Colchester...Looking Ahead

our community — our government — our choices

A Citizen Survey on
Municipal Services, Governance and Future Directions
for the Municipality of Colchester County

November 2002

This survey is being conducted by the Municipality of the County of Colchester
in cooperation of the School of Public Administration, Dalhousie University

Thank you for participating in the ***Colchester...Looking Ahead - Citizen Survey***. Your contribution to this review of municipal service and governance is very important.

Please answer all of the questions. If you want to comment on any of the questions, please use the **Comments** section at the end of the questionnaire. If a question does not apply to you, write "NA" for not applicable next to the question.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Mr. Crawford Macpherson at 897-3170. He would be glad to help.

Most of the questions can be answered by just circling the number that corresponds to your choice of response. For others, we need your written comment. Your responses are necessary to make certain the survey findings represent everyone in the County.

Thanks again!

SECTION #1 The Municipal Council at work

Please answer the following questions by **circling the number** that best expresses your assessment or opinion. • **N**

1. Generally speaking, how much attention have you given to the work and decisions of the Colchester Municipal Council in this past year? **Would you say you pay . . .**

   9% A lot of attention
   58% Some attention
   33% Not much attention

2. Council meets twice a month to review issues, develop policies, set budgets and oversee the general direction for the County. **How are we doing?** (*Please circle the number that matches your level of satisfaction with the performance of Council for each item* • **N**)

	Very Satisfied	**Satisfied**	**Dissatisfied**	**Very Dissatisfied**	Unsure/ Don't know
a. Overall performance	3%	64%	6%	2%	26%
b. Decisions made by Council	2%	57%	11%	2%	29%
c. Availability of Mayor to public	14%	41%	7%	3%	36%
d. Availability of Councillors to public	8%	46%	10%	3%	35%
e. Speed of response by Council to County issues	3%	41%	13%	4%	39%

3. Your elected officials are paid an honorarium. The Mayor is paid a total of $28,850 and the Deputy mayor is paid a total of $16,490 annually. Councillors receive $12,000 annually. These honorariums are adjusted by the rate of inflation on an annual basis.
   Would you say these amounts . . .

	Should be more	**Are about right**	**Should be less**
a. The Mayor's honorarium	10%	75%	15%
b. The Deputy Mayor's honorarium	7%	77%	16%
c. The Councillors' honorarium	6%	77%	17%

4. County Council has eleven elected members and a Mayor who are responsible for the overall governance of the County. Each Councillor represents approximately 2,400 voters. **Should the size of the Council . . .** (*Please circle appropriate number*)

   75% remain the same
   9% be larger
   17% be smaller

5. There are three separate municipal units within Colchester: the Towns of Truro and Stewiacke and the Municipality of the County of Colchester – and within the County of Colchester there are the two incorporated Villages of Tatamagouche and Bible Hill. Over the years there has been an on again-off again debate about the possible amalgamation of the existing municipal units into one regional municipality. **Would the creation of one regional municipality improve, worsen or leave the same the following features of our municipal government?**

	Amalgamation would improve	Amalgamation would worsen	Amalgamation would leave the same
a. The costs of municipal services	22%	60%	18%
b. The amount of services we receive	17%	49%	35%
c. The quality of the services delivered	14%	53%	33%
d. Our capacity for economic development	38%	30%	32%
e. The quality of the decisions made by Council	17%	46%	37%
f. Planning for municipal growth and development	36%	36%	28%
g. Ability of Council to represent community interests	15%	59%	27%

6. Generally speaking, would you say you **strongly favour, favour, oppose or strongly oppose** the amalgamation of the Colchester municipal units into one regional municipality? (*Please circle appropriate number*)

8% Strongly favour

17% Favour

31% Oppose

31% Strongly Oppose

Or, 14% neither favour nor oppose

7. **Are there regional issues not being addressed that should be**?
(Please circle appropriate number)

29% Yes

71% No **[IF no, GO TO QUESTION 9]**

8. [**If yes] what regional issues are not being addressed**?

Of those saying YES (29%), the largest group by far focused on ROADS (37%). The rest were references to sewage, garbage, watershed issues, environmental issues, economic development and tourism – by less than 5%

The best part of this response is that 71% consider that you are NOT overlooking regional issues.

SECTION #2 Programs and Services

9. **How do you find out about municipal activities**? **Which of the following is most important to you now as a source of information concerning the municipality**?
(Please circle the most important one • N)

41% newspaper
23% radio
31% County newsletter
1% County web site (www.colchester-county.ns.ca)
2% My local councilor

10. Considering **how** you receive information and **what** information you receive, **do you have any suggestions for change in this regard**? If you do, please write your suggestions in these two boxes. If you do not have any suggestions for change, you can check that off.

Suggested changes in how you receive information?	Suggested change in what information you are able to receive or access?
_____	_____
_____	_____
[89%] Check here if no suggestions	[96%] Check here if no suggestions

11. **Did you contact any municipal department during the past 12 months either by phone or in person**?

