

MEASURING UP THE NORTH

DAWSON CREEK

- SURVEY REPORT -



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The City of Dawson Creek received a \$20,000 grant from the 2010 Legacies Now Measuring Up and Inclusion Fund to help fund a survey of the community.

The focus of the survey was to assess how inclusive the community of Dawson Creek is for people with disabilities, seniors and families with small children.

Using examples from other communities a Local Advisory Committee developed a survey.

The Kiwanis Enterprise Centre, located in Dawson Creek, B.C., has been supporting business and social entrepreneurship since 1985.

It is governed by a non-profit society.

At the time of its inception it was the first youth oriented business incubator in Canada.

The Centre supports a variety of programs designed to support individuals and organizations to become dynamic contributors to the economic and social fabric of Canada.

Project Coordinator: Charlie Parslow

Composition of the Local Advisory Committee

Society for Community living (x2)

City of Dawson Creek (x 4)

Lions Club

North East News

Tourism Dawson Creek

Chamber of Commerce

Nawican Friendship Centre

Member of Ministerial society

Seniors advocate

Disability advocate

Note to reader:

This report has been written following *Measuring Up Guidelines for Using Plain Language*

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey was distributed by mail on **March 4th, 2009**. Links to both the City of Dawson Creek and the Kiwanis Enterprise Centre were established on the same date to allow citizens to submit their response using a computer. Opportunities were provided to individuals who wished to have someone complete the survey using the phone.

Site visits to promote the completion of the survey were made to:

- The Campus Kids Daycare Centre
- Northern Lights College
- The Child Development Centre
- South Peace Secondary School
- Southview
- The Seniors Centre
- Nawican Friendship Centre
- Dawson Creek Society for Community Living
- South Peace Community Resources Society
- YO!360.

A number of news releases were made and advertising was placed with local media over an extended period of time:

- Peace F.M.
- C.J.D.C.
- Mirror
- Dawson Creek Daily News.

A \$200 gift certificate was offered to encourage citizens to complete the survey.

The cutoff date for eligibility for the draw to win the gift certificate was **April 30th, 2009**. The final day for submissions was **May 15th, 2009**.

The survey asked citizens to express their opinions regarding accessibility and inclusivity for persons with disabilities, seniors, and families with young children in businesses, public buildings, transportation, communication, signage, recreation, parking, sidewalks, pathways and trails.

As of May 15th there was a return of **663** surveys – **478** by mail and the **185** by computer.

A total of 6399 surveys were mailed to the following postal areas in the South Peace:

Dawson Creek	5434
Rolla	85
Tomslake	120
Pouce Coupe	328
Progress	51
Farmington	139
Arras	75
Sunset Prairie	38
Groundbirch	129

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following definitions are given to terms as they are used within the Measuring Up program.

Accessible: free of barriers, can be used independently by all people.

Assessment: a process of community consultation involving the participation of persons with disabilities, local government, the business sector, other grass roots community leaders, and the general public.

Disability: A general term referring to a range of impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions experienced by individuals; can be visible or invisible, short-term or long term.

Inclusion: welcoming and enabling participation from everyone.

Universal design: an approach to building and design which makes sure that human-made space or structures are able to be used by everyone, to the greatest extent possible; also know as Barrier-Free-Design.

KEY FINDINGS

This survey focuses on issues of accessibility and inclusion in the City of Dawson Creek.

The survey was adapted from a survey that was used in another northern community in British Columbia. While the survey was comprehensive, in many sections it expressly focused on the challenges for seniors, people with disabilities and people responsible for young children. Many respondents felt unqualified to offer an opinion when the survey question focused on a particular section of the community.

In some instances the high number of “**don’t know**” responses makes it difficult to interpret the data. Care must be exercised in determining if there is a perceived weakness or strength in an area if a large number of the responses were “**don’t know**.”

Critical to a review of this report is for the reader to understand that **two sets of data** underpin the writing of the report – ratings in response to the questions and statements **AND** written comments submitted for each question or statement. In a number of instances the two sets of data appear to be contradictory. The rating might indicate strength but the themes of the comments might suggest a weakness. Critical to the work of developing an accessible and inclusive community is to learn and to appreciate the challenges facing **all** people whether they are the

majority or the minority of participants. In the same spirit the challenges facing a particular sector of the community can be flagged by an examination of the comments.

Where there are themes in the written comments they have been included in the report. The theme will need to be examined with a view to exploring the issues and, where possible, enacting a plan to help improve the situation.

The information in this report is based solely on the input of the people who took part in the survey. In some instances the perspective of the participants will need to be verified through detailed examination by experts i.e. traffic flow, signage, crosswalk location.

The 2009 Measuring Up the North Survey for the City of Dawson Creek indicates that overall the participants of the survey are satisfied with the level of accessibility and inclusion in the community. Many participants believe that the community has made significant improvements concerning accessibility and inclusion in recent years.

Participants identified the following areas as being significant strengths:

- Accessibility to grocery stores
- Communication and information (announcements, mailed public notices, posters)
- Community information
- Recreation and cultural activities

- Respect and social inclusion

The results also show that there are a number of areas where a large number of participants believe that action is required to improve the situation for some people in the community.

In some areas participants are quite evenly split in their opinions. This could suggest that further work is required either to clarify the question or to provide benchmarks to help people gauge the community's level of accessibility and inclusion.

Many accolades, suggestions and complaints were made in the comments section of the survey. While an attempt has been made to summarize these in the report it is important for city staff to review the comments in detail as many comments relate to safety issues.

Key Findings

- For a significant number of people many buildings are not considered to be accessible for people with mobility challenges and for people with young children. This includes parts of the public library, Ecole Frank Ross, the medical centre and many downtown businesses and professional buildings. Access to the art gallery is considered difficult for people with mobility issues.
- There is concern about the condition of sidewalks in the community. The lack of sidewalks in many parts of

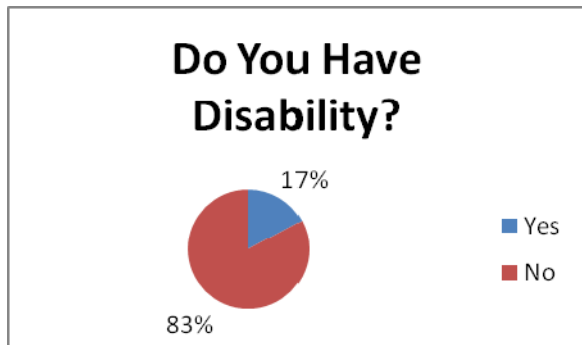
the city (including the roads leading to the swimming pool) is considered by a number of the respondents to be a safety issue.

- Snow and ice removal from roads and sidewalks causes challenges for people with mobility issues.
- There are many traffic issues linked to crosswalks, signage, lighting, stop signs and traffic flow.
- A significant number of participants believe that there is a serious housing issue in the community. The lack of affordable and suitable rental accommodation is presenting a serious problem for many people.
- Some seniors need assistance with the clearing of driveways, walkways and the cutting of grass. Access to affordable general maintenance services is an issue.
- There is a need to improve access to washrooms especially in the downtown core of the city.
- There is significant appreciation for the Step Up N Ride program.
- There is appreciation for the provision of a public transportation. Many respondents raised issues concerning routing, scheduling and perceived inefficiencies of the public transportation system.
- There are many issues associated with the taxi service in Dawson Creek.
- The development of the walking trail and the easy access to parks is appreciated.

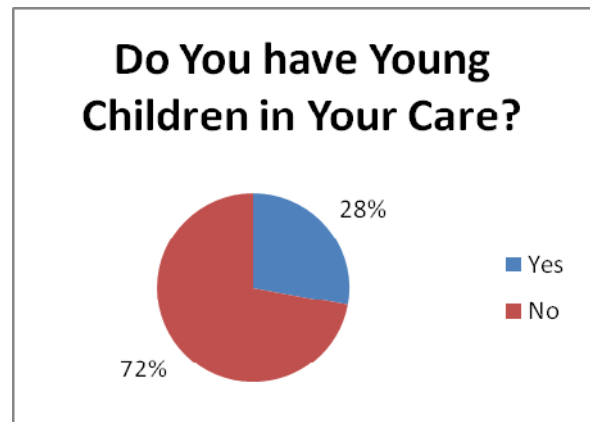
- The home delivery of groceries is considered by many to be an essential service for people with mobility challenges. The service, where it exists, is much appreciated.
- The availability of wheelchairs and other wheeled mobility assistance devices is, with one exception, lacking in the stores.
- Access to a number of professional services is compromised by the lack of elevators to the second floor of the buildings used by many medical practitioners, lawyers and accountants.
- Designated parking for handicapped people is believed to be abused by able bodied people.
- Some participants believe that participation in community events and cultural activities is not affordable for a number of the citizens of the community.

Throughout the development of the report attention was paid to the responses of the participants who are seniors or people with disabilities or people responsible for young people. A comparison of each of the three groups' responses to the overall response was made. Noticeable differences were recorded in the body of the report.

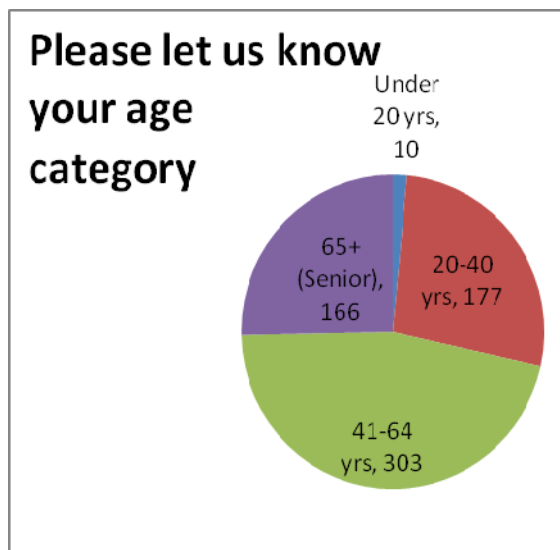
THE PEOPLE WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY



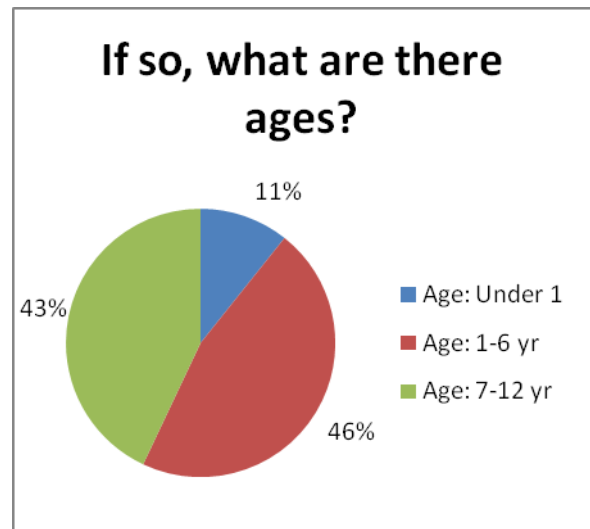
109 people reported the nature of their disability.



178 people reported having young children in their care.



The largest category of people responding to the survey was those aged between 41 and 64. The number of seniors who were engaged in responding to the survey was much higher than reported. As a number of seniors had difficulty understanding the survey a support worker formed several groups of 20 and submitted a group response.



172 people answered this question.

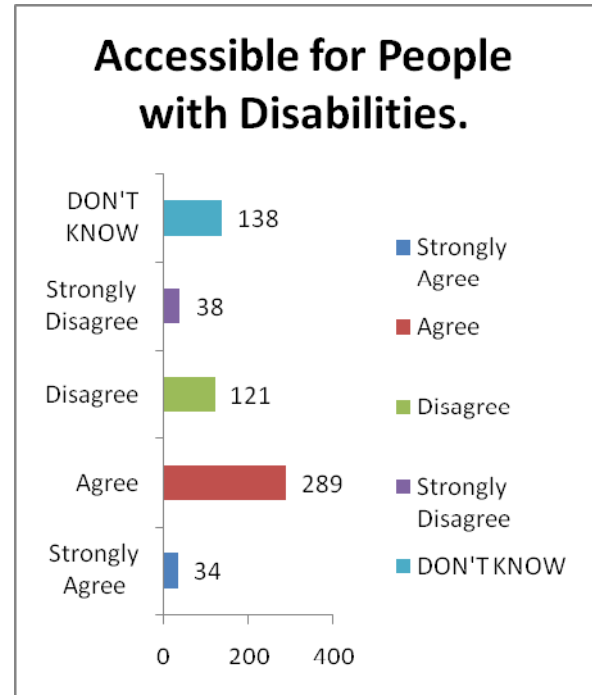
7% of these children were reported to have a disability.

IS DAWSON CREEK AN ACCESSIBLE PLACE?

“There is always room for improvement and I know many public washrooms that are supposed to be wheelchair accessible that are not. But the street profiles are good and most public buildings are excellent as far as accessibility for young mothers with youngsters and/or strollers, people with mobility challenges and those in wheelchairs”

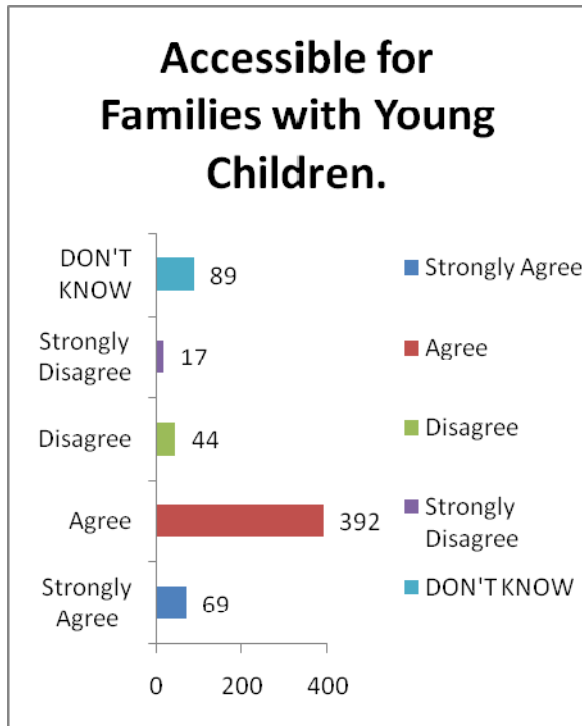
Participants in the survey were asked to express an opinion about Dawson Creek being an accessible place for people with disabilities, for seniors, and for families with young children. **129** people made written comments and/or opinions.

“I find (a) major problem is uneven sidewalks, poor lighting, and doors too heavy to open and no push button available for disabled. All are difficult for elders.....” ● ● ●



52.1% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for people with disabilities. **25.6%** strongly disagreed or disagreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for people with disabilities. **22.3%** reported that they did not know.

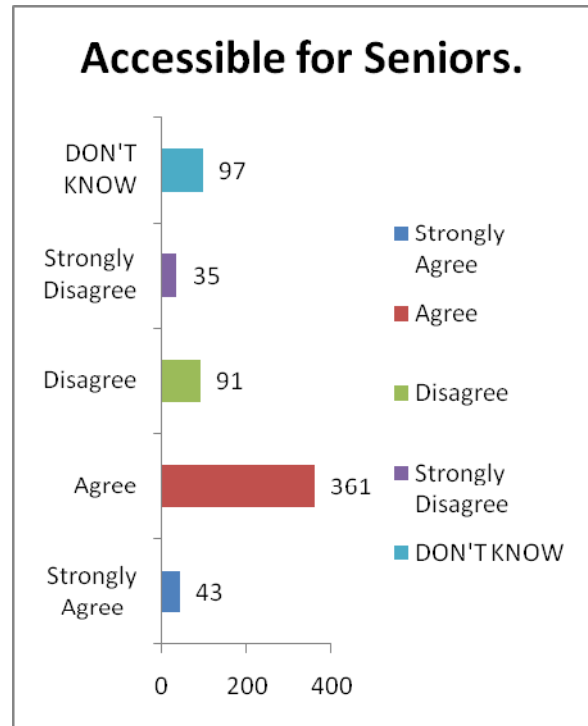
55.9% of the people who reported having a disability strongly agreed or agreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for people with a disability. **33%** of this group strongly disagreed or disagreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for people with a disability.



