A FINANCIAL ANALYSIS OF 79 CANADIAN CITIES

PRAIRIE EDITION

FRONTIER CENTRE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

BY LARRY N. MITCHELL & DAVID SEYMOUR

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The Frontier Centre for Public Policy is an independent, non-profit organization that under-takes research and education in support of economic growth and social outcomes that will enhance the quality of life in our communities. Through a variety of publications and public forums, the Centre explores policy innovations required to make the eastern prairies region a winner in the open economy. It also provides new insights into solving important issues facing our cities, towns and provinces. These include improving the performance of public expenditures in important areas like local government, education, health and social policy. The author of this study has worked independently and the opinions expressed are therefore his own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the board of the Frontier Centre for Public Policy.

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Executive Summary

- The 2008 Local Government Performance Index (LGPI) assesses the financial health and public accounting disclosure of 79 of Canada's municipalities based on those municipalities' audited financial statements.
- This assessment reveals large differences between the financial health and disclosure standards of Canadian municipalities. While these differences can often be explained by differences in provincial legislation, city size or geography, it is up to the municipalities to provide those explanations.
- The Individual City Reports reveal figures and percentages for each city: By looking at the report for any city, it is possible to see how its financial statistics compare with those of the average Canadian city and the average city in its province.
- Dollar figures are averaged over the number of households that are listed in that municipality according to the 2006 census. This allows very large cities such as Toronto to be compared with very small cities such as Cornwall.
- In most cases, the LGPI reports 2006 and 2007 figures; however, in some cases only the figures for one year were available. As can be seen in the city reports, we were unable to acquire audited financial statements for many of the cities.
- Significant efforts were made to acquire all reports, including web site searches, phone calls and e-mails. That it should be so difficult to access financial statements is a serious indictment of those cities.
- A notable omission is all of the Quebec cities except Montreal. This is because no English-language financial statements could be found for these municipalities.

The LGPI evaluates the relative financial health of municipalities in five topics:

The Financial Position presents the overall assets and liabilities of all Canadian cities. The average municipality held $4,930 of financial assets and $3,677 of liabilities per household for the 2007 financial year. This $1,353 in surplus assets per household shows that most municipalities are in good financial health. The average municipality also held $1,423 of long-term debt and paid $62 per household in interest charges on this debt. While a handful of municipalities are free of long-term debt, Montreal holds a whopping $9,657 of long-term debt per household while its residents pay $576 on average in interest expense for this debt.

Revenue evaluates the revenue sources that Canadian municipalities have used to fund their activities. In 2007, the average municipality raised $4,869 per household in revenue. This figure is 10 per cent greater than the 2006 figure of $4,426. However, behind that average, revenues varied from $1,278 to $16,132 per household. Municipalities in the Prairies raised the most revenue, usually due to significant holdings in commercial operations.

The majority of this revenue (42 per cent) was raised through taxation, followed by user charges (24 per cent) and grants from other governments (14 per cent).

The Expenditures by Object section gives insight into how municipalities spend their money in order to deliver services. The average municipality spends over half of its operating expenditure and approximately 40 per cent of its total capital and operating expenditure on salaries and benefits for staff. Compared with other Commonwealth countries, this figure is almost double the norm.

The Expenditure section analyzes the kinds of services that municipalities spend money delivering (core/non-core). The average municipality spends $720 per household per year on recreation and culture, $499 per household on administrative costs and $817 on protecting persons and property. Overall expenditure at $4,557 equates to approximately one dollar in thirteen compared to average household incomes.

The average municipality spends approximately 71 per cent of income on operating expenditure (purchases that are used up immediately) and approximately 27 per cent on capital expenditures (expenditures with benefits delivered over more than one financial year).

The average municipality spends approximately 52 per cent of all expenditure on genuine public goods where there is a justifiable role for government to tax and spend. It spends approximately 47 per cent on non-core activities that have substitutes in private markets or that are not directly linked to the delivery of a public good or service.

On this core/non-core measure, municipalities in the Prairies (53 per cent to 47 per cent) and Ontario (54 per cent to 46 per cent) spend more on average on core activities, while municipalities in British Columbia (47 per cent to 51 per cent) and the Maritimes (45 per cent to 54 per cent) spend more on non-core activities. (Some figures do not add up due to rounding.)

For the Disclosure Standards section, only 66 of the 79 municipalities are covered, because not all cities' 2007 audited financial statements could be found and analyzed at the time of writing. Annual reports were studied for completeness of accounting, additional useful accounting information and general reporting on non-financial activities.

There is a vast gap between the best and worst cities. While some were unable to produce audited financial statements in compliance with GAAP or supply any financial statements whatsoever, others presented full annual reports with financial statements and measurable-goal data on the efficacy of their services. Generally, the best reporting is found in British Columbia and the worst in the Maritimes.

Individual City Reports give a report for each city. Data for each city are presented on an individual page. The format of these reports is explained in the "Guide to Interpreting Individual City Reports."

Introduction

The 2008 Local Government Performance Index (LGPI) is the second installment of the Frontier Centre's project to measure and track the financial performance of Canadian municipalities. The index also measures the standards of reporting found in the municipalities' audited financial statements. The index was originally intended to report on the 100 largest municipalities by population in Canada. As it happens, all Quebec municipalities except Montréal have been omitted since those municipalities do not provide any reporting data in English. This means 79 cities are covered from Toronto to Cornwall.

Municipalities have several features that make their operations a matter of important public interest. All Canadians rely on a municipality of some kind to provide essential infrastructure, and unlike their dealings with private enterprises, which are disciplined by competition, they face a monopoly for the services that a municipality provides.

While current reporting gives an incomplete picture of the municipalities' capital assets, the average municipality controls approximately $15,000 per household. The average municipality raises $4,869 of revenue per household through various taxes, user fees, other government grants and development charges. This is approximately 1/13th of household income.[1]

Meanwhile, the only recourse voters have against poor service from municipalities is the democratic process, a process that relies on informed voters. It is therefore incumbent upon municipalities to supply the highest possible standard of information for citizens to access as easily as possible. One way to judge that standard is to compare the relative performance of Canadian municipalities.

Unfortunately, this comparison is unflattering for Canadian municipalities. It shows that significant improvements in the way they report financial and performance information are possible because other countries' reporting is so much more advanced. For example, while it will become mandatory for municipalities to report the value of capital assets for the financial year 2009, only half managed to do this in 2008. In reality, even these requirements are behind international best practice for asset management. Beyond that particular requirement, the standards and formats of reporting across Canada are highly variable with little sign of a consensus emerging around best practice

Because of different reporting standards and the unique provincial legislation that municipalities operate under, we expect to see differences between municipalities. Therefore, these results are not intended as indictments of any particular city. Even when a city's results are dramatically different from the norm, there may well be good explanations. For example, Ontario municipalities are tasked to supply a range of social, family, health and housing services that few outside that province provide. It is the task of local actors to evaluate and, if necessary, explain why their results are different from others. We anticipate some valid explanations but also some invalid ones. The purpose of the LGPI is to provide a basis for comparison.

The index contains five topics that deal with different aspects of municipal finance and reporting. Each compares four regions of Canada: British Columbia, the Prairies, Ontario and the Maritimes. The City of Montreal is included though it is the only Quebec city represented. These topics serve as an introduction to the individual city summaries, which present detailed data by city as well as comparisons with the averages in their regions.

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[1] Note that this revenue is not all raised directly from households. It is the total revenue from all sources divided by the number of households.

The Financial Position section presents data from the municipalities' Statements of Financial Position. It includes regional comparisons of financial position, capital assets, long-term debt and interest expense.

The Revenue section analyses the sources that municipalities use to raise revenue. It finds regional variations in the combinations of taxation, user fees, development charges and other government grants that municipalities employ to recover their costs.

The Expenditure by Object section breaks down the expenditures as employee costs, contracted services, goods and materials, grants to other organizations and interest expense. In particular, this section reveals the extent to which municipalities pay in-house staff to deliver services as opposed to contracting them out.

The Expenditure by Function section examines a different breakdown of expenditures, focusing on the kind of services output instead of the kind of inputs purchased. In particular, this section groups expenditures together according to whether they a core role of municipal government. For this purpose, the core role of municipal government is defined as the provision of services that are public goods that municipalities are best able to provide. Non-core roles are those expenditures such as recreation and culture that municipalities are providing that have substitutes in private markets. The analysis of core and non-core expenditure is an index of a municipality's focus on activities viewed as high priority by the LGPI.

The Reporting and Disclosure Assessments assess the quality of reporting from the municipalities' audited financial statements. The financial statements are rated on three factors. The first is a collection of non-accounting measures designed to reflect the overall commitment to accountability. For example, the length of time from the balance date for a financial year until the date that the financial statements are released. The second reflects the use of additional disclosures such as capital asset values and supplementary statistics that are helpful for accountability but not yet mandated by Generally Accepted Accounting Practices. The final section is an assessment of the extent to which a municipality's financial statements comply with more basic expectations. For example, presenting capital and operating expenditures separately.

All of the above information is presented as background for the Individual City Reports. These reports are fully explained in the Guide to Reading Individual City Reports, and they contain a large amount of detailed information for each municipality.

Financial Position

In this section, we examine the average figures for Canada and British Columbia, the Prairies and Ontario from the municipalities' Statements of Financial Position. We look at the averages for financial assets and liabilities, employee benefit obligations, long-term debt, investments in subsidiaries or Council Controlled Operations and short-term assets and liabilities.

By doing so, we are able to get a sense of the size and long-term financial health of Canadian municipalities' operations. To account for the differing size of municipalities, we normalize the figures on a per household basis. Thus, we are able to make fair comparisons between the largest municipality studied (Toronto with over a million households) and small municipalities (such as Wood Buffalo with only 20,000).

Looking at the financial position of municipalities, the average of Canadian municipal positions for the years 2006 and 2007 was a $1,049 surplus of financial assets over financial liabilities. Figure 1 shows the balances of municipal assets and liabilities for Canada and the regions for 2006, 2007, and both years combined.

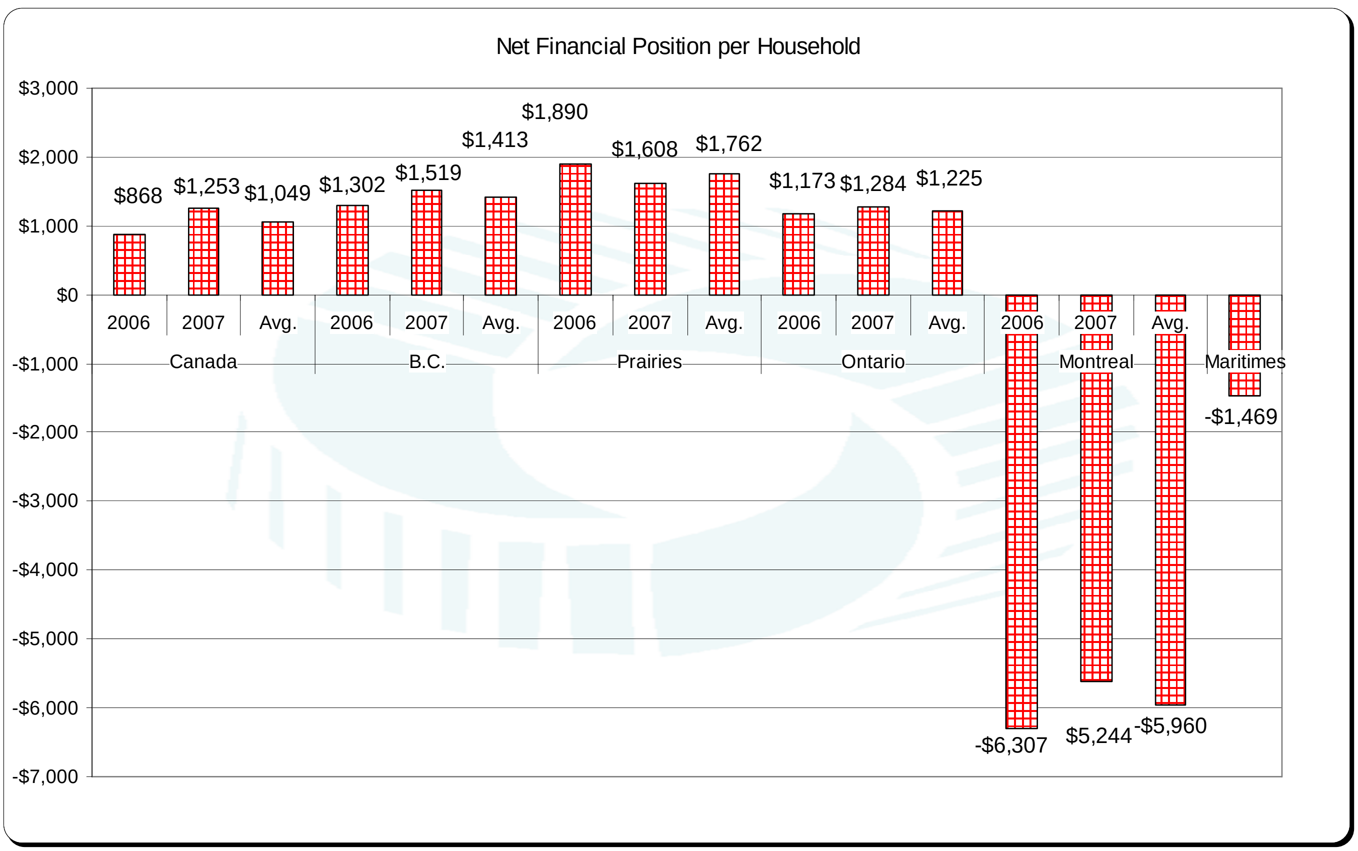


Figure 1 Average Net Financial Assets for Canada and regions.

These net financial position figures show a consistent pattern of municipalities carrying approximately $1,000 per household surplus of financial assets over financial liabilities. The exception is Montreal with its significant long term debt, examined later in this topic.

Examining the actual makeup of the surplus reveals the following results:

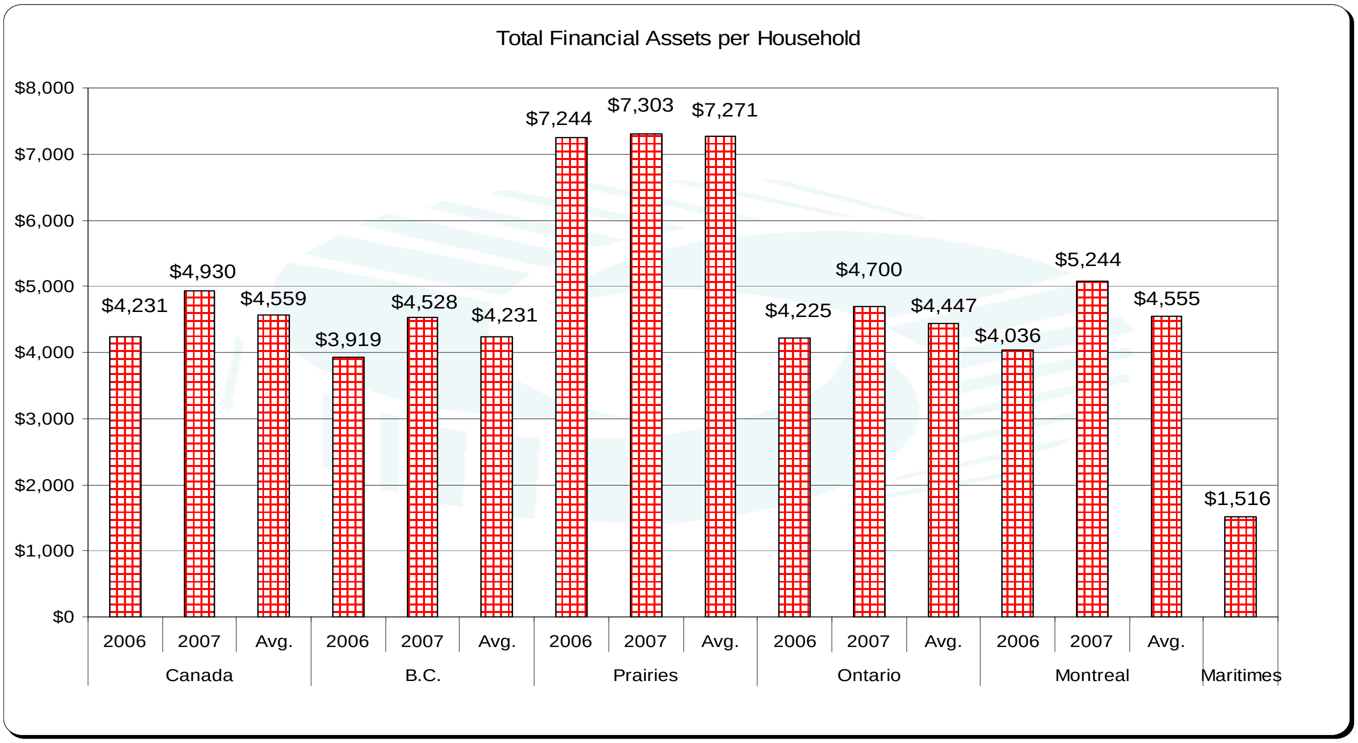


Figure 2 Total financial assets per household

There is a significant difference between the financial assets held by municipalities on the Prairies and those held by municipalities in other regions. This result is a reflection of large holdings in municipally controlled operations, particularly the energy companies controlled by Calgary and Edmonton.

