

Research with citizens on Calgary's economy

This year The City has conducted research related to Calgary's economy to understand:

- The current impact of the economy on individuals/families and their quality of life;
- Citizens' expectations of The City's role given the current economic environment; and
- Citizens' perceptions on what The City can do to help stimulate the economy.

The City partnered with IPSOS to conduct focus groups in each of Calgary's quadrants and fielded a telephone survey with 500 Calgarians to ensure we heard from a broad segment of Calgary's population. The complete research findings will be presented to Council.

Summary of early observations from focus groups

Our discussions with citizens over the last week in each quadrant of the city have been insightful and thoroughly engaging. Citizens have been reflecting on the economy's impact to their own lives, the lives of their friends and family, and what The City can do to sustain Calgary through this economic downturn. They have appreciated being a part of the conversation.

Early observations from the focus groups	
<p>Calgary's economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Many know someone who is directly impacted by the oil & gas lay-offs, and some are seeing their friends and family move to other cities, target other sectors or avail of Employment Insurance. ➤ They have seen economic downturns previously in Calgary, but don't remember seeing a recession this bad. ➤ There is a strong sense that the impact to the oil & gas sector has a ripple effect on all sectors. And it will take time for Calgary to recover. ➤ There is strong public desire for Calgary to diversify. ➤ Cost of living in Calgary has increased dramatically over the last few years – cost of housing, food prices, etc. ➤ The gap between the rich and poor in Calgary is growing. ➤ Despite the economic downturn, most conveyed a positive hopeful sentiment about Calgary's future. 	<p>What can The City do?</p> <p>There was strong support for The City to increase capital investment now to enable job opportunities and capitalize on lower commodity and contractor rates. A few things to keep in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do not spend too much time planning for an investment, but more on delivering results -- in transit, roads, infrastructure. ➤ Co-ordinate design plans for roads, transit, facilities, and other infrastructure so they don't have to be re-thought or dug up in future years. ➤ Consider maintenance and sustainment costs for capital projects. ➤ Hire local talent. ➤ Ensure transparency and accountability for capital investments remains a priority. <p>But the focus should not only be on increasing City job opportunities alone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The City needs to increase promotion of the social supports available for specific populations (e.g. lower income, mental health supports (including stress from job loss), families who are directly impacted and can no longer send their children to community sports are just a few). ➤ Promote shopping locally and encourage small business development (perhaps even through public/private partnerships or seed capital investments). ➤ Potentially consider reviewing and reprioritizing current spending priorities.