



Website Public Opinion Poll – Economic Conditions

Results Report - March 6, 2009

On February 4, 2009, a public opinion poll was opened on the municipal website encouraging citizens to share their ideas and opinions about the current economic conditions. Citizens were asked to answer a single question:

RECOGNIZING UNCERTAIN GLOBAL AND LOCAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, PLEASE LIST THREE SPECIFIC ACTIONS THE MUNICIPALITY COULD TAKE:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

By the March 4, 2009 response deadline, 70 completed forms had been received, providing 189 individual comments.

The suggested actions ranged from “control costs” to “request more government grants”. A thematic analysis of the comments shows that the top five suggestions were: Control costs, upgrade infrastructure, promote social and affordable housing alternatives, green initiatives and maintain current levels of service. A complete listing of the comments by category starts on the following page. The complete results are summarized in the table below:

| Action recommended | % of respondents | # of respondents |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Control costs / improve efficiency | 22.8% | 43 |
| Upgrade infrastructure | 12.2% | 23 |
| Promote social and affordable housing alternatives | 11.1% | 21 |
| Promote green initiatives | 9.0% | 17 |
| Maintain current levels of services | 7.4% | 14 |
| Promote mobility (non-automobile) | 6.4% | 12 |
| Encourage local food production | 2.7% | 5 |
| Lower taxes | 2.7% | 5 |
| Increase employment / create jobs | 2.1% | 4 |
| Increase user fees | 2.1% | 4 |
| Integrate services / provide services to other communities | 1.6% | 3 |
| Encourage business & development | 1.6% | 3 |
| No new projects or delay projects | 1.0% | 2 |
| Engage in public awareness / consultation | 1.0% | 2 |
| Do not treat sewage | 1.0% | 2 |
| Fiscal responsibility - reduce debt | 0.5% | 1 |
| Request more government grants | 0.5% | 1 |
| Other ideas and suggestions | 14.3% | 27 |
| Totals | 100% | 189 |

Complete Comments

Note: The comments provided below are exactly as submitted by respondents. Only very minor editing and combining of individual responses has taken place.

Upgrade infrastructure

(23) comments

- accelerate any infrastructure projects
- any infrastructure spending should also address both long term operating costs and the environment, e.g. solar heating on the rec center pools
- continue to or increase investment in infrastructure, mobility, sidewalks and transportation.
- finish gorge tillicum traffic calming plan
- public works projects which would create jobs and improve infrastructure
- accelerate capital projects with federal \$\$\$
- increase public works spending.
- public works projects
- borrow funds at historic low rates to improve infrastructure
- hire people to improve sidewalk and crosswalk pushbutton access for those using disabled mobility vehicles
- infrastructure upgrades and repairs - storm/sewer/road/water
- invest in longterm infrastructure solutions
- keep the "shovels" working in shovel ready projects
- maintain roads sidewalks etc
- match federal and provincial infrastructure funding
- make maximum use of infrastructure money
- proceed with necessary infrastructure upgrades - fdr had it right 60 years ago.
- spend on infrastructure while materials and labour costs are lower and available

- step up infrastructure projects: sidewalks and roads
- take advantage of every federal and provincial funding announcement to update saanich's infrastructure.
- traffic calming initiatives
- undertake road works to ease vehicle conjection
- direct capital expeditures to revenue generating projectsexpenditures should concentrate on essential projects such as roads, water etc. vs. arts, parks etc. during poor economic conditions.

Delay new projects

(2 comments)

- delay new initiatives
- consider delaying some capital projects that are non-essential

Integrate services

(3 comments)

- community capacity - maintain support and partnerships with agencies in voluntary and community sector
- look for opportunities to partner with other gov'ts
- work with all other local municipalities to develop a comprehensive transportation plan for the 21st centuryprogram allowed for "programs"/"courses" at other rec centres - change to be courses in recreation at other municipals ie: drop in for exercise or sport

Maintain current levels of service

(14 comments)

- keep property taxes level, no increase to 2008 rates

- maintain existing infrastructure , don't add more
- no increase in property taxes or water, sewer, etc. cost and fees
- no property tax increase
- maintain existing services and ongoing grants
- minimize any increases in property taxes
- no tax increases on residential property
- property tax freeze.
- recognize taxpayer's inability to pay tax increases
- small or no tax increases
- taxes - keep property tax increases as low as is feasible
- price freeze at rec centres.
- maintain regular employee levels
- maintain the practice of planting beautiful flower gardens on roadways, intersections and other common areas. this contributes to making saanich a desirable place to live, which in turn keeps all our property values (and municipal taxes) from falling.