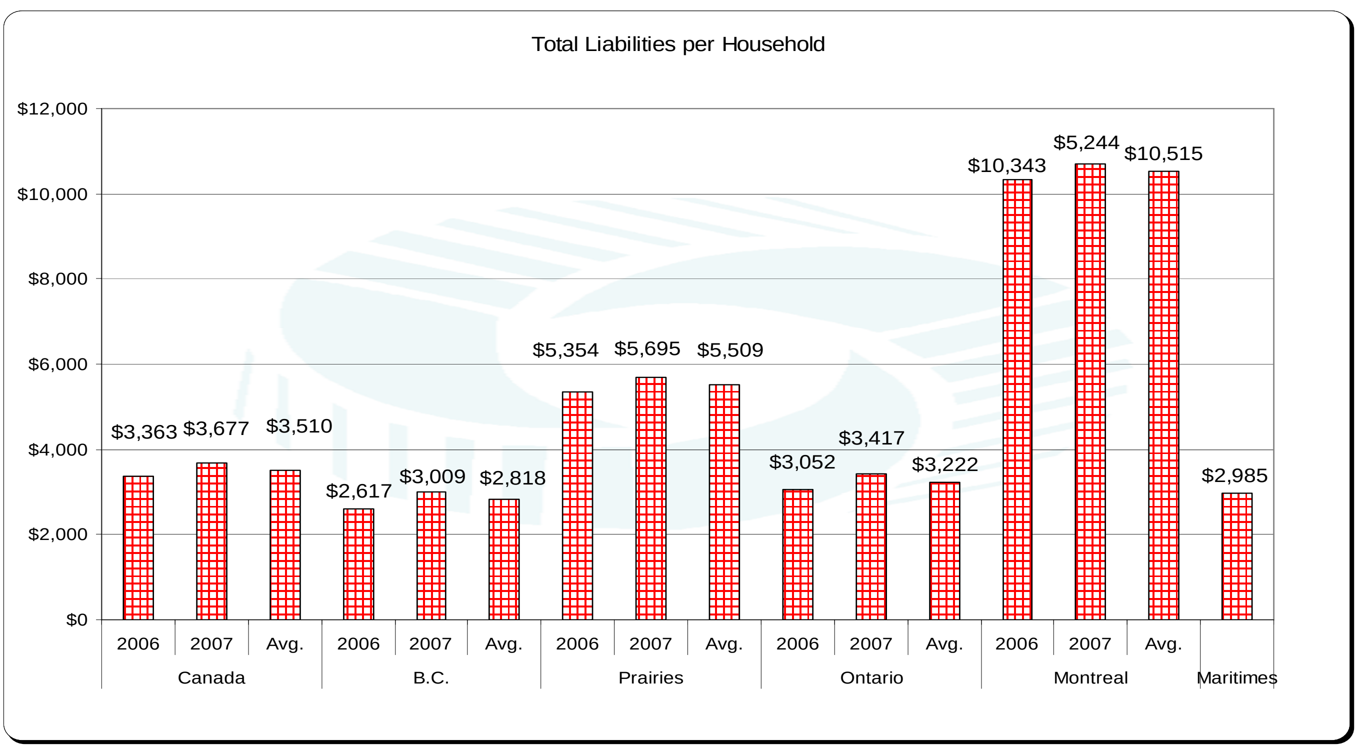


Figure 3 Total Liabilities per Household

Figure 3 shows the municipalities' liabilities per household. This is the counterpart to Figure 2, and Figure 3 shows a difference between the Prairie average and the averages of other regions. This difference is also related to holdings in municipally controlled operations, and it reflects large long-term debts held against the equity in those operations.

Long-term debt figures in Figure 4 show the Prairie region pattern with that region's municipalities holding much larger long-term debt than the Canadian average.

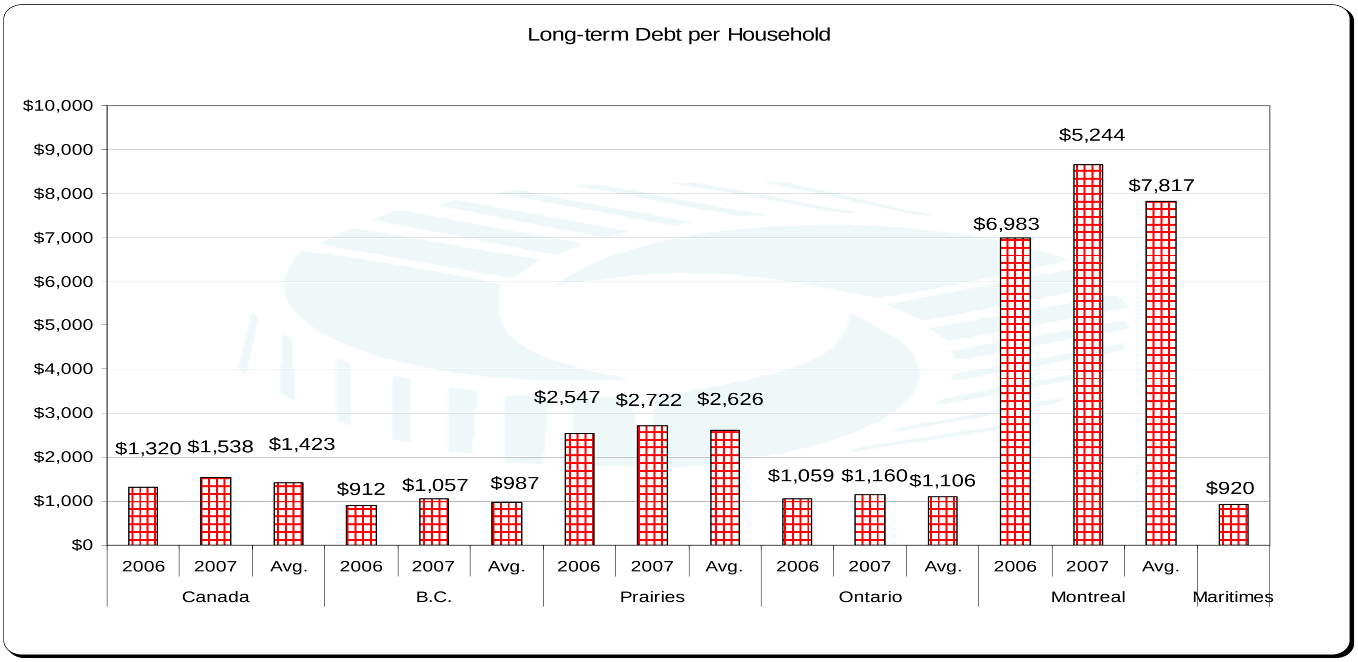


Figure 4 Long-term debt per household

The long-term debt figures are reflected in the interest burden paid by households.

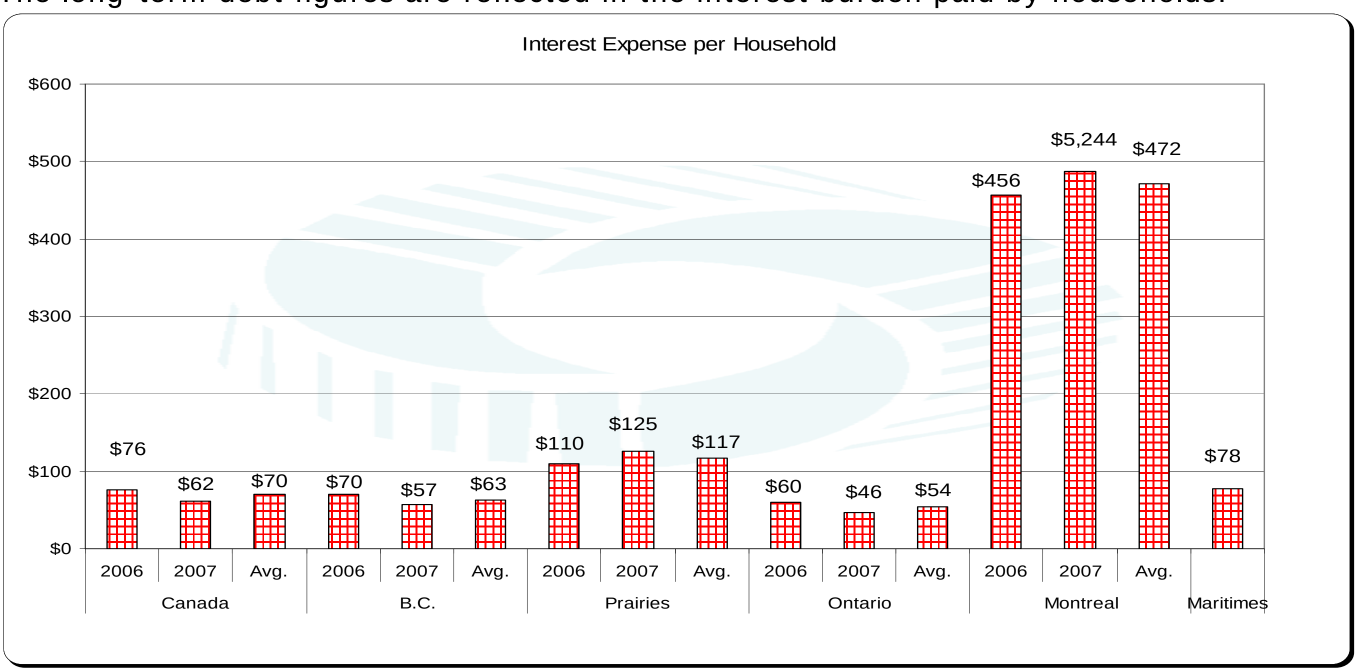


Figure 5 Interest on long-term debt per household

Figure 5 shows that the average Canadian municipality charged the average household $70 to recover interest expenses on long-term debt. Prairie households paid the most in interest charges at $110 per household in 2006 and $125 per household in 2007.

The reporting of capital assets was sporadic, and the regional averages reported in Figure 6 are as much a reflection of whether or not municipalities actually reported capital assets as they are a reflection of the actual capital assets held.

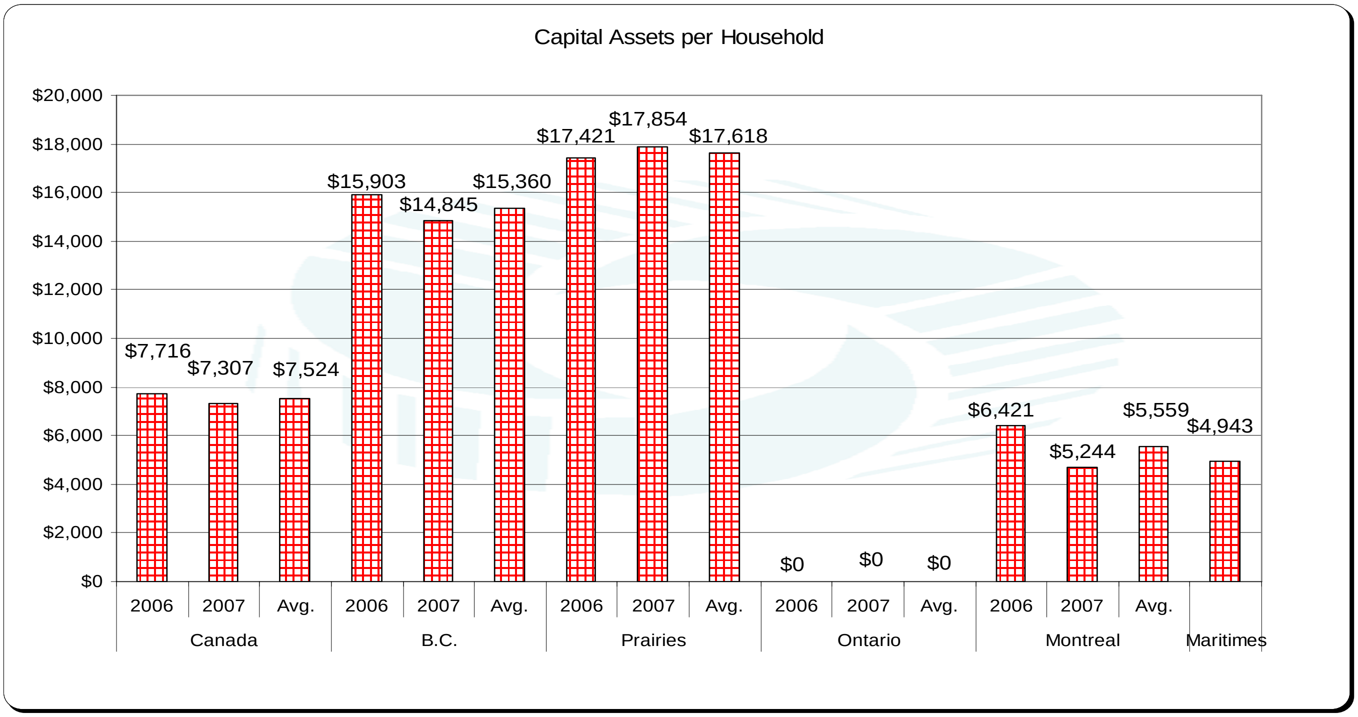


Figure 6 Value of capital assets reported per household

Reporting the value of capital assets was the norm in British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba; all municipalities reported a value for capital assets in their statement of financial position. However, municipalities in Saskatchewan and Ontario have not reported the value of their capital assets despite this being a Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) mandate for the coming fiscal year. Perhaps more than any others in this section, the capital asset figures show the enormity of municipalities' economic responsibilities. These figures indicate that the average household in a Canadian municipality holds over $15,000 in equity that is mainly infrastructure. (For many households this would be the largest item of equity they possess after the value of their home. Even for wealthier households, this figure is equivalent to the equity value in their second or third most-valuable possessions (houses and vehicles). That so many municipalities fail to present a figure for these assets once a year is a failure of measurement.

While some comfort can be taken from the fact that this reporting will not be mandated by the PSAB until the coming financial year and that most municipalities that do not already report the value of capital assets plan to do so, that standard should be viewed as cold comfort by municipalities and their stakeholders. In reality, the management of such significant assets must become even more sophisticated than the PSAB mandate if Canadian municipalities are to reach the same standard of asset management as those in other countries. Municipalities that want to lead in managing these significant assets must do the following:

- Integrate engineering and accounting activities so that the reported asset values reflect the true condition and therefore the value of capital assets.
- Mandate the funding of the resulting depreciation in value.

The coming status quo of simply reporting a figure for the value of capital assets is not the best practice by international standards. The figures in this final section show the value of assets managed. They point to the sophistication of asset management that will be necessary to manage such value assets properly.

Revenue

Raising revenue is the starting point of municipal financial processes. The insights on revenue in this section have implications for later topics that focus on expenditures.

Municipalities have a number of methods for raising revenue, each with different characteristics. For example, general property taxes are advantageous in that such taxes can raise revenue for public goods (such as roads, footpaths and the sanitation that comes from good water and wastewater services) for which it is difficult to make users pay a fee according to their usage. User fees are advantageous in that they tie benefits to costs and thus directly reveal citizens' preferences for what should be produced unlike the occasional and muffled signals they send through voting in municipal elections. Choosing the right method of revenue generation is an important decision for each service municipalities deliver.

There are sizeable variations in the approaches different municipalities take to raising revenue. In each case, these variations are presented at face value. Some municipalities depend more heavily than others do on development levies and user charges; others receive larger transfers from their provincial and federal governments; some engage in cost-sharing with other municipal or pan-municipal bodies. Often, such differences are a reflection of nuanced differences in geography, demographics and legislative conditions imposed by the provincial governments. We do not illustrate differences in revenue-gathering techniques as an indictment or endorsement of any particular municipality. Rather, we seek to present the differences so that those with greater local knowledge can consider whether or not their municipality's variations from national and regional norms are justified.

In order to control for municipalities' varying population sizes, all figures in this report are presented on a per household basis.

We start by presenting the Canada-wide averages for all municipalities covered. Variations exist in reporting. Some municipalities break down revenue in great detail and others present only a few line items; some split revenue for capital from revenue for operating expenditures; others use terms such as "sales of goods and services" and distinguish sales of utility services from other services; yet others report "user charges"
as a single line. For the purpose of this section, we record the revenue of each municipality with as many line items as are possible to get from each municipality's Statement of Financial Performance. We sought to resolve revenue into categories as defined in Table 1.

Source of revenue	Nature of revenue	Observations and data availability
Taxation	Usually rated on a property value basis on all city area taxable properties with exceptions that include community facilities, municipal buildings, etc.	The primary source of revenue for most municipalities.
Government (other municipal, federal and provincial) transfers and grants	Transfers from other governments, usually a function of provincial government policy.	Comprises a relatively small (Canadian average 12%) proportion of total municipal revenue.
User charges for services	Charges are assessed according to usage, e.g., charging for water per cubic metre.	
Investment income including dividends	Returns from City-owned and/or City-controlled financial investments.	Varies widely with the size and profitability of investments. Generally a very small proportion of municipal revenue.
Commercial income	Generally not separately disclosed (often included with investment income) but refers to income derived from assets owned or controlled by the City. It can include income from trading activities and could include public transit operations, land development, etc.	Varies widely with the size and profitability of commercial City-owned assets. Generally a very small proportion of total municipal revenue.
Development charges	Charges imposed by a municipality to recover costs of utilities, transportation, planning and other costs related to the development of new lots for building within the municipality's jurisdiction	This source of funding is normally related to capital requirements.

Table 1: Definitions of Revenue Sources

Total Revenue

To begin, we see major variations in the aggregate revenue collected by each municipality. The average municipality collected $4,665 over the 2006 and 2007 financial years. The median was Winnipeg's 2007 figure of $4,076, while Langley raised only $1,278 in 2007. Medicine Hat's significant operations in gas and electric sales and subdivision development on a relatively small base of households meant it drew a whopping $16,132 per household in revenue.

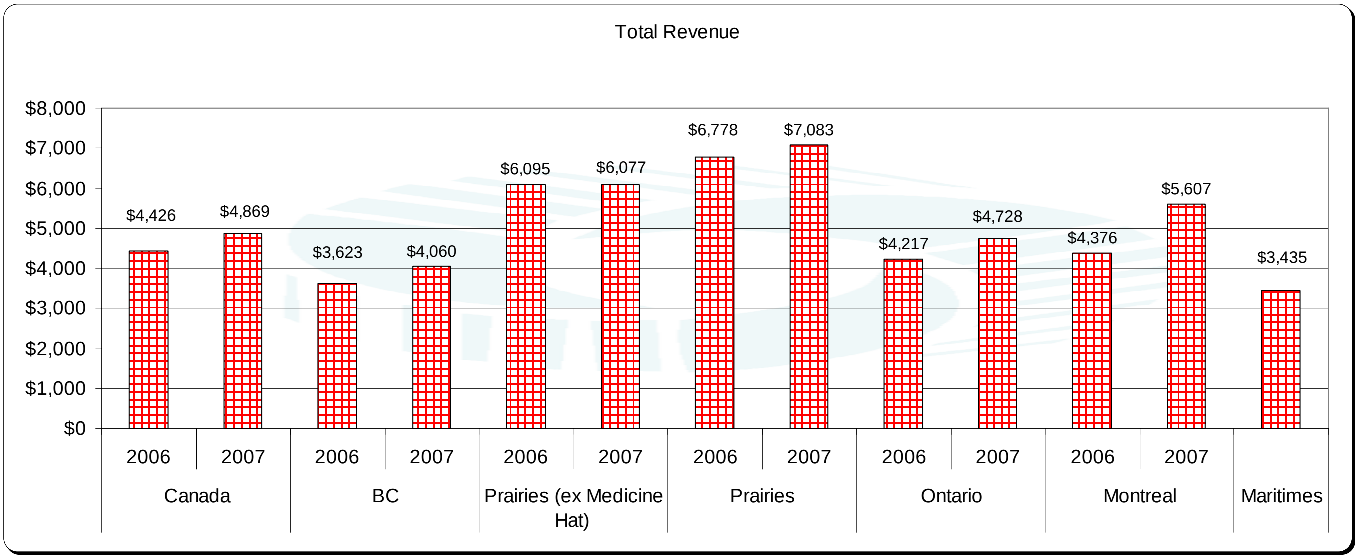


Figure 7 Regional Averages for Total Municipal Revenue

Earlier, we noted the extreme outlier of Medicine Hat, which collects almost four times more revenue than the national average. We are presenting the Prairie figures with and without Medicine Hat and we find that that municipality does indeed skew the Prairie figure but not to the extent that one might expect. The Prairie cities generally raise higher-than-average revenue compared with other regions.

