infrastructure as identified in the Comprehensive Asset Management analysis. As funding allows, the City continues to fund growth, building new infrastructure and investing in the future. The City adds between \$600 million and \$800 million worth of new capital to Ottawa's existing asset base every year including buses and vehicles, water pipes, roads, bridges, trunk sewers, street lighting, libraries and much more. These are investments that residents and businesses will benefit from for years to come, and which contribute to the growth of Ottawa's economy and quality of life.

## **Developing the budget**

With direction from City Council, City departments are responsible for developing their detailed draft budgets every year. A series of budgets are tabled, broken down by category so that the various City committees, commissions, and boards responsible can review and discuss what is proposed and ensure everything included complies with existing City plans.

The City must maintain a balanced operating budget. The [Municipal Act](#) prohibits the City from running a deficit on operating expenditures. The City can only borrow funds and incur debt for the capital budget.

Strong financial management and financial sustainability continue to be a commitment and a priority for the City. The budget is guided by Council-approved Long Range Financial Plans, the Fiscal Framework, Strategic Asset Management Plans, Reserve Management Plans, ongoing continuous improvement initiatives and the approved Service Review framework and principles.

During development of the operating and capital budgets, Council can reallocate or reprioritize funds between programs and services to address emerging issues. However, when the City receives funding from other levels of government to help administer several mandated programs, funding is often provided for specific projects and the City generally does not have input into how the funds are spent, nor can the funds be reallocated to other City priorities. How we engaged

The online survey had a total of 1,111 submissions between August 9, 2024 and September 13, 2024. The online survey was promoted through social media, Ottawa.ca and public service announcements. The survey questions are provided in Appendix A.

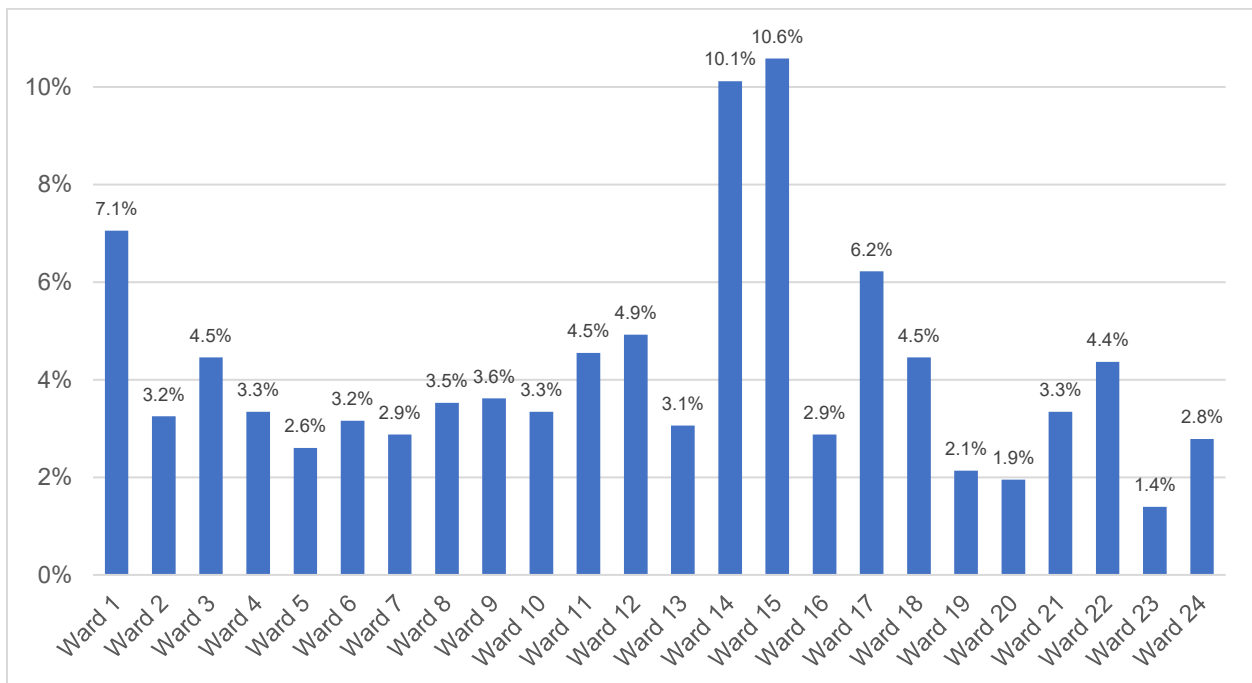
All feedback collected through the survey was considered in this report and all participation is given equal weight in the analysis. Text data from the survey was themed to identify the most common sentiments. For some survey questions, respondents could select more than one option, resulting in some graphs adding up to more than 100 per cent.

