



ATTITUDES AND CONCERNS  
AMONG CITIZENS OF OAKVILLE  
TOWARD KEY MUNICIPAL ISSUES

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**FINAL REPORT**

Prepared for  
the Town of Oakville

Prepared by  
Environics Research Group

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## INTRODUCTION

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The survey was conducted by telephone among a representative sample of 800 residents of the Town of Oakville between May 6 and 19, 2004. The questionnaire was designed in consultation with the Town of Oakville, primarily to update the results of a baseline survey conducted by Environics Research Group between May 23 and June 2, 2001.

The survey was designed to update the findings of the 2001 survey in the following areas:

- residents' attitudes and opinions toward quality of life issues, and toward municipal issues such as property taxes and user fees;

- current levels of satisfaction with municipal services;
- current preferences regarding spending priorities; and
- residents' perceptions and expectations vis-à-vis specific municipal planning priorities.

The margin of error for a sample of 800 is 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The reader is cautioned that margins of error for smaller subsamples are larger.

## THE LEADING TOP-OF-MIND ISSUES

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When residents of Oakville are asked to name, top-of-mind, the single most important issue facing their community today, the largest proportion by far name urban sprawl/rapid development; this proportion has increased dramatically since 2001 and there has been a marked decline in the proportion naming the often-related issue of traffic congestion.

There have been no statistically significant changes in the proportions who mention taxes, environmental pollution, population growth, road conditions, improved Town services, or education issues. Two percent or fewer (each) mention a number of other issues and 11 percent offer no opinion on the question.

### Most important issue facing Oakville 2001 - 2004

	JUNE 2001	MAY 2004
Urban sprawl/rapid development	23	39
Traffic/congestion	19	8
Taxes	6	7
Environmental/pollution	7	5
Population growth/overcrowding	4	4
Road conditions/size	5	3
Education/school issues	5	3
Improved city services	2	3
Other	17	16
dk/na	13	11

#### *Q.1*

*In your opinion, what is the single most important issue facing Oakville today?*

## ASSESSMENT OF OAKVILLE AS A PLACE TO LIVE

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### Likes and dislikes

The results of the current survey indicate that residents continue to place a high value on Oakville having a sense of small-town community and heritage and that they are still concerned about the impact that growth is having – and will have – on their ability to enjoy the ambiance of life in Oakville.

When residents are asked to name the two or three things they like most about the community of Oakville, the largest proportion mention a sense of being in a small, peaceful, historic community. Significant proportions also mention the presence of parks and green spaces, the pleasant downtown, the lakefront, the Town's beauty and cleanliness, the friendliness of the people, the sense of being safe from crime, and the location of the Town.

Also mentioned are the proximity to Town services, the generally good access to services and amenities, the sense of Oakville being a family-oriented community, the schools, the general ambiance of the Town, and arts and culture activities.

### Like most about Oakville 2001 - 2004

	JUNE 2001	MAY 2004
Small community/quiet/heritage	50	42
Green spaces/parks/recreation	36	30
Nice downtown/shopping	25	25
Waterfront/lakeshore*	18	17
Beautiful/clean	16	16
Nice/friendly people	17	13
Safe/crime-free	14	12
Location/proximity	13	11
Close to city services	6	8
Convenience/easy access/good city planning	–	7
Education/schools	5	6
Family oriented	4	6
Atmosphere/ambiance/personality	–	5
Arts/culture/activities	–	4
Other	12	16

\* In 2001, lakeside/waterfront festivals

### Q.2

*Thinking about the whole community of Oakville, what are the two or three things you like the most?*

When residents are asked to name the two or three things they dislike most about the community of Oakville, the largest proportions mention traffic congestion and rapid development. Much smaller proportions mention road maintenance, taxes, air and water quality, a perceived lack of green space and parks, public transit, the high cost of living, the municipal government, lack of recreation and entertainment facilities, poor Town services, overpopulation/crowding, dissatisfaction with Town aesthetics/planning, garbage and recycling issues, lack of parking, a feeling that the Town is elitist, education issues, and crime issues.

### Dislike most about Oakville 2001 - 2004

	JUNE 2001	MAY 2004
Traffic/congestion	31	26
Rapid development/growth	22	26
Road maintenance/snow removal	11	9
Taxes	6	8
Pollution/air/water quality	7	6
Lack of recreation/entertainment	7	5
Public transportation	5	5
High cost of living	4	5
Lack of green space/parks	4	5
Municipal government management problems	3	5
Poor city services/infrastructure	1	4
Education/school issues	5	3
Garbage/recycling services	5	3
Overpopulation/crowded	1	3
City aesthetics/poor design	2	3
Lack of parking	3	3
Elitist/too affluent	2	3
Crime/unsafe	1	3
Other	10	14
None/nothing	12	11
dk/na	10	7

#### Q.3

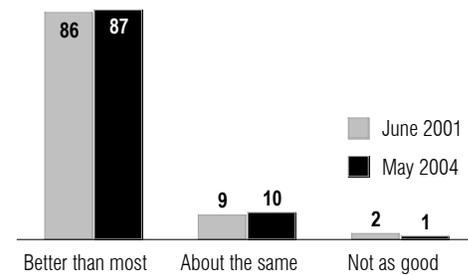
*Thinking about the whole community of Oakville, what are the two or three things you dislike the most?*

There have been some changes in the proportions mentioning some of these factors – most notably a decline in the proportion who mention the sense of being in a small, peaceful, historic community – but the survey results do not indicate any clear shift in how Oakville is perceived by its residents.