Also of interest are the year-on-year increases in revenue. In some cases, revenue is high for reasons beyond the control of municipal policy. For example, Prairie cities saw significant increases in revenue from development charges. That probably reflects the construction boom in the region (particularly in Saskatchewan) that occurred during the 2007 financial year. No doubt, many municipalities will present localized circumstances that explain year-on-year revenue increases.

Nevertheless, the overall double-digit average increase in all regions except the Prairies suggests that municipal revenues are rising significantly faster than growth in inflation, population growth and growth in GDP per capita, all of which could not be expected to sum to more than 5 per cent to 6 per cent in any given year.

We acknowledge that there may be nuanced explanations for these revenue increases across various municipalities. It is also true that these average figures for each region belie trends for individual municipalities that may have much greater or even opposite trends. The individual city reports give more detailed information on a per city basis. In aggregate though, these revenues are raised largely by the municipalities' powers – that is, through the ability to tax and to run effective monopolies in delivering certain services. Monopolies offer a privileged position to municipalities, as monopolies are exempt from the disciplines of competition that ensure the revenues of most organizations are linked to their productivity and output. Whatever the rationale given for increased revenues, and there are many possibilities, the question of what justifies these supra-normal increases is an important one to answer, because without the discipline of competition on many municipal services, the only way citizens can ensure value for money is through informed voting decisions.

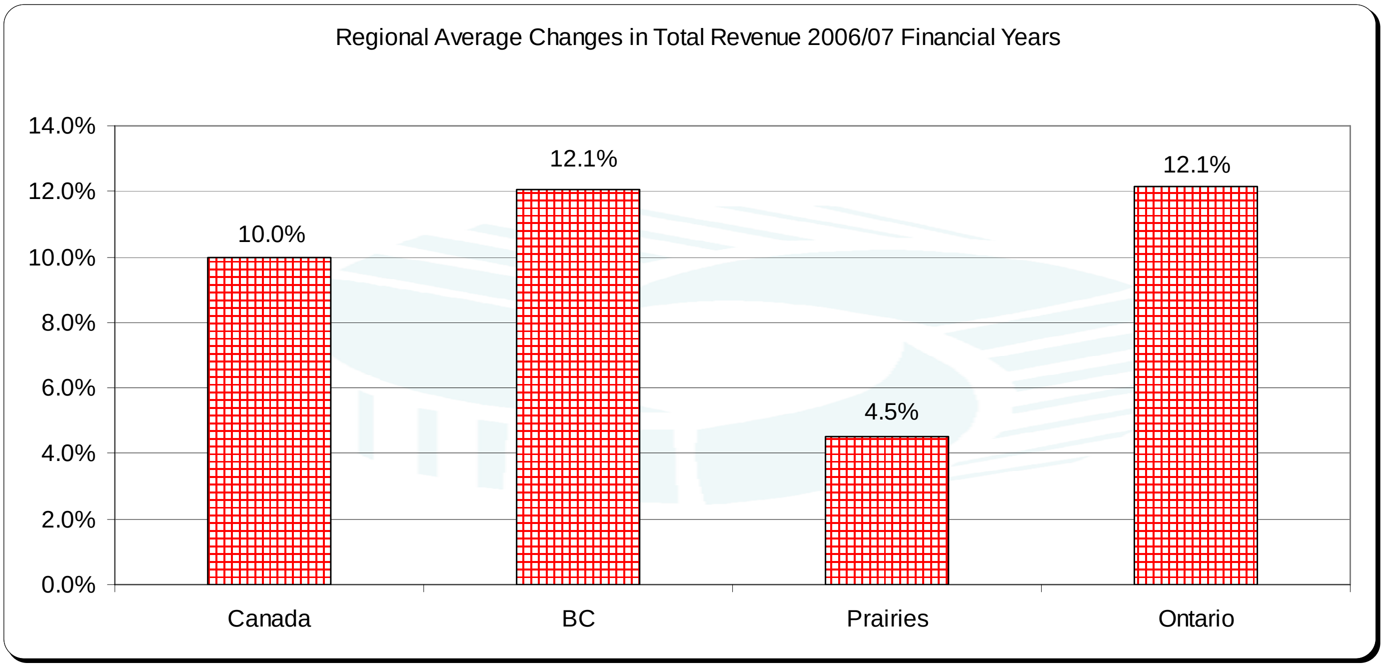


Figure 8 Changes in Regional Revenue Averages in 2006 and 2007

The Breakdown of Revenue

Turning to the breakdown of revenue, we can make the following broad observation about the kinds of revenue-raising techniques that are employed by Canadian municipalities:

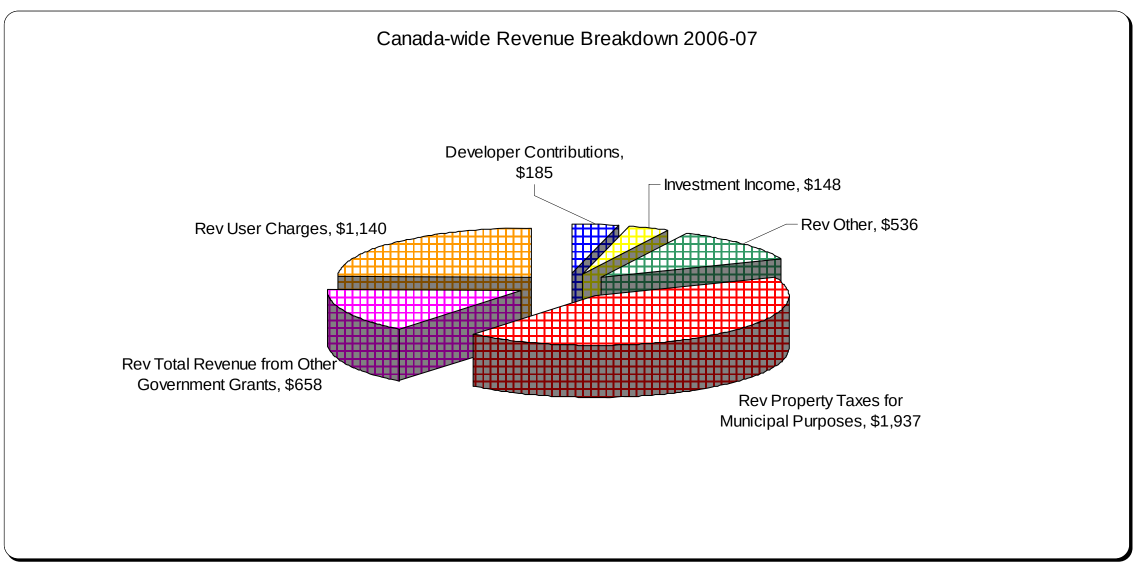


Figure 9 Dollar value breakdown of revenue, Canada-wide municipal average

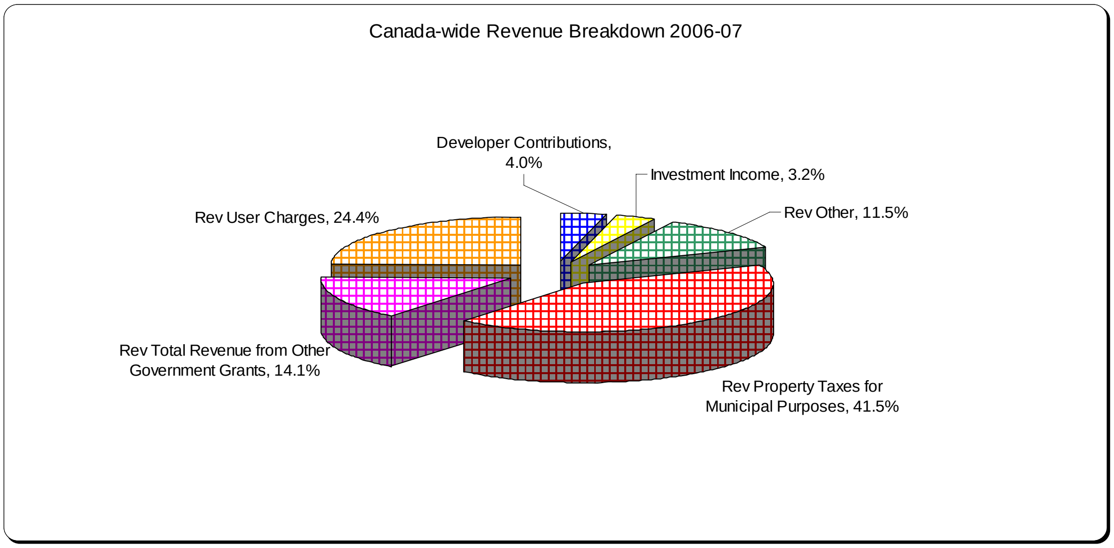


Figure 10 Percentage breakdown of revenue, Canada-wide municipal average

Figure 9 and Figure 10 show a breakdown of revenue for all municipalities averaged over 2006 and 2007. The pattern is clear with taxation by far the greatest source of revenue at 41.5 per cent and user charges at 24.4 per cent.

As with total revenue amounts, a more nuanced view of revenue sources reveals significant variations from region to region, which obscures significant differences among individual municipalities within each region.

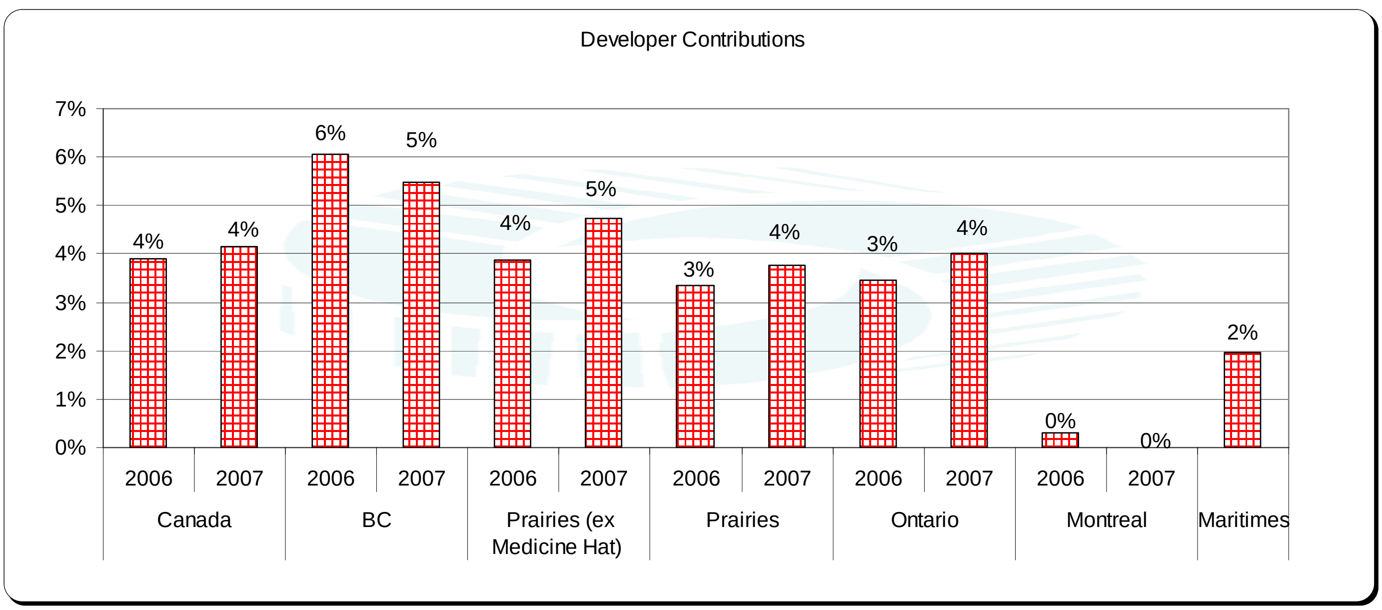


Figure 11 Percentage of Revenue from developer contributions

Developer contributions continue to provide a small proportion of local revenues, with variations plausibly reflecting differing rates of actual development rather than local policy differences. Note that with the exception of a handful of municipalities whose financial statements itemize revenue sources for specific functions, it is impossible to tell the extent to which municipalities practice full-cost recovery through development charges.

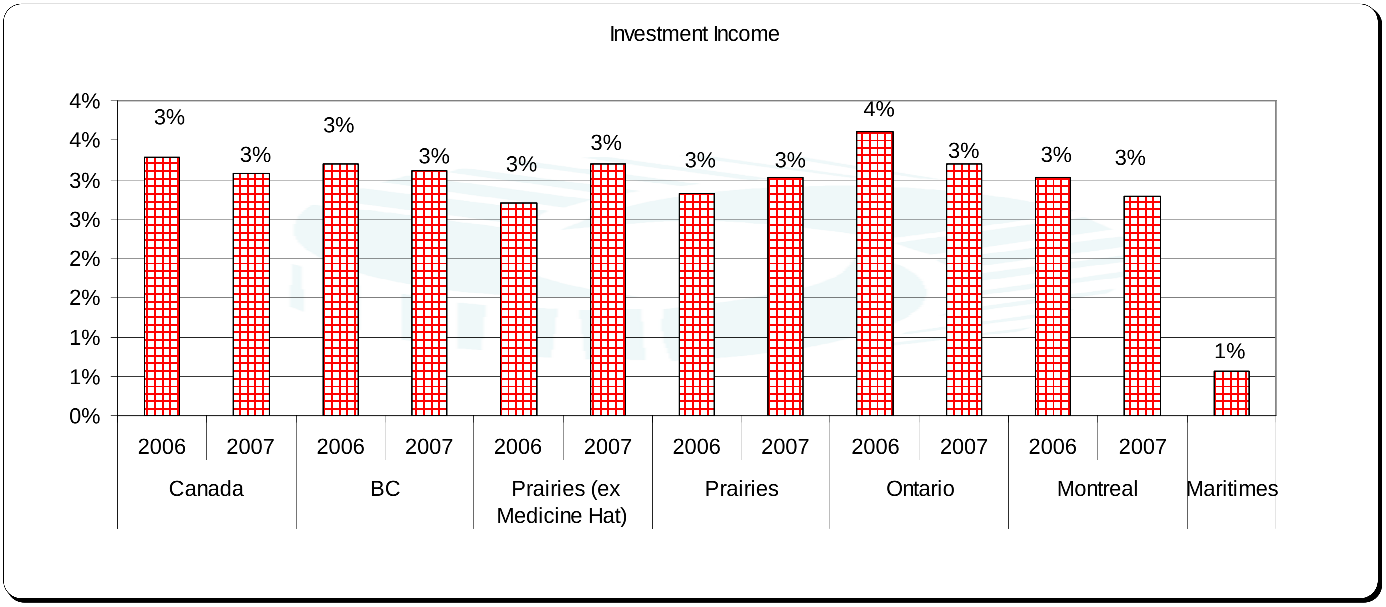


Figure 12 Percentage of revenue from investment income

As with development charges, investment income provides a small proportion of municipal revenue. It is worth noting that most municipalities report a zero value for this figure. Thus, these low average figures reflect a sporadic pattern of investment income rather than a consistently low percentage across a large proportion of all municipalities.

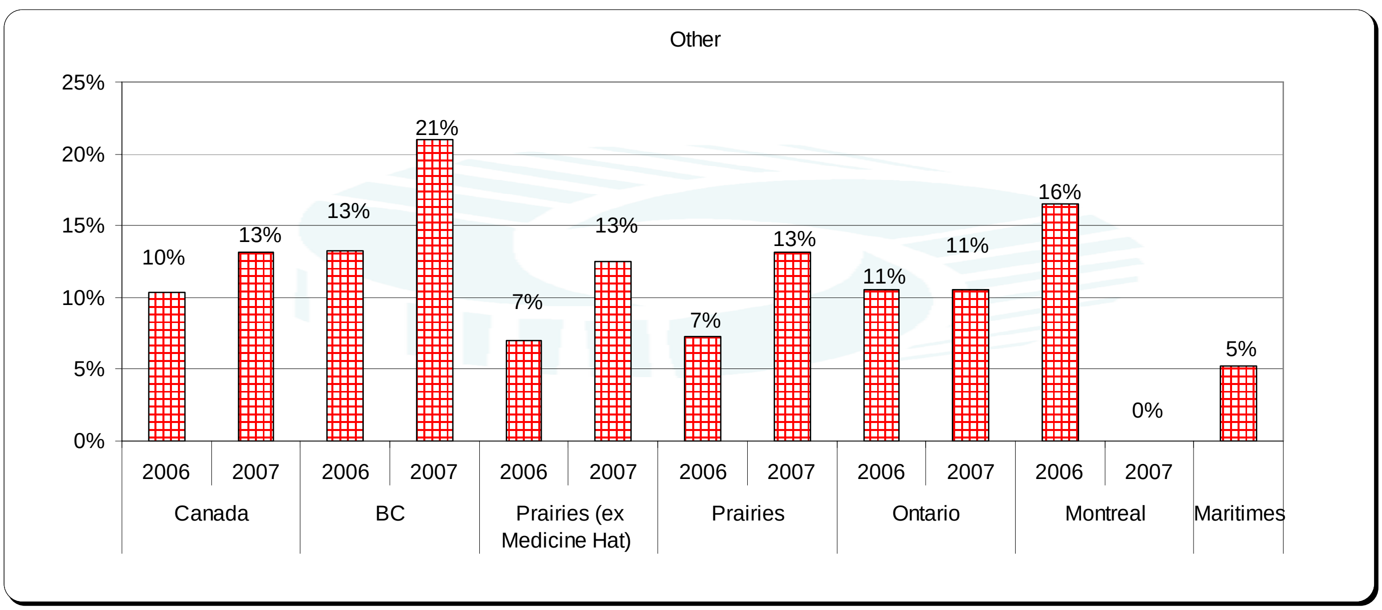


Figure 13 Percentage of revenue from other sources

The Other figures, which appear in several sections of this report, reflect mainly line items that were literally recorded as "other" in the financial statements as well as line items that did not fit the definitions used by the LGPI for data gathering. The first kind of "other" spending is a reflection of poor reporting. Good reporting aims to build a framework that categorizes all line items rather than leave them in the ambiguous category of other. To the extent that revenue sources have been recorded as Other by the LGPI data gathering process, it may well be argued that the LGPI has made a similar failure in the task of creating a schedule of revenue categories that succinctly and comprehensively account for all possible sources of revenue. Nevertheless, it is alarming that up to one dollar out of every five can be reported as having no familiar and identifiable source. All municipal stakeholders would be better served if revenue could be reported in universal and recognizable sources.

