

Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund (SSSF) What We Heard Report.

February 2021

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Edmonton

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A. Project Overview

The Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund (SSSF) is a program managed by the City that pays for the deepest and largest sanitary sewer tunnels in Edmonton. The fund has been in place for over 20 years and has allowed for the construction of essential sanitary pipes that support growth in Edmonton. The governance structure for the SSSF is being adjusted to reflect the City's organizational structure and the input of key stakeholders and the public. In response to a September 30, 2019 Executive Committee motion ([CR 6671](#)), City of Edmonton Administration (Administration) engaged the public and stakeholder groups on the SSSF.

B. Public Engagement

Administration engaged public and stakeholder groups for feedback on how decisions related to the Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund (SSSF) Program are made and shared. This engagement took place online, and was delivered through a survey and video conference meetings.

C. How We Engaged

Public and stakeholder engagement on the project took place in October and November of 2020:

- Online Survey – October 5 to 26, 2020
- Online Meetings –
 - The Public Online Meeting Engagement Session (November 10, 2020)
 - SSSF Oversight Committee Online Engagement (November 26, 2020)

D. Who Was Engaged

PUBLIC

ONLINE SURVEY

The online survey was distributed to members of the Edmonton Insight Community, and an open link was provided on the City's website. This survey was made available online to all Edmontonians.

ONLINE MEETING

The public online meeting had 42 participants attend, many of whom participated in the online survey. The individuals who attended this meeting were invited to do so because they, or someone in their household, indicated their interest in attending through the online survey and provided a contact email address for engagement details to be sent.

SSSF OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

On November 26, 2020 the SSSF Oversight Committee regular meeting was used as an opportunity to both present to and engage with the committee on the findings from the public online survey. In addition to City Administration, representatives from EPCOR and the development industry were present in the meeting.

Public and stakeholder groups were engaged to solicit feedback on how decisions are made and shared related to the construction of the deepest and largest sanitary sewer tunnels.

E. What We Asked

Overview of Public Online Survey Questions

Participants were asked?

- How participants search for information about city utilities and if they were able to find the information they were looking for?

- If participants had previously visited the SSSF website, did it have sufficient information / transparency on the SSSF and the type of information participants would like to receive or provide input on?
- At what stages in the SSSF planning process participants would you like to be informed?
- If they agree or disagree with the suggested amendment that would see decisions brought to Council when changes to the long term system strategy for the Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund are needed?

A public online survey was made available to all Edmontonians.

Online meetings were used to provide interested individuals & stakeholders the opportunity to discuss and provide feedback.

Public Online Meeting Discussion Questions

Breakout Group A	Breakout Group B
Round 1	
1. Where is the confusion on the roles and responsibilities in the management / accountability of SSSF and why? 2. How can the City create better awareness of these roles and responsibilities?	1. What types of changes to the long-term system plan (i.e., sanitary servicing strategy) should be: a. Elevated to Council for approval? b. Communicated to the public but do not need Council approval?
Round 2	
1. When major changes are identified for the long-term sanitary servicing strategy, how should the City communicate those changes to the general public?	1. Do the SSSF annual reports provide sufficient information? 2. How can the City make this information more readily available, accessible, and transparent?

SSSF Oversight Committee Meeting Questions

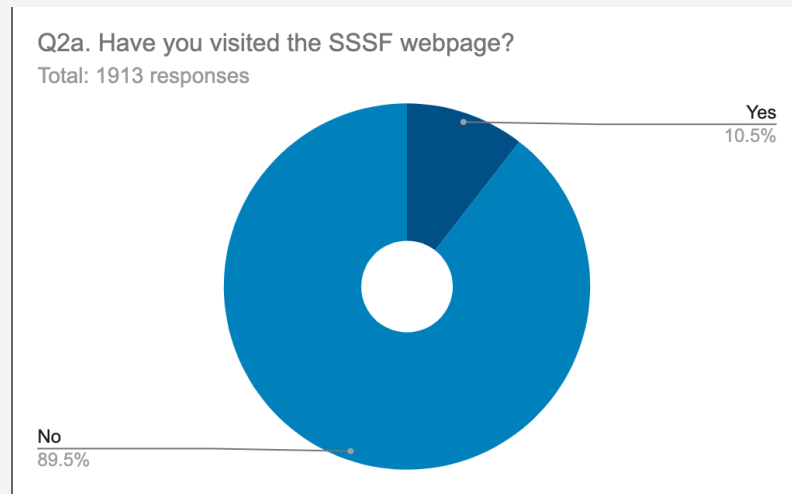
- Do you agree with the request for more transparency and communication around major changes to the overall sanitary sewer system? What opportunities and challenges do you envision?
- Please define what you believe to be a major change requiring public input or Council (Executive Committee) oversight?
- What approach should be considered with regards to the process to revisit South Edmonton Sanitary Sewer (SESS)?

