

2003 Lethbridge Public Opinion Study (Fall)

Lethbridge City Council Performance

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Exclusive to
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City of Lethbridge

Located in southwestern Alberta, the city of Lethbridge is home to 72,717 residents, 57,674 of which are 18 years of age or older.



The city is divided into six census areas, two each for its South, North and West geographic areas. It is divided north and south by Alberta highway 3, and east west by the Oldman River.

South Lethbridge's 27,941 residents represent 38.4 of the city's total population. West Lethbridge (22,429) and north Lethbridge (22,347) represent 30.8 and 30.7 respectively.

Methodology

This report is based on data collected by students enrolled in STS270 – Social Science Research Methods and PSC150 – Local Government at Lethbridge Community College in the Fall of 2003. Students interviewed 769 adult residents by telephone over a two-week period from October 1 to 15, 2003 using numbers drawn randomly from the Lethbridge telephone directory.

Using this method, the sample yields a margin of error of ± 3.5 , 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data.

Analysis of the demographic data indicated that, within acceptable limits, the sample accurately represents the demographic distribution of the voting age population within the city of Lethbridge.

These data are part of a larger study of the opinions and attitudes of Lethbridge residents conducted by the Citizen Society Research Lab at LCC. Because the Lethbridge Herald sponsored other aspects of this project, and is an ongoing sponsor of our research, we wish to express our thanks for their continuing support of applied research at Lethbridge Community College by offering the Herald privileged access to these data.

What follows is a selection of our findings based on the questions below.

Faron Ellis, Ph.D.
Citizen Society Research Lab

- Q. Using a scale that ranges from very good, to good, adequate, poor, and very poor, how would you rate the overall performance of the Lethbridge City Council?
- Q. Using the same scale, how would you rate the overall performance of Mayor Bob Tarleck?
- Q. Do you think city council members should be called Aldermen or should we switch to the term Councilor?
- Q. Thinking for a moment about Alderman Darlene Heatherington, which of the following do you think Alderman Heatherington should do?
- Q. How would you rate the overall performance of the Lethbridge City Council in dealing with the Alderman Heatherington situation?
- Q. How would you rate the overall performance of Mayor Bob Tarleck in dealing with the Alderman Heatherington situation?

Council Performance

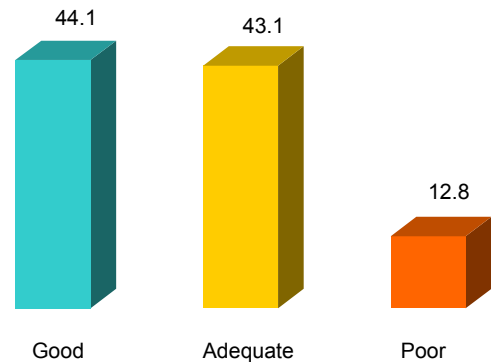
Two-thirds of the way into their term, Lethbridge city councilors are receiving more positive evaluations from voters than negative evaluations by more than a three-to-one margin.

With 44.1% of Lethbridge residents giving the current city council positive performance evaluations and only 12.8% responding negatively, (43.1% stated council is performing adequately) it is fair to say that Lethbridge residents are generally satisfied with their city council and if an election were held this month, voters would not be seeking wholesale changes in the makeup of council.

Council's current performance ratings are only slightly lower than what they received in February of 2002 (50.2%), and in February of 2002 (46.5%).

Satisfaction levels do not vary significantly between any demographic groups such as gender, age, income, education or area of city.

Lethbridge City Council Performance



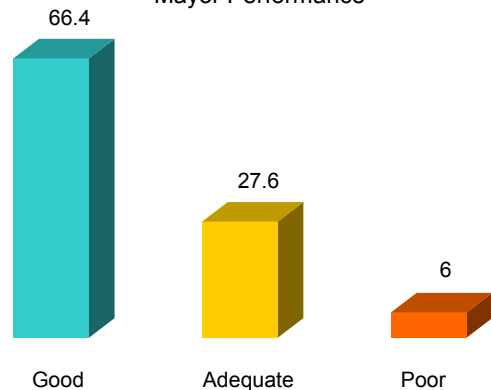
Mayor Performance

Lethbridge Mayor Bob Tarleck enjoys even more positive voter evaluations. Fully two-thirds of Lethbridge residents think Mayor Tarleck is performing well (66.4%) while only 6% think he is doing a poor job. About one-quarter (27.6%) believe the mayor is performing adequately.