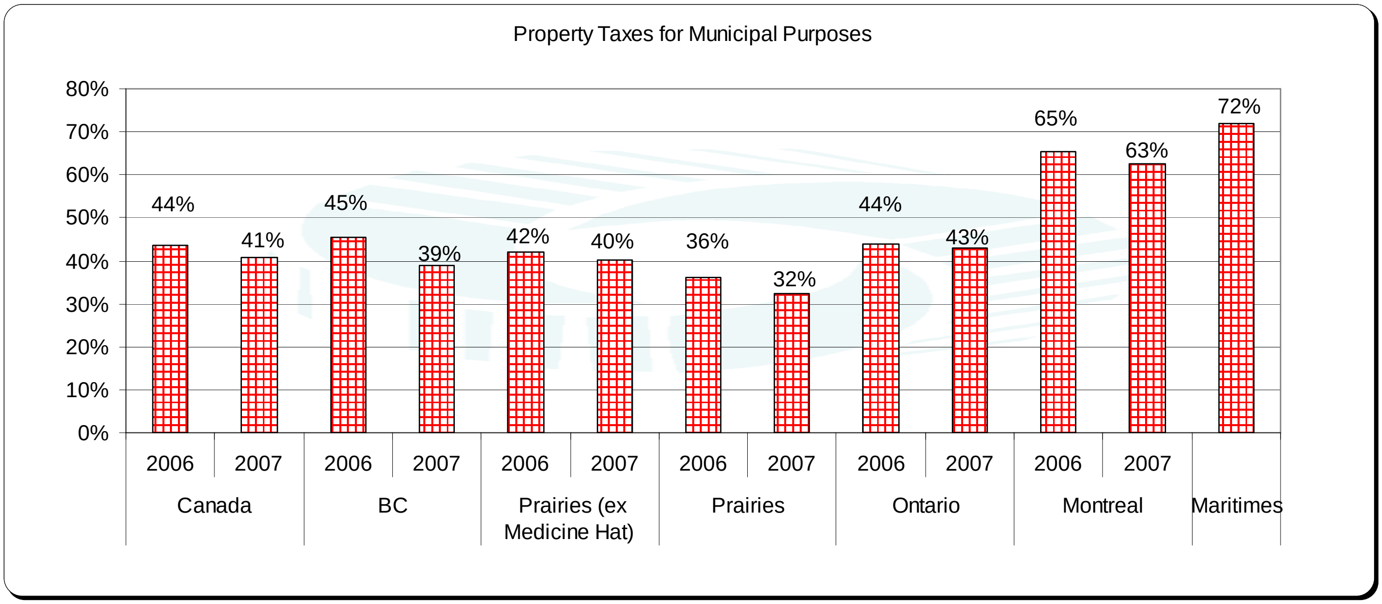


Figure 14 Percentage of revenue from taxes

The figures for property taxes show a considerable variation from 2006 to 2007. While two years of figures do not constitute a trend, they reveal a reduction in the proportion of revenue raised through property taxes as a Canada-wide average and in all jurisdictions. This decrease appears to be offset by the increased use of user fees as a cost-recovery mechanism in some regions, increased government grants in others, and in an increased proportion of revenues being classified as “other” in some other jurisdictions.

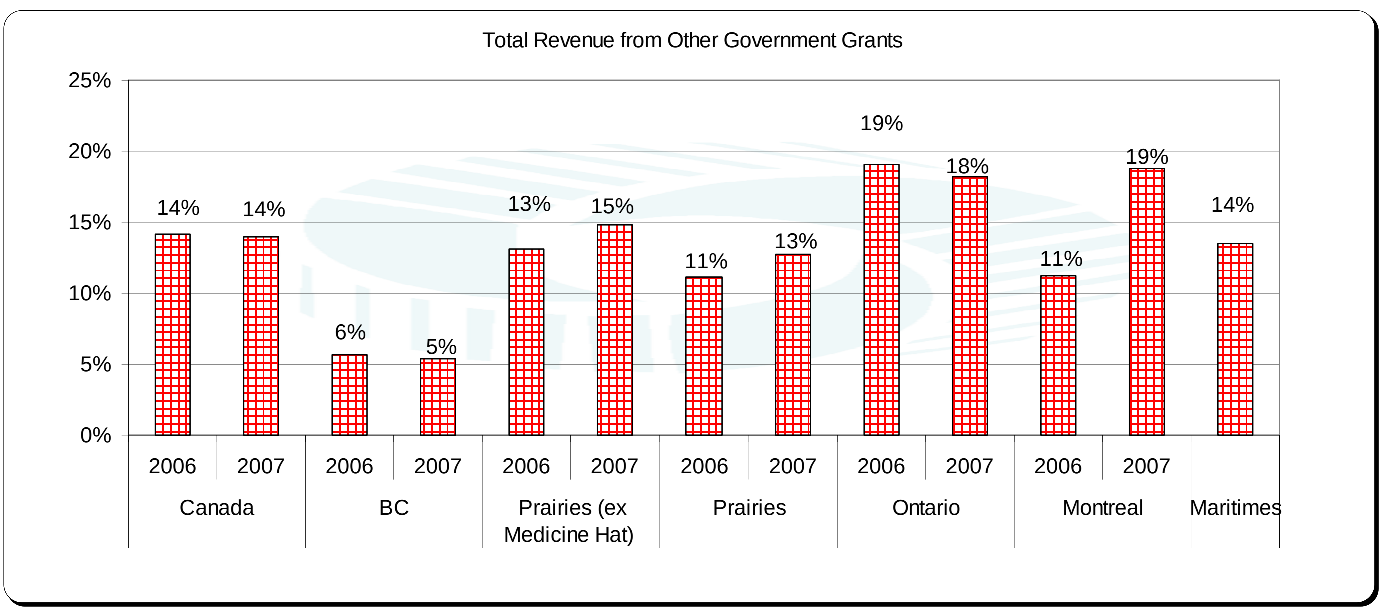


Figure 15 Percentage of revenue from other government grants

Grants from the federal and provincial governments, as well as transfers from other municipal governments, make up a differing proportion of municipal revenue region by region. This is unsurprising given that the majority of government grants tend to come from provincial governments rather than the federal government. B.C. municipalities report noticeably low grants. This anomaly requires further investigation, perhaps in conjunction with the abnormally high amounts of expenditure reported as “other.” Ontario municipalities report a very high proportion of revenue from other governments. This is a reflection of the provincially mandated housing, social, health and family services that Ontario cities are required to deliver.

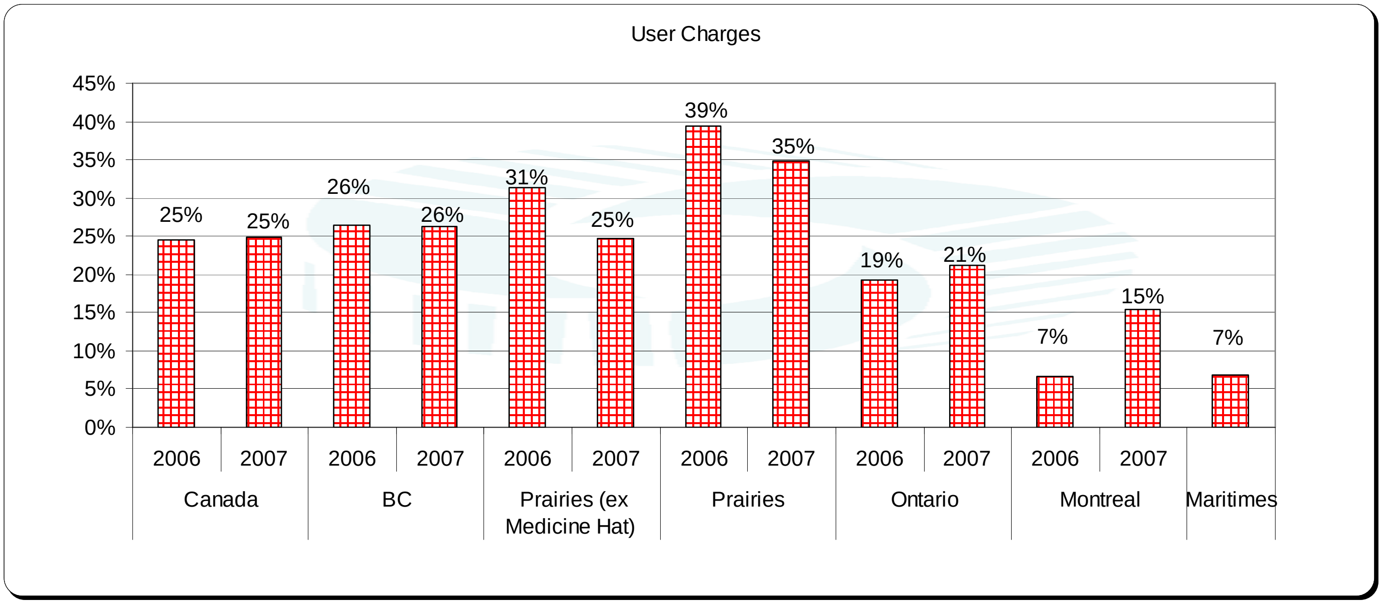


Figure 16 Percentage of revenue from user charges

User charges provide one-quarter of revenues in the average municipality. There are modest variations in the average percentage reported by municipalities in different regions, with Medicine Hat’s large gas operations providing a noticeable skew to Prairie results.

Revenue Conclusion

Understanding the amount of revenue raised by municipalities and the methods used to raise it is a first step to understanding the financial processes of Canadian municipalities. With only two years of data, it is difficult to identify clear trends. However, two years gives a snapshot of how much revenue Canadian municipalities typically raise in a given year and which methods are used to raise this revenue.

These Canada-wide and regional averages give a context for understanding the revenue figures presented in the city-by-city reports at the end of this study.

Expenditures by Object

This topic gives insight into what resources municipalities employ to deliver their services. It addresses important questions such as What proportion of expenditure is used for staff remuneration? To what extent does a municipality use contracting out instead of in-house provision as a method of service delivery? How much of a municipality's expenses are devoted to interest repayments, which could be seen as either "dead money" or a wise investment, depending on what the debt bought?

Unfortunately, it must be noted that data comparability for this topic is perhaps the weakest section in this report. Some municipalities (13 out of 79) failed to provide any breakdown of expenditures by object. Others provided total expenditures by object while others gave breakdowns for operating expenditures only. Very few gave expenditure by object breakdowns for both capital and operating expenditures; some provided "hybrid" breakdowns that show capital expenditures as an item parallel to the other operating expenditure line items. Yet others gave breakdowns for specific funds instead of as consolidated expenditures.

This variety in reporting presents considerable difficulties for comparing different municipalities. While the first responsibility of municipal accountants is to give the best presentation of their municipality's finances and not ensuring that their financial statements are comparable to those of others, it makes sense that these goals should yield the same results. If there is a best practice for reporting expenditures by object, then the wide variation in reporting methods means that regrettably few have followed such a best practice.

As a remedy, we suggest that the optimal breakdown is one that gives stakeholders the most information with which to evaluate their municipality's performance and that a superior presentation is one that splits capital and operating expenditure and presents them in a consolidated form rather than in a fund-based form.

Due to the difficulties in finding comparable data, this section presents municipalities' expenditures by object in groups according to how they reported these expenditures. The groups are

1. Municipalities that reported total expenditures by object as one set of figures or reported split capital and operating expenditures. In the latter case, the capital and operating figures are combined to give a set of figures for total expenditures by object;
2. Municipalities that reported only operating expenditures by object;
3. Municipalities that gave a breakdown of operating expenditures by object in parallel with capital expenditures.

Table 2 shows how common each style of reporting is.

	Reported Operating Figures	Reported Operating and Capital Figures	Reported Operating and Capital as a Single Figure	TOTAL
Reported Goods and Contracted Services Combined	3	0	5	8
Reported Goods and Contracted Services Seperately	40	10	11	61
TOTAL	43	10	16	

Table 2 Reporting formats and their incidence for Expenditures by Object

There is an additional complication in that regardless of whether municipalities reported expenditures by object as a total consolidated figure, as operating expenditure only or reported a split of capital and operating expenditure, they also varied in another important dimension.

While virtually all municipalities listed a line item for goods and contracted services purchased from outside their core organization, most reported contracted services and goods as a separate line item but others reported them as one combined “Goods and Services” item. To produce comparable averages, we grouped the municipalities according to their reporting formats.

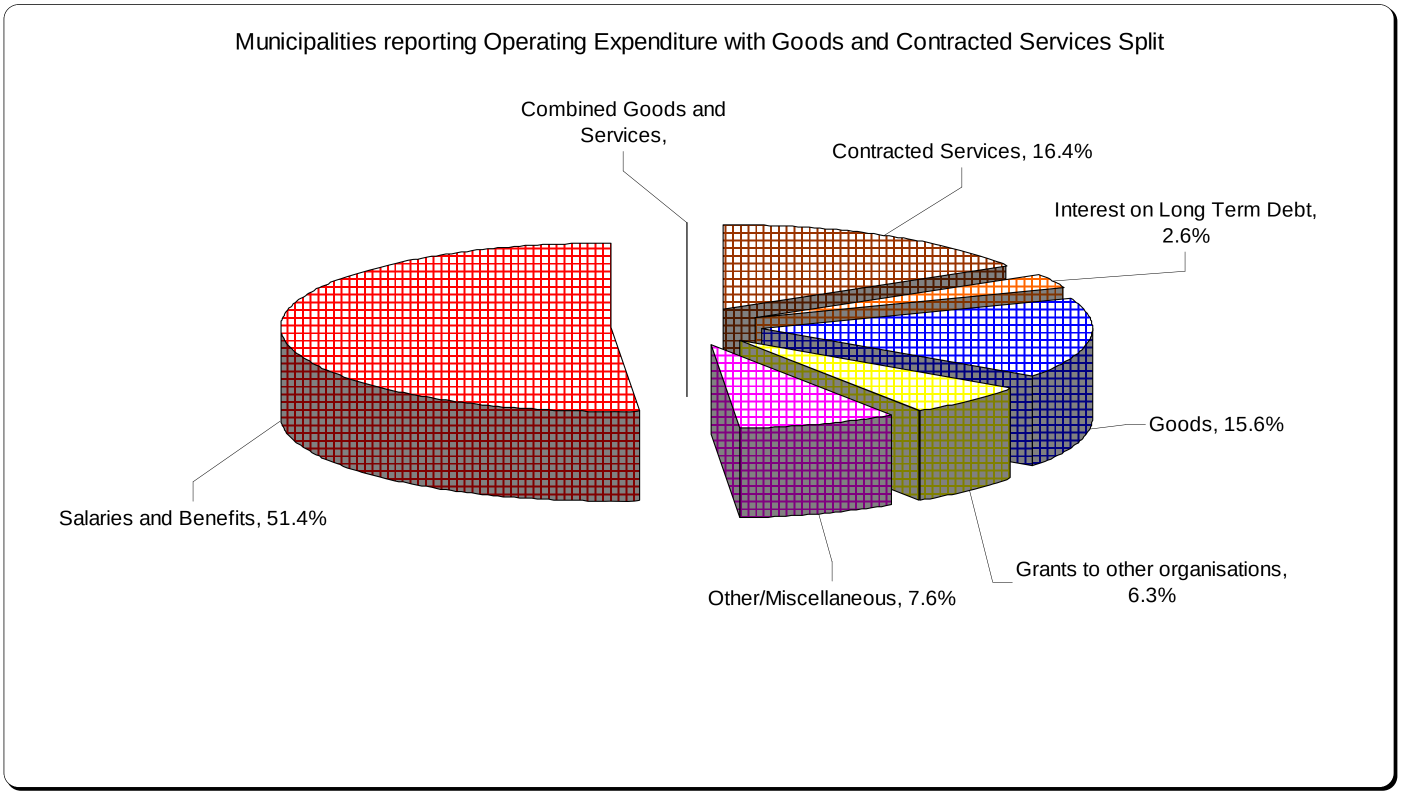


Figure 17 Municipalities reporting Operating Expenditures by Object with Contracted Services and Goods separated.

Figure 17 presents Expenditure by Object figures from municipalities that used the most popular reporting format – operating expenditures with separated contracted services and goods. With a slim simple majority, 51.4 per cent, salaries and benefits constituted the largest operating expenditure for the average municipality. Contracted services and purchases of goods were next at 16.4 per cent and 15.6 per cent respectively. The top three thus accounted for over 82 per cent of total expenditures.

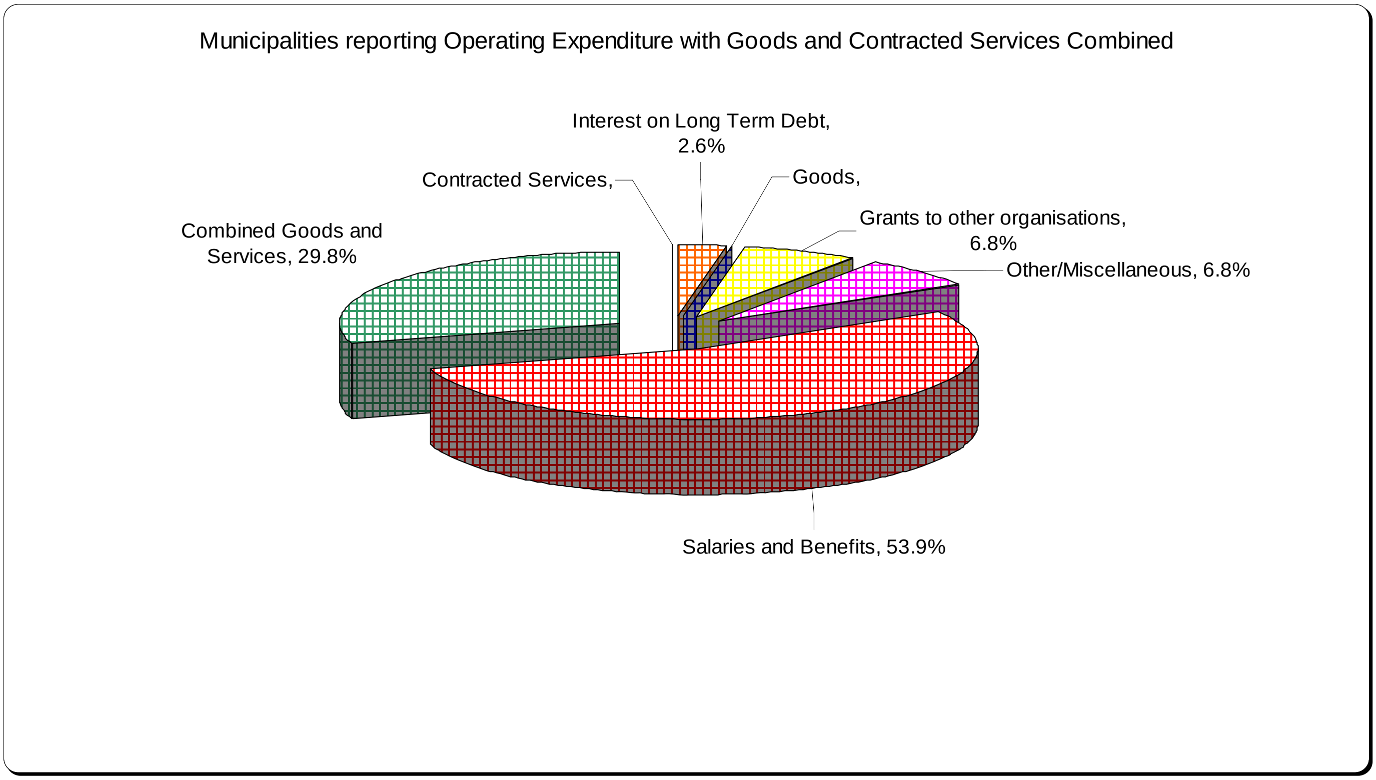


Figure 18 Municipalities reporting Operating Expenditures by Object with Contracted Services and Goods combined.