F. What We Heard

The following is a high level summary of themes outlining what was heard during the online survey, online public engagement and SSSF Oversight Committee Meeting. Additional details of What We Heard for these events can be found in the subsequent subheadings. Complete results from the online survey are available in Appendix A.

Awareness

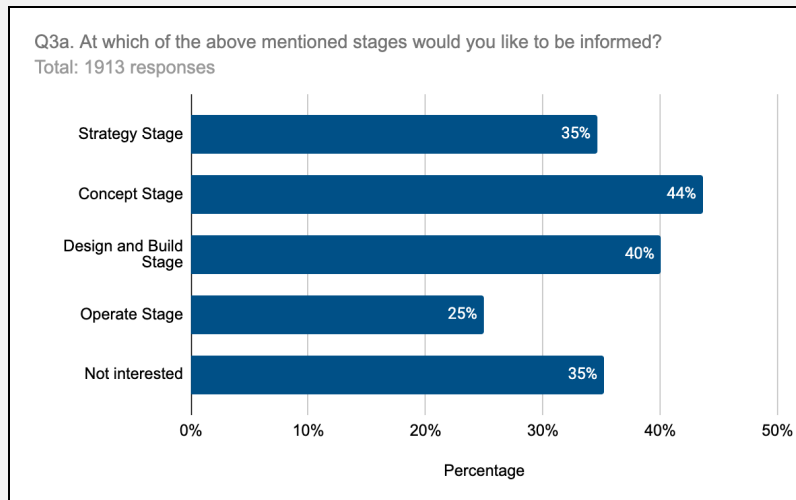
- Most individuals were unaware that the SSSF existed or had limited awareness of the program prior to this engagement opportunity, which is also reflected in the results shown in the figure below, where only 10.5% of respondents had visited the SSSF webpage.
- Better awareness could be created by updating the SSSF website and providing plain language summaries of the Annual Report to highlight key information.
- The Oversight Committee appreciated that there is not a full understanding of the sanitary system in general and the SSSF component in particular.



Information Availability and Communication

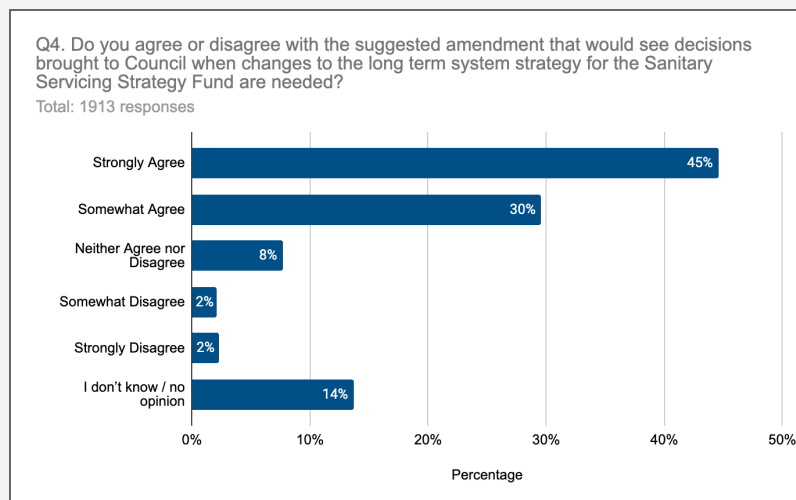
- The public relies on multiple sources for information about SSSF.
- There was interest shown in being informed throughout all stages of sanitary projects.
- Information that should be communicated to the public includes:
 - Information about the program and associated projects, such as timing, duration, location, road closures or community impacts
 - Contact information where people could learn more about SSSF.
- The Oversight Committee members' past experiences with sharing information about SSSF had not triggered substantial public interest or media attention

As previously noted, the following figure reveals that participants would like to be informed throughout all stages of sanitary projects.