## Demographic information

Basic demographic information was collected through a series of questions within the survey. Registrants had the option to self-identify or select ‘prefer not to answer.’ The breakdown of responses in terms of gender identity, geographic distribution of survey respondents, type of residency and self-identified equity-denied groups are depicted in Figures 1 to Figure 4. These questions were not mandatory and may not represent the total numbers of responses. Total number of responses to each question is noted along with each figure.

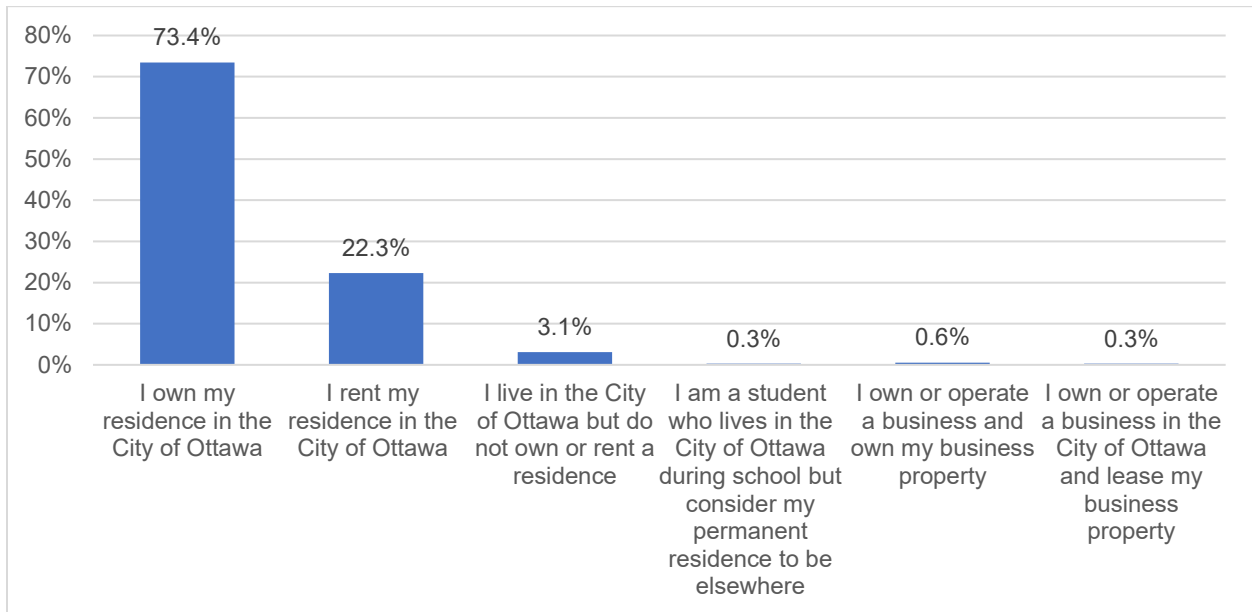
As shown in Figure 1, there were 1,077 responses to a question of which ward the respondent lives in. Individuals belonging to Ward 15 made up 10.6 per cent of responses, followed by Ward 14 (10.1 per cent) and Ward 1 (7.1 per cent).