The other reporting format, Figure 18, shows the kind of results that can be expected if the municipalities represented in Figure 17 had combined their reporting of contracted services and goods. Salaries and benefits still comprise the majority of spending.

Turning to municipalities that report total consolidated expenditures by object, i.e., expenditures by object including capital and operating expenditures, we see a shift away from salaries and benefits and toward contracted services and goods that might be expected given that capital works tend to involve greater non-labour inputs and are more likely to be delivered by outside contractors.

As we see in Figure 19, the proportion of expenditures devoted to salaries and benefits drops to 40 per cent with contracted services picking up the surplus. While these differences could reflect the fact that each chart presents figures from a different set of municipalities, each chart represents between 10 and 40 different cities depending on the number of cities in the region and, where available, takes an average of 2006 and 2007 for each city. Note also that municipalities that report separate operating and capital expenditures consolidate those two expenditures so they can be averaged together with the municipalities who reported total consolidated expenditures.

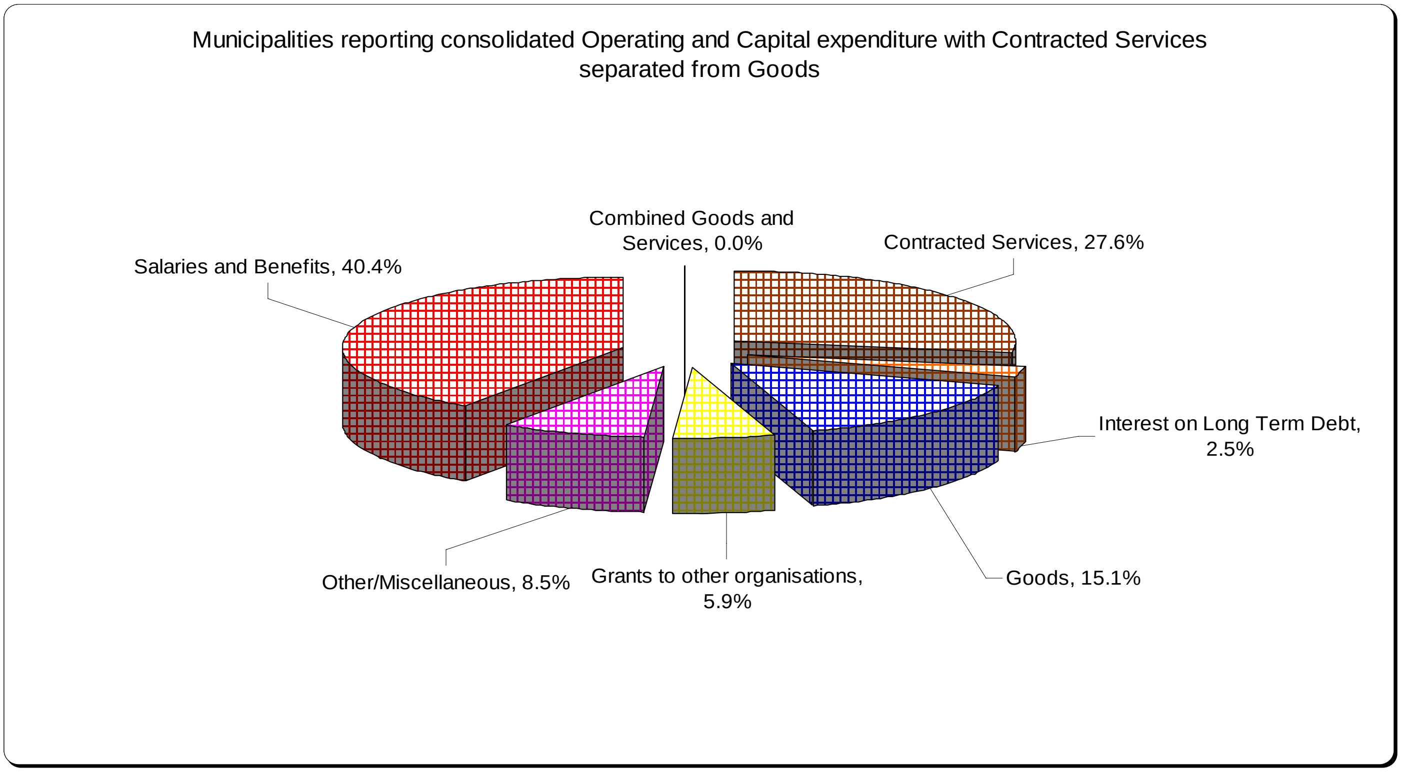


Figure 19 Municipalities reporting consolidated Operating and Capital expenditure with Contracted Services separated from Goods

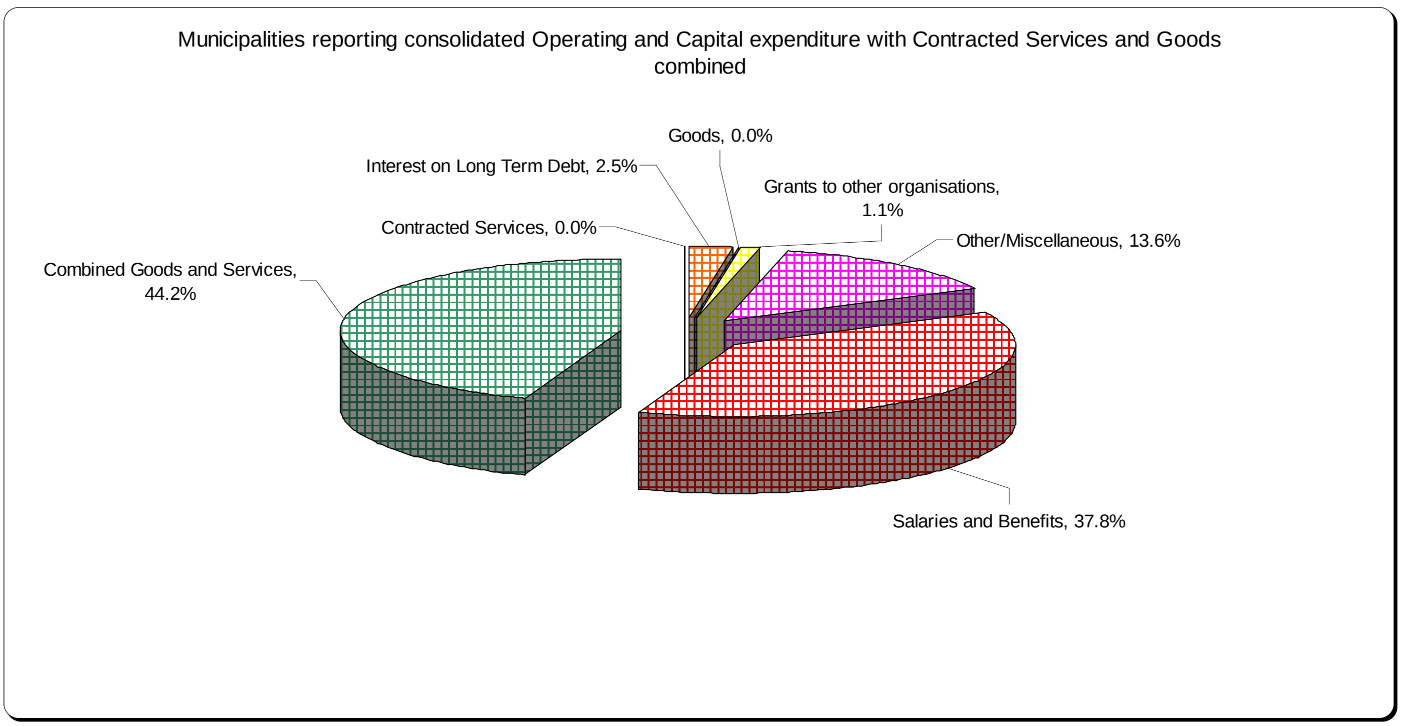


Figure 20 Municipalities reporting consolidated Operating and Capital expenditure with Contracted Services and Goods combined

Expenditures by Object Conclusion

Despite the difficulties of comparison caused by 13 municipalities failing to report expenditures by object and the remaining 66 using six different reporting formats, we have given the most equitable averages possible in order to show how Canadian municipalities generally spend their money. With these averages as baselines, we are able to evaluate each municipality's similarity or deviation from the norms in the Individual City reports that follow later in this index.

Expenditures by Function

This section analyses the functions on which municipalities spend their money. Aside from the overall amounts that municipalities spend, it looks at ratios of capital to operating and core to non-core expenditures.

Unfortunately, the data in this section are subject to widely varying reporting formats as is the data used in the Expenditure by Object section. Some municipalities report breakdowns of capital and operating expenditure, some report only total consolidated expenditure and others report only operating expenditure.

There is no standardized set of functions for expenditures. Most cities use different and sometimes overlapping terms to describe their various expenditures. There is no way to be sure that "public works" in Winnipeg is the same as "public works" in Burnaby or whether what both report as public works is the same as what another city reports as "environmental services."

As with the Expenditure by Object section, every effort is made to ensure that the averages and comparisons presented are a fair representation of municipalities' reported activities.

The regional averages are used to provide baselines to evaluate the relative performance of individual municipalities.

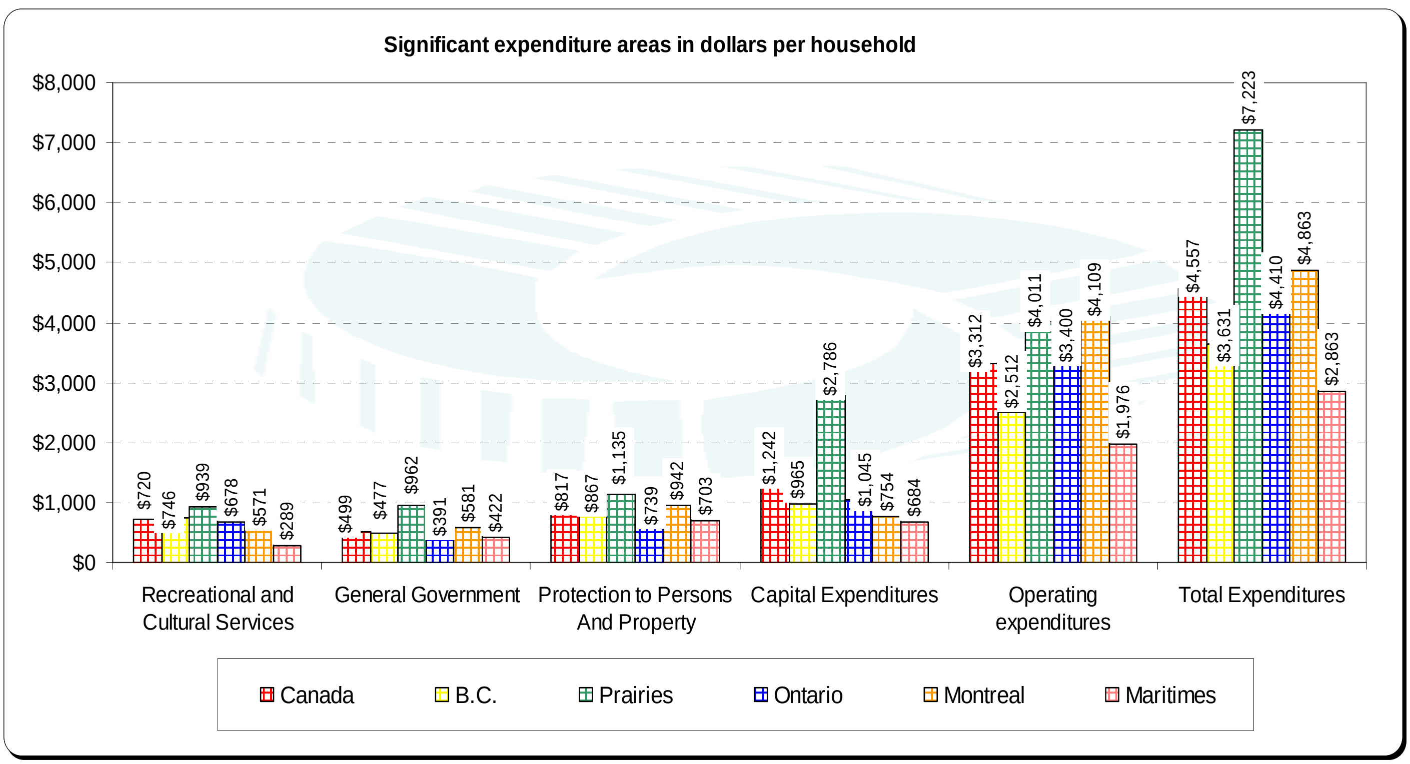


Figure 21 Significant areas of expenditure in dollars per household

Measured in dollars per household, the average Canadian municipality spends $4,557 per year. Of that, $3,312 is reported as an operating expenditure and $1,242 is reported as a capital expenditure.[2] The pattern of larger numbers among Prairie cities noted in the Revenue and

[2] Figures in this section may not add up due to the previous rounding of raw figures.

Expenditure by Object section appears again. Particularly in the area of capital expenditure, Prairie cities spend significantly more than other cities do.

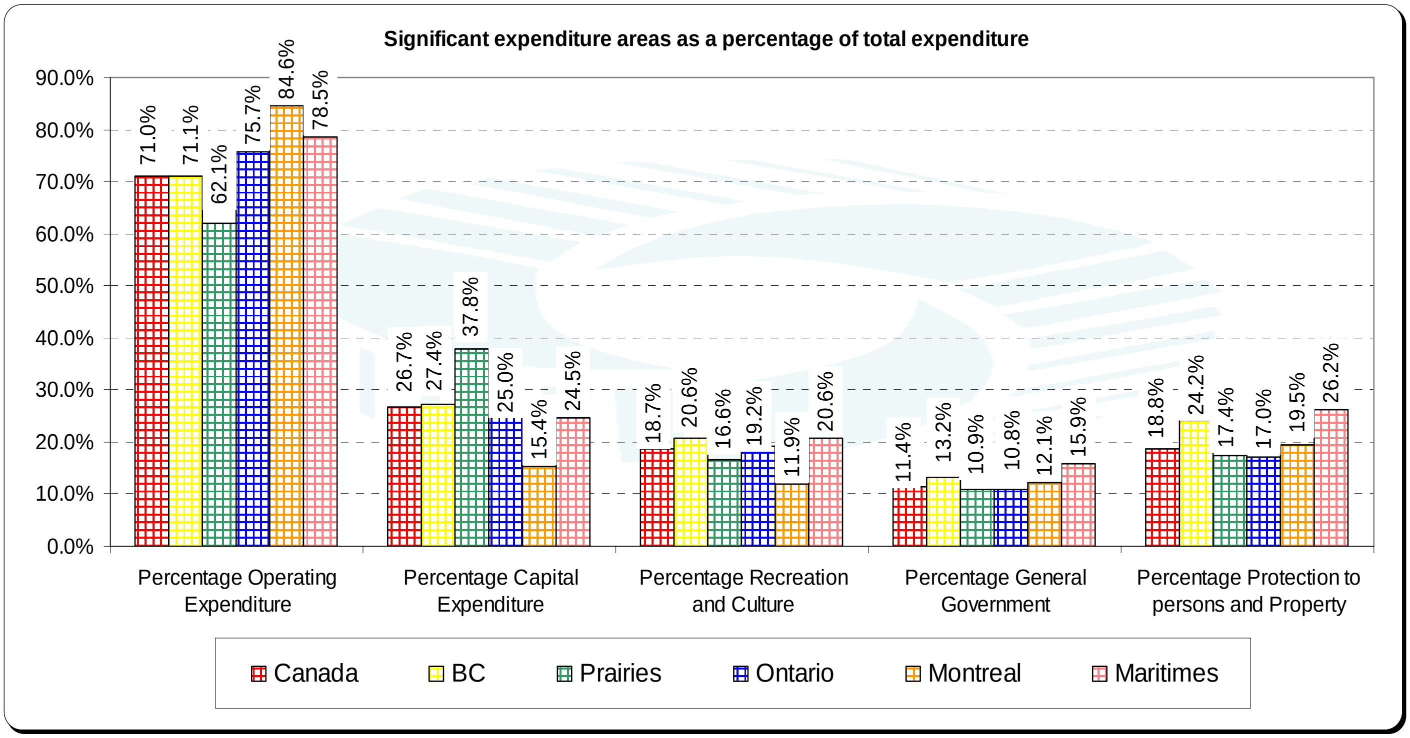


Figure 22 Significant areas of expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure

As a percentage of total expenditures, the average municipality spends approximately 71 per cent of total expenditures on operating expenses and 27per cent on capital expenditures. The average municipality also spends approximately 19 per cent on recreation and culture, 11 per cent on council and administration costs and 19 per cent on protective services (mainly fire and police).

Core and Non-core Expenditures

As a further analysis of expenditures by function, we divided the various line items into “Core” and “Non-core” expenditure functions.

The rationale behind this split is that municipalities have, or at least ought to have, a hierarchy of responsibilities. At the top of the hierarchy is the provision of genuine public goods and natural monopoly infrastructure.

Public goods have no substitutes in private markets, because their nature means that their beneficiaries cannot be made to pay for consuming them. For example, sanitation services in a city reduce the possibility of suffering from diseases for all residents regardless of whether they have individually paid for the service.

Natural monopolies are those markets where providers experience increasing returns to scale, and so a single provider is the most efficient market structure. For example, a road network has a very high initial cost but once it is established it can be extended and give proportionately higher value outputs for any additional investment. Because these markets involve monopoly power, there is a public policy role for governments to regulate them or to participate in them as a provider.