The most recent performance evaluation is even more positive than what the mayor received in February of 2003 (60.5%), and up significantly from February 2002 during what is normally seen as the honeymoon period, only a few months into his first term as mayor (56.2%).

Few significant differences were measured between demographic categories although older voters are even more impressed than younger voters with positive performance evaluations peaking amongst seniors at 75%.

Mayor Performance

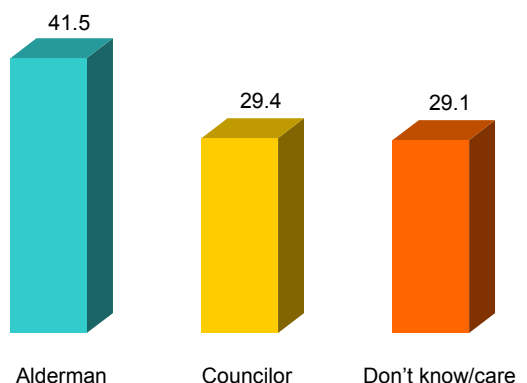


Alderman vs. Councilor

When asked to choose between the terms alderman or councilor for their city council members, Lethbridge residents sided with alderman (41.5%). Only 29.4% believe a change to councilor is in order, about as many as didn't have an opinion or thought the issue didn't matter.

Interestingly, no significant gender differences were measured with women only slightly more likely than men to prefer changing to the term councilor.

Alderman vs. Councilor

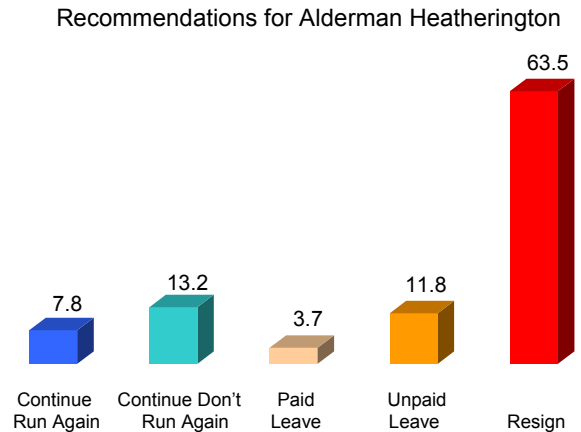


Alderman Heatherington

When asked to reflect on the Alderman Darlene Heatherington situation, and offer an opinion on what course of action she should choose, a clear majority of Lethbridge residents would prefer her to resign (63.5%).

Only 7.8% believe she should continue on as alderman and seek re-election next fall. A further 13.2% believe she should serve out her term but not seek re-election while 11.8% believe she should seek an unpaid leave of absence. Only 3.7% think she should take a paid leave of absence.

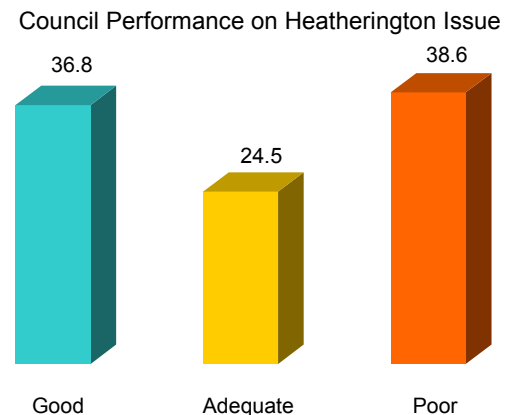
Few significant differences were measured when comparing demographic categories.



Council Performance - Heatherington Issue

Council received slightly negative performance evaluations when residents were asked specifically about their handling of the Alderman Heatherington situation.

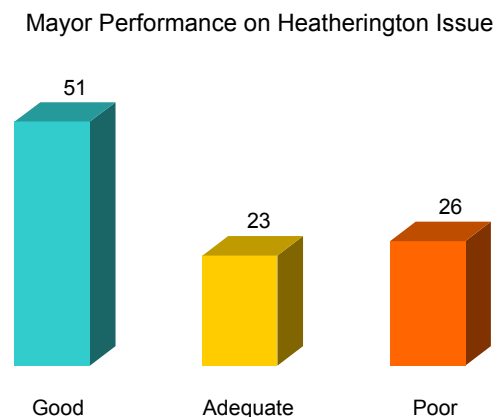
Slightly more residents believe council did a poor job handling the situation (38.6%) than those who believe council did a good job (36.8%). About one-quarter of all residents believe council handled the situation adequately (24.5%).