Governance Amendments

- As shown in the figure below, 75% of the 1,913 respondents of the online survey agreed with the suggested amendments to governance that would see decisions brought to Council that had the following impacts:
 - direct or indirect impacts utility rates or taxes
 - changes to the long-term system plan



- Participants felt that changes to the long term sanitary servicing plan should be elevated to Council when the change resulted in:
 - Removal of a trunk from the plan
 - Addition of a trunk from the plan
 - Major rerouting of an approved trunk

- The Oversight Committee supported changes that resulted in a major re-route that would deviate significantly from the long term system and would be more appropriate for Council review/approval

Confusion/Lack of Understanding/Education

- There is public confusion regarding the purpose and functions of the SSSF
- There is a lack of understanding regarding the respective responsibilities of EPCOR and the City, and who is ultimately responsible for making what decisions
- Education is needed to address misinformation and misunderstanding of the SSSF
- The Oversight Committee supported the use of plain language and education materials for the general public and Council

SESS Alignment

- Many participants, with varying perspectives, wanted to know what are the options for revisiting the decision to reroute the SESS with public input
- The Oversight Committee noted that given the current status of the sanitary system, a planning decision for SESS is not required until early to mid-2030's
- The Oversight Committee also indicated that the focus is the next 10 years and the desire to leave long-term decisions open

G. What Happens Next?

Administration will take what was heard and integrate it into the proposed governance options being presented to Council's Executive Committee on April 12, 2021.

Appendix A - SSSF Governance Survey Results

SSSF Governance Public Survey Results - Conducted in October 2020

Summary: SSSF Governance Fund - Oct 2020

☒ Q1a

How do you search for information about city utilities, like sewer and water services, and utility projects?

Total responses: 1813

City of Edmonton website



Utility website (e.g. ATCO, EPCOR, Shaw, Telus, etc.)



Social Media



Newspaper/News



Google/online search



Other: please specify



Don't know



I haven't tried to search for information on utility projects



☐ Q1b

Were you able to find the information you were looking for?

Total responses: 1144

Yes



No



☐ Q1c

Can you please identify what specific information you were seeking?

Total responses: 1144

© Q2a

Currently, the SSSF Oversight Committee communicates to the public about long-term plans and the status of current projects through the New Sanitary Trunk Construction web page and SSSF annual report which are available on the City of Edmonton website. The webpage includes information about: • Background • Public Engagement • Funding • Scope of the SSSF • Annual Reports • Email Contact Have you visited this webpage?

Total responses: 1913

Yes

11% (201)

No

89% (1,712)

© Q2b

Do you believe the website provides sufficient information/transparency on the Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund?

Total responses: 201

Yes

44% (89)

No

22% (45)

No opinion

33% (67)

☑ Q3a

At which of the above mentioned stages would you like to be informed?

Total responses: 1913

Strategy Stage

35% (662)

Concept Stage

44% (834)

Design and Build Stage

40% (766)

Operate Stage

25% (477)

Not interested

35% (673)

☰ Q3b

Please elaborate on the type of information you would like to receive or provide input on:

Total responses: 1913

Q4

At the September 30, 2019 Executive Committee meeting, the Sanitary Services Strategy Oversight Committee - Governance Options report proposed that the SSSF Oversight Committee retain the ability to manage the Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund. In addition, the report proposed an amendment to have Council's Utility Committee provide input into any decision that could: • Directly or indirectly impact utility rates or taxes; AND • Cause changes to the long-term system plan. Do you agree or disagree with the suggested amendment that would also see decisions brought to Council when changes to the long term system strategy for the Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund are needed?

Total responses: 1913

Strongly Agree

45% (853)

Somewhat Agree

30% (566)

Neither Agree nor Disagree

8% (147)

Somewhat Disagree

2% (41)

Strongly Disagree

2% (44)

I don't know / no opinion

14% (262)