Figure 1 - Geographic distribution



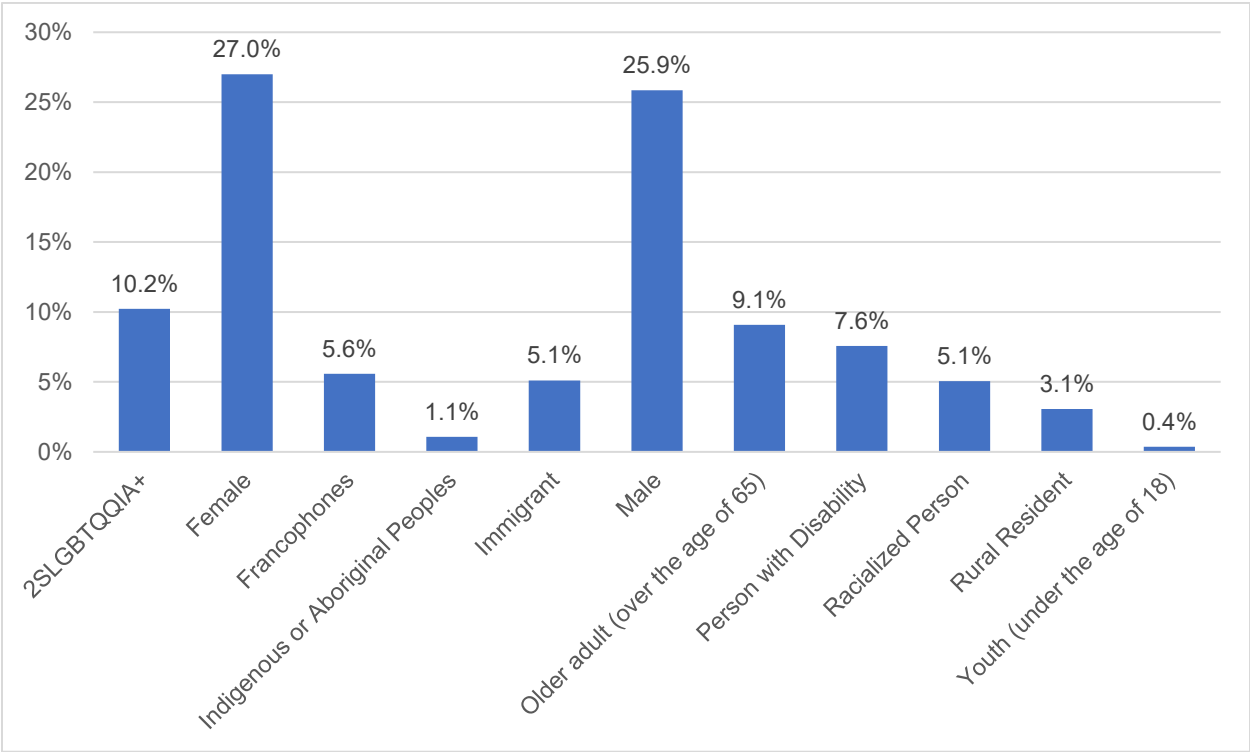
When asked to identify type of residence, there were 1,062 responses. Individuals who own their residence made up 73.4 per cent of responses, followed by those who rent their residence (22.3 per cent) and those that live in the City of Ottawa but do not own or rent a residence (3.1 per cent) (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Type of property occupancy



When asked to self-identify, 1,663 unique responses were received. Individuals who identify as a female made up 27.0 per cent of responses, followed by those who identify as male (25.9 per cent), 2SLGBTQQIA+ (10.2 per cent) and older adult (over the age of 65) (9.1 per cent) (Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Self-identified declaration





## What we heard - survey results

The survey was comprised of three main questions asking respondents to identify their priority of City services, offer suggestions on reducing operating expenses, finding efficiencies and an open comment section. The breakdown of overall responses is provided below in Figures 4 to 7.

### Participant priorities

Paramedic services (57.2 per cent), drinking water (55.0 per cent), public transportation (53.7 per cent), affordable housing (45.3 per cent) and fire services (44.4 per cent) were identified as the **highest** priorities for Draft Budget 2025 when respondents were asked to identify how important each service is to them.

Funding of community agencies and non-profit organizations (13.0 per cent), sustainable transportation (i.e. cycling, walking, e-bikes, e-scooters) (13.1 per cent), media relations (20.6 per cent), arts and culture (14.0 per cent) and parking (23.7 per cent), and were identified as the **lowest** priorities for Draft Budget 2025 when respondents were asked to identify how important each service is to them.