75.5% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for families with young children. **10.1%** strongly disagreed or disagreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for seniors. **14.6%** reported that they did not know.

Separating the response of people with young children showed that **88%** of them believe that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for families with young children.

14 of the surveys were completed by people who were responsible for young children who have a disability. **69.4%** strongly agreed or agreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for families with young children.



64.5% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for seniors. **20.1%** strongly disagreed or disagreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for seniors. **15.5%** reported that they did not know.

Separating the response of seniors showed that **78%** of seniors believe that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for seniors.

48 of the surveys were completed by seniors who reported that they were disabled. Of this group of survey participants **66.6%** strongly agreed or agreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for seniors with a disability. **23.8%** strongly disagreed or disagreed that Dawson Creek is an accessible place for seniors with a disability.

Approximately one in five of the people who responded to each part of this question chose the response “**don’t know**”. This is a common occurrence throughout the survey and highlights the challenge of helping people to become aware of the accessibility issues in the community.

Many people illustrated the challenge of accessibility with examples. Generally the most serious obstacles to access to buildings were associated with the downtown area of the city.

Most of the comments and written opinions fit into themes

Sidewalks and roads

The challenge of using strollers, wheelchairs, walking frames and other devices used to assist movement was frequently referred to as an issue. Common problems that were raised were:

- uneven sidewalks and roads
- inappropriate curbs
- the disintegration of asphalt surfaces
- the lack of snow removal
- inadequate repair of road and sidewalks
- the lack of sidewalks in parts of the city
- poor signage
- ice and snow barriers in the middle of sidewalks and roads.

Doors

A major barrier to access is the difficulty of opening doors.

Frequent problems that were raised were:

- the lack of electric push buttons to open doors
- doors being too heavy
- the space between double doors being inadequate for people with strollers and wheelchairs
- some door closing devices being too fast and/or too strong
- some door ledges
- the lack of ramps to doors
- some ramps being too narrow.

Stairs and lack of elevators

Access to the second floor of many buildings is difficult or impossible for many individuals.

Concern was expressed that many professionals have their offices on the second floor of buildings that require the use of stairs.

Frequently mentioned problem sites were:

- the second floor of the public library
- the public art gallery
- many apartment buildings
- offices of law firms
- offices of accountants
- some dental and medical offices.

The lack of elevators in the buildings is an accessibility and inclusion issue.

Parking

The inadequate provision of designated parking for the handicapped and for young mothers with toddlers was a frequently raised issue – particularly in the downtown core of the city.

Some designated parking spots are considered to be too far away from the facility.

Other issues that were mentioned were:

- enforcement of parking bylaws
- handicap parking permits being used improperly
- able bodied people using handicap parking areas.

Washrooms

It was reported that there is a lack of washrooms available to the public.

Few washrooms are wheelchair accessible.

Housing

A number of participants reported that they believe there is a housing issue in the City of Dawson Creek. Increases in the cost of rent have made it very difficult for low income families.

The lack of accommodation suitable for the disabled was raised as an issue by a number of respondents.

Other issues

A number of issues were raised by small numbers of participants:

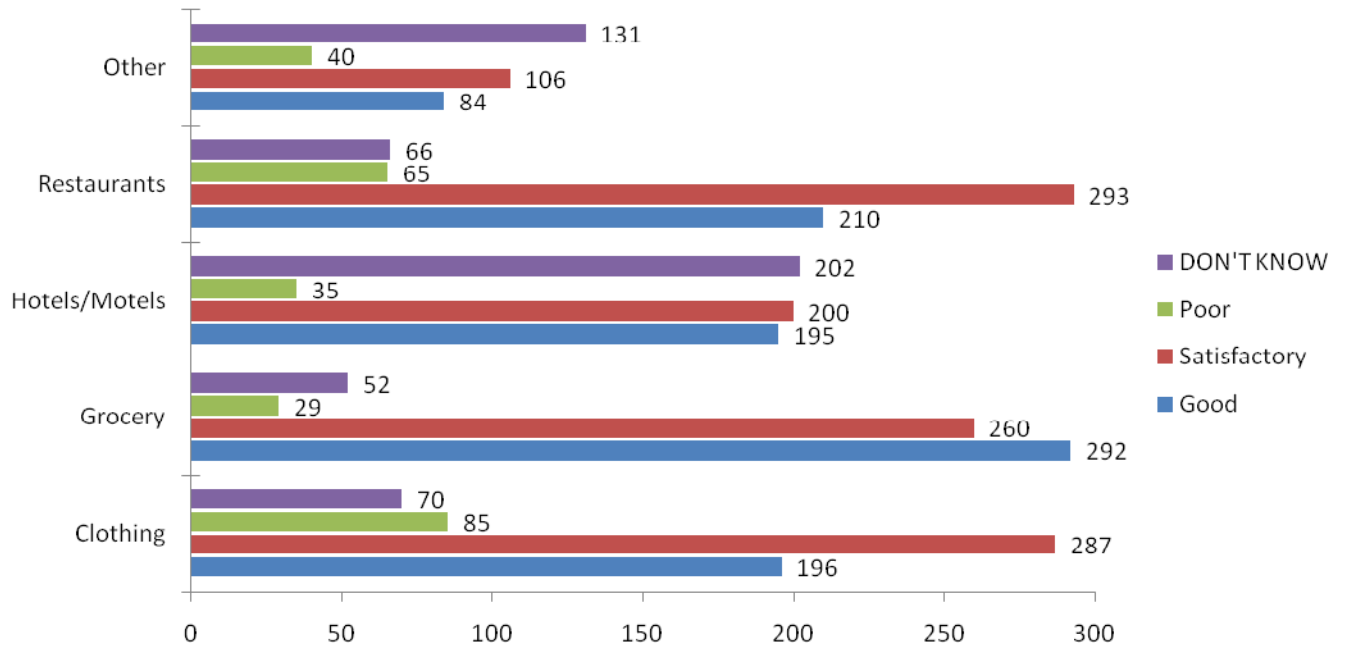
- limited hours of transit
- poor lighting in parks
- lack of bike lanes
- many public facilities located at the edge of the city
- no viewing windows at the arenas.

Many of these issues are reviewed in more detail appropriate parts of the survey.

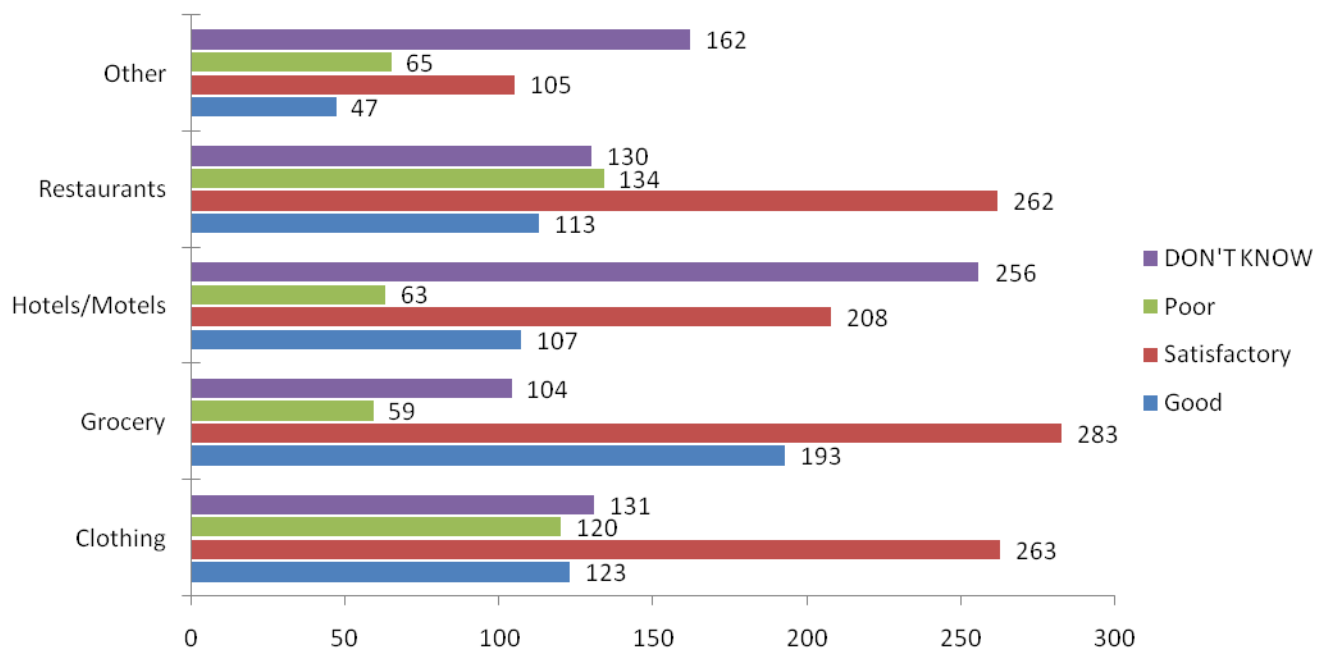
“Winter is the challenge – sidewalks both downtown and residential, parking lots especially if having to walk any distance – designated senior parking at some locations would be a definite asset”

ACCESS TO BUSINESSES

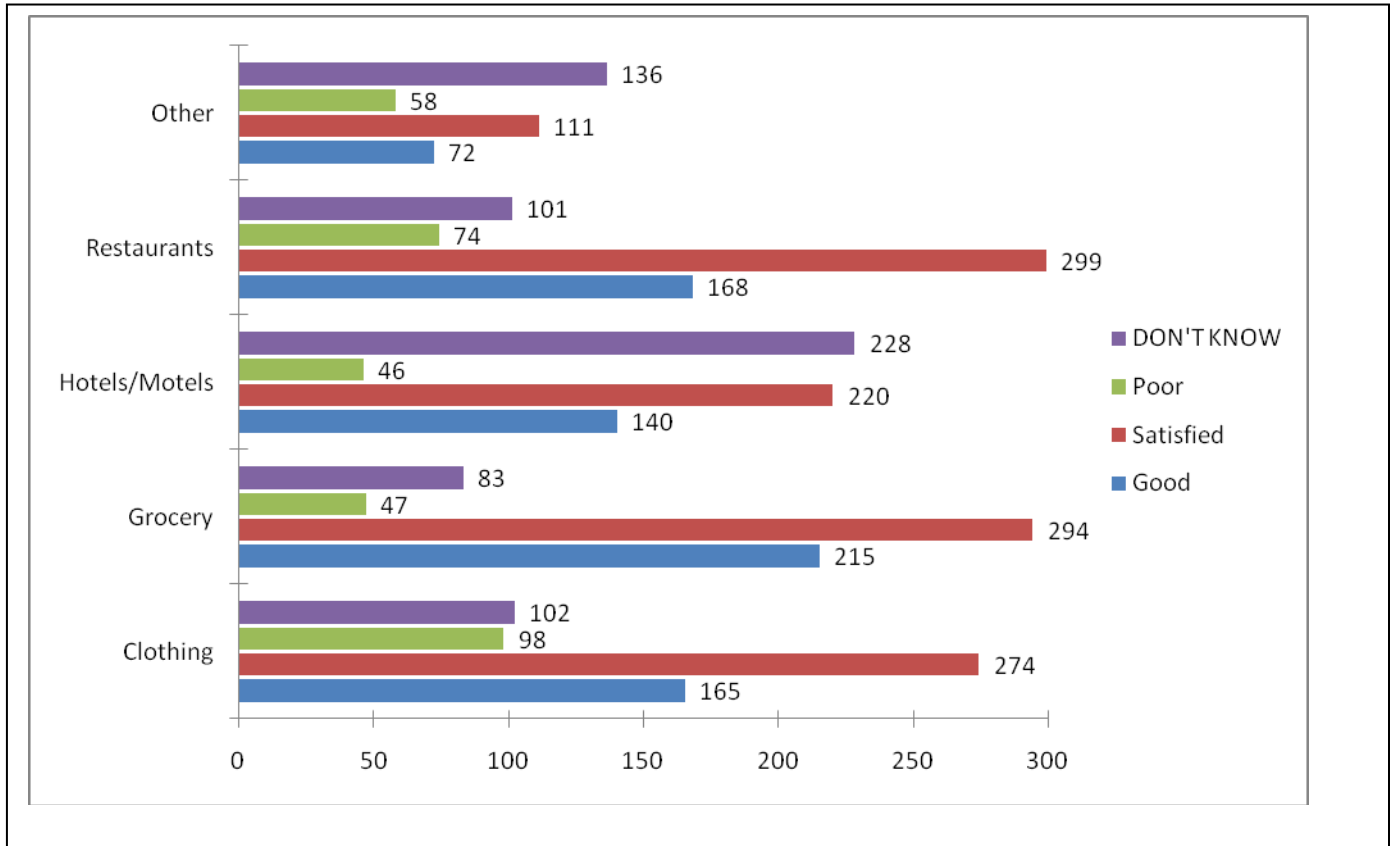
Accessibility to Businesses for Families with Small Children



Accessibility to Businesses for People with Disabilities



Accessibility to Businesses for Seniors



These overall survey results were consistent with the survey results for seniors, families with young children and people with disabilities.

Participants expressed strong satisfaction with the accessibility of grocery stores. The positive rating of grocery stores is likely linked to the stores being modern or recently renovated.

A large number of participants didn't know about the accessibility of hotels and motels - presumably because they had never stayed at the establishments. Similarly a significant number of participants

expressed a “don't know” opinion about businesses categorized as 'other'.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – ACCESS TO BUSINESSES FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

96 participants offered comments concerning accessibility to businesses for families with young children.

Doors

The outstanding issue of accessibility raised for this group was the difficulty of gaining access to some businesses because of the lack of automatic doors. Some doors were

described as being heavy or narrow. Some doors present a challenge because of a high threshold. Entrance to buildings with two sets of doors was reported to be a challenge - especially with a stroller or wheelchair.

Aisle space

Some stores have narrow aisles which makes access with a wheelchair or stroller difficult. Clothing stores were often mentioned as problem locations.

Maneuvering in aisles cluttered with boxes was reported as a special challenge.

Family friendly space

The need for what was described as 'family friendly space' was raised by some participants.

Illustrations of deficits in some businesses would be:

- lack of menus for healthy eating for children
- limited space for high chairs
- benches in booths being too narrow to place a car seat
- lack of seat belts in some shopping carts
- no high chairs in banks for use when making deposits or withdrawals at the tellers counter
- the lack of designated parking for mothers with young children
- limited availability of washrooms
- washrooms often not large enough for strollers and wheelchairs.

Steps

Access to many buildings is difficult for families with young children because of the need to climb steps. This is made more

difficult when they are often slippery in winter months.

Access to the second floor of many buildings is impossible using a stroller or wheelchair.

Sidewalks and roads

Pushing strollers or using wheelchairs on sidewalks that are uneven, disintegrating or covered in snow or grit was reported as a problem.

The lack of sidewalks in many locations in the city was reported as a safety issue as well as being an accessibility barrier.

“Some stores are good, some aren’t like the ...; clothing racks are close together and there is no room to maneuver”

“We do have several Box stores that do have wider aisles and handicap parking”

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – ACCESS TO BUSINESSES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

117 participants offered comments concerning accessibility to businesses for people with disabilities.

Many participants reported that many of the newer buildings are accessible but many of the older buildings are not.

Disabled person friendly space

Many participants reported examples of small adjustments that would assist people with disabilities:

- tables and counters at the right height for people using wheelchairs
- change rooms large enough for a wheelchair
- aisle space for a wheelchair
- larger washrooms and toilets with grab bars
- restaurants with tables that can be used while sitting in a wheelchair
- automatic doors
- displays at a height that can be seen from a wheelchair.

Doors

Many doors present a barrier to access to businesses in the community.

Problems reported include:

- doors close too quickly
- lack of electric doors including the new swimming pool
- doors too heavy
- insufficient space when there are two sets of doors at an entrance
- when there are electric doors they are often not in working order

- buttons to operate electric doors are hard to locate and sometimes they are in an inconvenient location.