### Comparative rating

Oakville residents continue to express a strong sense of pride in their town. The overwhelming majority, 87 percent, say that Oakville is generally a better place than most areas of the Greater Toronto Area in which to live. Ten percent say it is about the same as other areas and just one percent think the Town compares unfavourably with other areas of the GTA. These findings are essentially unchanged from 2001.

### Oakville compared to other GTA areas 2001 - 2004



#### Q.4

*Thinking about Oakville as a place in which to live, would you say that it is generally ... {rotate first two responses} ... better than most areas of the Greater Toronto Area ... not as good as most areas of the Greater Toronto Area ... about the same as most areas of the Greater Toronto Area?*

## Specific quality of life measures – gap analysis of importance and satisfaction

The survey continues to find confirmation of the generally high levels of satisfaction reported by Oakville residents in the combined results of two questions designed to explore residents' perceptions regarding ten specific quality of life measures and how the Town of Oakville rates along these same dimensions. In all cases, majorities of residents give the Town a positive assessment on its efforts to deliver on the quality of life measures that are important to them. Moreover, on six of the measures, seven in ten or more give the Town passing grades.

However, there is some concern in the areas of environmental protection, the Town's living environment, provision of social services and the amount of green space. On all these measures, there are gaps between perceived importance and the Town's performance. There has been a noticeable decline in expressed satisfaction

with the amount of green spaces, but it should be noted that the Town still receives a relatively high rating on this measure.

Residents were first asked to rate the importance of ten factors in making any community a good place in which to live and work and then to rate the Town of Oakville on each of these factors. From the table below, it is clear that residents attach the greatest importance to having a feeling of belonging and being safe in one's neighbourhood and to the environment in which people live (e.g., clean water and air and adequate shelter). On the next tier of importance are the amount of green space that's available for the use of residents, the efforts that the Town government makes to protect the environment, the opportunities people have for education and development of new skills, the opportunities for recreation, sports, leisure and cultural activities, the community's ability to find help for people in need, the quality of buildings and overall appearance of the community and the kinds of jobs and earning power

## Quality of life measures – gap analysis 2001 - 2004

	IMPORTANCE		RATING					
	JUNE 2001	MAY 2004	JUNE 2001			MAY 2004		
	VERY IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXCELLENT	GOOD	EXCELLENT/ GOOD COMBINED	EXCELLENT	GOOD	EXCELLENT/ GOOD COMBINED
Feeling of belonging/being safe in neighbourhood	92	94	46	45	91	45	45	90
Environment for living	95	92	24	48	72	22	51	73
Amount of green space available for use of residents	83	82	30	50	80	28	43	71
Town efforts to protect environment	82	82	10	46	56	12	43	55
Education/training opportunities	77	75	20	52	72	24	52	76
Opportunities for sports/leisure/cultural activities	75	75	30	49	79	33	49	82
Finding help for needy	74	70	13	42	55	11	44	55
Quality/appearance of buildings/community	65	63	35	51	86	31	52	83
Jobs/earning opportunities for residents	56	62	13	46	59	7	49	56
Civic involvement opportunities	38	45	13	46	59	16	50	66

### Q.6

*Now I would like to ask you a two-part question.*

- i) First, in general, how important are each of the following factors in making any community a good place in which to live and work ...?*
- ii) Second, how would you rate The Town of Oakville on each of these factors ...?*

that are available for residents. Of least importance are the opportunities residents have to get involved with organizations and local government. These findings are largely unchanged from 2001, although there has been a slight increase in the perceived importance of jobs and earning power.

When residents are asked to rate the performance of the Town of Oakville on each of these measures, the Town gets its highest marks in the areas of providing a feeling of belonging and being safe, the quality of buildings and overall appearance of the community, sports, leisure and cultural activities, education and training opportunities, the environment for living, and the amount of green space. The Town gets somewhat lower marks on the other dimensions, but, it should be

noted, there is no area for which fewer than 55 percent give a rating of “good” or “excellent.”

There are five areas for which there are statistically significant gaps between the proportions who rate the dimension as “very important” and the proportions who give it a rating of “good” or “excellent.” The largest gap is found on the measure of Town government efforts to protect the environment. Somewhat smaller gaps are found on the measures that test perception of the environment in which people live (e.g., clean water and air and adequate shelter), the community’s ability to find help for people in need, the amount of green space, and jobs and earning opportunities. For all the other areas, the results suggest the Town is meeting or exceeding citizens’ expectations.

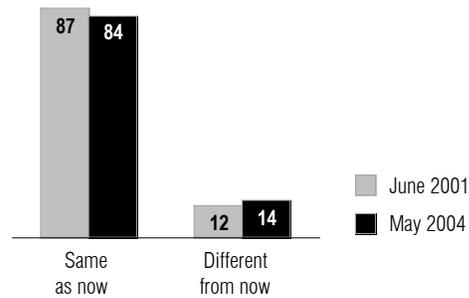
## Future outlook

Oakville residents want their town to remain unchanged. When asked to look ten years into the future, almost all residents – 84 percent – say they would like Oakville to be much the same as it is now. Just 14 percent would like it to be quite different from what it is now. These findings are essentially unchanged from 2001.

Among the relatively few who would like to see changes, the largest proportions mention a desire for less development/fewer businesses, improved aesthetics and more green space, improved Town services, better road maintenance and accessibility to transportation, and more recreation services. Also mentioned are more development/businesses, various health and medical issues, less traffic, better public transportation, education issues, more housing, changes to Town government or bureaucracy, lower taxes and cost of living, more public involvement in civic issues and increased seniors' services.