Mayor Performance - Heatherington Issue

A majority of Lethbridge residents approve of Mayor Tarleck's handling of the Alderman Heatherington issue (51%), although more than one-quarter believes he has done a poor job (26%). Slightly less than one-quarter believe he has handled the situation adequately.

Seniors are much more supportive of the mayor's handling of this issue (63.2%) than are younger residents, especially those aged 18 to 29 (40.2%).



Snapshot of Responses (%)

Council Performance	February '02	October '02	February '03	October '03
Good	46.5	46.7	50.2	44.1
Adequate	44.4	39.8	39.1	43.1
Poor	9.1	13.5	10.7	12.8

Mayor Performance	February '02	October '02	February '03	October '03
Good	56.2	57.6	60.5	66.4
Adequate	39.8	33.0	33.9	27.6
Poor	4.0	9.4	5.6	6.0

Alderman vs. Councilor (%)

Alderman	41.5
Councilor	29.4
Don't know/don't care	29.1

Alderman Heatherington

Continue—run again	7.8
Continue—don't run	13.2
Paid leave	3.7
Unpaid leave	11.8
Resign	63.5

Council Performance – Heatherington Issue (%)

Good	36.8
Adequate	24.5
Poor	38.6

Mayor Performance – Heatherington Issue (%)

Good	51.0
Adequate	23.0
Poor	26.0

Tabular Data

Council Performance (%)

Q. Using a scale that ranges from very good, to good, adequate, poor, and very poor, how would you rate the overall performance of the Lethbridge City Council?

Council Performance by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Good	44.0	44.5	44.1
Adequate	43.1	43.1	43.1
Poor	13.0	12.5	12.8

Council Performance by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Good	47.2	42.8	42.2
Adequate	42.3	42.2	45.2
Poor	10.6	15.0	12.6

Council Performance by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Good	43.0	45.0	41.3
Adequate	43.0	42.1	44.3
Poor	14.0	12.9	14.4

Council Performance by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post-Secondary	Col-Tech-Trade Grad	University Grad
Good	44.3	47.6	38.6	46.6
Adequate	43.7	43.4	44.6	40.4
Poor	12.0	9.0	16.8	12.9

Council Performance by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Good	46.8	41.9	41.8	46.7
Adequate	42.0	45.6	43.1	42.1
Poor	11.2	12.5	15.1	11.2

Mayor Performance (%)

Q. Using a scale that ranges from very good, to good, adequate, poor, and very poor, how would you rate the overall performance of Mayor Bob Tarleck?

Mayor Performance by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Good	65.1	67.5	66.4
Adequate	27.5	27.7	27.6
Poor	7.5	4.8	6.0

Mayor Performance by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Good	68.0	69.7	63.8
Adequate	26.1	24.7	29.6
Poor	6.0	5.6	6.5

Mayor Performance by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Good	66.1	68.3	65.7
Adequate	29.6	27.1	24.7
Poor	4.3	4.6	9.6

Mayor Performance by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post- Secondary	Col-Tech- Trade Grad	University Grad
Good	68.1	64.5	65.4	68.8
Adequate	24.4	32.5	29.6	22.7
Poor	7.5	3.0	5.0	8.5

Mayor Performance by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Good	61.8	67.3	66.8	75.0
Adequate	33.0	28.9	23.8	21.3
Poor	5.2	3.8	9.4	3.7

Alderman vs. Councilor (%)

Q. Do you think city council members should be called Aldermen or should we switch to the term Councilor?

Alderman vs. Councilor by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Alderman	43.3	39.9	41.5
Councilor	28.9	29.9	29.4
Don't know/don't care	27.8	30.2	29.1

Alderman vs. Councilor by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Alderman	41.0	41.1	42.9
Councilor	27.7	27.9	31.8
Don't know/don't care	31.3	31.1	25.3

Alderman vs. Councilor by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Alderman	45.0	37.2	46.5
Councilor	31.7	30.2	28.2
Don't know/don't care	23.4	32.6	25.3

Alderman vs. Councilor by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post-Secondary	Col-Tech-Trade Grad	University Grad
Alderman	44.7	41.1	45.6	33.9
Councilor	25.3	30.5	23.6	38.7
Don't know/don't care	30.0	28.4	30.8	27.4

Alderman vs. Councilor by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Alderman	45.2	37.5	37.2	48.6
Councilor	29.1	31.5	33.8	17.8
Don't know/don't care	25.7	31.0	29.0	33.6

Alderman Heatherington (%)

Q. Thinking for a moment about Alderman Darlene Heatherington, which of the following do you think Alderman Heatherington should do?