Figure 4 – Priorities - Part 1 (Affordable housing through emergency preparedness)

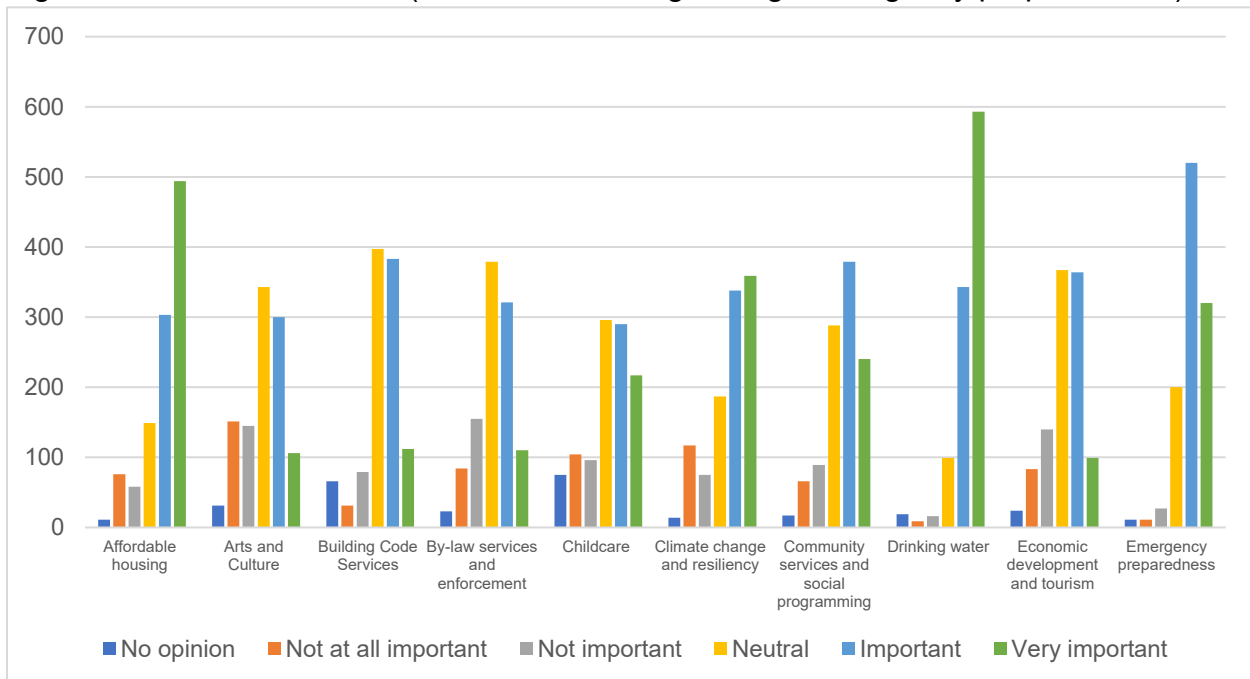


Figure 5 – Priorities - Part 2 (Environmental issues and programs through long range planning)