Q5

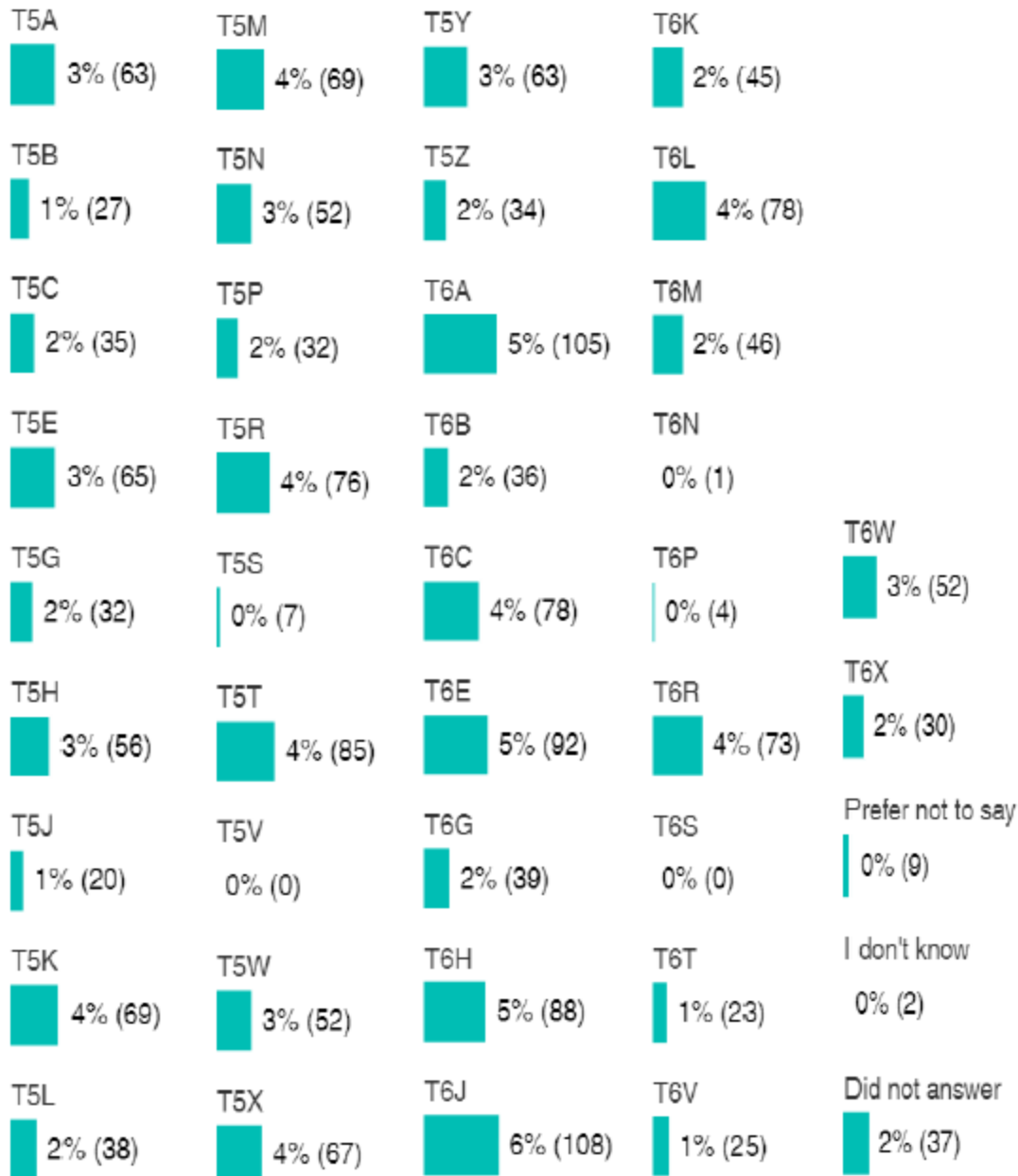
Are there any other comments you would like to share about the governance and oversight of the large sanitary system projects that support growth within Edmonton?

Total responses: 1913

Q6

What are the first three letters of your postal code?

Total responses: 1913



Q7a

Are you interested in participating in a 2 hour online engagement event about SSSF governance and oversight on November 10, 5 PM to 7 PM Mountain Daylight Time?

Total responses: 1913

Yes

9% (181)

No

91% (1,732)

Acknowledge

Total responses: 181

I acknowledge the requirements

96% (173)

Did not answer

4% (8)

Invite_to_Join

We hope you enjoyed filling out this questionnaire! Just a couple questions before we are done. Do you know someone else who might be interested in completing a questionnaire? Please direct them to edmonton.ca/surveys You have valuable knowledge about your community and a unique perspective that can help make your City better. By joining the Edmonton Insight Community, you can share this knowledge quickly and easily from your phone, tablet or computer directly with the people who can make your ideas happen. The Edmonton Insight Community is open to all residents of Edmonton, and those who own property in Edmonton, over the age of 15. Would you be interested in receiving questionnaires in the future?

Total responses: 164

Yes, sign me up now

24% (39)

Maybe, please invite me to join later

0% (0)

No, thanks

18% (30)

Thank you. I'm already a member of the Edmonton Insight Community

58% (95)