These findings are largely unchanged from 2001, although there have been noticeable decreases in the proportions who mention changes to Town government or bureaucracy, better road maintenance and accessibility to transportation, and traffic-related concerns.

## Preferences for future of Oakville 2001 - 2004



*Q.17a*

*Thinking ahead ten years from now, would you like the Town of Oakville to be ...?*

## Changes most like to see for future 2001 - 2004

	JUNE 2001	MAY 2004
Decreased development/businesses	17	21
Better aesthetics/cleaner/more green space	21	18
Better road maintenance/transport accessibility	23	16
Improved services/infrastructure	20	16
Social/recreation activities increased	13	13
Increased development/businesses	12	9
Health/medical issues (various)	–	8
Better public transportation	10	6
Less traffic/congestion	12	6
Town/government/bureaucracy	14	4
Education issues (various)	–	4
More housing	–	4
Lower taxes/lower cost of living	5	4
More public involvement in running municipality	–	3
Increased/improved seniors' services	4	3
Other	10	13
dk/na	5	7

*Q.17b*

*What are the one or two changes that you would most like to see?  
Subsample: Those who would like the Town of Oakville to be quite different from now in ten years*

## SATISFACTION WITH TOWN OF OAKVILLE GOVERNMENT

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### Overall satisfaction

Residents continue to express high levels of satisfaction with the Town of Oakville government, although there has been a decline since 2001.

There has been a decrease of six points in the overall proportion, now 76 percent, who say they are satisfied, and a decrease of 11 points in the number, now 24 percent, who say they are very satisfied. There has been an overall increase of eight points in the proportion, now 21 percent, who express dissatisfaction with the Town government.

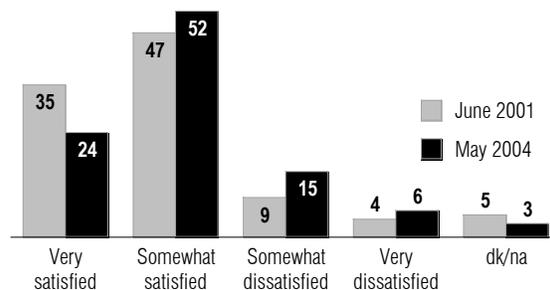
### Satisfaction with specific Oakville services – satisfaction and spending

Majorities report being satisfied with the Town's delivery of all of the services included in the survey and majorities are satisfied with current levels of spending for all of these services. There is very little support for spending cuts in any of the areas included in the survey. This pattern of response is largely unchanged from 2001.

Between eight and nine in ten express satisfaction with libraries, fire fighting, parks, cultural venues, garbage collection at curbside, bush and leaf collection at curbside, the number of woodlots and trails, recreation programs, road and sidewalk maintenance during the spring, summer and fall, indoor recreation facilities (other than arenas), outdoor sports fields, and fire education services. Between six and seven in ten express satisfaction with all the other services included in the survey, with the exception of public transit, which gets a passing grade from just over five in ten residents.

The largest increase in satisfaction is found for bush and leaf collection at curbside, but there have also

Town of Oakville government  
2001 - 2004



#### Q.5

*Would you say that you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the Town of Oakville government?*

been slight increases in satisfaction with garbage collection at curbside, library services, seniors' services, fire education services, winter sidewalk maintenance, and the roads network. The only area for which there has been a slight decrease in satisfaction is maintenance of boulevards and curbside grass.

Approximately three in ten say they are dissatisfied with the Town's performance in the areas of winter road maintenance, the roads network, winter sidewalk maintenance, maintenance of boulevards and curbside grass, and litter pick-up, but in each of these cases, satisfaction outweighs dissatisfaction by a wide margin. About two in ten say they are dissatisfied with public transit and road and sidewalk maintenance outside the winter season. Again, however, it should be noted that satisfaction far outweighs dissatisfaction. Significant proportions of two to four in ten offer no opinion regarding cemeteries, seniors' services, public transit, arenas, and fire education services.

Majorities express satisfaction with current spending levels for every service included in the survey. The only area for which there has been a slight decrease in satisfaction with current spending is that of maintenance of boulevards and curbside grass.

Four in ten residents would like to see increased spending on Oakville's road network. Three in ten favour increased spending on winter road maintenance, public

transit, litter pick-up, maintenance of boulevards and curbside grass, services for seniors and winter sidewalk maintenance. About two in ten favour increased spending on libraries, increasing the number of woodlots and trails, road and sidewalk maintenance outside the winter season, parks, recreation programs, and indoor recreation facilities (other than arenas). One in ten offer no opinion on spending levels on arenas and fire education services.