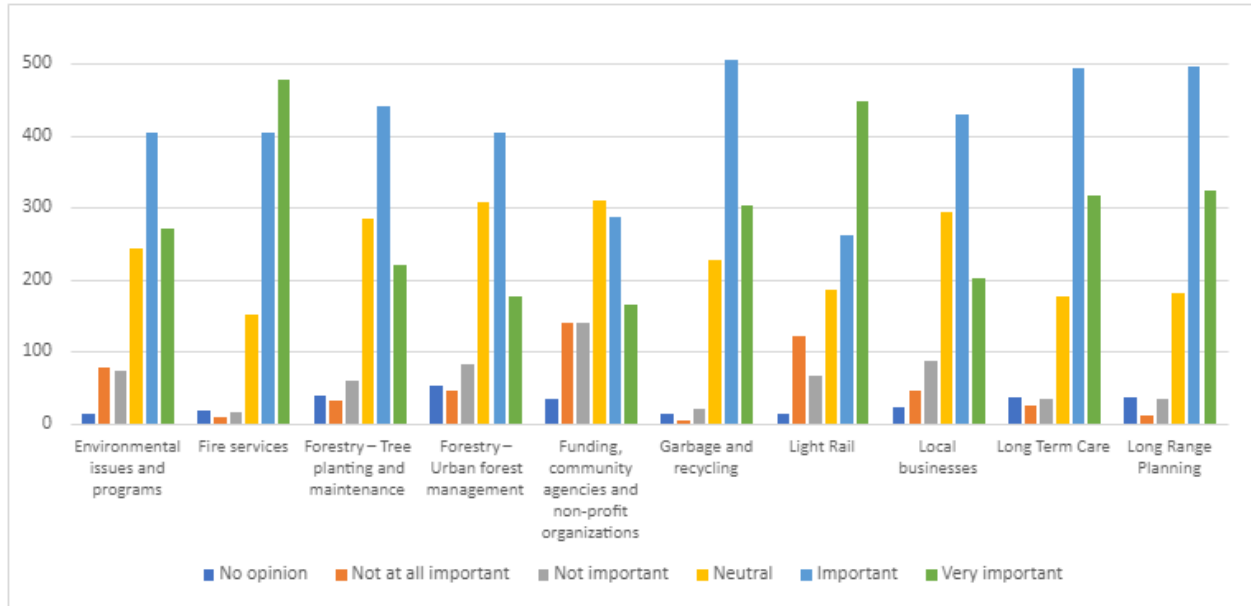


Figure 6 – Priorities - Part 3 (Media relations through roads (snow removal))

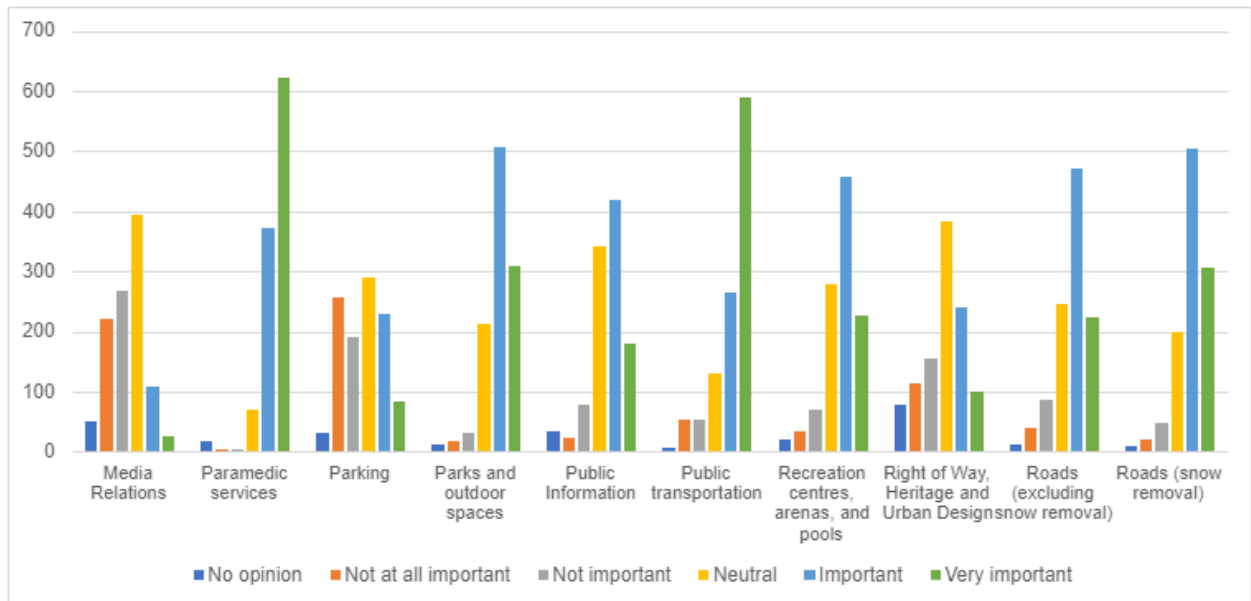
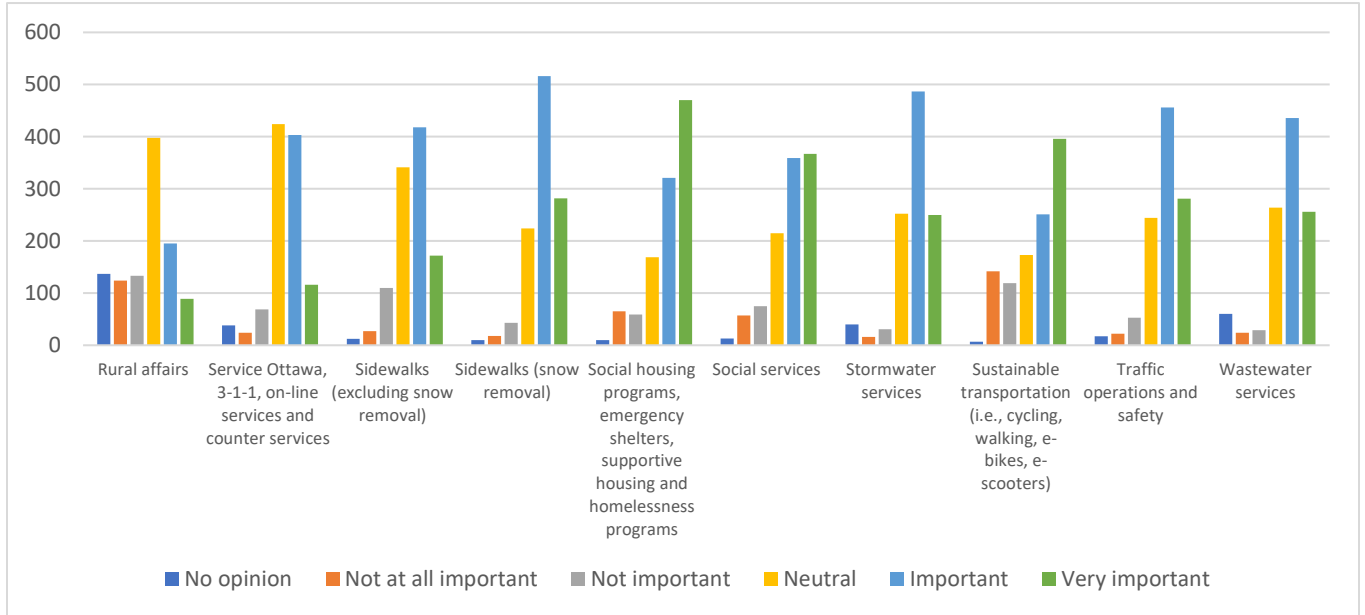