Because these benefits would be lost without government intervention, providing them should be a municipality's top priority. We identified several commonly reported line items as directly relating to core activities of municipal government.
Expenditure items not directly related to providing public goods are listed as non-core. This is because they are goods that could be provided, or at least close substitutes could be provided, in private markets. For example, much of the Culture and Recreation activity funded by municipal governments could be substituted by alternatives that are already produced in private markets. There is little practical difference between a municipally run event and a privately promoted concert.

For the purposes of this evaluation, we divided commonly reported line items into the following two core and non-core groups: items directly relating to core activities sand items not directly relating to core activities.

Items directly related to core activities	**Items not directly related to core activities**
Environmental services	Building services
Planning and development	Civic corporations
Public works	Grants
Public safety	Health services
Transit	Other
Transportation	Recreation and culture
Solid-waste disposal	Social and family services
	Social housing
	General government

The regional results show a roughly even divide between expenditure on core activities and expenditure on non-core activities.

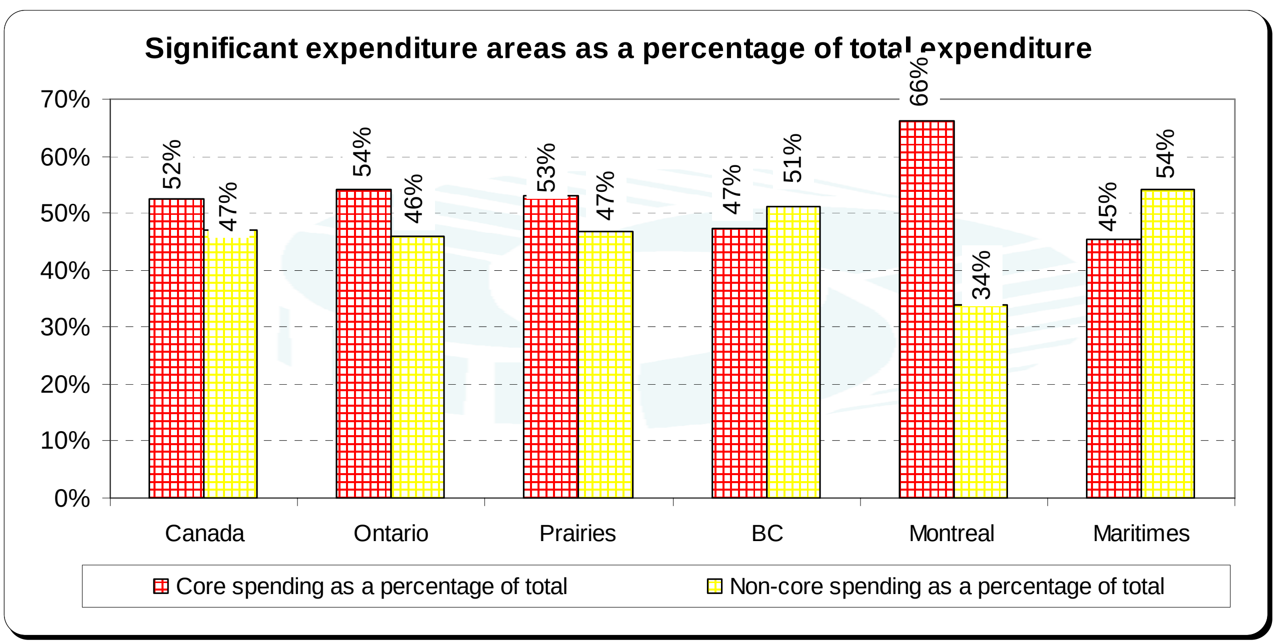


Figure 23

In the individual city reports, we revisit this theme by expressing their figures for core and non-core items as a ratio between the figures of the municipality in question and its regional average.

Reporting and Disclosure Assessments

In addition to analyzing what the reported financial statistics tell us about a city's operations, we assessed the quality of reporting used to convey that information. This topic is perhaps more important than the previous ones. Readers will have noticed the repeated caveats and conditional statements relating to the comparability and availability of data. They will have noted that the data we reported are designed to reflect publicly available information and that the quality and availability of this information is highly variable.

In this section, we apply a series of tests to 66 of the municipalities in the index. Noticeably, this number is lower than the number (79) for which some data has been produced, and the reason is that this section applied stricter criteria for inclusion. Only 2007 audited financial statements available in English were included. The language requirement reflects in part the limitations of the LGPI team, but ultimately we feel it is incumbent upon the municipalities to ensure public information is available in both official languages.

Notwithstanding municipalities omitted because of language, a number of municipalities are not covered, because we were unable to acquire 2007 audited financial statements. Our efforts to acquire them included web site searches and direct enquiries to the municipalities by e-mail and phone. In some cases, we found that audited financial statements were not ready at the time of publication (October 2008) that no GAAP-compliant audited statements were in existence or we simply received no reply. That it should be so difficult for interested citizens to even see the financial statements of a public organization such as a municipality is a major problem in itself.

The Individual City Reports, which follow this section, contain data from this assessment report; those for which we could not acquire 2007 audited financial statements are marked "no data."

For the 24 most-populous cities, a detailed analysis that judges 14 sub-factors was used to produce three scores. These sub-factors are summarized in tabular form in Appendix A. The remaining cities were assessed according to a smaller set of sub-factors and therefore produce the same three scores. The three scores represent

1. General Accountability Standards: This measures non-accounting factors including the timeliness of auditing, the receipt of accounting awards and evidence of the municipality embarking on performance improvement and business excellence of similar programs.
2. Added Disclosure Accountability Standards: Tests for reporting of tangible assets on the balance sheet and for additional supplementary information including statistics and performance measures.
3. Appropriate Compliance: Assesses the completeness and comprehensiveness of reporting. For example, the existence of capital and operating expenditure splits and complete disclosure of pension fund liabilities.

Scores were judged on a scale of one to seven with one being highest and seven being lowest. A complete description and discussion of these measures is located in Appendix A. Individual city scores are in the Individual City Reports.

The regional averages are presented for comparison in Figure 24.

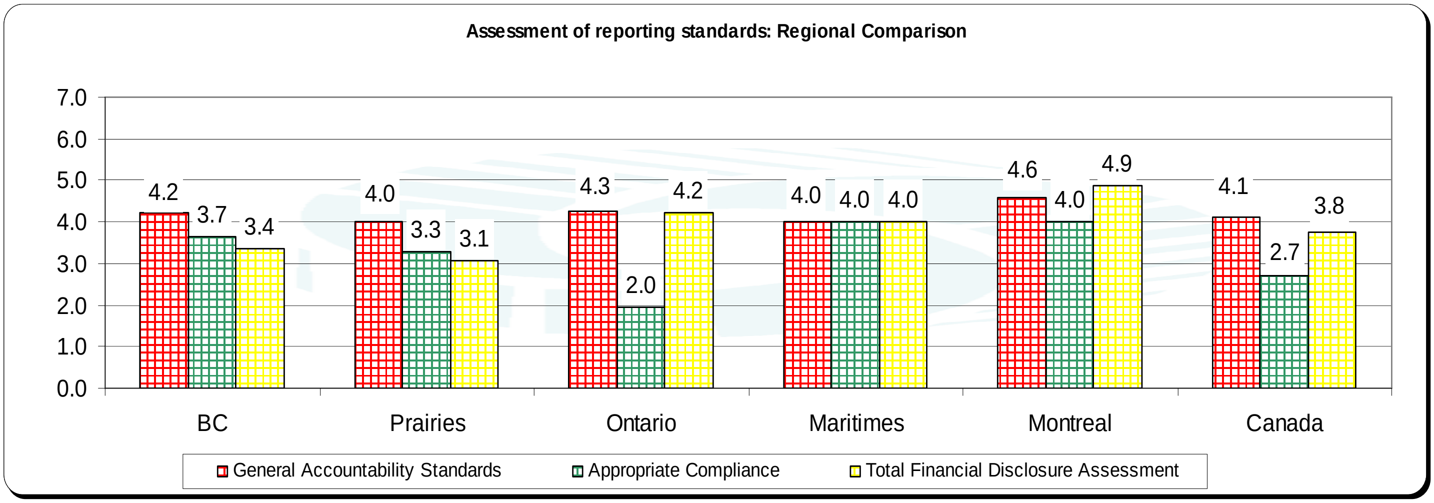


Figure 24 Assessment of Reporting Standards

Guide to Interpreting Individual City Reports

After the opening five sections, which summarized regional differences for various groups of metrics, we now present detailed statistics for each of the municipalities. In total, 79 municipalities are covered, using data for the 2006 financial year, the 2007 financial year or both. This guide explains how each statistic was calculated — that is, how the figures acquired from the municipalities' audited financial statements were used to generate per household dollar figures and percentage figures that express the municipalities' financial performance on a fair and comparable basis.

Results, Contexts and Explanations

The results often show that a given municipality has figures as much as ten times lesser or greater than the average for municipalities in their regions. In some cases, these results will be welcomed by stakeholders; in others, they will present a significant cause for concern. For example, some municipalities report zero figures for long-term debt, while others report seven times the average.

It is important to note that even dramatic deviations from the mean are not necessarily the face value indictments or endorsements of the municipality that they may first appear to be. This is because municipalities face very different environments depending on the provincial legislation that governs them. For example, Ontario municipalities will generally report higher government grants than municipalities in other jurisdictions as well as higher levels of non-core expenditure. This is a reflection of the fact that Ontario municipalities have to deliver a wider range of social services including health, family services and social housing than are municipalities in other jurisdictions.

In an effort to allow for such differences, municipalities were not benchmarked against Canada-wide averages but rather against regional averages wherever possible. This process is fully explained in the following section.

Interpreting the Graphs

At the bottom of each Individual City Report is a bar graph. The graph shows that municipality's performance relative to the average for its region. For example, Vancouver's figures are normalized against the British Columbia average. Vancouver's figure for net taxation is $1,948 per household. The 132 figure for Vancouver reflects the fact that the British Columbia average for net taxation is $1,497 per household, so Vancouver's net taxation is 132 per cent of the average.

All figures in the graphs are normalized in this way with the exception of Expenditures by Object (discussed below). The first four figures relate to the revenue topic noted earlier in this document. They all take the per household revenue-related figure reported for the municipality in question and divide it by the average for municipalities in its region (either British Columbia, the Prairies or Ontario). Quebec and the Maritime provinces are represented by such a small number of municipalities that no useful regional averages could be generated, so they are referenced against the Canada-wide average.

The second set of figures (Interest expense through total liabilities) reports figures from the Statement of Financial Position section.

The third set (Contracted Services through Services and Goods) is taken from the Expenditures by Object section. These figures reflect the percentage of expenditure on a given object normalized against the group average. However, these group averages are not the regional group averages used for the other figures in the graphs. As discussed earlier in the Expenditures by Object section of this report, there are a number of different reporting formats for expenditures by object. Some municipalities report expenditures by object for operating expenditures only, some report operating and capital expenditures separately, and others report total consolidated expenditures by object. There is a second division in the way expenditures by object are reported, with some reporting expenditures on goods and materials separately from expenditures on contracted services, while others report goods and services as one figure.

As a result of this fragmentation in reporting styles, we thought that normalizing municipal scores against the average for their reporting format group would give a more meaningful result than would their regional average. The final groups used for producing averages are

- those municipalities that reported operating expenditure only,
- those that reported total consolidated expenditures by object or that separate operating and capital expenditures by object (with the latter category having their figures combined to give total expenditures) and
- two sub-groups for each of the above so that municipalities are grouped according to whether or not they report goods and contracted services together or separately.

For example, New Westminster's figure of 0.8 per cent expenditure on interest expense equates to 73 per cent of the 1.2 per cent average for cities reporting total consolidated expenditures by object with contracted services and goods recorded as separate line items. In the graph for New Westminster, the interest expense figure is represented by the figure 0.73.

The fourth set of figures (Recreation and culture through non-core spending) contains figures discussed in the expenditure section. As with earlier figures, the graph presents figures that are normalized against the average for the municipality's region.

Finally, the right-most three bars (General accountability standards through Total financial disclosure assessment) reflect the assessments of reporting standards in the audited financial statements as judged by the Local Government Performance Index. These are normalized and expressed as a proportion of the Canada-wide average for these judgments. It is important to note here that larger numbers indicate poorer results. For example the General Accountability Standards score of 7.0 is the worst possible score on that measure. It is represented in the graph as 1.7, and this indicates that it is 170% of the average score (which is 4.1). This is a worse result than Abbotsford, whose score of 4.0 is represented by a 0.9 in the graph, meaning that this score is approximately 90% of the average. On this measure, Abbotsford has strongly outperformed Ajax and this is reflected by a lower, not higher graph score.

Reporting Standards, Missing Figures and Zero Figures

Every effort was made to ensure that missing data points are expressed as “unknown” while figures where the result is genuinely zero are expressed as zero. However, there are some instances where zero figures appear where the figure is unknown: These instances should be interpreted as a reflection of the municipal financial statements rather than the actual state of the municipality’s operations. For example, Ontario and Saskatchewan municipalities generally have not reported the value of capital assets on their balance sheets. The capital asset is blank, not because Barrie, for example, has no capital assets but because it does not disclose any on its audited statement of financial position.

Table One: Financial Position

The first table takes data from the municipalities’ audited statements of financial position as well as the interest expense figure from the Expenditure by Object section. Each figure is divided by the number of households under the municipality’s jurisdiction according to the 2006 census.

- Financial asset figures are taken directly from the bottom line of the financial assets section and exclude any amounts attributed to capital assets, inventory or any other non-financial asset that might contribute to the municipality’s overall bottom line.
- Financial liabilities are taken from the total liabilities line item in the Statement of Financial Position.
- Capital assets where reported are taken from the capital assets line item and generally exclude the much smaller non-financial asset line items commonly called inventory or supplies.
- Long-term debt is taken from the long-term debt line item in the financial liabilities section of the Statement of Financial Position.
- Investment in subsidiaries is taken from the financial assets section. It is the reported value of any financial interests in subsidiary operations. For example, Edmonton and Calgary have large financial interests in power companies.

Table Two: Revenue

These figures reflect the revenue gathering of a municipality as reported on the Statement of Financial Activities or equivalent. All figures are normalized to the per household basis to allow comparability between cities of different sizes.

- Total revenue is taken directly from the line item of the same name.

- Net taxes include property and other taxes but excluding any taxes remitted to school boards.
- Other government grants are grants from municipal, federal and provincial governments.
- User charges are any fee charged contingent upon the use of a service.

Development contributions are any fees charged contingent on the development of a property.

Table Three: Reporting Standards

These three figures are taken from the assessment of financial reporting standards discussed in that section. The reference to either "2-factor" or "5-factor" analysis reflects whether the analysis used for each figure involved two or five judgments or sub-factors. The comments, where included, are qualitative observations regarding the standards of reporting.

Table Four: Expenditures by Object

These figures express the percentage of expenditures spent on select line items. A more comprehensive discussion of how these figures were arrived at is included in the Expenditures by Object section and in the discussion of the individual city graphs above. The word in parentheses after the title of this table reflects whether the expenditure by object figures reported were for total consolidated or for operating expenditures.

Table Five: Expenditures by Function

This table contains expenditure figures from the Statements of Financial Performance or equivalent, expressed as a percentage of total expenditure.

- In the case of capital and operating expenditure, figures may also be taken from the Expenditures by Object section of the financial statements.
- General government expenditure is a line item that appears in all municipal financial statements and covers the cost of running a democracy (i.e., running a city council) and the administrative costs not allocated to any particular activity.
- Protection to persons and property is a figure that sometimes appears verbatim in the statement of financial activity. In other cases, it is synthesized from contributing line items, usually fire and police, but in some cases it includes ambulance services.
- Recreation and culture is a line item that usually appears verbatim in the financial statements. However, in some cases, it is disaggregated and a synthesized figure including items such as libraries and parks is consolidated into the figure recorded here.

Core and Non-core expenditures are summations of a range of items found in the Statements of Financial Activity and judged either a core role of municipal government or a non-core role. A full explanation of this distinction and the rationale behind it can be found in the expenditure section of this report.

Calgary

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$ 8,252
	2007	$ 9,456
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 6,692
	2007	$ 7,566
Capital assets/household	2006	$21,968
	2007	$24,299
Long-term debt/household	2006	$
	2007	$ 4,228
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$
	2007	$ 3,642

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 6,325
	2007	$ 7,216
Net taxes/household	2006	$2,589
	2007	$ 3,010
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 924
	2007	$ 1,203
User charges/household	2006	$ 1,760
	2007	$
Development contributions/ household	2006	$ 271
	2007	$ 335

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	2.8
Appropriate compliance	2.9
Total financial disclosure assessment	2.4

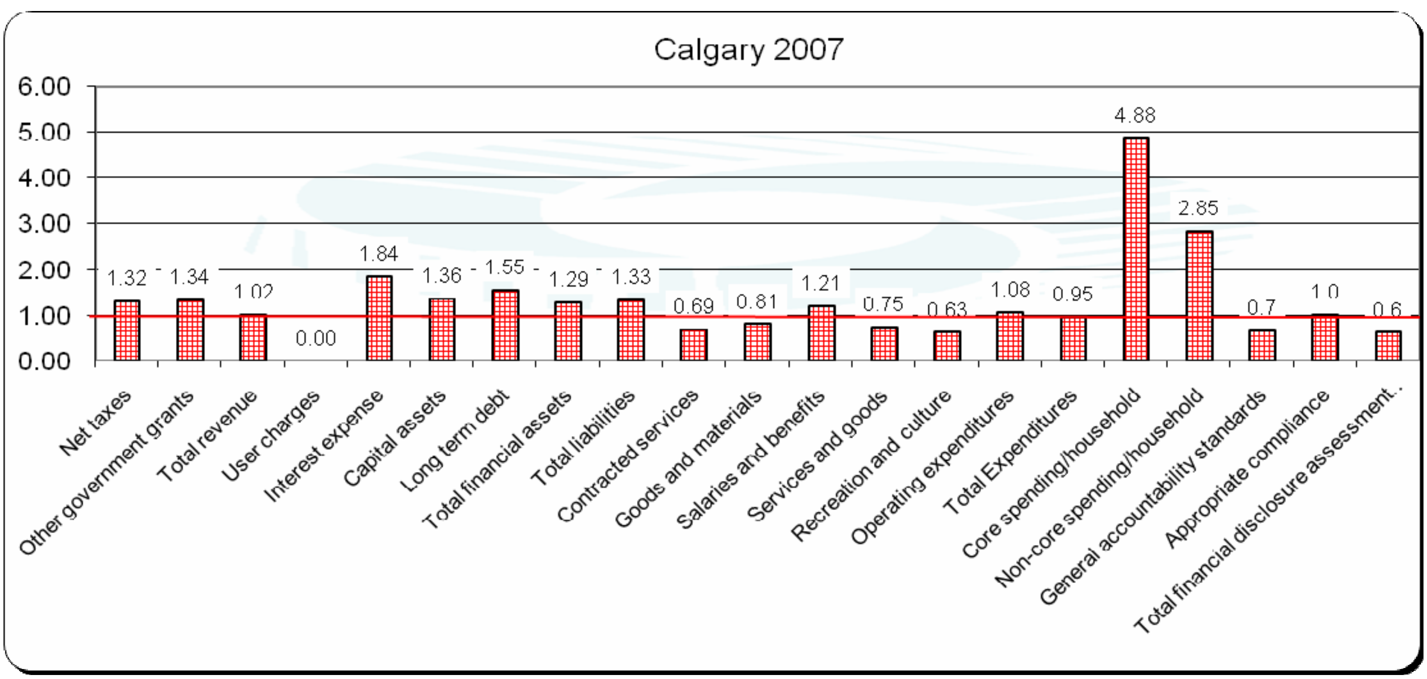
Expenditures by object (operating)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	60.9%
	2007	62.2%
Contracted services/household	2006	10.9%
	2007	11.3%
Goods and materials/household	2006	12.2%
	2007	12.7%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	23.1%
	2007	24.0%
Interest expense/household	2006	5.5%
	2007	5.3%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	7.4%
	2007	5.4%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	34.4%
	2007	37.1%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	65.6%
	2007	62.9%
General government expenditure	2006	7.9%
	2007	7.0%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	17.7%
	2007	17.7%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	8.0%
	2007	8.6%
Core expenditure/household	2006	74.1%
	2007	75.2%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	27.8%
	2007	27.6%

Type of reporting assessment used: 5-factor Comment: A very high standard with useful and copious additional information.