## Satisfaction and spending – Town services 2001 - 2004

SERVICE	SATISFACTION						SPENDING					
	JUNE 2001			MAY 2004			JUNE 2001			MAY 2004		
	SAT.	DISSAT.	DON'T USE/ DK/NA	SAT.	DISSAT.	DON'T USE/ DK/NA	SPEND MORE	SPEND LESS	SPEND SAME	SPEND MORE	SPEND LESS	SPEND SAME
Public library services	86	7	6	92	5	3	24	3	69	23	3	73
Fire fighting services	88	1	11	90	2	8	17	2	73	16	2	75
Parks	89	9	2	89	9	2	21	4	74	21	2	76
Cultural venues such as the Oakville Museum, galleries and the Performing Arts Centre	86	6	8	88	6	7	17	9	70	16	9	73
Garbage collection at curbside	81	15	4	88	8	3	14	3	81	13	2	83
Bush and leaf collection at curbside	77	15	7	87	6	7	14	5	77	7	6	84
Number of woodlots and trails in the Town	84	11	4	84	10	7	25	4	68	23	6	68
Recreational programs	80	8	11	83	7	9	18	3	72	18	4	74
Road and sidewalk maintenance during the spring, summer and fall	78	21	1	81	18	1	24	4	71	21	4	74
Indoor recreational facilities, other than arenas	76	14	10	79	12	8	22	6	66	18	4	73
Outdoor sports fields	79	9	11	78	11	12	16	4	73	16	5	72
Fire education services	71	10	20	77	7	17	21	3	64	16	4	69
Litter pick-up in parks and on boulevards	73	25	2	72	27	1	25	2	70	29	2	68
Maintenance of boulevards and curbside grass	77	21	3	71	28	1	21	7	70	27	6	66
Arenas	70	8	21	70	9	21	12	8	68	14	6	68
Winter sidewalk maintenance	65	31	3	69	28	3	31	6	61	26	8	64
The network of roads in Oakville	63	35	1	67	31	2	46	2	50	39	2	57
Winter road maintenance such as sanding and snow clearing	63	36	1	65	33	1	40	2	56	34	2	63
Services for seniors	54	8	38	61	6	33	30	1	47	27	2	52
Cemeteries	58	2	40	61	1	39	5	5	64	3	5	69
Public transit	50	21	29	53	23	24	28	5	54	32	5	54

### Q.7

Now I would like to ask you another two-part question about specific services.

- i) First, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following services as it is currently delivered by the Town of Oakville ...?
- ii) Second, keeping in mind that taxes may increase if spending increases, do you think the Town of Oakville should be spending more, spending less, or spending the same on each of the following services ...?

## Satisfaction with specific Regional services – satisfaction and spending

Large majorities of about eight to nine in ten residents are satisfied with police services, ambulance services, water safety and hospital renovations and new health care facilities. About half are satisfied with public housing, social welfare assistance services, mental health services and child care services; it should be noted that two in ten or fewer are actually dissatisfied with these services and from three to four in ten either say they do not use the services or offer no assessment. These findings are all largely unchanged from 2001.

Large majorities of about seven in ten favour maintenance of current spending levels for ambulance and

police services; there is also slight majority support for current spending levels on social welfare assistance and mental health services. There has been an increase in the proportion, now almost six in ten, who are satisfied with current spending on water safety. Pluralities of just under half are satisfied with current spending on public housing and child care services.

The only area for which there is majority support for increased spending is that of hospital renovations and facilities; this sentiment has increased since 2001.

It should also be noted that about two in ten (each) offer no opinion regarding spending on mental health services, social welfare assistance, child care services and public housing.

## Satisfaction and spending – Regional services 2001 - 2004

SERVICE	SATISFACTION						SPENDING					
	JUNE 2001			MAY 2004			JUNE 2001			MAY 2004		
	SAT.	DISSAT.	DON'T USE/ DK/NA	SAT.	DISSAT.	DON'T USE/ DK/NA	SPEND MORE	SPEND LESS	SPEND SAME	SPEND MORE	SPEND LESS	SPEND SAME
Police services	90	7	3	89	8	3	22	4	71	28	4	65
The safety of the water you drink	75	19	6	79	19	2	46	1	50	39	1	58
Ambulance services	77	3	20	79	2	19	17	1	70	17	1	72
Hospital renovations and new health care facilities	75	19	6	75	19	5	47	2	47	54	2	41
Public housing	53	15	32	54	14	32	22	12	47	24	10	48
Child care services	50	13	38	49	12	39	26	6	47	28	4	48
Mental health services	51	9	40	49	12	39	22	2	51	25	2	51
Social welfare assistance	53	13	34	49	13	38	18	12	49	20	8	51

Q.8

i) Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with ...?

ii) And, keeping in mind that taxes may increase if spending increases, do you think the Regional Municipality of Halton should be spending more, spending less, or spending the same on each of the following ...?

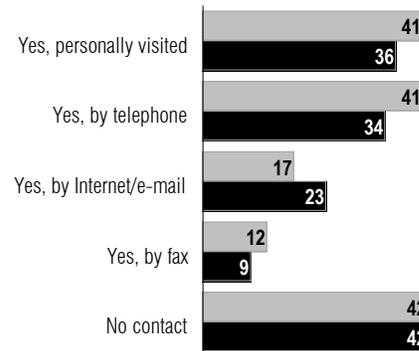
## Rating customer service at Town of Oakville

A majority of 58 percent of residents report some kind of experience with Town employees; 42 percent report no such experience. These findings are virtually unchanged from 2001

About one-third (each) say they have personally visited or telephoned an Oakville municipal office, community centre or library within the past year in order to conduct business or obtain municipal services. About two in ten report making such contacts by e-mail and one in ten report faxing a municipal office. Tracking data from 2001 indicate that personal visits and phone calls are down and use of e-mail contact has increased.

Approximately nine in ten residents agree that “Town employees are courteous,” and eight in ten agree that “services are dependable and accurate,” and that “Town employees are knowledgeable.” Seven in ten agree that “you can easily find the right staff to deal with your situation.” In all these cases, agreement tends to be slightly higher among those who report having contacted a municipal office or facility within the past year; those who report no such contact are more likely to simply not express an opinion on the question. There have been slight increases in the proportions who offer positive assessments in the areas of courtesy and accessibility of the appropriate staff.