Figure 7 – Priorities - Part 4 (Rural affairs through wastewater services)



## Priorities by ward

Respondents were not required to share their ward however for those who chose to respond, Table 1 identifies the highest priorities for Draft Budget 2025 based on each ward.

Table 1 - Priorities by ward

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Highest priority</b>	<b>Second highest priority</b>	<b>Third highest priority</b>
<b>Ward 1 Orléans East-Cumberland</b>	Drinking water	Paramedic services	Fire services
<b>Ward 2 Orléans West-Innes</b>	Drinking water	Paramedic services	Fire services
<b>Ward 3 Barrhaven West</b>	Paramedic services	Drinking water	Fire services
<b>Ward 4 Kanata North</b>	Paramedic services	Drinking water	Fire services
<b>Ward 5 West Carleton-March</b>	Paramedic services	Rural affairs	Fire services
<b>Ward 6 Stittsville</b>	Drinking water	Paramedic services	Fire services
<b>Ward 7 Bay</b>	Public transportation	Affordable housing	Drinking water
<b>Ward 8 College</b>	Public transportation	Paramedic services	Drinking water

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Highest priority</b>	<b>Second highest priority</b>	<b>Third highest priority</b>
<b>Ward 9 Knoxdale- Merivale</b>	Drinking water	Paramedic services	Public transportation
<b>Ward 10 Gloucester- Southgate</b>	Drinking water	Paramedic services	Fire services
<b>Ward 11 Beacon Hill- Cyrville</b>	Drinking water	Paramedic services	Public transportation
<b>Ward 12 Rideau-Vanier</b>	Public transportation	Social housing programs, emergency shelters, supportive housing and homelessness	Paramedic services
<b>Ward 13 Rideau- Rockcliffe</b>	Paramedic services	Drinking water	Public transportation
<b>Ward 14 Somerset</b>	Public transportation	Affordable housing	Social housing programs, emergency shelters, supportive housing and homelessness programs
<b>Ward 15 Kitchissippi</b>	Public transportation	Light rail	Affordable housing