“Disabled persons in a wheelchair have limited accessibility to most of the services in Dawson Creek.... Most restaurants are not set up where you can easily fit in a wheelchair at a table”

Stairs and ramps

Participants reported that many businesses do not have ramps. In some instances where there are ramps they are too narrow or too steep. Snow and ice removal from ramps is often delayed.

Needed and valued professional services are often inaccessible because they are located on the second floor of buildings. Examples frequently mentioned were:

- public library
- Frank Ross School
- lawyers Offices
- some doctors and dentists
- accountants.

“The closeness of the double door entryways going into most restaurants (makes them) very hard to get into. The doors are also hard to open.”

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – ACCESS TO BUSINESSES FOR SENIORS

Seniors who participated in the survey reported in a similar way to the rest of the participants.

Many seniors have mobility issues.

Doors

Doors are a major problem for seniors.

Issues that were reported include:

- few automatic doors
- doors are heavy and hard to open
- doors close too strongly
- no wheelchair access.

Stairs

Access to the second floor of buildings is a problem for many seniors. As was reported for other categories access to a significant portion of the public library collection, the art gallery and the services of many groups of professional is not possible for people with significant mobility issues.

Sidewalks and roads

Walking or using walkers or wheelchairs is made difficult by uneven surfaces, high curbs, accumulated snow and ice, and the lack of sidewalks in parts of the city.

Other concerns

A few participants mentioned the following issues:

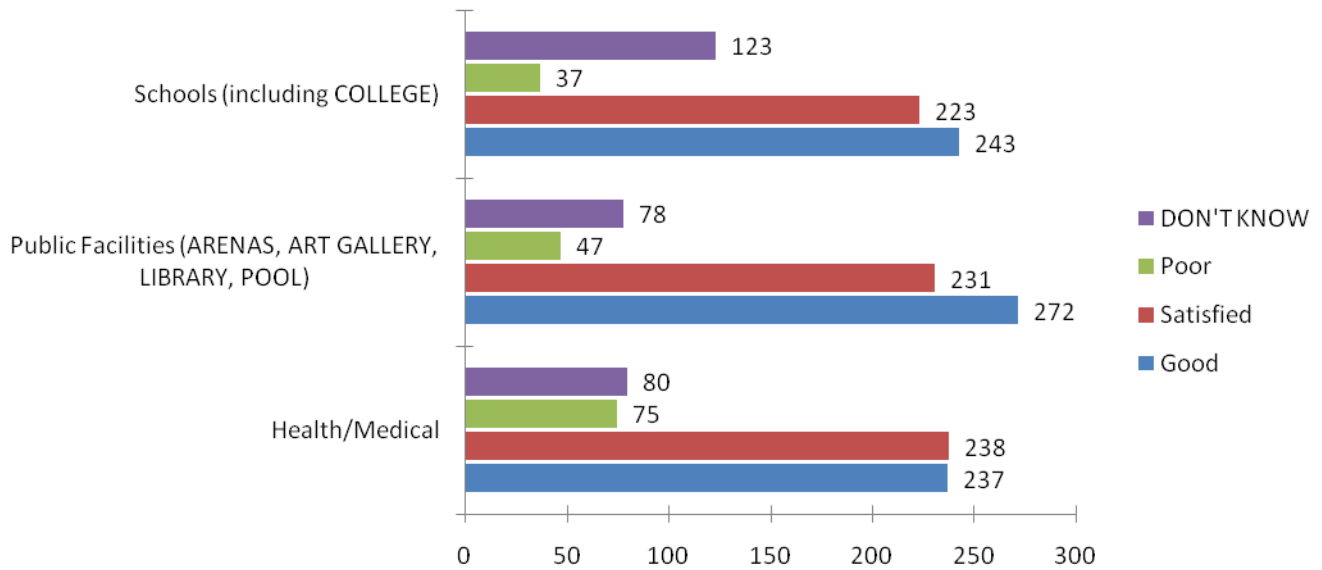
- availability of people to clear away snow from driveways and entrances to private residences

- toilets are too low for many seniors and there needs to be more grab bars in washrooms
- high shelves makes it difficult for seniors to see what is displayed
- parking for seniors needs to be designated and made close to the businesses
- change rooms are too small
- there is a shortage of suitable and affordable housing
- viewing of activities at the arenas is not possible from a wheelchair.

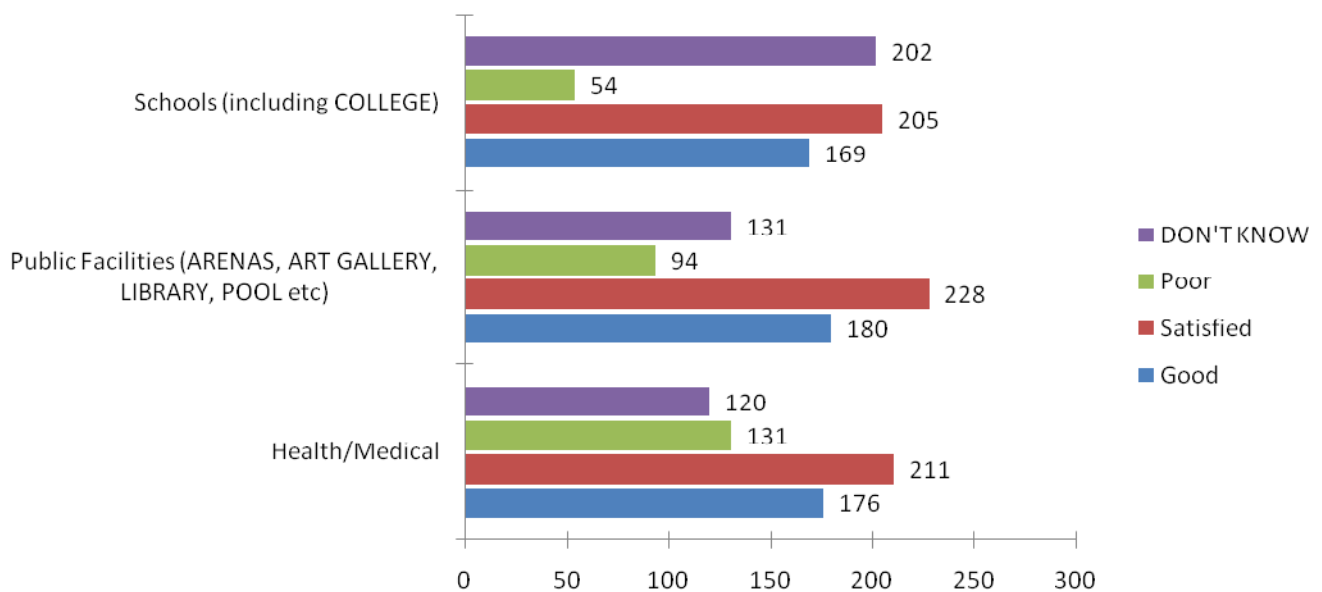
“...There is no service for seniors to access to even get out of their driveway if they have no family or friend to assist. If we had a service for basic snow shoveling and lawn care seniors could stay in their homes longer, perhaps until they passed away... If we had services available at minimum cost it would save a lot of health and welfare costs with more seniors able to maintain their quality of life in their home they have worked so hard to keep”

ACCESS TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS

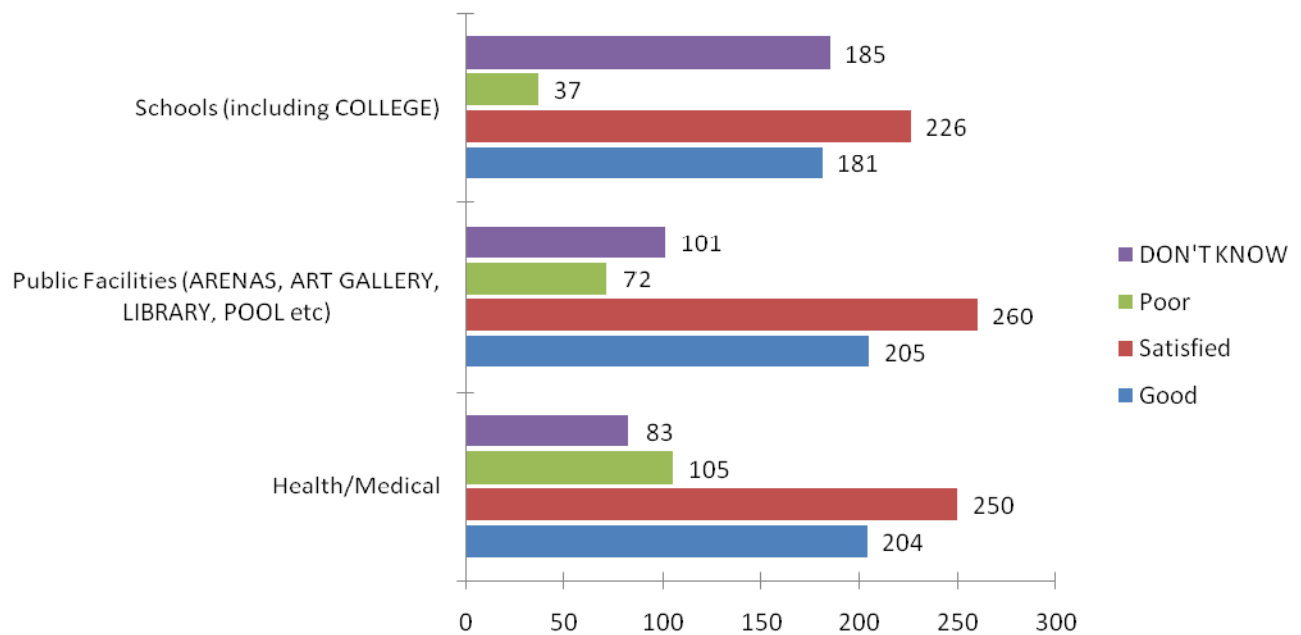
Accessibility to Public Buildings for Families with young Children



Accessibility to Public Buildings for People with Disabilities



Accessibility to Public Buildings for Seniors



The information provided by participants showed that many believe that access to public buildings is good or satisfactory.

For instance, **80.1%** rated access to public facilities for families with young children as good or satisfactory.

Access to schools and college for families with young children is rated good or satisfactory by **74.4%** of the participants.

Access to public facilities for seniors is rated good or satisfactory by **72.9%** of participants.

Analyzing the data by target groups reveals that **38.9%** of participants who are disabled rated the access to health and medical services as poor. **21.1%** of seniors

rated access to health and medical services as poor.

In all categories a large number of participants expressed “**don’t know**”. Part of the reason for this was expressed in the comments section. Many people felt unqualified to express an opinion and felt that only those people who were a senior, a disabled person or a person responsible for young children should respond to the questions.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – ACCESS TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

As a general comment and one given by several participants, access to government funded facilities is easier than access to many private business facilities. Access to financial resources over time was considered to be a factor in this difference between public and private facilities.

EASE OF ACCESS

A number of suggestions were made to improve access for families with young children:

- more designated parking for mothers with young children especially at the hospital, health unit and swimming pool
- radically improved parking at the public library
- ramps for strollers
- sanding at the Kiwanis Performing Arts Centre
- making the floor surface at the arenas and the Encana Event Centre non slippery
- removal of bumpy surfaces at the Memorial Arena
- installation of elevators at the art gallery and the public library
- installation of electric doors at all public buildings.

“Arenas/Encana Centre are appropriately ramped; but once you get into the building the floor surfaces in the entire area are very slippery and/or bumpy and uneven. One would think twice about going there in the winter or in rainy weather. There are non-slip flooring materials available. Bumpy floors catch on crutches, canes, some walkers and are a nightmare for wheelchairs (and high heels). A public building should be accessible to all citizens”

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – ACCESS TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The comments of participants concerning accessibility to public buildings for people with disabilities were focused on a small number of areas.

Art Gallery

It was reported that access to the entry ramp at the Art Gallery was often impeded by parked vehicles. The difficulty in pushing a wheelchair up the ramp inside the gallery was identified as an accessibility issue.

The art gallery was considered to be a building that presents accessibility challenges for people with disabilities.

Public Library

It was reported by many participants that access to the public library is difficult to impossible.

Examples of the shortfall of this building include:

- extremely limited parking
- the need to use stairs to access the second floor
- uneven surface at the main doors.

Medical Clinic

The lack of an elevator to the second floor of the medical clinic was presented as accessibility issue by many participants. The building has no automatic doors and

entrance using the ramp and the side door was reported to be difficult.

Some participants expressed the need for more designated parking at the clinic.

Kenn Borek Aquatic Centre

While expressions of appreciation for the Centre were expressed a number of issues relating to accessibility were given:

- the doors to the change rooms are narrow and hard to open
- there is a need for two of the cubicles set aside for people with disabilities to be made larger
- the location of the pool at the edge of the city
- more parking for people with a disability
- no sidewalk for walking to the pool.

Schools

It was reported that many schools do not have designated parking that is close to the entrance of the school.

Accessibility to the second floor at Ecole Frank Ross was flagged as a problem.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – ACCESS TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR SENIORS

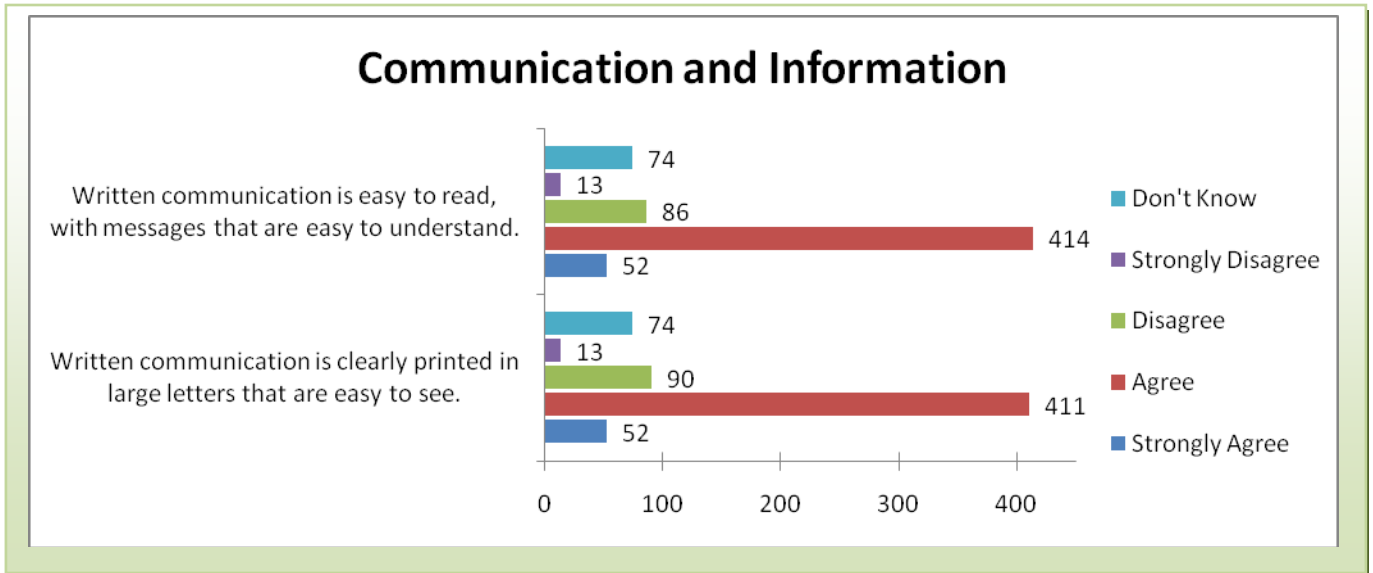
The number of comments made by seniors in this section was few. Several comments were made that the survey had repeated questions in it.

Issues raised in this section were:

- accessing the second floor of the medical centre
- difficulties facing many seniors in opening doors
- the lack of adequate change rooms at the swimming pool
- the poor accessibility of the art gallery
- the location of the swimming pool
- ice at the entrance to the swimming pool and the snow covered sidewalk at the swimming pool
- the inadequate provision of designated parking for seniors.