Control costs / Improve efficiency

(43 comments)

- allow for competition in currency - enforce through bylaws
- be fiscally prudent by not expanding service offerings.
- finish all of the planning initiatives that have been started over the years, so that when the economy turns aaround saanich is ready to move forward.

- concentrate on producing public goods that the vast majority wants rather on what a few rich tax payers want which is more policing and more car culture.
- consider efficiencies, staff and service intergration and consolidation. wage freeze for the staff earning over \$ 75,000. reduce training, travel and discretionary costs.
- consider modest service cuts (i.e.: require curbside placement of garbage)
- do not reduce contributions and amenities required from developers unless there are clear and enduring benefits to all.
- don't plant as may flower
- don't waste money on useless program. i.e. bike to work week.
- eliminate discretionary city expenditures
- eliminate discretionary spending
- freeze wages
- fund only necessary expenditures, zero non-essential
- get rid of expensive public goods that gov't can't afford,thus forcing them to charge for it,thus leaving it for the rich minority.
- hiring freeze
- i think that one of the most critical actions the municipality could take is to reduce costs rather than increase taxes (particularly since the property values were frozen at a historical high), even if that means eliminating or reducing some service levels, as long as there was a well-advertised, well-thought-out public referendum to give the citizens the opportunity to prioritize the alternatives. and that the municipality commits to doing so in response.

- identify, if you have not already, key performance indicators, driven by cost measures and then meet them.
- invest in supports for struggling families
- like a ceo, if the mayor cannot control the budget then he does not deserve the salary he is recieving. cut back his salary as well as the other council members
- limit matching grants to appications that directly support saanich
- lower building permit fees
- lower property taxes to assist homeowners
- make saanich more affordable for young families
- plan next 3 years budget to increases no greater than cpi
- create public private operations so that gov't doesn't get duped by superoverpriced goods and services.
- offer a discount on annual rec centre passes
- permit subdivision of larger lots to create more housing and ease homeowners' financial challenges.
- plan for increased interest rates, a decrease in bond value, lots of inflation. reduce taxes.
- promote youth employment - including those graduating university
- reduce cost of street lighting by shutting off earlier in the a.m.
- reduce costs and/or programs
- reduce costs by not taking credit card payments - the merchant fees alone at 2.5 - 4% are probably quite significant.
- reduce grants to non-essential activities
- reduce income tax
- reduce services (especially the parks department)
- reduce staff

- reduce studies. i.e. carb footprint
- reduce unessential public works projects (i.e. non essential garden boxes and paths through parks)
- reduce wages
- review recreation programming-i understand sometimes 50% of programs are cancelled-yet, kinderprograms have ridiculous waiting lists-reallocate!
- shorten work week rather than lay off key employees
- simplify planning/zoning applications
- take the money set aside for infrastructure and invest it in "shovel ready" projects immediately.

Reduce debt (1 comment)

- pay down debt

Promote green initiatives

(17 comments)

- alternate energy infrastructure
- eliminate building inspection, etc. fees for people improving the carbon footprint or other environmental impact aspects of their homes
- green transportation amenities
- incentives to continue to build in saanich and rebates for using reclaimed and recycled materials.
- investing in green technology
- make public lands available for community gardens.
- more green infirstucture then hard enginerring practices to cut costs to future generations
- only invest in infrastructure projects which also contribute to lowering greenhouse gases ie. sidewalks, bike paths, tree planting etc.
- approve the use of electric cars such as the zenn

- ban the sale and use of pesticides
- only spend on infrastructure that promotes safe, green travel.
- pre-paid parking permits in large park parking lots near transit lines for downtown commuters; 'park'n'ride' scenario supporting sustainability. presumably park usage times don't peak at the same time as commuter parking.
- solar panels to power various energy consuming necessities (city hall, street lights, etc)
- the use of a natural water regime to reduce capital cost for drainage.
- use more efficient vehicles, get employees to not idle them when parked
- while there are immediate economic challenges, the long-term crisis is the environmental/climate crisis. the municipality should help and promote citizens to enhance fuel efficiency and protect our environment.
- working with other munis to develop green transportation alternatives.

Promote mobility alternatives to the automobile (12 comments)

- bicycle lanes
- build better bike-paths+sidewalks to help easy travel
- improve walking and biking opportunities
- improve bicycling infrastructure
- add electric bicycle charging outlets at public municipal properties
- more bike paths/lanes
- more bycle paths
- proceed with infrastructure projects, especially bike lanes
- safe bike lanes on major roadways.

- safe walking/cycling routes for schools/commuters
- campaign for light rail transit with infrastr funds
- push the crd for a light rail option down the galloping goose trail. start with a run from langford to downtown, then a run from the downtown station up to the new town and country mall. if no one want to do it, then saanich can do it and own it.