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Highest priority</b>	<b>Second highest priority</b>	<b>Third highest priority</b>
<b>Ward 16 River</b>	Public transportation	Drinking water	Sustainable transportation (i.e. cycling, walking, e-bikes, e-scooters)
<b>Ward 17 Capital</b>	Public transportation	Affordable housing	Sustainable transportation (i.e. cycling, walking, e-bikes, e-scooters)
<b>Ward 18 Alta Vista</b>	Public transportation	Construction of affordable housing	Development of affordable housing
<b>Ward 19 Orléans South-</b>	Paramedic services	Drinking water	Fire services
<b>Ward 20</b>	Paramedic services	Rural affairs	Fire services
<b>Ward 21</b>	Fire services	Paramedic	Roads (snow removal)
<b>Ward 22 Riverside</b>	Paramedic services	Public transportation	Drinking water
<b>Ward 23 Kanata South</b>	Paramedic services	Fire services	Public transportation
<b>Ward 24 Barrhaven East</b>	Paramedic services	Drinking water	Fire services

## Priorities in relation to demographics

Respondents were not required to self-identify, however for who chose to respond, Table 2 identifies highest priorities for Draft Budget 2025 based upon an equity, inclusion and diversity lens.

Table 2 - Priorities by demographics

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Highest priority</b>	<b>Second highest priority</b>	<b>Third highest priority</b>
<b>2SLGBTQIA+</b>	Public transportation	Social housing programs, emergency shelters, supportive housing and homelessness	Affordable housing
<b>Female</b>	Paramedic services	Public transportation	Affordable housing
<b>Francophones</b>	Paramedic services	Drinking water	Public transportation
<b>Indigenous or aboriginal peoples</b>	Paramedic services	Drinking water	Roads (excluding snow)
<b>Immigrant</b>	Public transportation	Paramedic services	Drinking water
<b>Male</b>	Public transportation	Paramedic services	Drinking water
<b>Older adult (over the age of 65)</b>	Drinking water	Fire services	Paramedic services

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Highest priority</b>	<b>Second highest priority</b>	<b>Third highest priority</b>
<b>Person with disability</b>	Public transportation	Paramedic services	Social housing programs, emergency shelters, supportive housing and homelessness
<b>Racialized person</b>	Public transportation	Affordable housing	Light rail
<b>Rural resident</b>	Paramedic services	Fire services	Rural affairs
<b>Youth (under the age of 18)</b>	Public transportation	Social services	Light rail



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## **Other important issues and feedback to be considered for Draft Budget 2025**

Two open-end questions were asked to allow respondents an opportunity to identify any other important issue that should be considered as a budget priority or provide additional feedback to be considered for Draft Budget 2025. Common themes are summarized below.

While the focus on the consultation was on services reporting to the City of Ottawa Standing Committees, frequent topics included, police services, public safety and public health. Ottawa Police Services, Ottawa Public Library and Ottawa Public Health were not included in this consultation survey as they produce their own budgets and consultations with residents and users.

Common themes noted were a manageable property tax increase to promote affordability for residents. Feedback included continuing to focus on efficiency savings in the delivery of public services, postponement of non-urgent capital projects in favour of more emphasis on traditional core public services, such as roads, paramedics and waste collection and cooperation with other levels of government. Several respondents suggested the city should also investigate additional revenue sources to further help offset tax increases.

Public transit was another popular topic amongst respondents. They would like to see an increase to the reliability of the service without an unmanageable rise in cost. Some comments noted the need to encourage people to use the services by improving reliability of busses and light rail transit systems. Along with reliability, the inflation of transit costs is also a concern, and respondents would like to see affordability of the system be considered.

Respondents also had a desire to see the 2025 budget have funding for affordable housing programs and battling homelessness, especially in the downtown core and urban centres. The opioid crisis was frequently mentioned, and respondents want to see more resources focused on controlling the crisis by way of alternative methods and supports.