“Not enough wheelchair bathrooms where you can actually put a wheelchair or scooter into in this community.... Library is horrible – no access to second floor. Art Gallery is very difficult to get into and around. Pool – parking too far away, change rooms are still not right...benches are too narrow. Arenas...impossible to sit with spectators in the rink.....”

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION



The opinions of each group - seniors, people with disabilities and people responsible for young children did not vary significantly from the overall results presented in the two graphs.

69.3% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that communication is clearly printed in large letters that are easy to see. **16.1%** of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

72.9% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that written communication is easy to read, with messages that are easy to understand. **15.5%** of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

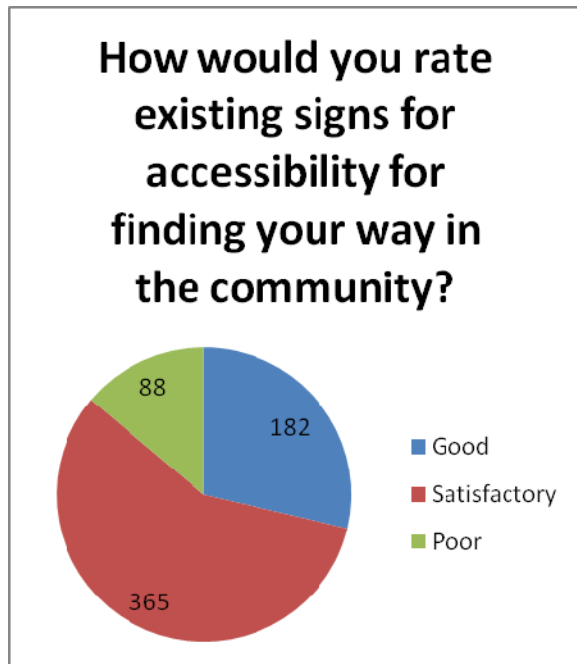
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

A number of participants commented that the questions in this section were unclear.

Issues raised by some participants included the:

- need to avoid ‘buzz’ words and to use plain language
- need to use large and clear fonts
- need to display notices at eye level and to have some notices at an appropriate height for people in wheelchairs
- need to send more information to people’s homes as many people find it difficult to get out of their homes
- need for the local radio station to give prompt and accurate information.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION



86.2% of participants rated the existing signs for accessibility as good or satisfactory. This result was reflected in the results for seniors, people with disabilities, and people responsible for young children.

72 participants offered comments – many made specific suggestions to deal with perceived issues. These may be found in the appendix of this report.

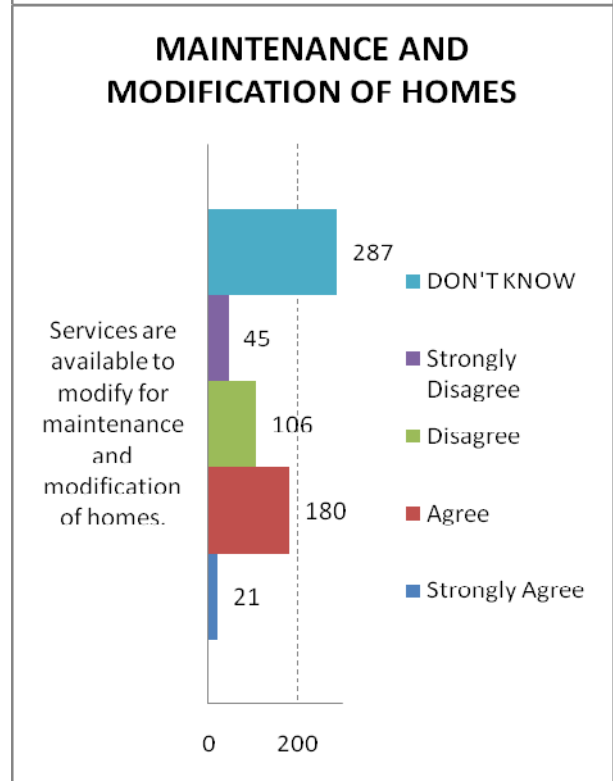
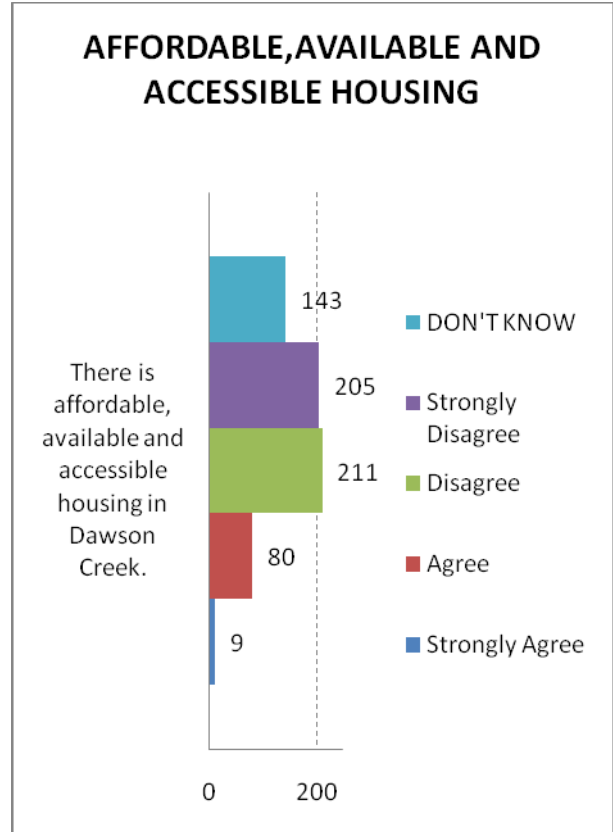
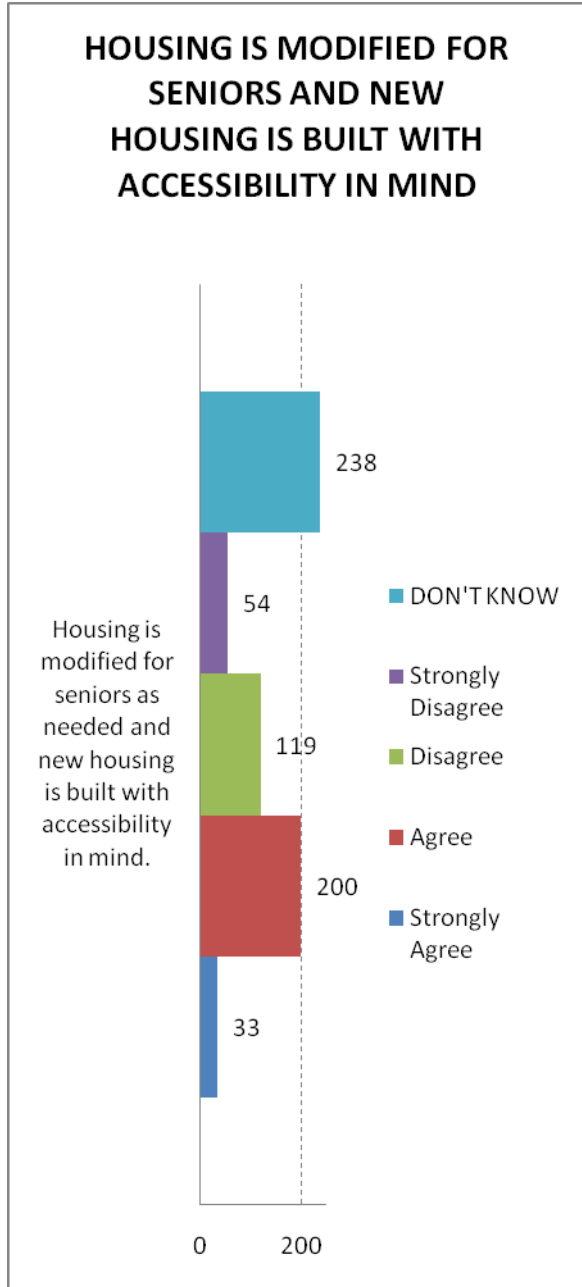
Some themes that were reported were the need for:

- more signage for visitors to direct them to places such as the swimming pool, soccer fields, library, hospital, police, arenas and K.P.A.C.
- improved highway signage especially at the round about
- street signs at the corners of roads
- signs displaying a city map that indicates a person’s location in the city.

“Need signage for city facilities i.e. swimming pool and arenas, people from out of town cannot tell the big building on the end of town holds a swimming pool and have a hard time finding the arenas.”

“Street signs need to be larger and addresses like the numbers downtown need to be larger and visible so one can see them! I don’t have the faintest idea what the street addresses of most places are. I just know how to get there after 25 years of living here.”

HOUSING



There were many written responses to this set of questions.

The expression of negative opinion was significant. **64.2%** of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is affordable, available and accessible housing in Dawson Creek. A further **22.1%** responded “don’t know.” Only **13.7%** expressed a positive opinion in response to the question – the lowest positive response in the entire survey.

A review of the opinions expressed by seniors, people responsible for young children, and people with disabilities is presented in table format.

There is affordable, available and accessible housing in Dawson Creek.

Seniors:

Strongly Agree	.6%
Agree	12.6%
Disagree	31.4%
Strongly Disagree	26.4%
Don’t know	28.9%

Families with young children:

Strongly Agree	1.4%
Agree	12.0%
Disagree	36.6%
Strongly Disagree	33.1%
Don’t know	16.9%

People with disabilities:

Strongly Agree	2.2%
Agree	10.9%
Disagree	26.1%
Strongly Disagree	40.2%
Don’t know	20.7%

A significant number of participants (**37.0% and 44.9%**) expressed a “**don’t know**” opinion in response to the questions *“Housing is modified for seniors as needed and new housing is built with accessibility in mind” and “Services are available to modify for maintenance and modification of homes”*

“Private contractors are in short supply and are extremely expensive. For those who can’t do the work themselves, regardless of the reasons, modifying and maintaining houses can be out of income ranges for many citizens in DC.”

“.....parents are working around the clock just to pay rent.....”

“Rent in Dawson Creek is far too high for the wages or income of most people. Some are paying 75% of income for accommodation”

“We moved here to rent that was double our mortgage in Prince George”

“Demographically, we are entering a prolonged crisis in housing – services for seniors/disabled.”

“There is not adequate AFFORDABLE housing available for low income people.”

“My rent is \$1100.00 a month + utilities we have less than \$200 for food each month there are 4 people here.”

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – HOUSING

A review of the **147** comments made by participants to the set of questions that focused on housing indicated that housing is a major concern in the community.

The common themes in the comments were the:

- high cost of rent that leaves little remaining funds for other necessities
- lack of affordable and suitable housing
- long waiting lists to access appropriate housing
- need for more information on programs designed to assist people needing to modify their homes
- lack of services to assist seniors and the disabled to live in their homes.

Other comments included:

- a call to establish a housing co-op
- the need to have more emphasis on support for homeless people
- the needs of seniors who are raising their grandchildren.

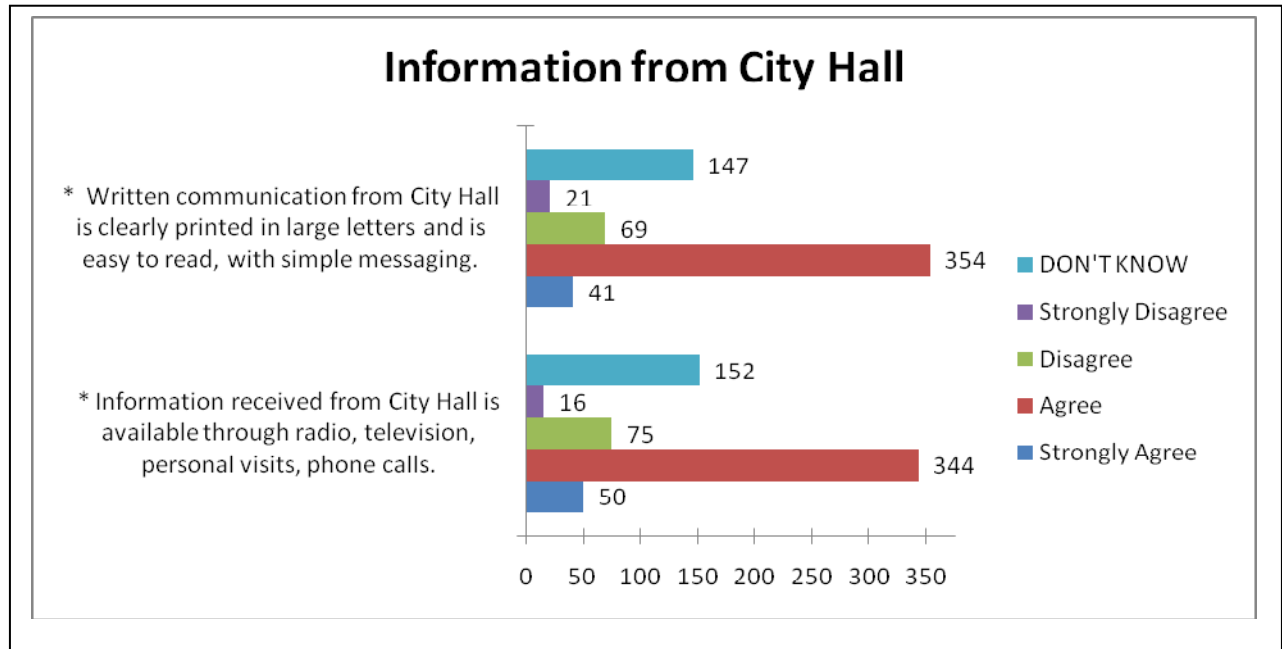
Many of the comments indicate that housing issues are a significant problem for a number of citizens.

“New housing is built to maximize profit. Anything added which has been termed ‘medical’ or ‘accessible’ is cost plus-plus. And if it government subsidized – add another ‘plus’ to the cost.”

“I would very much like to know about services to modify or maintain homes for seniors. I am a caregiver for a senior.”

“This is an area where we need to do a lot of work.”

INFORMATION FROM CITY HALL



61.8% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that information is available from City Hall and 62.5% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that written communication from City Hall is easy to read. Almost 25% of the participants chose the “don’t know” response to each of the questions.

A number of rural area residents reported that they didn’t expect to receive information from City Hall.