Promote affordable housing / Homeless shelters / Secondary suites (21 comments)

- affordable housing.
- approving secondary suites to create more affordable housing
- build more affordable housing
- build more affordable housing
- encourage an increase in density by legalizing additional suites and buildings in residential zones. also encourage more apartments, condos. this will lower housing costs per person and be better than sprawl for the environment while being more efficient for infrastructure.
- encourage and promote secondary suites
- encourage and promote secondary suites
- encourage construction of affordable housing, including secondary suites
- housing for the homeless
- housing: legalize secondary suites with minimal tax hit
- housing: require affordable units in every new development (condo or single family)
- housing: stimulate building of rental apt buildings in every neighbourhood
- legalize illegal suites (2)
- legalize secondary suites
- legalizing suites
- make a bylaw change so that secondary suites are legal in

- order to create more affordable housing.
- put concrete plans in place for additional food/shelter facilities
- same for affordable housing
- sign a memorandum of understanding with the province for supported housing to address homelessness
- work harder to encourage low-cost housing, suites

Increase employment (4 comments)

- hire more law enforcement personnel
- hire more summer students to allow them to pay for their schooling
- hire people to work on infrastructure, especially sidewalks to encourage walking, etc.
- encourage living wage and employment conditions that provide employees with full time hours with benefits

Engage in public awareness / Consultation (2 comments)

- post all finance info on the saanich website, show residents where their tax money is going
- strengthen community relationships and resources

Lower Taxes (5 comments)

- cut property taxes
- cut property taxes
- freeze or lower property taxes
- property tax relief for those who have lost their jobs due to the economic crisis
- reduce taxes

Request more government grants (1 comment)

- apply for infrastructure grants

Do not treat sewage (2 comments)

- back out of the crd sewage treatment plan

- not proceeding with the grotesquely expensive and unnecessary sewage treatment upgrade

Increase user fees and fines

(4 comments)

- charge user fees for garbage pick-up. Have curbside pickup of compost.
- Introduction of fees for frequent users - we will respond to the first 2 calls/year free, after that a fee is charged for services to that user.
- make sure illegal suites are taxed appropriately
- tipping fees for pw yard waste usage.

Encourage local food

production (5 comments)

- have weekend markets to sell local goods and trade items.
- increase support for local food production , eg tax breaks, continue water at cost, publicize pocket markets, encourage backyard production (maybe even lower the zoning size lot for chickens!)
- promote the use of lawns and boulevards for garden food production
- reduce property taxes if property is used for food production.
- support local agriculture as sustainable food source

Encourage business and development

(3 comments)

- reduce the tax burden on businesses
- generate revenue by offering advertising to saanich licensed businesses on the website; perhaps for an

additional \$ per business license, we offer the public exposure in a way that is not seen as endorsement.

- promote the creation of businesses with social and economic goals such as cooperative and social enterprise where the profits stay in the community

Other ideas and suggestions

(27 comments)

- allowing infill lots to condense neighbourhoods within close proximity to shopping.
- ban basement suites
- new tax for pet owner
- continue support for low income residents such as the life program
- do not legalize secondary suites in rural saanich because of increased stress on infrastructure, water resources and septic systems
- enforce ticket bylaw 2009 #8976
- free swim
- help raise and maintain property values in saanich by dealing with problem properties or road/park upgrades where budget allows
- leadership - help citizens and businesses turn risk into opportunity (leadership)
- lower dcc's
- make golf passes reasonable for people on fixed income
- more / improved recreations centers
- municipal daycare?
- not a bridge over the trans-canada at mckenzie and admirals
- plan for the future when economic times are better ie.

community planning, esp for underdeveloped areas such as tillicum burnside.

- thank you for seeking my input
- protect the air and reject all applications for removal of land from the air
- put in place a moratorium on all new development.
- read "economics in one lesson" - henry hazlet
- read "what has government done to our money" - rothbard
- recognizing that busy people need to be able to schedule their activities, allow people to book tee-times at cedar hill golf course during non-peak, non-twilight times (noon-3:30pm), thereby increasing green-fee revenue.
- remind saanich council and mayor of saanich's motto; that they are there to serve the people - who consist of more than just elitist, hybrid-driving members of the church of global warming.
- review the operations of restaurant facility at cedar hill golf course, and actualize its potential to be a profitable facility.
- saanich needs to be team leader for the region
- take this opportunity to invest in land banking for housing.
- understand that the key to a healthy economy is production and trade - reduce barriers to these
- discourage more businesses like casinos that suck up dollars and do not contribute to the social capital in a community