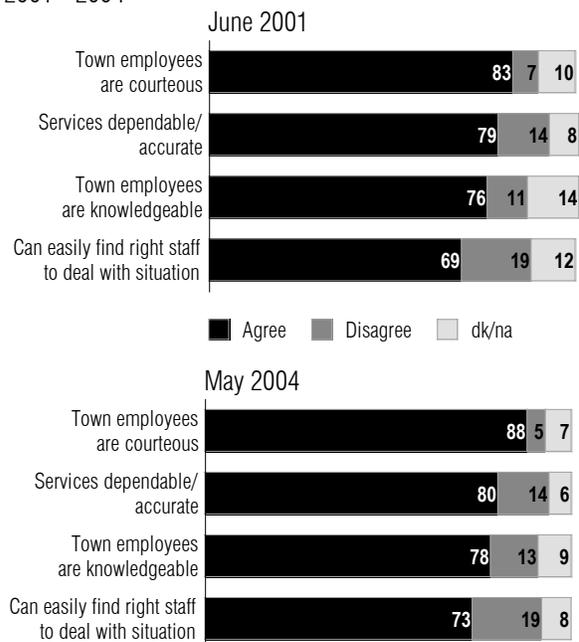
## Contact with municipal office, community centre or library 2001 - 2004



### Q.12a

*Within the past year, have you visited, telephoned, faxed or e-mailed any Oakville municipal office, a community centre or a library in order to conduct business or obtain municipal services?*

## Experience with Town staff 2001 - 2004



### Q.13a-d

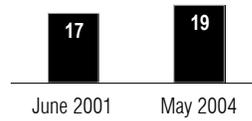
*Based on your recent contact with the Town or on what you have read or heard, would you agree or disagree with the following statements ... {randomize} ... Town employees are courteous ... Town employees are knowledgeable ... You can easily find the right staff to deal with your situation ... Services are dependable and accurate?*

## Accessibility of Councillors

Relatively few residents, just 19 percent, report having contacted a member of the Oakville Town Council within the past year; 81 percent say they have made no such contact. These findings are essentially unchanged from 2001.

A majority of 54 percent of residents agree that “Town Council members are accessible;” 14 percent disagree and 32 percent offer no opinion. However, among those who contacted a Council member, 72 percent agree with the statement; 21 percent disagree. Once again, there have been no statistically significant changes in these findings from 2001.

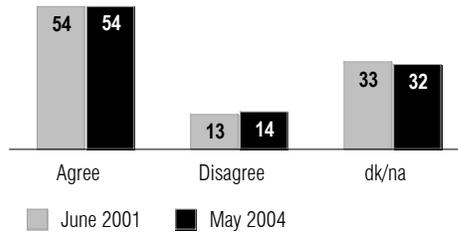
## Have had contact with Town Council member within past year 2001 - 2004



*Q.12b*

*Within the past year, have you contacted any member of the Oakville Town Council?*

## Town Council members are accessible 2001 - 2004



*Q.13e*

*Based on your recent contact with the Town or on what you have read or heard, would you agree or disagree with the following statements ... {randomize} ... Town Council members are accessible?*

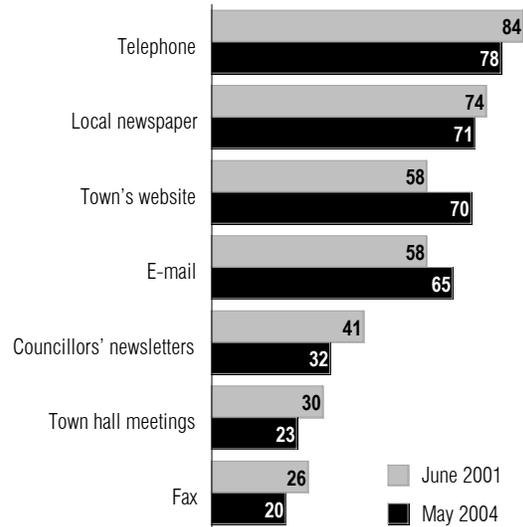
## Preferred sources of information

The survey results suggest that residents are most likely to use the phone, the local newspaper or the Town's website when looking for information from the Town of Oakville government; preference for the website has increased markedly since 2001. There has also been an increase in the proportion who indicate they would use e-mail; among these, there continues to be noticeably more openness to using the website to register for services than there is for using it to pay taxes, user fees or fines (that is, for a financial transaction with the Town), although the latter has increased slightly over the past three years.

When residents are asked how they might look for or get information from the municipal government of the Town of Oakville, substantial majorities say that they would phone, check the local newspaper, use the Town's website or e-mail the Town; use of both the website and e-mail has increased. About three in ten say they would likely check their ward newspapers and about two in ten say they would go to a Town hall meeting or send a fax to the Town; these findings are down from 2001.

Among those who are likely to use the Town's website or e-mail, almost eight in ten would use the website to register for services, and there has been a slight increase in the proportion, now six in ten, who say they would use it to pay taxes, user fees or fines.