It should be noted that when the “don’t know” responses are removed from the group 81.1% of the remaining participants agreed that information from city hall is available through radio, television, personal visits and phone calls. Following the same approach 81.5% agreed that written communication from city hall is clearly

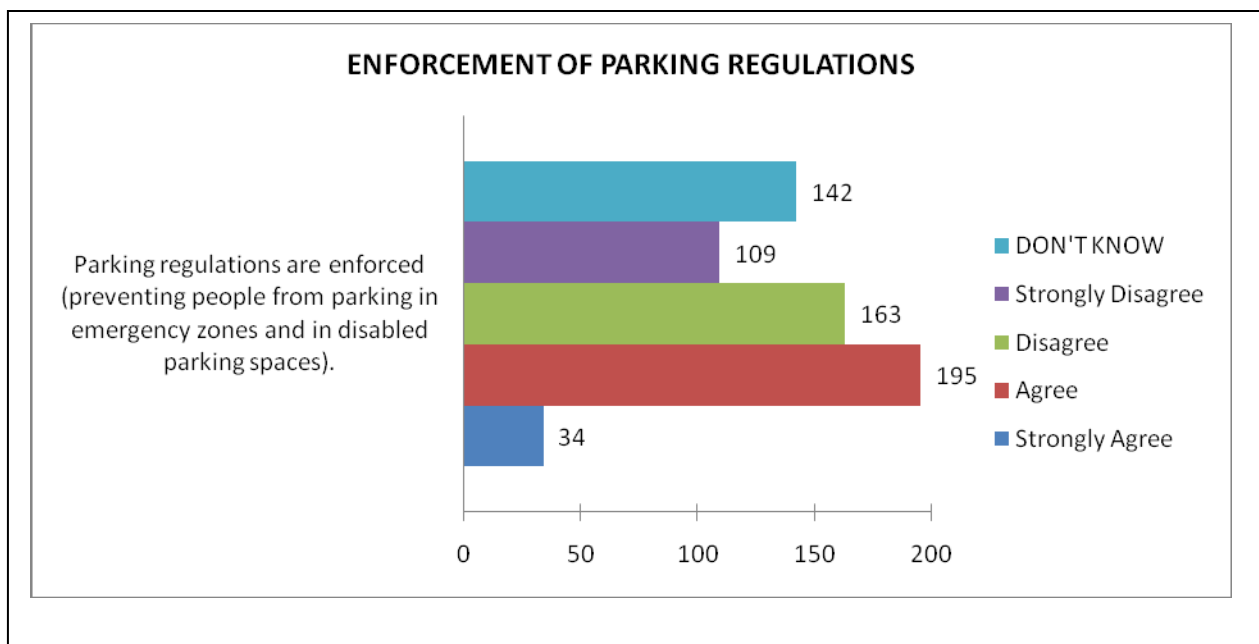
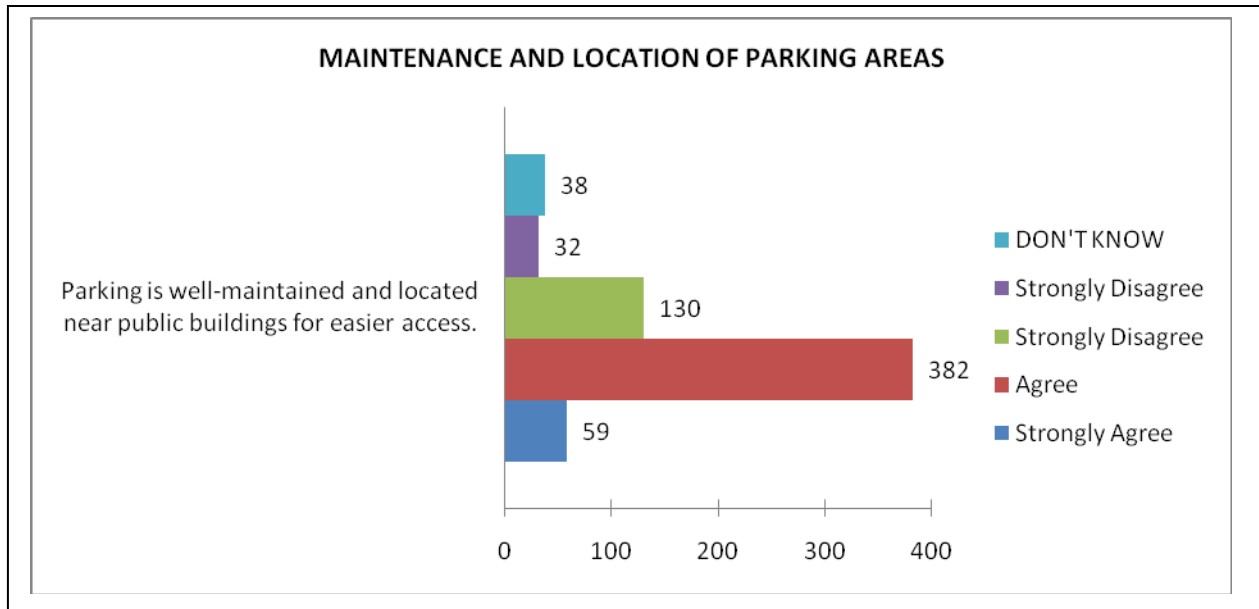
printed, is easy to read with simple messaging.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – INFORMATION FROM CITY HALL

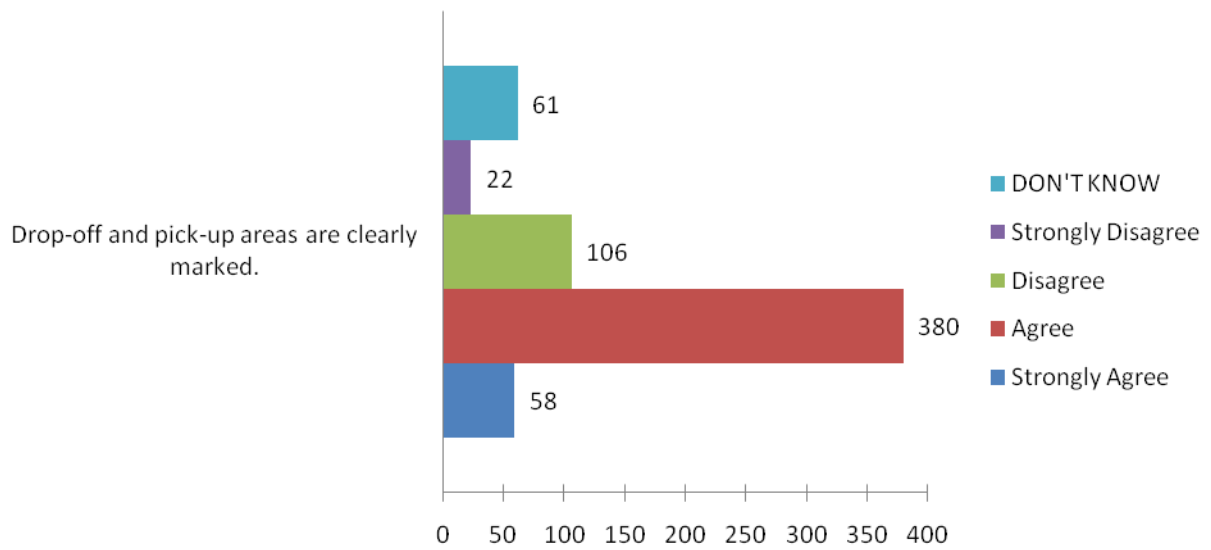
There were a few general themes expressed in the 57 comments made in this section of the survey. These themes were:

- local media seems to be focused on Fort St John
- news about emergencies is more reliable coming from media based in Vancouver – especially on weekends and holidays
- the city needs to advertise using a number of local radio stations
- the size of print for many legal and other notices is too small.

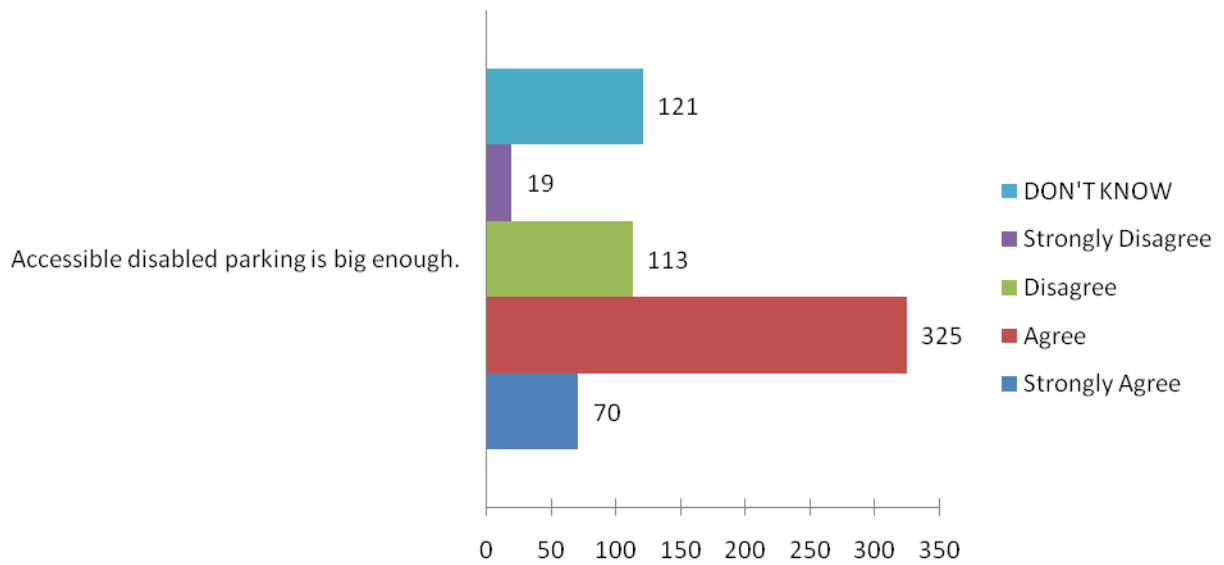
PARKING

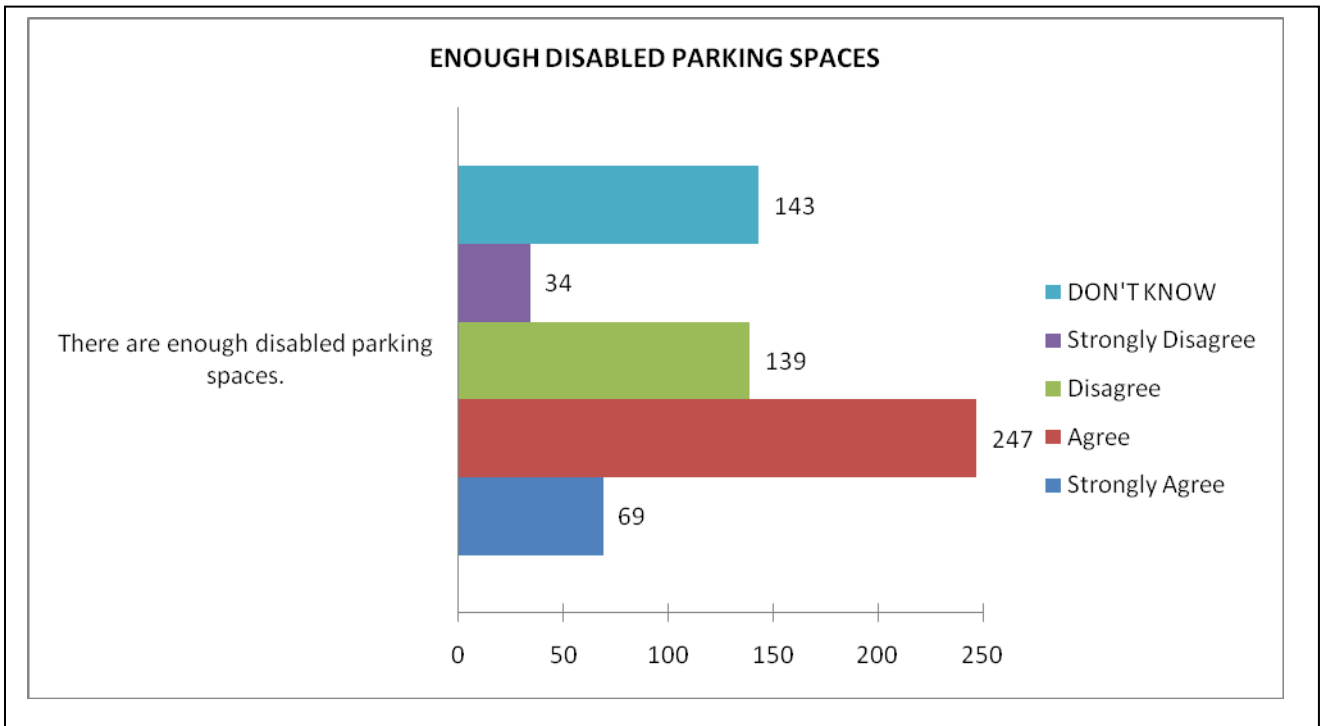


MARKING OF DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP AREAS



SIZE OF ACCESSIBLE DISABLED PARKING





68.8% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that parking is well maintained and located near public buildings for easier access. For people with disabilities this number decreased to **63.7%**.

35.5% of the participants believe that parking regulations are enforced. **37.1%** of the people with disabilities who took part in the survey believe that parking regulations are enforced. **22.0%** of the participants expressed a **“don’t know”** rating to this statement. Removing this group from the remaining responses shows that **45.5%** of the participants who did have a perspective on this issue strongly agree or agree that parking regulations are enforced. A majority of participants (**54.5%**) strongly disagree or disagree that parking regulations are enforced.

69.8% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that drop-off and pick-up areas are

50% of the participants believe that there are enough disabled parking spaces. Adjusting this figure by removing the **22.6%** who chose the **“don’t know”** response shows that **64.5%** of the participants strongly agreed or disagreed that there are enough disabled parking spaces.

41.6% of the people with disabilities believe that there are enough disabled parking spaces.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – PARKING

The greatest number of comments related to the perception that there is a lack of enforcement of parking by-laws. Issues were also raised about the lack of monitoring of private parking lots. Related to this general issue is the apparent disregard of designated parking spots by able-bodied people.

Other themes were:

- the need for signs being vertical as snow covers the painted signs placed on the road
- snow being pushed off sidewalks onto the roads in the downtown area making access from cars difficult
- parking lots not being cleared of snow and being covered with gravel in the spring
- the need for more designated spaces for mothers with young children and for seniors.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONCERN

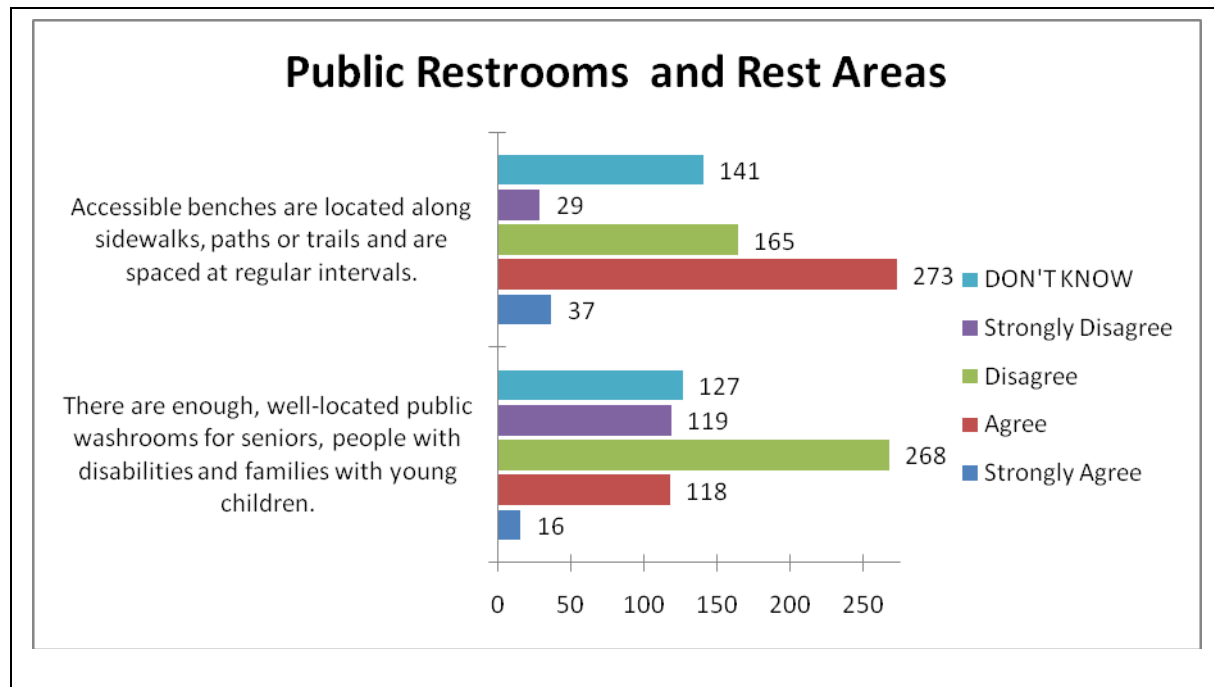
- ❖ Downtown in general
- ❖ Hospital
- ❖ Medical Clinic
- ❖ Public Health Unit
- ❖ Library
- ❖ Encana Event Centre
- ❖ Schools (no parking for disabled)

“Quite often I see cars parked in disabled parking spaces without the designated signage on their vehicle. There is usually no one around to enforce this so they get away with it.”

“...but winter months make it more difficult. Businesses in the downtown core shovel their sidewalks but where does it go... onto the street therefore making it very difficult for anyone in a wheelchair or mobility issues to get to the sidewalks.”

“As a mother of young children I really appreciated businesses that have spots designated for young children. Those car seats can be heavy and awkward.”

PUBLIC RESTROOMS



59.8% of the participants gave a less than favorable response to the statement “There are enough, well located public washrooms for seniors, people with disabilities and families with young children. A further **19.6%** responded “don’t know.”