Alderman Heatherington by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Continue—run again	6.9	8.6	7.8
Continue—don't run	11.2	15.0	13.2
Paid leave	3.7	3.7	3.7
Unpaid leave	12.3	11.5	11.8
Resign	65.9	61.2	63.5

Alderman Heatherington by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Continue—run again	8.2	7.6	7.6
Continue—don't run	14.3	14.7	11.4
Paid leave	3.1	3.3	4.7
Unpaid leave	12.6	11.4	11.8
Resign	61.8	63.0	64.5

Alderman Heatherington by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Continue—run again	7.9	7.5	8.3
Continue—don't run	16.3	13.5	11.3
Paid leave	2.0	3.2	5.4
Unpaid leave	9.4	13.1	13.7
Resign	64.5	62.7	61.3

Alderman Heatherington by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post-Secondary	Col-Tech-Trade Grad	University Grad
Continue—run again	9.1	8.3	3.7	10.5
Continue—don't run	10.9	16.7	12.0	13.8
Paid leave	2.4	2.2	5.2	5.0
Unpaid leave	7.9	13.3	15.2	10.5
Resign	69.7	59.4	63.9	60.2

Alderman Heatherington by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Continue—run again	7.9	5.4	7.6	12.1
Continue—don't run	13.6	14.4	11.6	14.0
Paid leave	3.3	6.6	2.7	2.8
Unpaid leave	13.1	14.4	11.6	6.5
Resign	62.1	59.3	66.7	64.5

Council Performance - Heatherington (%)

Q. How would you rate the overall performance of the Lethbridge City Council in dealing with the Alderman Heatherington situation?

Council Performance – Heatherington Issue by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Good	36.2	37.5	36.8
Adequate	24.2	24.7	24.5
Poor	39.7	37.8	38.6

Council Performance – Heatherington Issue by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Good	39.2	34.9	36.7
Adequate	24.1	26.3	24.2
Poor	36.7	38.7	39.1

Council Performance – Heatherington Issue by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Good	31.5	37.8	39.8
Adequate	28.9	21.1	24.1
Poor	39.6	41.1	36.1

Council Performance – Heatherington Issue by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post- Secondary	Col-Tech- Trade Grad	University Grad
Good	36.1	32.0	40.6	39.0
Adequate	20.9	32.0	20.3	25.1
Poor	43.0	36.0	39.0	35.8

Council Performance – Heatherington Issue by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Good	30.9	36.4	40.8	41.4
Adequate	24.2	24.8	25.4	25.3
Poor	44.9	38.8	33.8	33.3

Mayor Performance - Heatherington (%)

Q. How would you rate the overall performance of Mayor Bob Tarleck in dealing with the Alderman Heatherington situation?

Mayor Performance – Heatherington Issue by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Good	50.1	51.8	51.0
Adequate	22.1	23.7	23.0
Poor	27.7	24.5	26.0

Mayor Performance – Heatherington Issue by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Good	55.5	50.3	46.0
Adequate	21.7	22.8	24.8
Poor	22.8	27.0	29.2

Mayor Performance – Heatherington Issue by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Good	45.3	52.5	56.1
Adequate	24.0	23.0	19.5
Poor	30.7	24.6	24.4

Mayor Performance – Heatherington Issue by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post- Secondary	Col-Tech- Trade Grad	University Grad
Good	49.4	50.0	50.5	55.2
Adequate	24.1	23.8	23.9	18.8
Poor	26.5	26.2	25.5	26.0

Mayor Performance – Heatherington Issue by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Good	40.2	49.7	56.3	63.2
Adequate	26.8	20.5	21.8	21.7
Poor	33.0	29.8	21.8	15.1