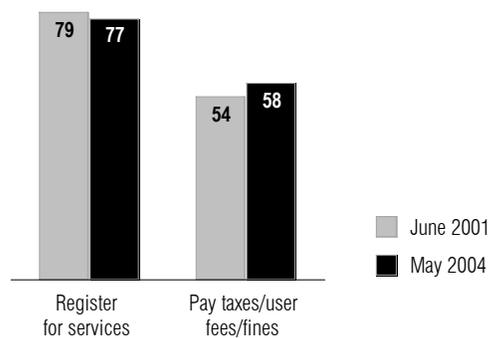
## Likely ways to access information from Town of Oakville government 2001 - 2004



### Q.14

*Thinking about the ways that you might look for or get information from the municipal government of The Town of Oakville, would you likely, or not likely, use each of the following ... {randomize} ...?*

## Likely uses of Town website 2001 - 2004



### Q.15

*Is it likely or not likely that you would use the Town of Oakville's website in order to ...?*

*Subsample: Those who said they would be likely to use e-mail or the Town's website in order to look for or get information*

## PREFERRED APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT OF SERVICES

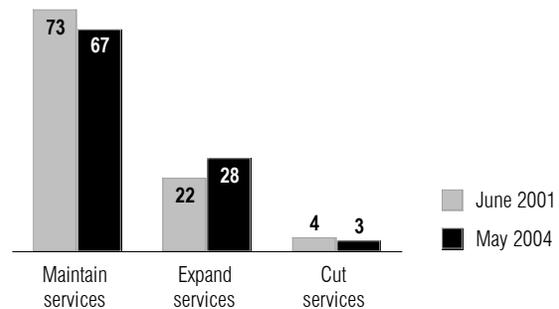
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A substantial majority of residents want the Town government to maintain existing levels of services, even if this means increasing taxes or higher user fees. At the same time, there is a consensus that any expansion of services should be paid for by user fees. There is virtually no support for service cuts.

When residents are asked to choose among three overall strategies for managing Town services, a majority of 67 percent say the Town should maintain existing levels of services; however, this proportion is down slightly from 2001 and there has been a slight increase in the proportion, now 28 percent, who favour an expansion of services.

Among those who favour maintaining current service levels, a large majority of 71 percent say they favour maintenance of current service levels even if it means higher taxes and a similar proportion, 68 percent, say they favour maintenance of current service levels even if it means higher user fees. These findings are essentially unchanged from 2001.

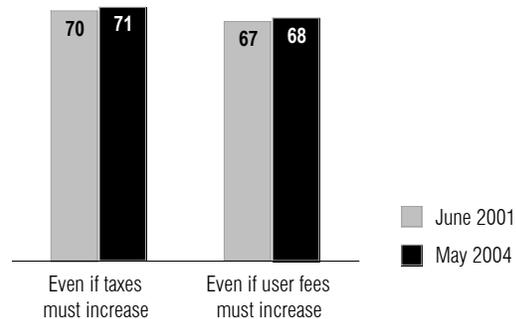
### Strategies for managing Town services 2001 - 2004



*Q.10a*

*Thinking about overall strategies by which the Town should manage its services, which of the following would be your first choice? Do you think the Town of Oakville should ...?*

### Maintain services 2001 - 2004



*Q.10d*

*Do you think the Town of Oakville should maintain services even if it means taxes are increased?*

*Subsample: Those who think the Town should maintain existing services*

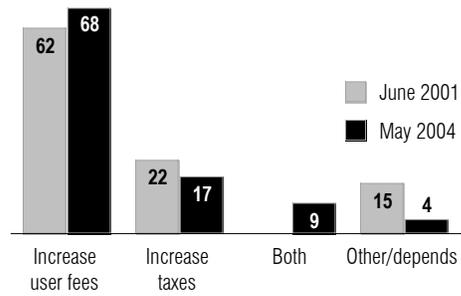
*Q.10e*

*Do you think the Town of Oakville should maintain services even if it means user fees are increased?*

*Subsample: Those who think the Town should maintain existing services*

Among the minority of Oakville residents who favour an expansion of services, 68 percent say this should be financed by increasing user fees rather than taxes; this proportion has increased slightly and there has been a decrease in the number, just 17 percent, who say taxes should be raised to pay for the expanded services. Among the three percent of Oakville residents who favour service cuts, three-quarters think this should lead to property tax cuts.

### Strategies for expanding Town services 2001 - 2004

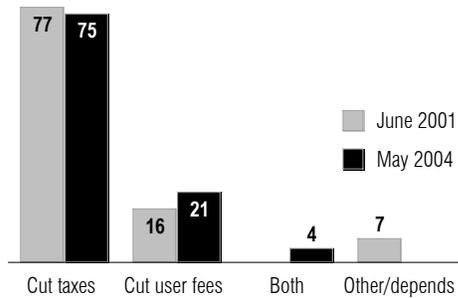


#### Q.10b

*And how do you think the Town should do this? Do you think the Town of Oakville should ...?*

*Subsample: Those who think the Town should expand existing services*

### Preferences if Town services are cut 2001 - 2004



#### Q.10c

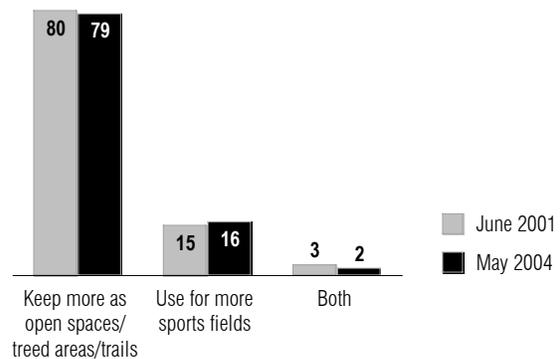
*And if the Town cuts services, which one of the following do you prefer ...?*

*Subsample: Those who think the Town should cut existing services*

## PREFERRED USE OF PARK SPACES

Oakville residents continue to express a strong preference for open green spaces over sports fields. An overwhelming majority of 79 percent say they prefer that the Town keep more of its park areas as open green spaces, treed areas and trails. Relatively few residents, 16 percent, would like the Town to use its park space to develop more sports fields, such as ball diamonds and soccer fields. These findings are largely unchanged from 2001.

