

Date: Monday, September 15, 2025

Meeting Type: Special Council Meeting

From: Samantha Buchanan, Treasurer

Subject: 2026 Services Survey Results

Report#: COR2025-047

This document and its attachments are public and available in an accessible format upon request.

Recommendation

N/A

Background

As part of routine engagement staff issued the 2026 Services Survey, opening for answers on July 11, 2025, which included a media release on this date, and closed on August 15, 2025. The purpose of the services survey was to gather feedback from residents about their priorities for municipal spending and the value they place on different services. This feedback is to help the Township make informed decisions about resource allocation, ensuring that the budget aligns with community needs and expectations. With the overall goal being to promote transparency and accountability in the budget process by directly involving residents in shaping their community's future. As part of the survey, it was noted that the Township does not guarantee that suggestions received as part of the survey will be implemented in the coming years budget, however, are to provide an understanding of what services the community may want further explored.

The survey was available on the Township website (Engage GB) and in paper form at all Township facilities.

Analysis

Who we heard from:

The 2026 services survey had 587 visitors on the EngageGB site with 215 participants providing comments to the survey (214 participated through Engage GB and 1 (one) through paper submissions). Majority (96.7%) of survey participants are full-time residents of the Township, with respondents identifying Shallow Lake, Kemble, Balmy Beach, Brooke, and other areas as the option which best described where they live

within the Township, with less representation from other communities throughout the Township. 52.1% of survey participants fell within the 56+ age range, 42.2% in the 35-55 age range, and the remaining 5.7% of survey participants fell within the 18-34 age range. Approximately 55.90% of survey participants have lived in the Township for over 10 years with approximately 6.6% of participants having lived in the Township for less than 2 years.

Staff note that this engagement relied on voluntary participation; the results of the engagement are not statistically relevant and may not reflect the demographics of the Township or wider area. Various forms of engagement were used, surveys, in person opportunities, availability for phone discussions and submissions of written thoughts. However, each of these forms will differ on its accessibility for distinct groups. As such, while staff hope that the engagement is comprehensive and helpful information, it does not necessarily reflect all views and perspectives of the communities in the Township, nor does the strength of views share necessarily reflect with equity all voices in the community.

What we heard:

- Winter maintenance and roads generally good – participants frequently thanked the Township for snow clearing and said plowing was reasonable on many routes.
- Garbage and recycling services is valued – weekly pickup at the convenience of regular service were praised (even if some had issues at times).
- Helpful, courteous, and responsive staff – participants highlighted positive interactions and quick responses when things went wrong.
- Appreciation for communication and engagement – participants thanked the Township for asking for input, liked that surveys are easy to complete, and valued clear communication on decisions.
- Perceived good value/prudent use of tax dollars – many participants felt taxes were fair or low relative to services, and that spending is careful.
- Parks/amenities and community spaces appreciated – playgrounds/parks maintenance, active community centres (e.g. Kilsyth and Kemble), and biodiversity efforts drew praise.

When asked “How would you describe the overall value of services you receive for the tax dollar you pay?” 85.40% of respondents described it as fair or better, with comments themes as described below for their reasoning.

- **Taxes vs. Value** – many participants feel taxes have risen without matching service improvements; several ask the Township to focus on core/necessary services.

- **Road Conditions and Winter Maintenance** – mixed views – some say plowing is reasonable, but potholes/resurfacing are persistent issues on specific concessions.
- **Garbage/Recycling Reliability** – reports of inconsistent pickup or delays.
- **High water/wastewater costs** – water bills perceived as “obnoxious”.
- **By-law Enforcement Concerns and Equity Issues** – perceived weak/inconsistent enforcement; residents on private roads note paying extra for services without tax relief.