Edmonton

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$13,295
	2007	$14,431
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 4,027
	2007	$ 5,117
Capital assets/household	2006	$ 6,200
	2007	$ 7,394
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 1,731
	2007	$ 2,414
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$ 7,136
	2007	$ 7,533

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 6,927
	2007	$ 7,120
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 2,705
	2007	$ 2,175
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 614
	2007	$ 1,290
User charges/household	2006	$ 1,691
	2007	$ 1,489
Development contributions/ household	2006	$ 364
	2007	$ 313

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	3.4
Appropriate compliance	2.3
Total financial disclosure assessment	2.2

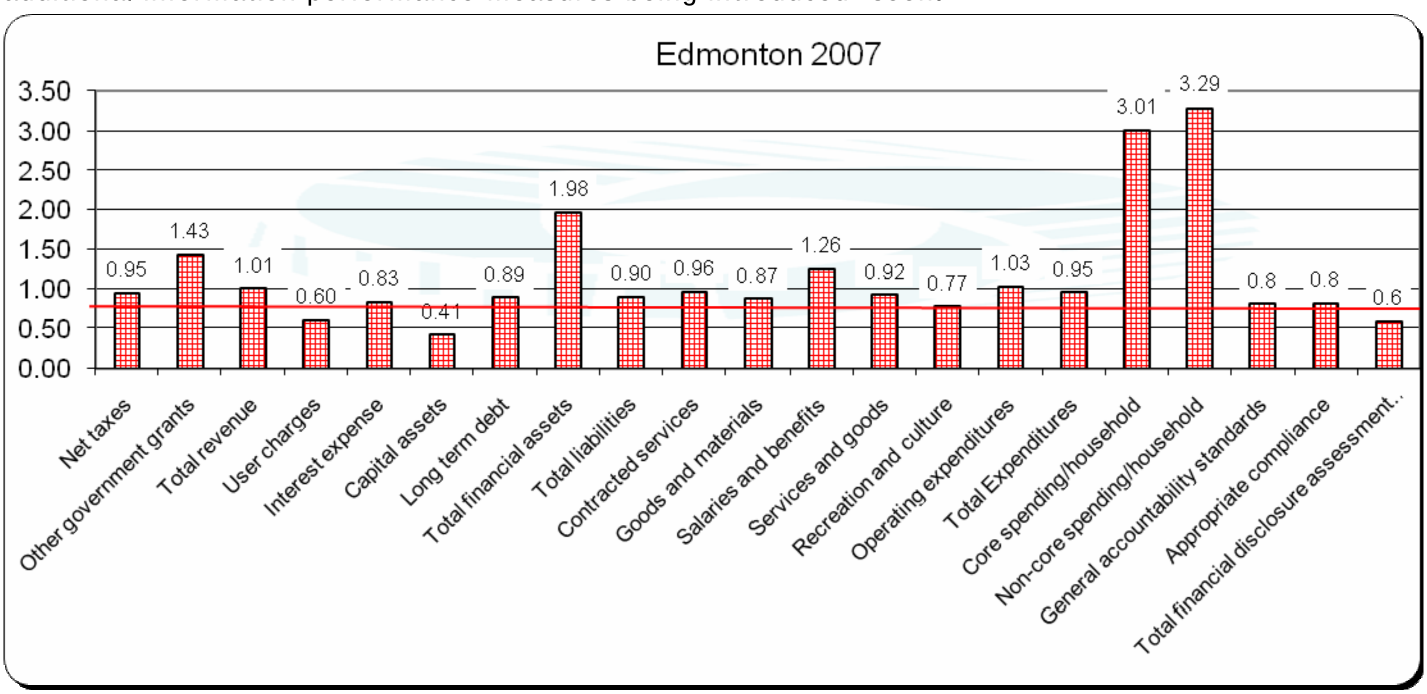
Expenditures by object (operating)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	63.7%
	2007	64.7%
Contracted services/household	2006	17.4%
	2007	15.8%
Goods and materials/household	2006	11.9%
	2007	13.6%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	29.2%
	2007	29.5%
Interest expense/household	2006	3.5%
	2007	2.9%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	0.0%
	2007	0.0%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	30.3%
	2007	40.3%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	69.7%
	2007	59.7%
General government expenditure	2006	4.0%
	2007	10.2%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	17.9%
	2007	17.9%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	5.2%
	2007	10.6%
Core expenditure/household	2006	61.5%
	2007	59.3%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	38.2%
	2007	40.7%

Type of reporting assessment used: 5-factor Comment: A very high standard with useful and copious additional information performance measures being introduced "soon."



Grande Prairie

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$ 6,196
	2007	$ 7,149
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 3,141
	2007	$ 4,227
Capital assets/household	2006	$19,171
	2007	$21,280
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 2,209
	2007	$ 2,273
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$ 2,272
	2007	$ 2,246

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 5,507
	2007	$ 5,840
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 2,334
	2007	$ 2,878
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 1,066
	2007	$ 906
User charges/household	2006	$ 741
	2007	$ 817
Development contributions/ household	2006	$ 225
	2007	$ 202

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	4.0
Appropriate compliance	3.4
Total financial disclosure assessment	2.8

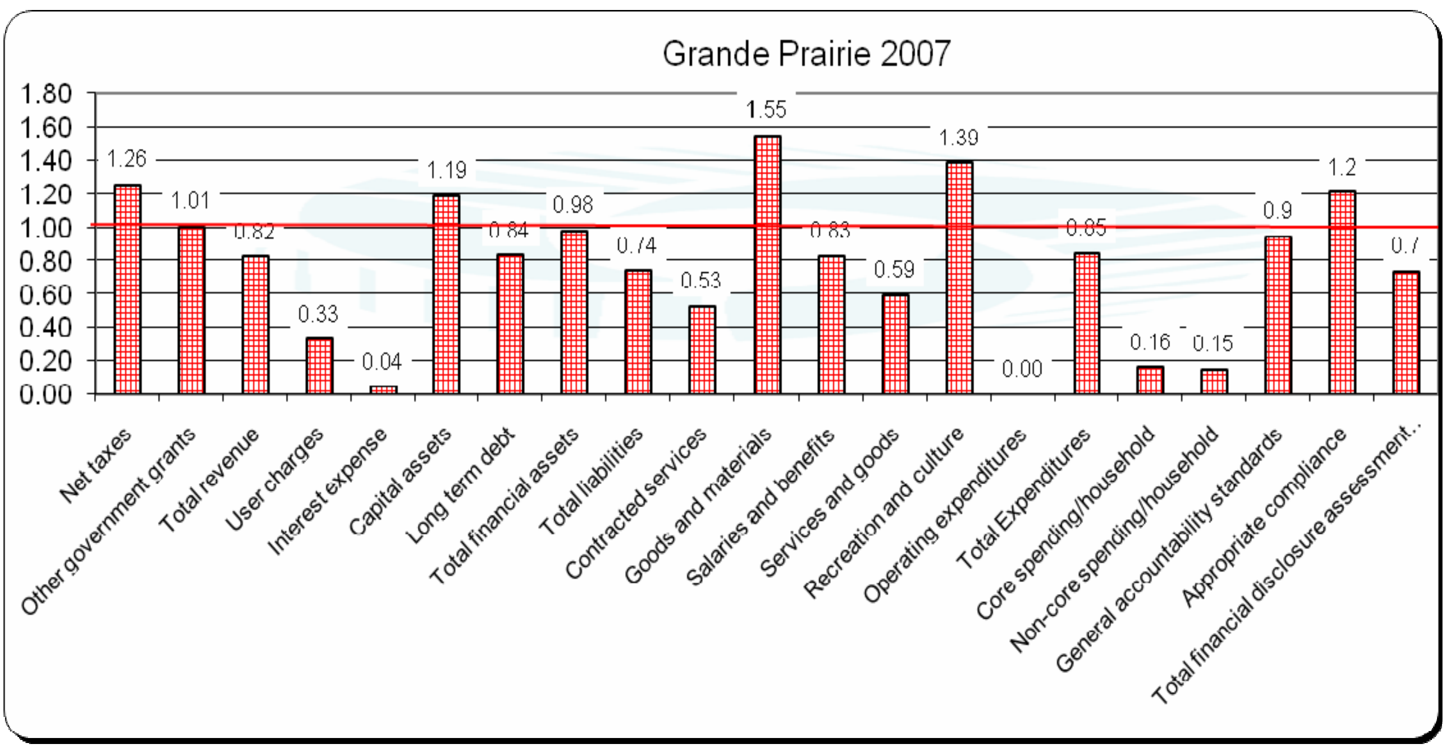
Expenditures by object (total)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	50.0%
	2007	34.0%
Contracted services/household	2006	25.9%
	2007	16.0%
Goods and materials/household	2006	3.3%
	2007	1.8%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	29.2%
	2007	0.0%
Interest expense/household	2006	4.4%
	2007	0.0%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	16.0%
	2007	9.7%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	30.8%
	2007	0.0%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	69.2%
	2007	0.0%
General government expenditure	2006	11.6%
	2007	1.0%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	20.0%
	2007	20.0%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	18.9%
	2007	21.3%
Core expenditure/household	2006	66.6%
	2007	63.1%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	54.1%
	2007	36.9%

Type of reporting assessment used:



Lethbridge

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$ 5,296
	2007	$ unknown
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 4,172
	2007	$ unknown
Capital assets/household	2006	$25,636
	2007	$ unknown
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 1,609
	2007	$ unknown
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$ 217
	2007	$ unknown

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 6,590
	2007	$ unknown
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 1,816
	2007	$ unknown
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 74
	2007	$ unknown
User charges/household	2006	$ 3,909
	2007	$ unknown
Development contributions/ household	2006	$
	2007	$ unknown

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	no data
Appropriate compliance	no data
Total financial disclosure assessment	no data

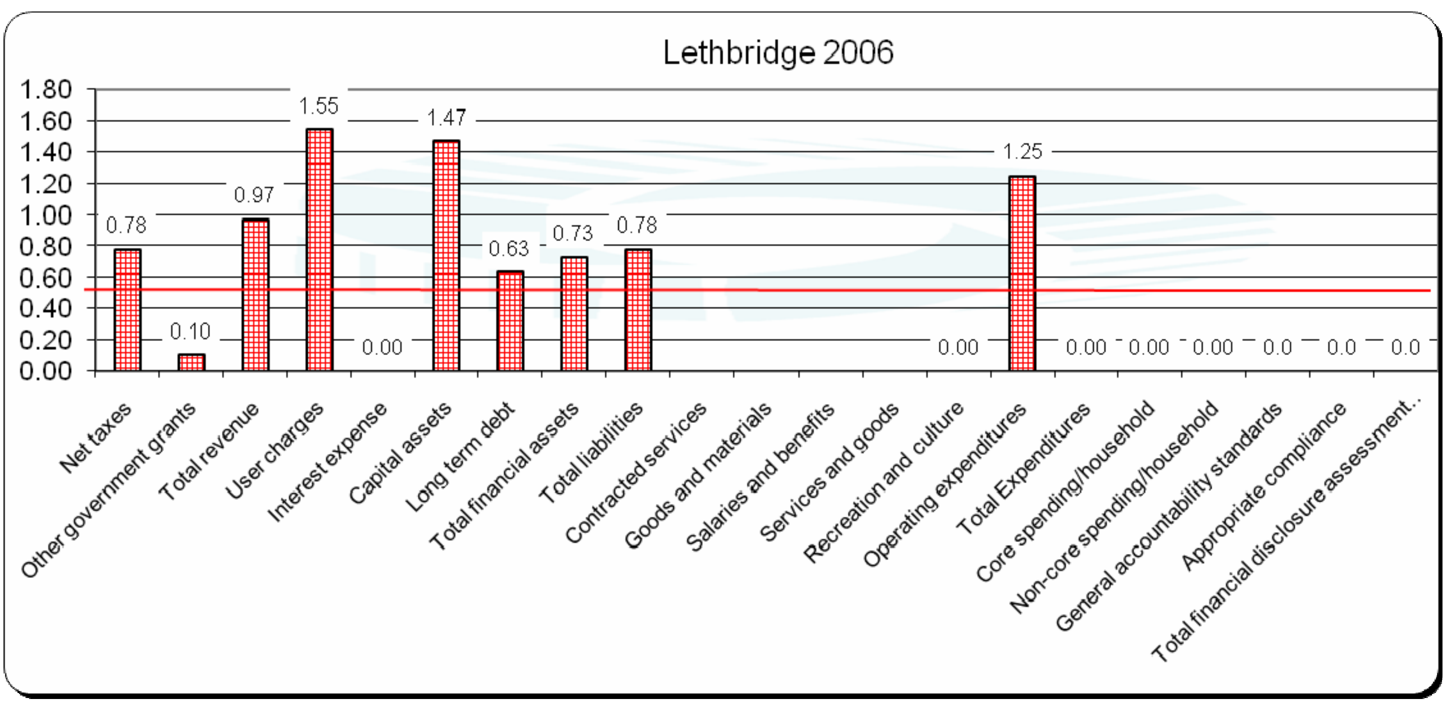
Expenditures by object (no data)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	40.6%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Contracted services/household	2006	20.2%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Goods and materials/household	2006	17.2%
	2007	0.0%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Interest expense/household	2006	1.7%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	20.2%
	2007	unknown 0.0%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	0 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
General government expenditure	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Core expenditure/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	45.7%
	2007	unknown 0.0%

Type of reporting assessment used:



Medicine Hat

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$15,016
	2007	$14,846
Liabilities/household	2006	$12,574
	2007	$14,469
Capital assets/household	2006	$38,948
	2007	$45,595
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 7,439
	2007	$11,324
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$
	2007	$

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$13,605
	2007	$16,132
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 1,189
	2007	$ 2,211
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 277
	2007	$ 1,349
User charges/household	2006	$ 9,602
	2007	$11,922
Development contributions/ household	2006	$ 102
	2007	$ 214

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	4.0
Appropriate compliance	3.2
Total financial disclosure assessment	2.7

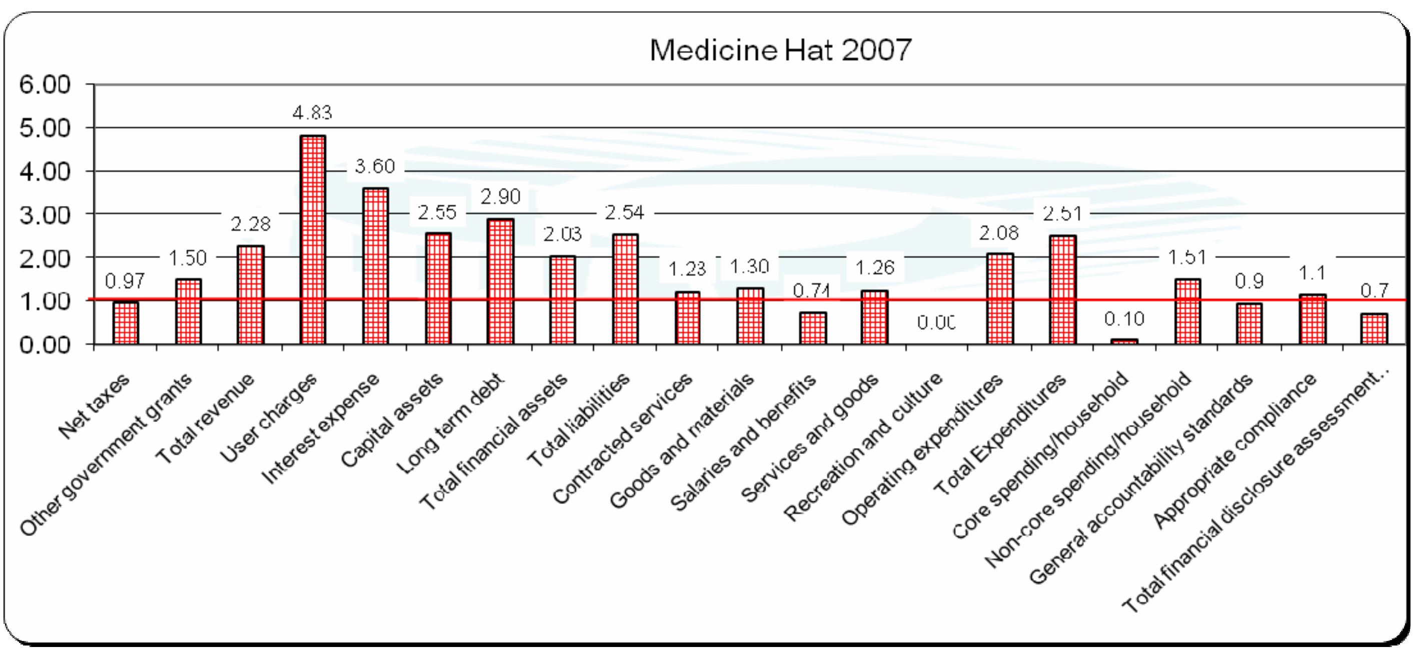
Type of reporting assessment used: 2-factor