69.3% of the participants who are responsible for young children disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

The concern about access to public washrooms has been raised in other sections of the survey.

48% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that accessible benches are located along sidewalks, paths or trails and are spaced at regular intervals. This

number dropped to **44.3%** of the seniors who participated in the survey and to **34%** of the participants with disabilities.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS – PUBLIC RESTROOMS AND BENCHES

There were a large number of comments made in this section of the survey.

Many comments were made about the lack of public washrooms in the downtown section of the community. Participants claimed that the refusal or reluctance of many downtown businesses to allow people the use of their washroom facilities causes them to shop at box stores or at malls.

It is clear that many people are aware that issues such as vandalism and loitering impact the provision and the maintenances of public washrooms and benches.

Other themes raised in the comments made in this section were:

- lack of suitable washrooms for people with disabilities
- the need for more benches on the walking trail and in parks
- the need for shelters from rain and wind
- people being required to be a customer of the business before being allowed the use of the washroom.



“It’s hard to find a place downtown to use a toilet or you must buy something first in order to use the store’s”



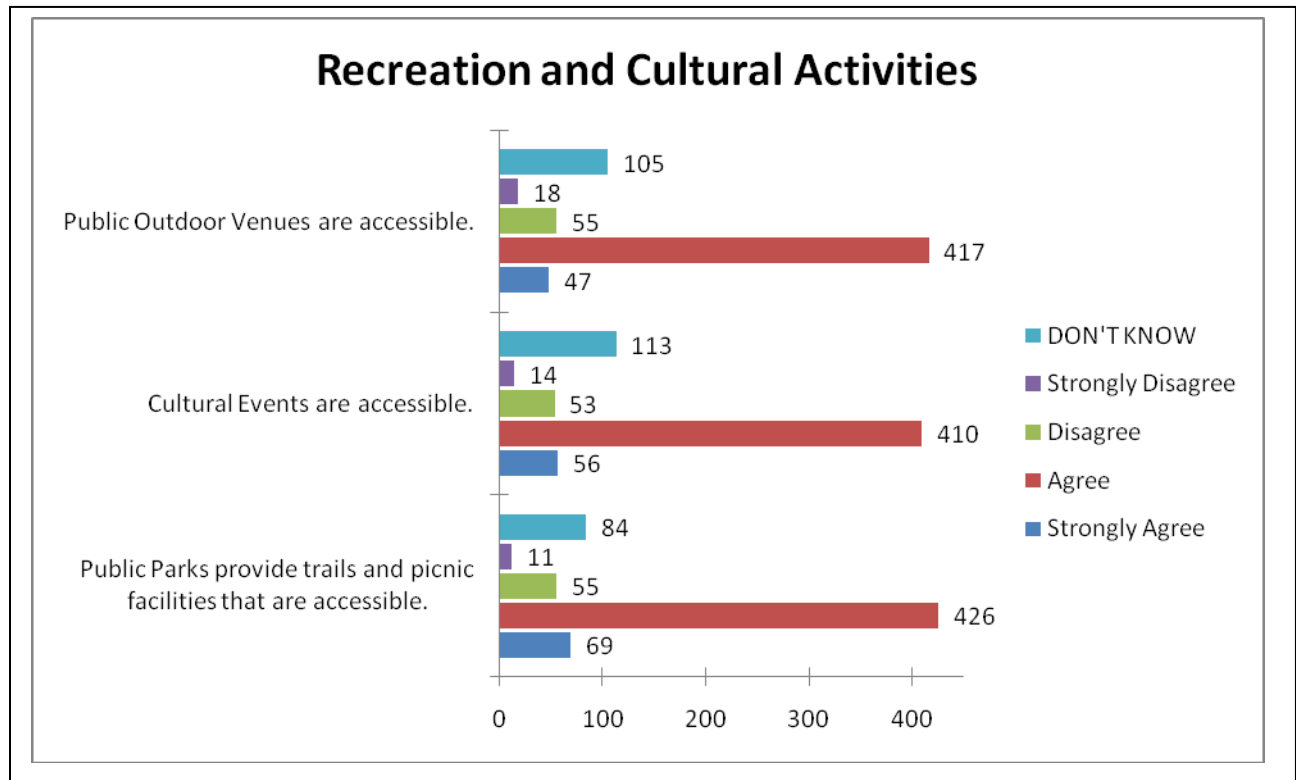
“Downtown needs better washroom access – not sure where to go when stuck, especially bad with young kids.”

“We need a facility in the downtown core for the public to use – the businesses aren’t obligated to supply those services.”

“...I have had kids have accidents due to small businesses not permitting use of washroom.”

‘ Benches are a tough one as they seem to get vandalized regularly....’

RECREATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES



76.7% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that the public parks provide trails and picnic facilities that are accessible.

A similar expression of agreement was expressed concerning the accessibility of cultural events and public outdoor venues **(72.2% and 72.3 %.)**

Many participants made positive comments about the parks and trails in Dawson Creek.

A number of suggestions were made by participants:

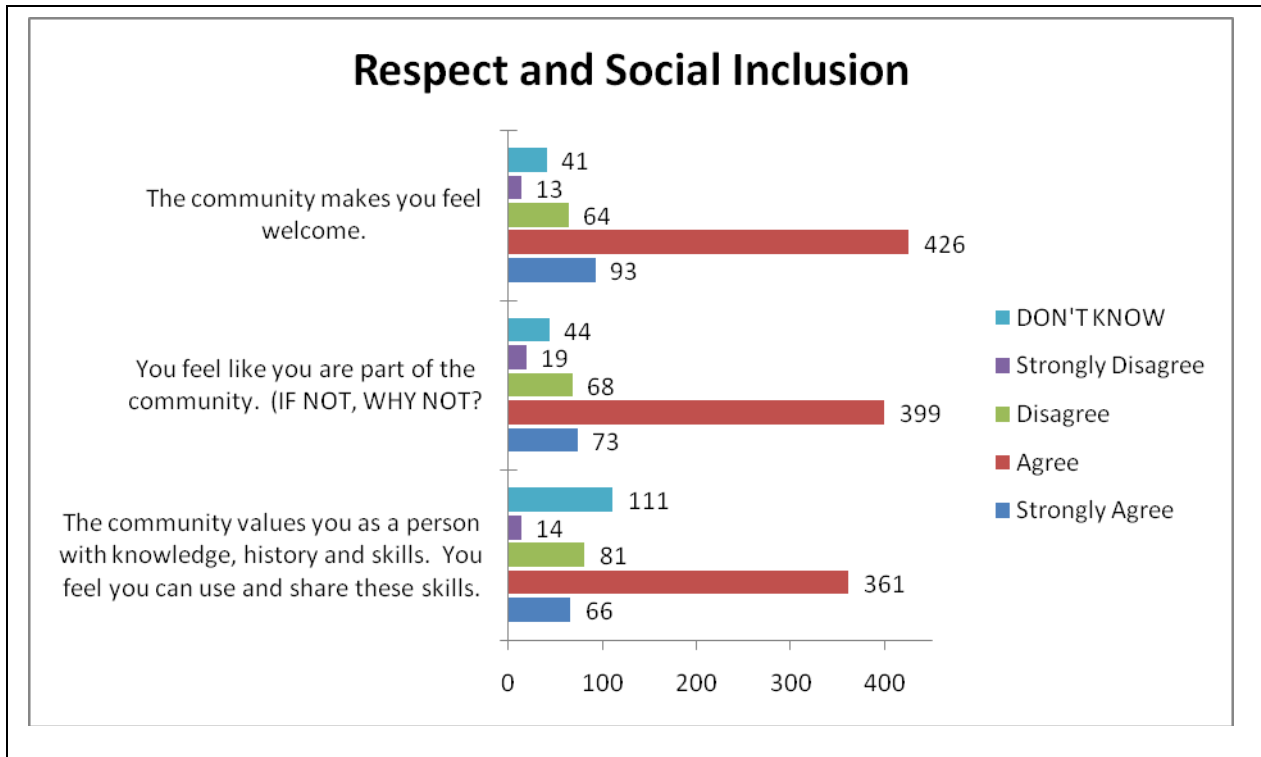
- link the trails in a safer and more logical way

- more bike and skateboard paths
- more picnic tables, benches and garbage cans
- accessible toilets
- provide barbeques especially at Kin Park
- build a foot bridge over 8th street to join the walking trails.

A number of participants expressed concerns about the cost of attending cultural activities.

Many participants expressed their difficulties and frustrations with accessing the fair grounds.

RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION



67.4% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “The community values you as a person with knowledge, history and skills. You feel you can use and share these skills.” An examination of the responses of the seniors who participated in the survey showed a positive response of **72.8%**.

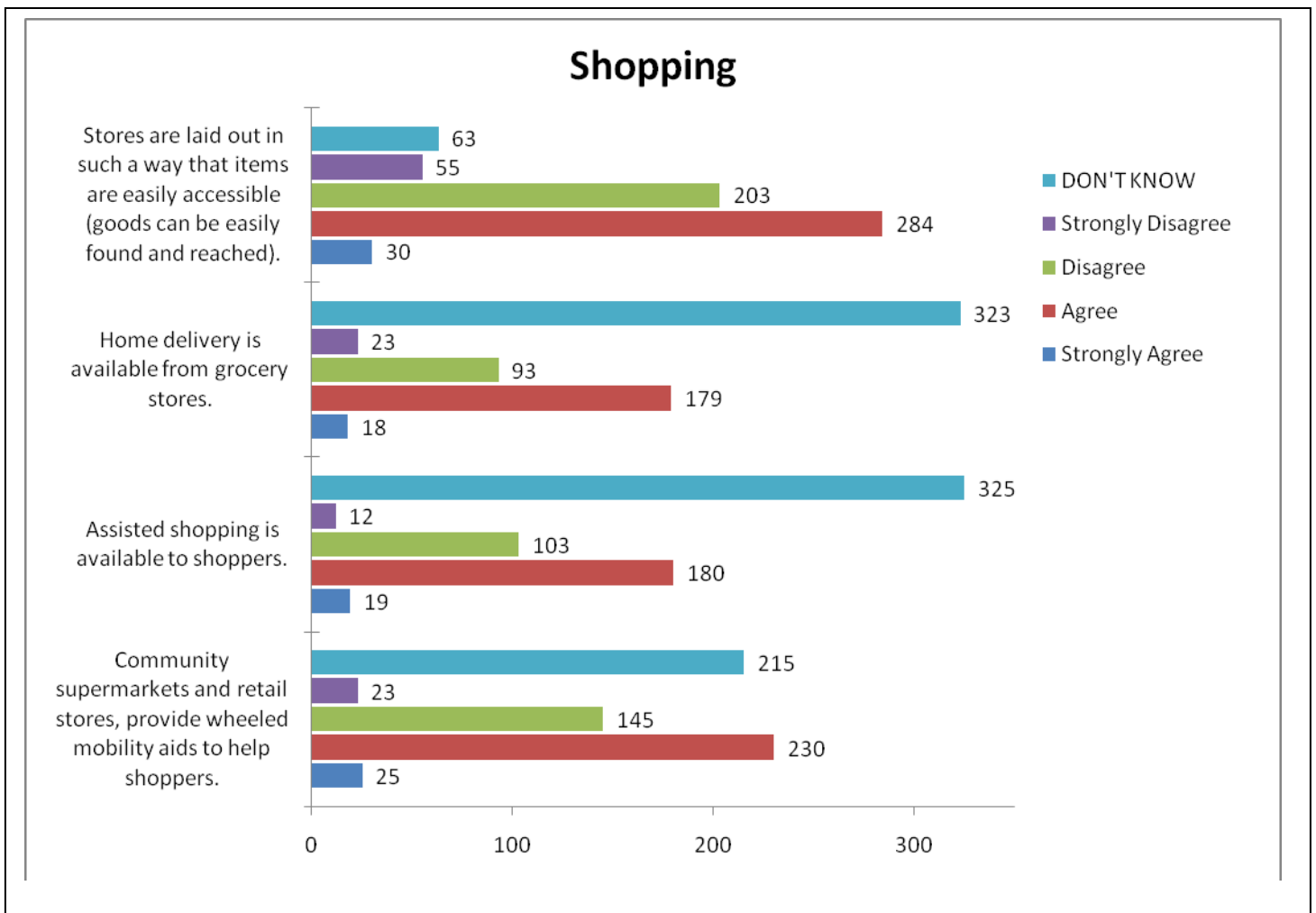
78.3% of the participants responded positively to the statement “You feel like you are part of the community.” This rating dropped to **67.4%** participants who are disabled.

81.5% of the participants responded positively to the statement “The community makes you feel welcome.” The lowest positive response to this statement came from the people who are disabled – **73.6%**.

A number of participants explained why they responded in a negative way to the statement “You feel like you are part of the community.” A summary of the issues raised by these people were:

- racism and poverty
- the perception that some groups are a clique
- personal safety in the downtown core.

SHOPPING



The number of participants who responded **“don’t know”** to three of the statements in this section of the survey was very high. An examination of the responses of seniors, people with disabilities, and people responsible for young children showed that the high **“don’t know”** response is consistent for all groups.

Given the narrow focus of the statements this response should not be unexpected.

Excluding the **“don’t know”** responses to the question concerning the availability of wheeled mobility aids for shoppers reveals that **60.2%** agree or strongly agree that wheeled mobility aids are provided and **39.8%** of the participants strongly disagree or disagree with the assertion.

Setting aside the **“don’t know”** responses to the questions concerning the availability of assisted shopping shows that **63.1%** agree or strongly agree that assisted shopping is available and **36.9%** of the

participants strongly disagree or disagree with the statement.

The availability of home delivery from grocery stores produced similar results when the “**don’t know**” responses were excluded – **62.9%** asserting that it is available and **37.1%** holding the contrary position

There is an almost equal split in the perception of participants concerning the accessibility of goods in stores - **49.4%** giving a positive response and **40.7%** giving a negative response. The reason for this could be based on the shopping habits of the participants and their particular circumstances. There is a slightly more positive response to this issue from participants who are responsible for young children – **56.4%** giving a positive response.

163 participants made comments in this section of the survey.

A number of participants made the suggestion that stores advertise the services they will provide to assist people with shopping.

Many participants expressed appreciation of the option of home delivery of groceries.

The provision of wheeled mobility aids by one large store was applauded by many participants.

Other dominant issues raised by participants were:

- the lack of wheelchairs and other wheeled mobility aids in most stores
- the difficulty of accessing shopping in stores that have cluttered aisles and with staff that do not readily volunteer assistance

- shelves being too high.

Many participants stated how friendly and helpful staff positively impacts the ease of shopping.