34% Yes, have contacted a department
66% No, have not **[If no, GO TO QUESTION 13]**

12. **[If yes]**, **how satisfied were you with the service you received in terms of the following**?

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Time spent waiting	32%	53%	9%	7%
Time to complete your business	34%	50%	9%	7%
Courtesy of staff	45%	44%	7%	3%
Speed of response to inquiries	33%	42%	18%	7%
Quality of service	34%	47%	12%	7%
Overall performance	32%	48%	12%	8%

13. Municipal staff are responsible for the delivery of the Municipality's programs and services on a daily basis. **How are we doing?**
(*Please circle the number that matches your level of satisfaction with the performance of the municipal staff for each item* • **N**. **If you have not used a program or service**, please circle No. 5)

[Satisfaction scores of those who **used** the service]

Programs & Services	**Very Satisfied**	**Satisfied**	**Dissatisfied**	**Very Dissatisfied**	**Have not used the service**
a. Building Inspection Service	18%	64%	14%	3%	67%
b. CAO, Clerk's Office	18%	76%	3%	3%	72%
c. Development Control Service	14%	66%	16%	3%	83%
d. Dog Control Service	16%	50%	19%	15%	68%
e. Emergency Measures Planning	21%	74%	4%	1%	78%
f. Engineering, Public Works	10%	69%	16%	6%	74%
g. Finance, Tax Office	16%	75%	6%	4%	48%
h. Land Use, Planning, Zoning	8%	54%	25%	13%	72%
i. Recreation	12%	69%	15%	5%	60%
j. County Newsletter	18%	76%	5%	2%	25%
k. Website	19%	73%	6%	2%	80%
l. Parks	22%	71%	5%	2%	46%
m. Sidewalk maintenance & snow removal	10%	56%	22%	12%	34%
n. Collection of Garbage, Recyclables & Compost	27%	60%	10%	4%	7%
o. Recycling/Waste Diversion Program	22%	69%	6%	3%	17%
p. Compost Giveaway Program	30%	60%	7%	4%	49%
q. Condition and maintenance of municipal roads (blue signs)	5%	53%	25%	17%	20%
r. Volunteer Fire Service	53%	45%	2%	1%	27%

14. The hours of operation at the

< Municipal Court House are 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday and at the
< Balefill site in Kemptown are 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday; Saturday, 8:00 am to 12:00 noon.

Would you like to see any changes in the hours of operation at either location? [keeping in mind that there could be a cost associated with some changes]

	Yes	**No**	Unsure/ Don't know	**If yes**, what changes in time of service would you suggest
Municipal Court House	5%	74%	17%	Open to 5:00/ evenings?
Balefill site	10	69%	18%	Saturday hours into afternoon

15. Council is interested in improving our Recreation Service. **If Council were to assign more resources to Recreation, what should the priorities be?** Please review the following recreation areas and **check five** you would consider a high priority.

	Priority T Check 5
a. Improved staff support of community groups and associations	24%
b. Improved community access to schools	42%
c. More parkland	27%
d. Better/more equipment for parks	31%
e. Trail development throughout the County	50%
f. Recreational programming	36%
g. New cultural facilities	14%
h. Tourism & events promotion	50%
i. Community beautification	41%
j. Recreation grants	27%
k. Acquisition of conservation lands (ecological, historical, cultural)	24%
l. Arenas	25%
m. Sports fields	28%
n. Swimming pools	22%
o. *Other: please specify* _____	

16. Each year Municipal tax dollars directly fund services not provided by the Municipality. About 50% of each tax dollar collected goes toward these services. **We would like to know your level of satisfaction with some of these services.**

	Very satisfied	**Satisfied**	**Dissatisfied**	**Very dissatisfied**	Unsure/ don't know
a. Police service - RCMP	24%	63%	6%	2%	6%
b. Maintenance of local roads by Dept of Transportation (green signs)	5%	35%	33%	21%	6%
c. Education	6%	54%	19%	4%	17%
d. Public Library system	13%	59%	5%	1%	22%

17. We would like to know the types of services you consider important for your community in the future.

Would you please **T** check the services you currently have, and . . .	if you do not have the service, circle • whether you **should have** the service in the future or whether you **do not require** that service

SERVICE	T **check services you have**	**should have service in future**	**do not require this service**
a. Public sewer	34%	18%	82%
b. Public water	4%	12%	88%
c. Natural gas	/	30%	70%
d. Paved road	**75%**	**65%**	34%
e. Paved road with concrete curb	16%	23%	77%
f. Sidewalks	20%	31%	69%
g. Parks	28%	41%	59%
h. Trails	29%	48%	53%
i. Land-use planning, zoning	24%	31%	**70%**

18. The following are some services that we do not provide today. The Municipality could provide these services but each would add costs to our municipal budget and require more municipal staff to deliver the service. The funding of new services could come from new area rates charged to specific residents using the service, increased general rates paid by everyone, or by cuts to other programs in our existing budget.