Planning and use of park space  
2001 - 2004



### Q.9

*Thinking about the planning and use of the Town's park space, which one of the following do you most prefer ... {rotate} ... keeping more of the park areas as open green spaces, treed areas and trails ... using park space to develop more sports fields, such as ball diamonds and soccer fields?*

## OAKVILLE BUS SYSTEM

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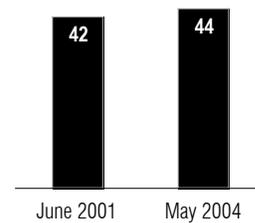
As was noted earlier in this report, public transit is the lowest rated of the Town's services, although residents are twice as likely to express satisfaction as dissatisfaction and just over half are satisfied with current levels of spending in this area. (See Satisfaction and spending – Oakville services.)

The current survey finds that among the four in ten residents who patronize the Town's bus system, most use it only occasionally or to commute to work. Only about one in ten report household use of Sunday bus services and virtually no one uses this service on a regular basis.

A minority of 44 percent report that they or someone in their household has used Oakville's bus system within the past year; 55 percent report no household use of the bus system. These findings are largely unchanged from 2001.

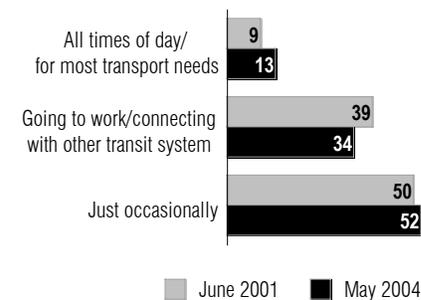
Among those who report household use of the system, 52 percent say the most frequent user in their household uses the bus system only occasionally; another 34 percent say that person usually uses the system just to get to work or to connect with another transit system, such as the GO train and 13 percent say the person uses the system at all times of the day. These findings have changed little since 2001, but there has been a slight increase in the proportion of what might be described as heavy users and a slight decrease in reported use to commute to work.

Have used Oakville bus system in past year  
2001 - 2004



*Q.11a*  
Within the past year, have you or members of your household used Oakville's bus system?

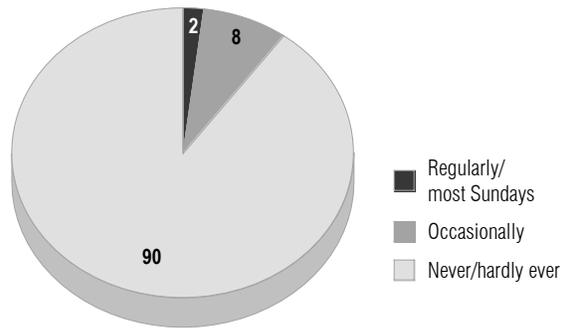
Pattern of bus system use  
2001 - 2004



*Q.11b*  
Thinking about the person in your household who uses the bus system the most, does that person take the bus ... at all times of the day, to get most places where he/she cannot walk or bike ... usually just to get to work or to connect with another transit system, such as the GO train ... just occasionally?  
Subsample: Those who said that they, or members of their household, have used Oakville's bus system within the past year

Just two percent of Oakville residents report regular personal or household use of the Town's Sunday bus system and another eight percent report occasional use of Sunday buses. Most, 90 percent, say the Sunday bus system is rarely or never used by members of their household. Reported use is considerably lower than the level of interest expressed in 2001, when 19 percent said they would use a Sunday bus occasionally and seven percent said they would use it regularly.

### Sunday use of bus system May 2004



Q.11c

*Thinking about Sundays, do you, or does anyone in your household, use Oakville's bus system ...?*

## OAKVILLE LIBRARY SYSTEM

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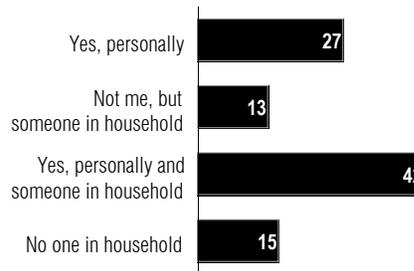
### Reported use of system

Earlier in the report, we noted that Oakville’s public library system is its highest rated service and that seven in ten are satisfied with current Town spending on this valued service. (See Satisfaction and spending – Oakville services.)

The value placed on the library system is further reflected in the finding that a total of 82 percent report that they personally (69%) and or someone in their household (13%) have a card for the library; 42 percent report two or more cards per household.

Furthermore, among the residents who do not personally have a card, 36 percent report some use of the library system. The survey results indicate that eight percent of Oakville households do not use the library system.