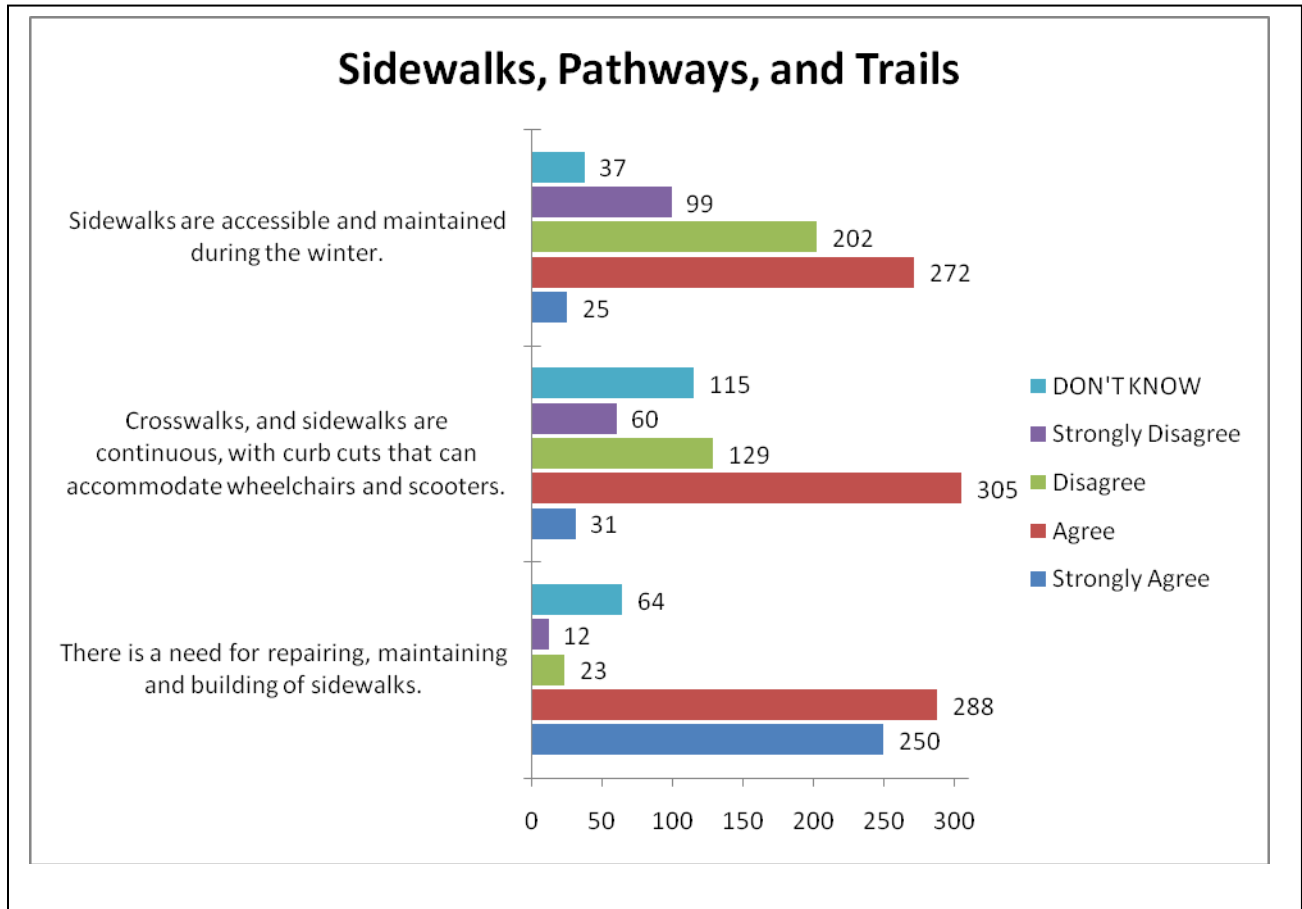
“If assisted shopping is available in the store it should be posted where it can be seen, as well as wheeled aids”

“Not all grocery stores have home delivery.”

“Delivery of groceries is essential to shut-ins.”

“...Scooter and wheelchairs should be available in bigger stores, not just..... Too many items are placed too high in all stores with few offers to help. Delivery should be available from all grocery and drug stores....”

SIDEWALKS, PATHWAYS AND TRAILS



84.4% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that there is a need for repairing, maintaining and building sidewalks. The **strongly agreed** response in this section represents the highest percentage in this category for the entire survey.

The opinion of participants about whether sidewalks are accessible and maintained during the winter is evenly divided with **46.7%** responding positively and **47.4%** responding negatively.

Almost **52.6%** of participants believe that crosswalks and sidewalks are continuous with curb cuts that can accommodate wheelchairs and scooters. If the data was adjusted to exclude the “don’t know” responses the positive response to this issue would be **64.1%**.

157 participants made comments in this section of the survey. The selected comments capture both the positive and the negative themes in this section.



“When walking with young children, with children in strollers, with seniors and with those who have mobility problems, the uneven cement, weed growth through many areas, and ice/snow in the winter all make crosswalks and sidewalks hard to use. Especially north of Alaska Avenue. Many streets still have no crosswalks or sidewalks in residential areas. Even 8th and 15th and 17th have limited sidewalks and the intersection with many roads is difficult to travel.”

“Why are there so few sidewalks in this town?”

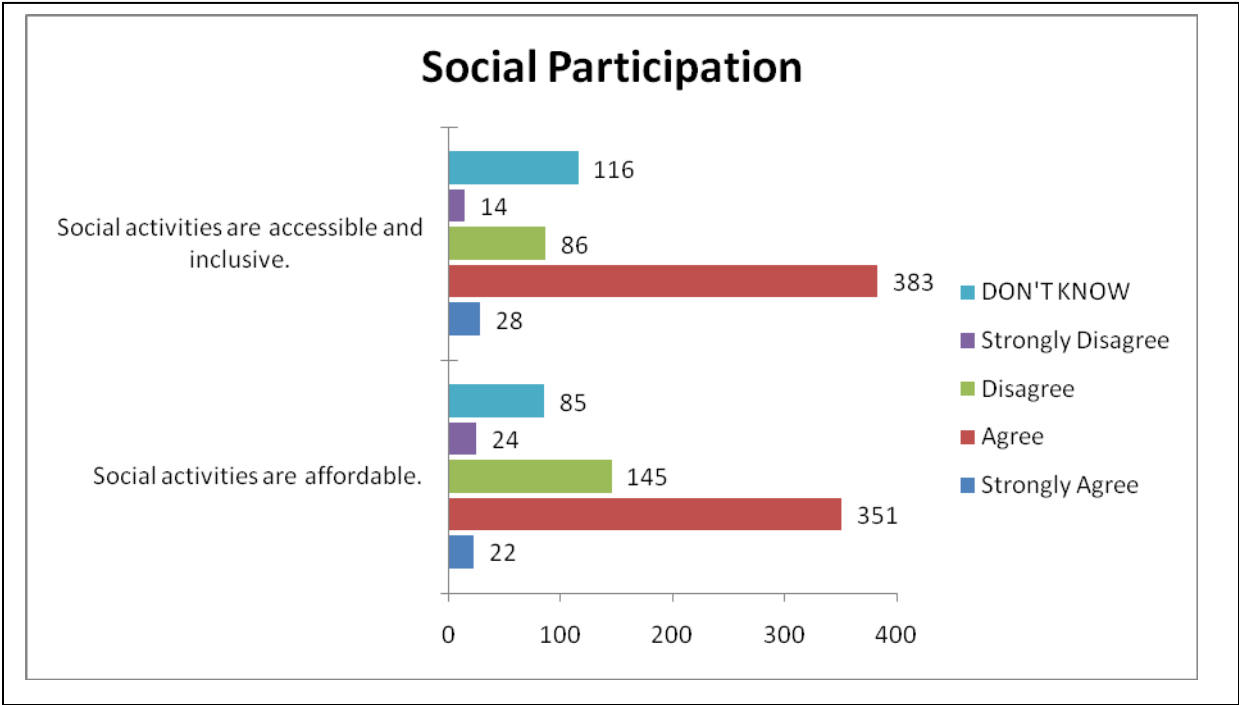
“Is there any way of requiring residents to shovel walks in winter? It’s very difficult to walk on sidewalks; people have to walk on the street which is dangerous at times. City does a good job for downtown area. Some businesses could do better.”



“sidewalks have improved the last few years”

“..most of the curbs are not cleared of snow and because of the uncleared snow a wheelchair cannot get onto the sidewalk and we must run our wheelchairs on the streets, also when we can get on the sidewalk it has been cleared too narrowly and creates a whole new set of bad challenges.”

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION



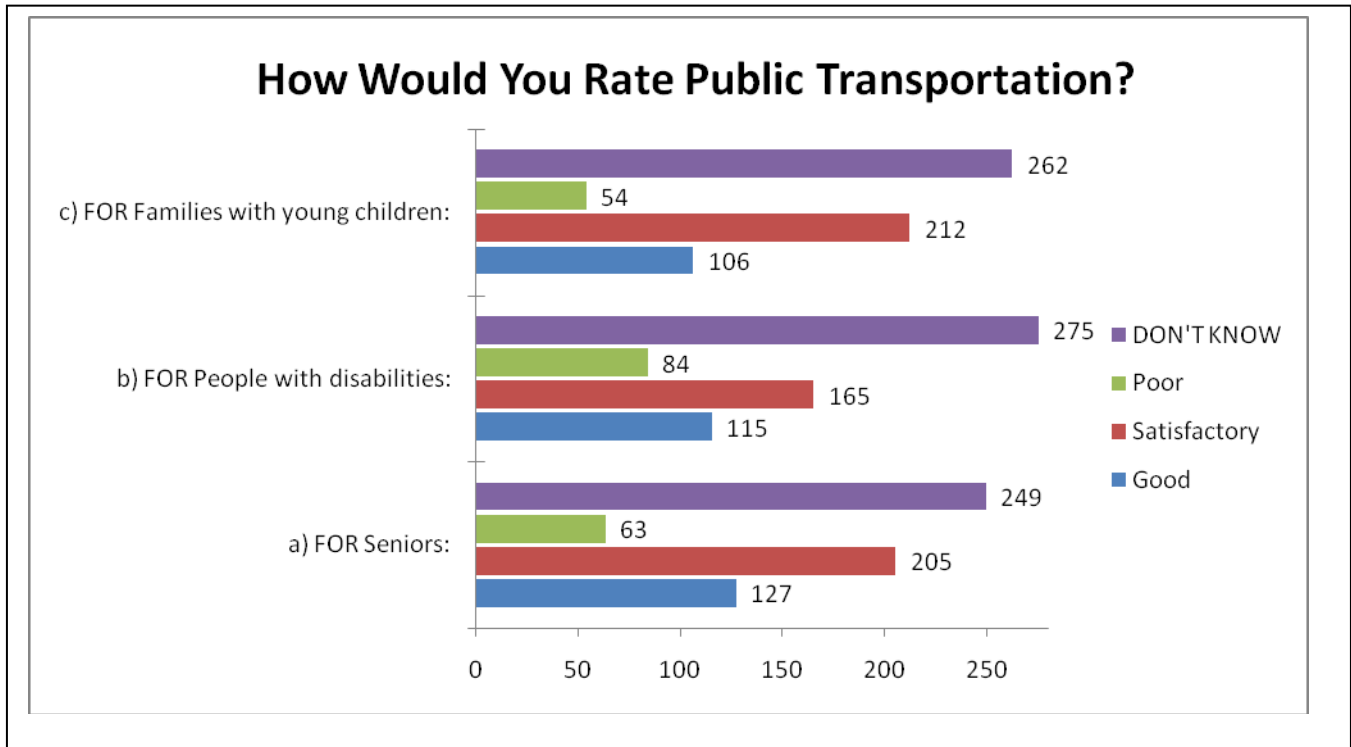
59.5% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed that social activities are affordable and **26.9%** either strongly disagreed or disagreed.

65.6% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed that social activities are accessible and inclusive. This number drops to **49.4%** for the participants who have disabilities.

The common issues made in the comments of participants were:

- difficult to access activities on a low income
- swimming pool harder to access because of its location
- events held at the Encana Event Centre are expensive for low income people.

RATING OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



A large number of participants answered “don’t know” to the questions in this section of the survey. This should not be a surprise given the questions and that a significant number of the participants were not either seniors, people with disabilities or people responsible for young people.

51.5% of participants rated public transportation to be good or satisfactory for seniors. The rating of good or satisfactory for people with disabilities was **43.8%** and for families with young children the rating of good or satisfactory was by **50.3%**.

Removing the “don’t know” responses yields a rating by the remaining participants

of good or satisfactory for seniors of **83.8%**, a rating of good or satisfactory for people with disabilities of **76.7%** and a rating of good or satisfactory for families with young children of **85.5%**.

Many participants commented on how they appreciate having a public transportation system in the community.

A number of repeated issues were raised in the comments made by participants:

- the lack of service at weekends, holidays and in the evening
- buses often running nearly empty
- the need to reduce the carbon imprint by using smaller buses

- the need to review the bus routes and to consider the work schedules of people who need to use the bus service
- the need for more bus stops and to have a reliable and posted schedule
- the lack of timely access to taxi services.

“Public transportation is a huge barrier to persons with disabilities who are seeking employment. Usually a lot of job opportunities are shifts and they rely on public transportation or cabs. Both services are inadequate with the public transit running limited hours, and the cab company unreliable. They will not even allow pre-booking for certain times like shift change or closing, Sometimes a person has to wait an hour for a cab, then be late for work or stuck outside after closing.”

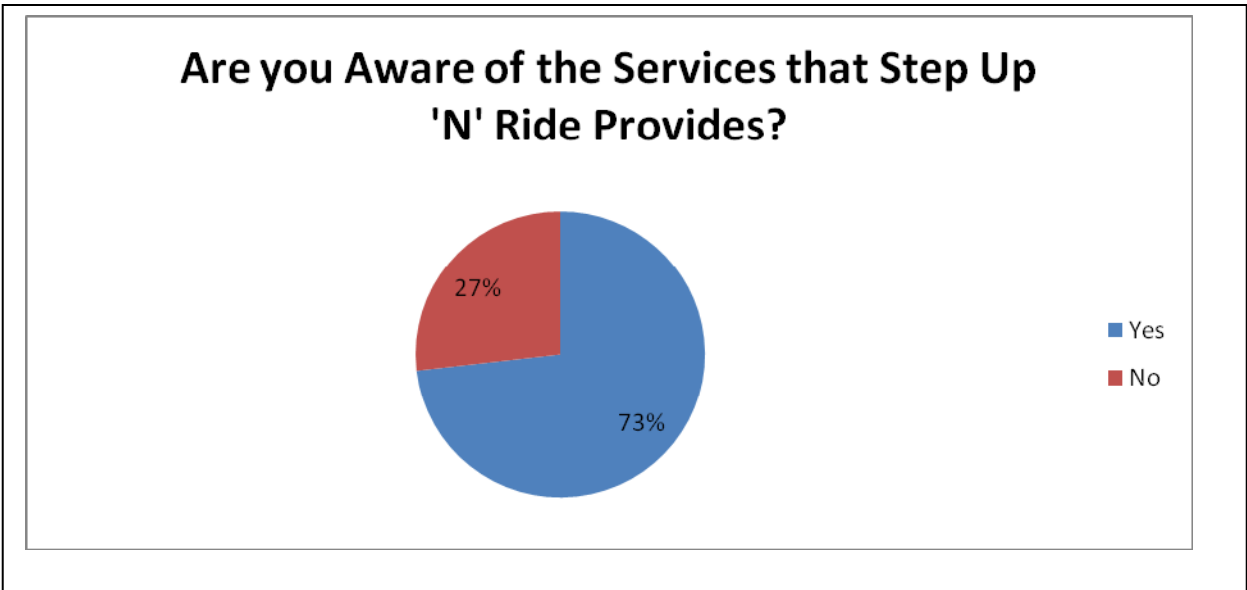
“..The public transportation really needs to be revamped for a healthy and sustainable society.”

“The buses are not available to go to the show, shopping or other evening events. The need to transfer between buses makes them less user friendly. Also, times at stops are not well posted or well advertised; bus schedules with routes are not available at a multitude of places throughout the city.”

“For the amount of people we see on the bus at any given time, I think we could downsize the vehicles being used – less of a carbon imprint.”

“For the size of Dawson Creek – good bus service”

TRANSPORTATION –STEP UP 'N' RIDE



73.2% of participants reported that they were aware of the services of “Step Up ‘N’ Ride.” **83.7%** of participants with disabilities responded yes to the question.

136 participants made comments.

It is clear that many of the participants feel that this is an excellent and wonderful service.