Please consider the following services and indicate with a T check whether they should be provided and, IF THEY SHOULD BE PROVIDED, indicate how they should be funded by circling the number that matches your opinion.

SERVICE	T check if they SHOULD BE provided	Service should be provided by (choose one) [Responses of only those saying "yes" should be provided]		
		An increase to the General Rate	Funding through an Area Rate	Cutting other programs
a. Public transit	23%	30%	57%	12%
b. Affordable housing	29%	36%	46%	18%
c. Septic tank pumping	24%	31%	59%	11%
d. Cultural centre/facility	16%	48%	39%	13%
e. Large, multi-purpose, arena complex	24%	48%	42%	11%
f. Other recreation facilities (e.g. ball fields, curling rinks)	18%	32%	55%	13%
g. Festivals & community events	25%	34%	47%	19%
h. Medical recruitment	40%	52%	28%	20%
i. Medical clinics	46%	51%	34%	15%
j. Regional roadway improvements	53%	46%	31%	23%
k. Weekly garbage collection	21%	40%	43%	17%
l. Roadside clean-up	32%	41%	38%	21%
m. Year around compost giveaway	18%	33%	45%	22%
o. *Other?*_____	[ ]			

SECTION #3 Financial Matters

19. The Municipality is trying to balance the need and desire to pay off its existing debt with the need and desire to replace and add new infrastructure.
    - < Our debt load is approximately $11 million
    - < We reduce this debt by approximately $1 million per year
    - < The Municipality's debt is well within provincial borrowing guidelines.

    In the future the Municipality will have to repair existing infrastructure (e.g. sewer pipes, treatment plants, sidewalks), and consider requests for new infrastructure.
    Which statement best reflects your view? *(Please circle appropriate number)*

22%	It is acceptable to borrow money for infrastructure, providing the Municipality does not exceed provincial borrowing guidelines
13%	The Municipality should not invest in new infrastructure until the money is in the bank, even if this means that infrastructure is not built or replaced for a number of years
66%	**A balance between the first two statements seems reasonable**

20. With continued development in Colchester, the Municipality has a budget surplus. **Please rank the following statements in the order which best describes your advice to Council, using #1 for your highest priority.**

	1 highest priority	2 high priority	3 low priority	4 lowest priority
a. Lower the tax rate	**29%**	16%	16%	**39%**
b. Hold the tax rate and pay off our debt more quickly	**54%**	**21%**	16%	9%
c. Invest new tax revenues in replacing existing infrastructure	19%	**38%**	**29%**	13%
d. Invest new tax revenues in providing new services	8%	24%	**32%**	**36%**

21. **If you think the Municipality should invest in new services (question #20 d) what new services would you suggest?** [IF NOT, GO TO THE NEXT QUESTION]

82% did NOT suggest any new services.
Those that did, mentioned services already covered in Question 18

22. **What are the three most important things that you think Colchester County should address over the next 5 to 10 years?**

71% of citizens (384/541) volunteered "most important issues"

Issue areas volunteered as "most important"	% of 384
T Infrastructure – consisting of roads, road maintenance and bridges	62%
T Municipal finances – taxes and debt	16%
T Health care in Colchester County – access to services, recruitment of medical staff, facilities	16%
T Recreation services and programs	15%
T Environmental issues	14%
T Economic development	8%
T Tourism and culture	7%
T Concerns for seniors	7%

SECTION #4 A Little About You

Information in this section provides us with a general picture of those who responded and will be used for the purpose of interpreting this survey only.

Length of residence in Colchester	From 1 year to 87 years!	
Name of your Community	15%	West Colchester
	9%	North Colchester
	15%	South Colchester
	14%	Central Colchester
	26%	Central Colchester with sewer
	22%	Colchester County, unspecified region
Gender	53%	female
	47%	male
Age	4%	under 25
	32%	25-44
	44%	45-64
	20%	65 and over
Do you...	85%	Own your home?
	15%	Rent or other arrangement
Does your household include school-aged children?	70%	No
	30%	Yes, school-aged children in household
Which of the following best describes your community?	22%	**Suburban** with public sewer, street lights & paved road;
	9%	**Rural Subdivision** with on-site septic field, gravel or paved road, located in a neighbourhood of homes, lot created as part of a multi-lot subdivision;
	55%	**Rural** with on-site septic field, larger lots fronting on an existing road and greater distance between neighbours;
	14%	**Village** Settlement of homes and shops, perhaps served with public sewer, water, street lights and sidewalks.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey! Your responses will help to ensure that the views of citizens are made known to Municipal Council and will help us to better tailor our services to your needs. If you would like to make other comments about the survey or community issues, please do so on the space provided on the next page.

In case you have misplaced the return envelope, please return this survey to: ***Colchester...Looking Ahead - Citizen Survey,*** c/o School of Public Administration, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3J5 **or** drop it off in person at the County Court House, 1 Church Street, Truro