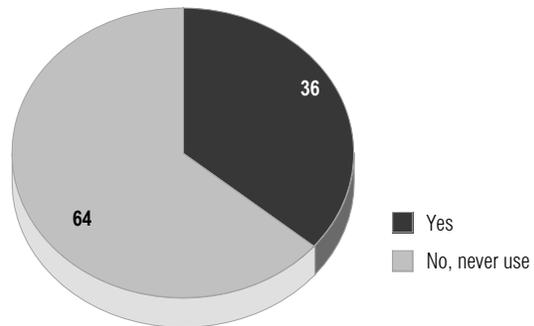
### Have Oakville library card May 2004



#### *Q.D6a*

*At the present time, do you or does anyone in your household have a card for the Oakville library?*

### Use Oakville library May 2004



#### *Q.D6b*

*Even though you don't have a card, do you use the Oakville library at all?*

*Subsample: Those who do not have a card for the Oakville library*

## Awareness of specific services

Nine in ten residents are aware that the Oakville library offers the following services:

- free expertise of the library staff to help in finding information;
- desks or areas designed for studying or reading;
- reference materials in the form of books or CD-ROMS for in-library use;
- newspapers that can be used in the library;
- videos that can be borrowed; and
- music on CD or cassette tapes that can be borrowed.

Between seven and eight in ten are aware of these library services:

- children's programs;
- DVDs that can be borrowed;
- computer activities for children in the library;
- adult magazines that can be borrowed; and
- children's magazines that can be borrowed.

About six in ten are aware of adult programs and speakers and about five in ten are aware of:

- specialized databases on the library website;
- rooms that can be booked in advance to hold meetings;
- outreach community services like library Book Nooks or the Youth Online program; and
- the community information service called Information Oakville.

## Aware that Oakville library offers ... May 2004

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Free expertise of library staff to help in finding information	92
Desks or areas designed for studying or reading	92
Reference materials in the form of books or CD-ROMs	89
Newspapers to be used in the library	89
Videos that can be borrowed	89
Music on CD or cassette tapes that can be borrowed	86
Children's programs	84
DVDs that can be borrowed	81
Computer activities for children in the library	76
Magazines for adults that can be borrowed	75
Magazines for children that can be borrowed	71
Adult programs and speakers	58
Specialized databases on the library website that include things like full text magazine articles	50
Rooms that can be booked in advance to hold meetings	50
Outreach community services like library Book Nooks or the Youth Online program	48
The community information service called Information Oakville	45

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### Q.16

*Are you aware that the Oakville library offers the following programs and services ...?*

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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Oakville residents continue to be very proud of their community – there is an overwhelming consensus that it outranks all other areas of the Greater Toronto Area as a place in which to live and that it should stay the way that it is.

When residents are asked about the leading issues facing their community and about what they like and do not like about living in Oakville, their responses confirm that they continue to place a high value on the overall ambiance of the Town as an historic, peaceful community with a small-town feel. As a result, they are very concerned about factors – rapid development and traffic congestion – that might threaten that ambiance.

Overall, Oakville residents continue to be very positive in their assessments of the overall management of the Town: although the proportion has declined since 2001, three-quarters say they are satisfied with the Town of Oakville government. In addition, most residents offer positive assessments of Town employees and Town Councillors, and these assessments tend to be higher than average among those who have actually had recent contact with these people.

A deeper analysis of attitudes reveals that, when residents were asked to rate the importance of ten factors in making any community a good place in which to live and work and then to rate The Town of Oakville on each of these factors, majorities – often large majorities – believe that the Town is doing a good job of delivering on the quality of life measures that are important to them. At the same time, there continue to be notable gaps between perceived importance and the Town's performance in the areas of environmental protection, living environment and provision of social services; a noticeable gap has also emerged in regard to the perceived amount of green space available to Town residents.

Majorities report being satisfied with 21 specific services that are delivered by the Town and with current levels of Town spending on all of these services. However, it should be noted that there is significant minority support for spending more on the Town's network of roads, winter road maintenance, public transit, litter pick-up, maintenance of boulevards and curbside grass, services for seniors and winter sidewalk maintenance.

Similarly, half or more of residents say they are satisfied with the delivery of eight regional services; lower satisfaction ratings tend to come more from a lack of experience with certain services (e.g., child care services) than with actual dissatisfaction. Majorities or pluralities favour maintenance of current spending levels for all of these services except that of hospital renovations and facilities (for which a majority now favour increased spending).

The survey finds very little support for spending cuts – only about one in ten or fewer say there should be lower levels of spending on any of the specific services included in the survey. Moreover, when residents are asked to choose among three overall strategies for managing Town services, just under seven in ten say the Town should maintain existing levels of services – even if it means higher taxes – and almost three in ten favour an expansion of services; virtually no one chooses the option of cutting services. In fact, since 2001, there has been a slight shift away from a preference for the status quo toward an expansion of services. At the same time, there is a growing consensus that any expansion of services should be financed through user fees, not higher property taxes.

When residents are asked about sources of information from the Town of Oakville government, most say they are likely to use the phone or the local newspaper, but there has been a marked increase in reported interest in the Town's website and in using e-mail; these

residents continue to be much more open to using the website to register for services than to pay taxes, user fees or fines, although there has been a slight increase in the number who say they would use it to complete a financial transaction with the Town.

When residents are asked about their preferences regarding management of park space, there continues to be an overwhelming preference – among eight in ten – for developing green spaces over sports fields.

When the survey asked further about library services, it found that the library system is Oakville's highest rated service and eight in ten households report having at least one library card; four in ten report two or more cards within the household. Moreover, residents express high degrees of awareness of a range of library services.

The public transit system is the lowest rated service, to a large extent because a quarter of residents offer no opinion on its perceived quality. Just one in ten report regular household use (with another three in ten reporting occasional use); one in ten report use of the Sunday bus service.