Participants were asked their opinion on tax changes and the impact to services that they would prefer to see. 57.1% sited that they would prefer to maintain current taxes and existing services, with 9.0% siting they would rather decrease taxes and cut existing services. When asked comments on their selection respondents sited:

- Keep taxes stable; cost-of-living pressure – strong sentiment to maintain current taxes/services/ many say they can’t afford increases
- If increases, only for essentials – some accept modest increases for core needs/inflation or specific improvements (e.g., roads)
- Waste services: bigger priority than “new” services – requests for better garbage collection/free pickup recur; some oppose adding parks/playgrounds
- Alternative revenues/prudence – mentions of shore road allowance sales and “better management” (increased efficiency) before raising taxes

Current Service Levels

Participants were asked if they felt if some services should be enhanced, maintained, or reduced, the listed services are not reflective of all the services that the Township provides. For all services, the majority of participants sited that they would like to maintain the current level of services that they are received, roads had 87 respondents who indicated that they wish to see the current level of service be enhanced. Garbage, recycling and leaf/yard collection having 86 respondents who indicated that they wish to see the current level of service be enhanced. Participates siting the below reasons as what influenced their selections:

- Community safety and mobility – request for lower speeds, police presence and safe bike/walk routes.
- Affordability/utility charges – concern about already-high water rates; reluctance to pay more for sewers.
- Waste and winter – interest in wheelie bins/recycling convenience and winter maintenance generally viewed as good.
- By-law/Police visibility and shore road allowance upkeep – perceived low police presence; frustration about maintaining shore road allowance.
- Community-building – appreciation for events; desire for more reasons to bring residents together.

Additional Services

Participants were asked if there were any additional services they would like to see the Township provide to residents, suggested services consisted of:

- Organics (green bin)/composting – the most repeated ask (often paired with weekly recycling).
- Off-leash dog park(s) esp. in Shallow Lake – frequently requested.
- Sidewalks, bike lanes/trails and safer walking routes – including Nicol’s Gully/Somers and road-shoulder bike lanes.
- Traffic calming and speed enforcement – calls for crosswalks, cameras, reduced speed in problem areas.
- Connectivity and utilities – better internet/cell coverage; scattered asks for water/sewer expansion.
- Waste services tweaks – large item pickups; improved/weekly pickup.

State of Current Infrastructure

Participants were asked how they would assess the current overall condition of Township bridges, roads, parks, and community centers. For bridges and parks majority of responses assessed the current condition as good. For roads and community centres there was a comparable split between respondents who answered as fair and good. Comments received that influenced participants assessment rating were:

- Road repair/resurfacing and intersection fixes – many cite poor road surfaces, potholes, and priority spots.
- Drainage/ditching and culverts – frequent reports of flooding, standing water, and culvert failures; requests for ditching and maintenance.
- Pedestrian safety/sidewalks and trails upkeep – sidewalk needs near schools and concerns about unimproved walking trails.
- Speeding/signage and traffic calming – calls for signage, speed reduction and enforcement on local roads.
- Bridges/structure timelines and communications – frustration with delays and expectations management for local bridge projects.

Overall Comments and Survey Feedback

- Thanks/positivity and general satisfaction – multiple notes of appreciation and overall contentment.
- Roads/ditches remain top concerns – call to improvement and maintain roads and drainage.
- Budget, leadership and communication – emphasis on transparency, cost-of-living sensitivity and stable leadership (CAO).

- Safety and by-law enforcement – traffic/speeding hotpots (e.g. Old Mill Road) and calls for stronger enforcement.
- Other single-issue mentions – natural burial plan, tree trimming along wires, boat launch/pier management.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with receiving the results of the services. If Council wishes for staff to further explore and provide additional information about a potential service the financial impacts of that will be identified and advised to Council.

Strategic Lenses

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

By gather anonymous, direct feedback from residents and the greater public we are able to obtain perceptions of the overall Township services, identifying disparities and areas. The survey was available in electronic and paper form to allow for participants to provide feedback in their preferred method.

Truth and Reconciliation

The services survey provides an opportunity for participants to voice their opinions on how the Township is positively or negatively accomplishing truth and reconciliation and an opportunity to provide suggestions on how to enhance or change the Township services to reflect this strategic lens.

Climate Change

The services survey provides an opportunity for participants to voice their opinions on how the Township is positively or negatively accomplishing climate change and an opportunity to provide suggestions on how to enhance or change the Township services to align with this strategic lens.

Conclusion

The Township would like to thank all survey participants who took their time to complete the 2026 Services Survey. Staff ask that Council review these comments and provide direction on any additional services they would like further information on.

Respectfully Submitted: Samantha Buchanan, Treasurer