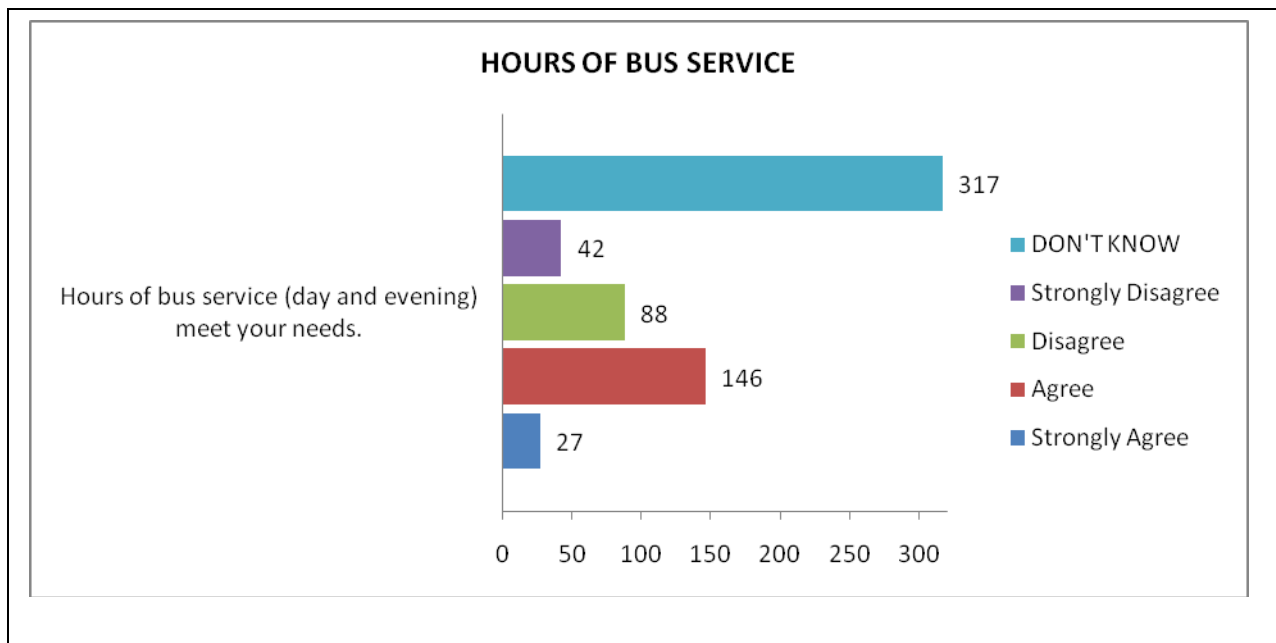
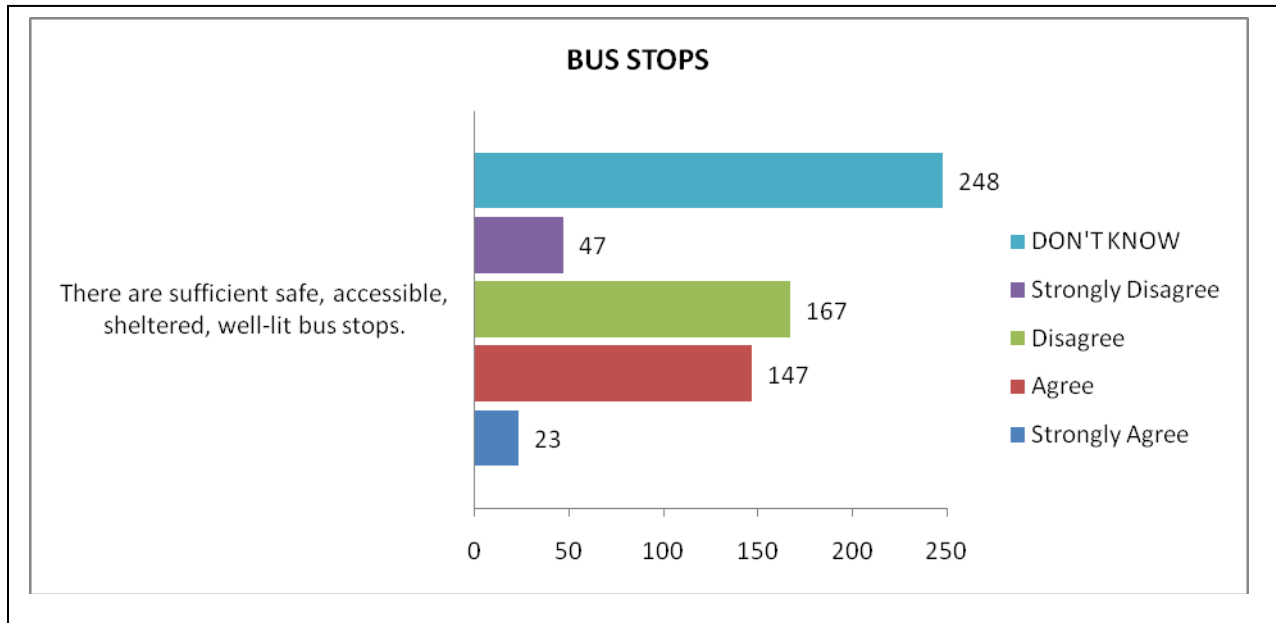
Staff is described as being caring people who go far and beyond their prescribed jobs.

Some confusion exists concerning who can use these services. There is a continuing need to make people aware of the service and to explore ways of expanding its availability.

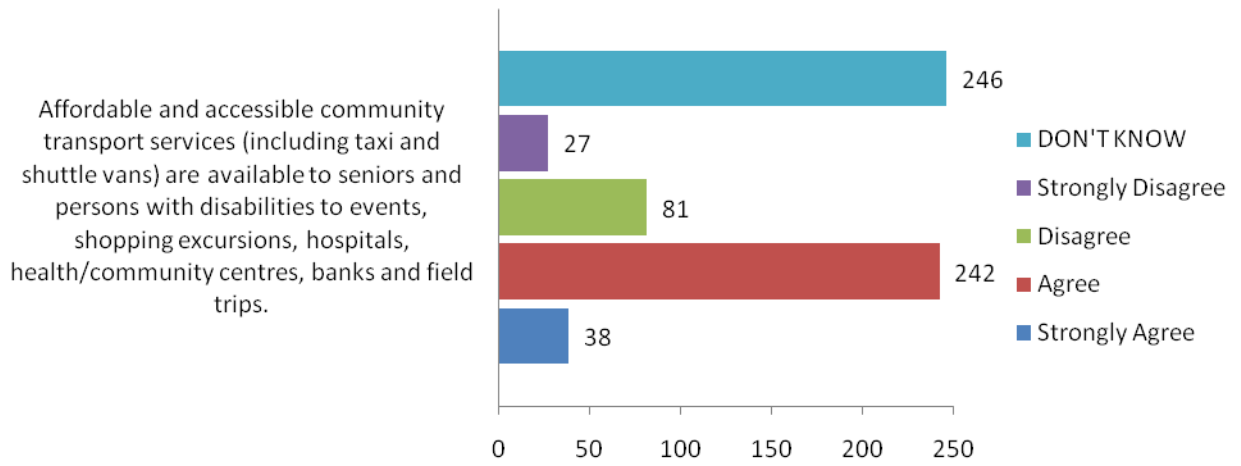
“A wonderful local service for our community.”

“Great people doing a valuable piece of work.”

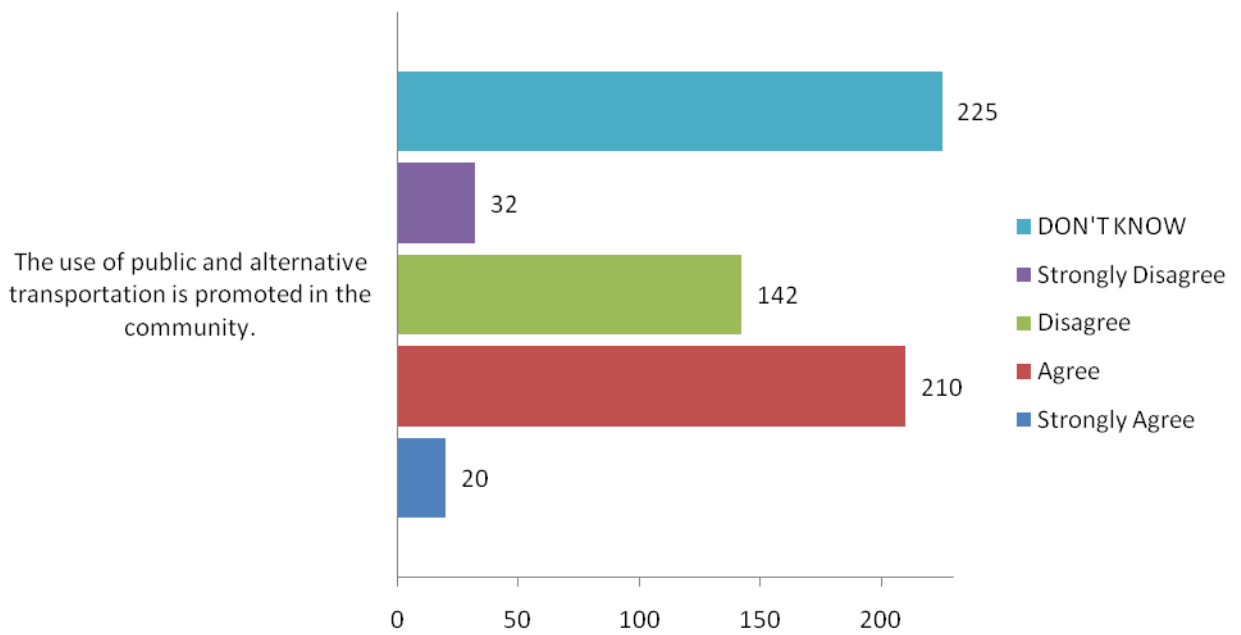
TRANSPORTATION



AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICES



PROMOTION OF PUBLIC AND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION



A significant number of participants responded “**don’t know**” to each of the four statements in this section of the survey.

Many participants commented that as they had never used the public transportation system they could not offer an opinion.

Adjusting the data by removing the “**don’t know**” responses reveals that the perspective of the participants is split:

- **44.1%** support the statement that there are safe, accessible, sheltered, well – lit bus stop and **55.9%** do not support the statement
- **57.0%** support the statement that the hours of bus service (day and evening) meet your needs and **43.0%** do not support the statement
- **57.0%** support the statement that the use of public and alternative transportation is promoted in the community and **43.0%** do not support the statement.

While **72.0%** of the participants (excluding the **38.8%** who did not know) supported the statement concerning affordable and accessible community transport services there were many comments made about the need to improve the taxi service in the community. Issues about the taxi service included:

- cab wait times
- unreliability
- cost of service
- cleanliness of taxis.

While a number of participants noted recent improvements to bus shelters many commented on the need for improved

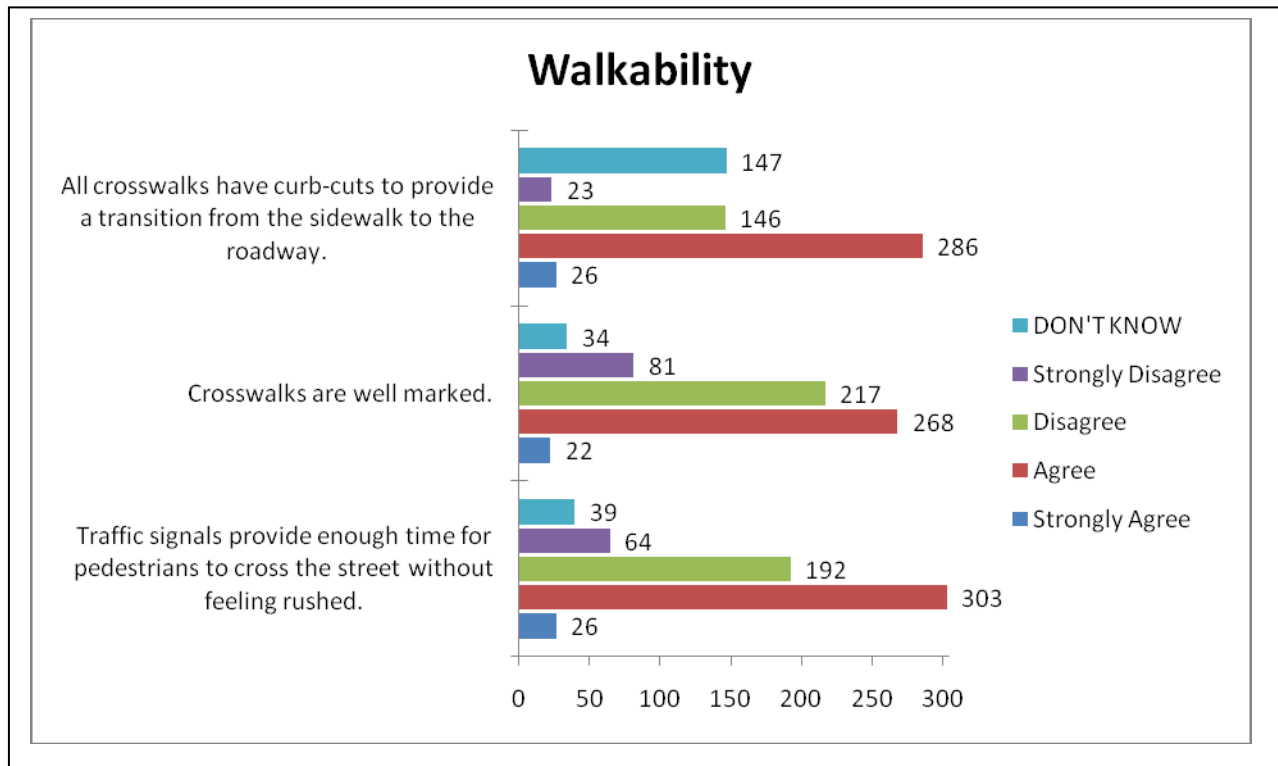
lighting and for sufficient space for people with wheelchairs.

Further comments were made about the need for improved scheduling of buses. These comments included the need for service to special events as well as evening and weekend service.

A number of participants believed that a lot needs to be done in the community to promote the use of alternative transportation. The provision of designated pathways for bicycles was mentioned.

The ratings in this section of the survey as they relate to public transportation might seem to contradict the ratings given to a previous question - “**How would you rate public transportation.**” An examination of the comments made to this latter part of the survey illustrates the need to carefully interpret the ratings to questions and statements in conjunction with the comments provided by participants.

WALKABILITY



52.8% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that traffic signals provide enough time for pedestrians to cross the street without feeling rushed. **41.1%** disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. A higher number (**52.4%**) of participants with a disability disagreed with the statement.

46.6% of the participants supported the statement “Crosswalks are well marked” and **47.9%** did not. Participants with young children expressed a higher level of disagreement with the statement (**59.3%**).

49.6% of the participants supported the statement “all crosswalks have curb-cuts to provide a transition from the sidewalk to

the roadway.” **23.3%** of the participants expressed a “don’t know” opinion in response to this statement. This response rate should not be considered high in light of the use of the word ‘all’ in the statement.

It is clear that there is a fairly even split in opinion concerning walkability in the community.

183 participants provided comments to this section of the survey.


The major suggestions in the comments section were:

- the need to paint the crosswalks more frequently and to make them more obvious to motorists

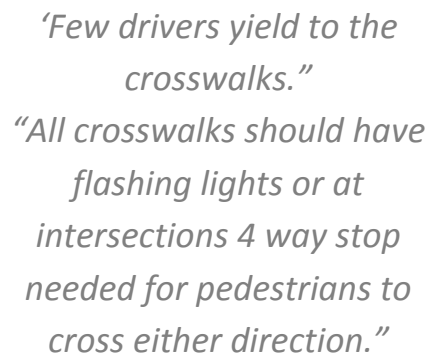
- the need for new crosswalks especially on 8th street
- the need for a controlled crosswalk at 13th street and Alaska Avenue
- the need to light crosswalks especially the ones on Alaska Avenue
- in some places the time provided to use the crosswalk is insufficient for some people
- icy conditions cause an increased amount of time being required to cross the road – this needs to be recognized in setting the crosswalk time
- flashing lights to signal to motorists the location of crosswalks should be installed
- more overhead signal lights on 8th street and Alaska Avenue for traffic to stop for pedestrians.

The complete set of suggestions is contained in the appendix of this report. It needs to be reviewed in detail by appropriate individuals.

It is clear that many participants consider the situation for pedestrians to be very dangerous in some locations of the city. The situation is compounded by issues of traffic speed and the apparent disregard of many drivers for people using the crosswalks.



“Someone is going to get killed on 8th street.”



‘Few drivers yield to the crosswalks.’

“All crosswalks should have flashing lights or at intersections 4 way stop needed for pedestrians to cross either direction.”