Other recurring topics mentioned in the feedback sections included maintenance of roads (potholes and winter maintenance), rural roads and ditch maintenance, traffic congestion, zoning and climate change initiatives.

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## Appendix A – Draft budget 2025 survey questions

1. Municipal services are funded from all levels of government and some funds may be restricted to specific services. From your perspective and recognizing that not everything is within the control of the City of Ottawa, what do you feel are the important local issues facing the City of Ottawa at the present time?

Please note it is not required to rank all services listed below.

- Affordable housing
- Arts and Culture
- Building Code Services
- By-law services and enforcement
- Childcare
- Climate change and resiliency
- Community services and social programming
- Drinking water
- Economic development and tourism
- Emergency preparedness
- Environmental issues and programs
- Fire services
- Forestry – Tree planting and maintenance
- Forestry – Urban forest management
- Funding, community agencies and non-profit organizations
- Garbage and recycling
- Light Rail
- Local businesses
- Long Term Care
- Long Range Planning
- Media Relations
- Paramedic services
- Parking
- Parks and outdoor spaces
- Public Information
- Public transportation
- Recreation centres, arenas and pools
- Right of Way, Heritage and Urban Design
- Roads (excluding snow removal)
- Roads (snow removal)
- Rural affairs

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- Service Ottawa, 3-1-1, on-line services and counter services
  - Sidewalks (excluding snow removal)
  - Sidewalks (snow removal)
  - Social housing programs, emergency shelters, supportive housing and homelessness programs
  - Social services
  - Stormwater services
  - Sustainable transportation (i.e., cycling, walking, e-bikes, e-scooters)
  - Traffic operations and safety
  - Wastewater services

### Options (Columns)

- No opinion
  - Not at all important
  - Not important
  - Neutral
  - Important
  - Very important
2. If the most important local issue facing the City at the present time was not listed above, please tell us what it is.
  3. Do you have any other feedback to be considered for Draft Budget 2025?

### Demographics

This section is optional to complete. The City of Ottawa is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion and strives to ensure that we are consistent and coherent in our efforts to move equity and inclusion forward in our services and to the benefit of our city. It is critical to democracy and public engagement that voices from all diverse backgrounds are heard.

4. Ward information is collected to understand how residents' budget priorities may differ across the City of Ottawa. What [ward](#) do you live in?
  - Ward 1 – Orléans East-Cumberland
  - Ward 2 – Orléans West-Innes
  - Ward 3 – Barrhaven West

- Ward 4 – Kanata North
- Ward 5 – West Carleton March
- Ward 6 – Stittsville
- Ward 7 – Bay
- Ward 8 – College
- Ward 9 – Knoxdale-Merivale
- Ward 10 – Gloucester-Southgate
- Ward 11 – Beacon Hill-Cyrville
- Ward 12 – Rideau-Vanier
- Ward 13 – Rideau-Rockcliffe
- Ward 14 – Somerset
- Ward 15 – Kitchissippi
- Ward 16 – River
- Ward 17 – Capital
- Ward 18 – Alta Vista
- Ward 19 – Orléans South-Navan
- Ward 20 – Osgoode
- Ward 21 – Rideau-Jock
- Ward 22 – Riverside South – Findlay Creek
- Ward 23 – Kanata South
- Ward 24 – Barrhaven East
- Prefer not to answer / not applicable
- I live outside of the City of Ottawa

5. Select the statement that applies to you.

- I own my residence in the City of Ottawa
- I rent my residence in the City of Ottawa
- I live in the City of Ottawa but do not own or rent a residence
- I am a student who lives in the City of Ottawa during school but consider my permanent residence to be elsewhere
- I own or operate a business and own my business property
- I own or operate a business in the City of Ottawa and lease my business property
- Prefer not to answer

6. Do you personally identify as someone in the following group(s)? (choose all that apply)

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- 2SLGBTQQIA+
  - Female
  - Francophones
  - Indigenous or Aboriginal Peoples
  - Immigrant
  - Male
  - Older adult (over the age of 65)
  - Person with Disability
  - Racialized Person
  - Rural Resident
  - Youth (under the age of 18)
  - Not applicable
  - Prefer not to answer