Expenditures by object (operating)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	63.6%
	2007	38.2%
Contracted services/household	2006	26.0%
	2007	20.2%
Goods and materials/household	2006	5.1%
	2007	20.3%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	31.1%
	2007	40.5%
Interest expense/household	2006	1.5%
	2007	5.4%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	3.7%
	2007	0.0%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	40.1%
	2007	53.5%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	59.9%
	2007	46.0%
General government expenditure	2006	32.3%
	2007	28.5%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	unknownunknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Core expenditure/household	2006	19.3%
	2007	9.8%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	35.1%
	2007	90.3%



Red Deer

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$ 6,201
	2007	$ 7,222
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 3,255
	2007	$ 5,155
Capital assets/household	2006	$21,469
	2007	$24,450
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 564
	2007	$ 1,931
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$ 42
	2007	$ 59

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 5,711
	2007	$ 6,495
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 1,710
	2007	$ 1,852
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 425
	2007	$ 729
User charges/household	2006	$ 2,840
	2007	$ 1,699
Development contributions/ household	2006	$
	2007	$

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	4.0
Appropriate compliance	2.2
Total financial disclosure assessment	2.4

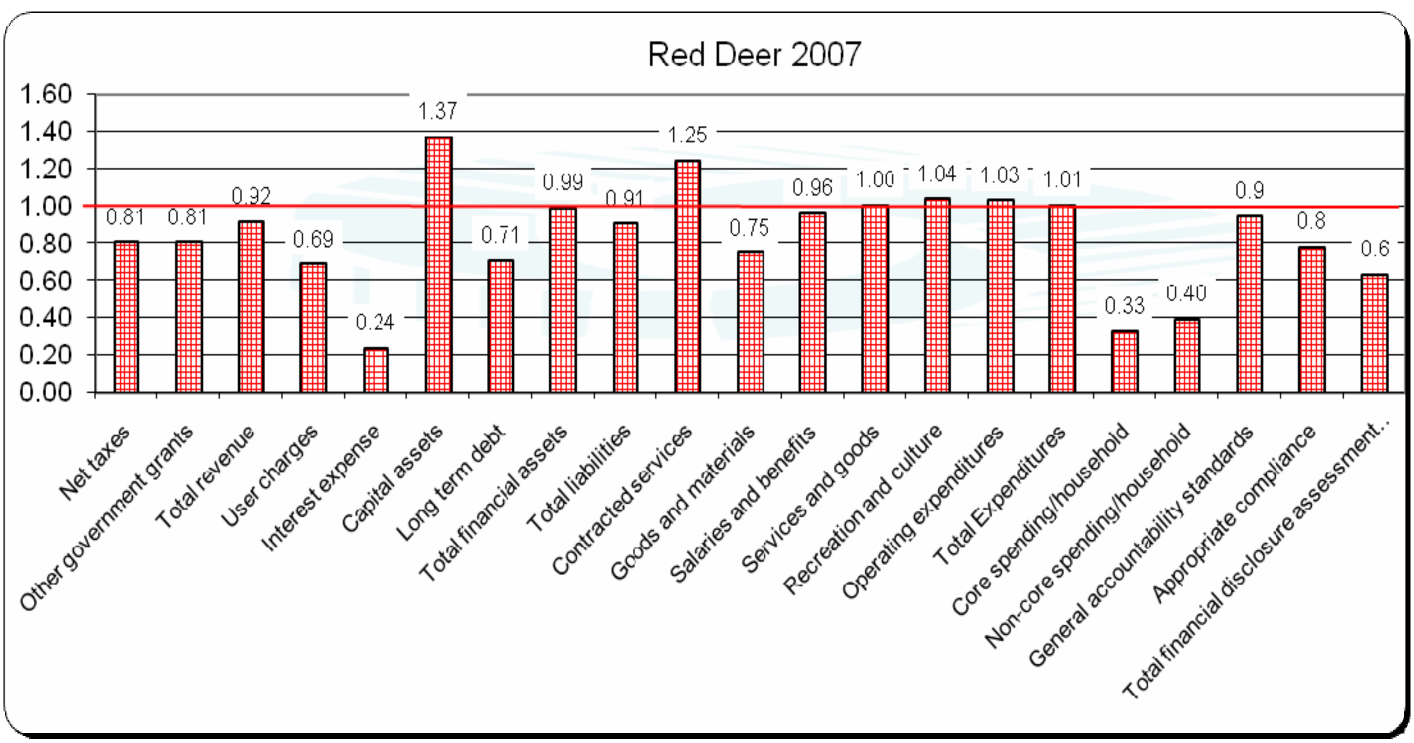
Type of reporting assessment used: 2-factor

Expenditures by object (operating)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	50.4%
	2007	49.5%
Contracted services/household	2006	21.9%
	2007	20.5%
Goods and materials/household	2006	12.2%
	2007	11.6%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	34.1%
	2007	32.1%
Interest expense/household	2006	1.5%
	2007	0.7%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	4.9%
	2007	4.3%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	28.6%
	2007	43.1%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	71.4%
	2007	56.9%
General government expenditure	2006	9.4%
	2007	7.8%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	13.9%
	2007	13.9%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	20.0%
	2007	13.4%
Core expenditure/household	2006	48.7%
	2007	56.9%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	38.8%
	2007	43.0%



Regina

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$ 1,980
	2007	$ 2,282
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 1,903
	2007	$ 2,052
Capital assets/household	2006	$
	2007	$
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 579
	2007	$ 550
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$
	2007	$ 956

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 3,863
	2007	$ 4,455
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 1,640
	2007	$ 1,601
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 416
	2007	$ 704
User charges/household	2006	$ 1,096
	2007	$ 1,228
Development contributions/ household	2006	$ 50
	2007	$ 72

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	3.4
Appropriate compliance	3.0
Total financial disclosure assessment	3.8

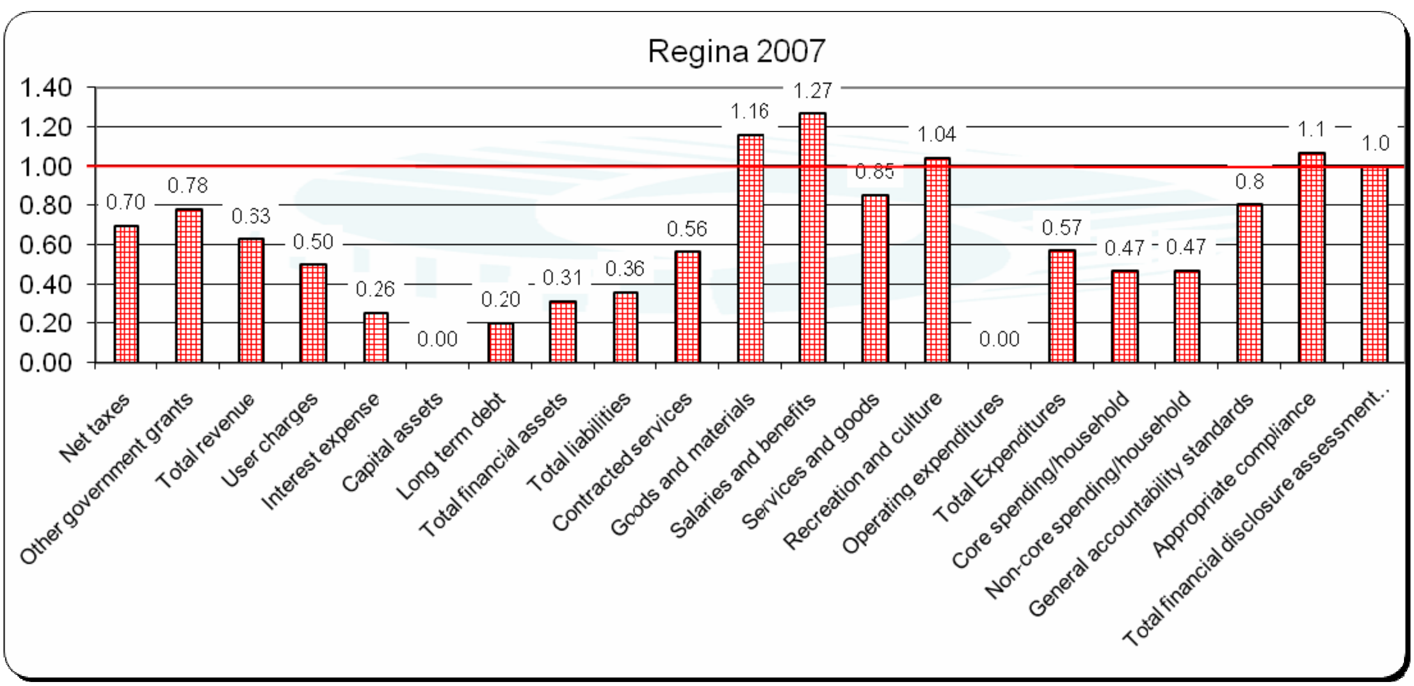
Expenditures by object (operating)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	65.9%
	2007	65.3%
Contracted services/household	2006	9.0%
	2007	9.3%
Goods and materials/household	2006	17.3%
	2007	18.0%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	26.3%
	2007	27.3%
Interest expense/household	2006	1.2%
	2007	0.9%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	1.9%
	2007	1.9%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	17.2%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	0 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
General government expenditure	2006	14.4%
	2007	13.6%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	23.3%
	2007	23.3%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	23.0%
	2007	23.8%
Core expenditure/household	2006	61.2%
	2007	61.2%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	no data 0.0%
	2007	38.8%

Type of reporting assessment used: 5-factor Comment:
A fair overall standard with some useful additional disclosures and statistics.



Saskatoon

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$ 3,933
	2007	$ 3,912
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 1,698
	2007	$ 1,698
Capital assets/household	2006	$
	2007	$
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 477
	2007	$ 477
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$
	2007	$

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 5,207
	2007	$ 6,249
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 1,305
	2007	$ 1,329
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 349
	2007	$ 562
User charges/household	2006	$ 2,291
	2007	$ 2,454
Development contributions/ household	2006	$ 620
	2007	$ 1,184

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	3.4
Appropriate compliance	1.1
Total financial disclosure assessment	3.0

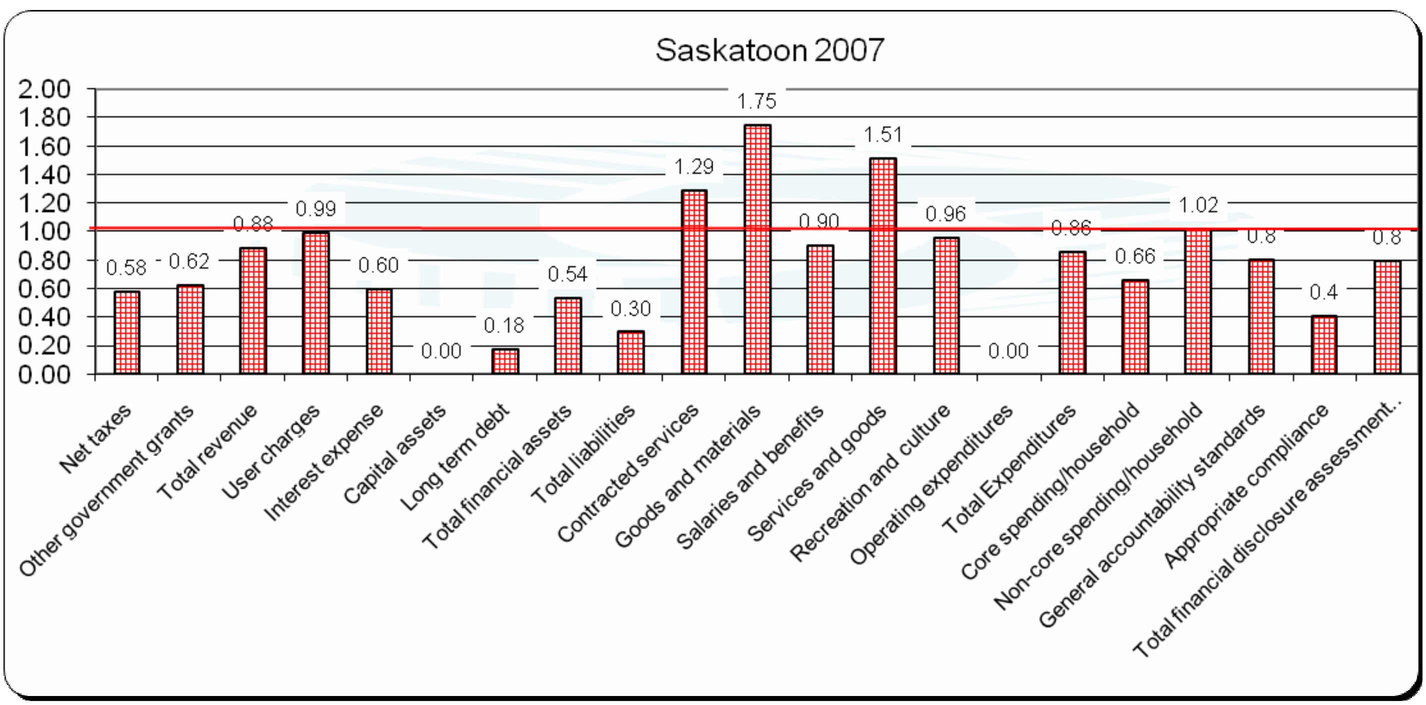
Expenditures by object (operating)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	41.5%
	2007	46.4%
Contracted services/household	2006	16.5%
	2007	21.2%
Goods and materials/household	2006	21.3%
	2007	27.3%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	37.8%
	2007	48.4%
Interest expense/household	2006	0.9%
	2007	2.2%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	1.2%
	2007	1.5%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	31.4%
	2007	36.5%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	68.6%
	2007	0.0%
General government expenditure	2006	4.7%
	2007	4.4%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	17.1%
	2007	17.1%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	14.5%
	2007	14.5%
Core expenditure/household	2006	54.4%
	2007	50.9%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	45.0%
	2007	49.1%

Type of reporting assessment used: 5-factor Comment: A high standard with useful additional information.



St Albert

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$ 2,277
	2007	$ 3,385
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 3,762
	2007	$ 5,693
Capital assets/household	2006	$17,923
	2007	$20,468
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 2,223
	2007	$ 3,262
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$
	2007	$

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 5,724
	2007	$ 6,304
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 3,489
	2007	$ 2,707
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 1,251
	2007	$ 1,206
User charges/household	2006	$ 1,339
	2007	$ 1,600
Development contributions/ household	2006	$ 140
	2007	$ 147

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	7.0
Appropriate compliance	7.0
Total financial disclosure assessment	5.0

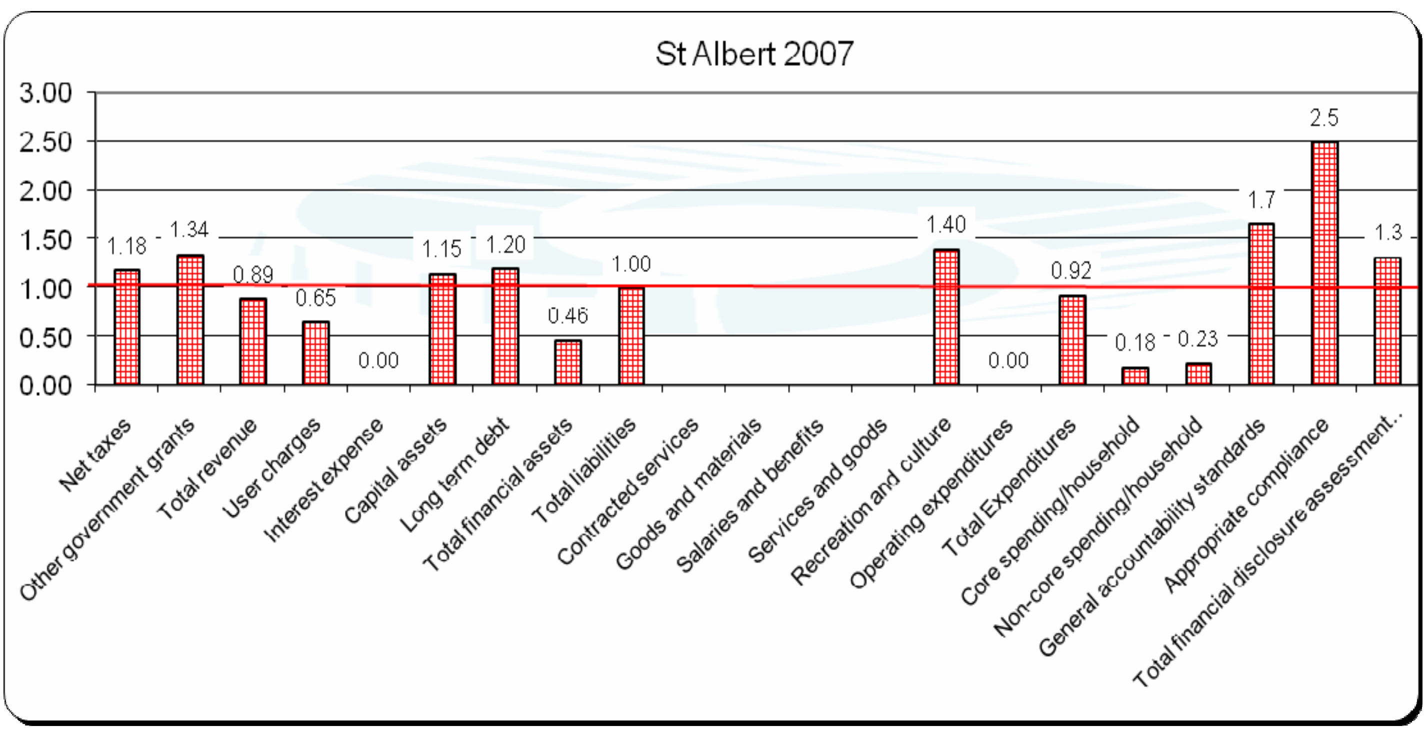
Type of reporting assessment used: 2-factor

Expenditures by object (no data)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Contracted services/household	2006	38.5%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Goods and materials/household	2006	24.5%
	2007	0 0.0%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	63.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Interest expense/household	2006	3.9%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	2.9%
	2007	unknown 0.0%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	45.2%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	54.8%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
General government expenditure	2006	6.9%
	2007	7.0%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	16.0%
	2007	16.0%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	31.0%
	2007	19.7%
Core expenditure/household	2006	43.2%
	2007	55.9%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	54.0%
	2007	44.1%



Winnipeg

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$ 3,294
	2007	$ 3,188
Liabilities/household	2006	$ 3,028
	2007	$ 2,994
Capital assets/household	2006	$13,613
	2007	$14,382
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 1,660
	2007	$ 1,474
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$ 82
	2007	$ 1,051

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$ 3,941
	2007	$ 4,076
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 1,506
	2007	$ 1,510
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 565
	2007	$ 435
User charges/household	2006	$ 1,323
	2007	$ 1,414 unknown
Development contributions/ household	2006	$
	2007	$

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	4.6
Appropriate compliance	4.9
Total financial disclosure assessment	3.7

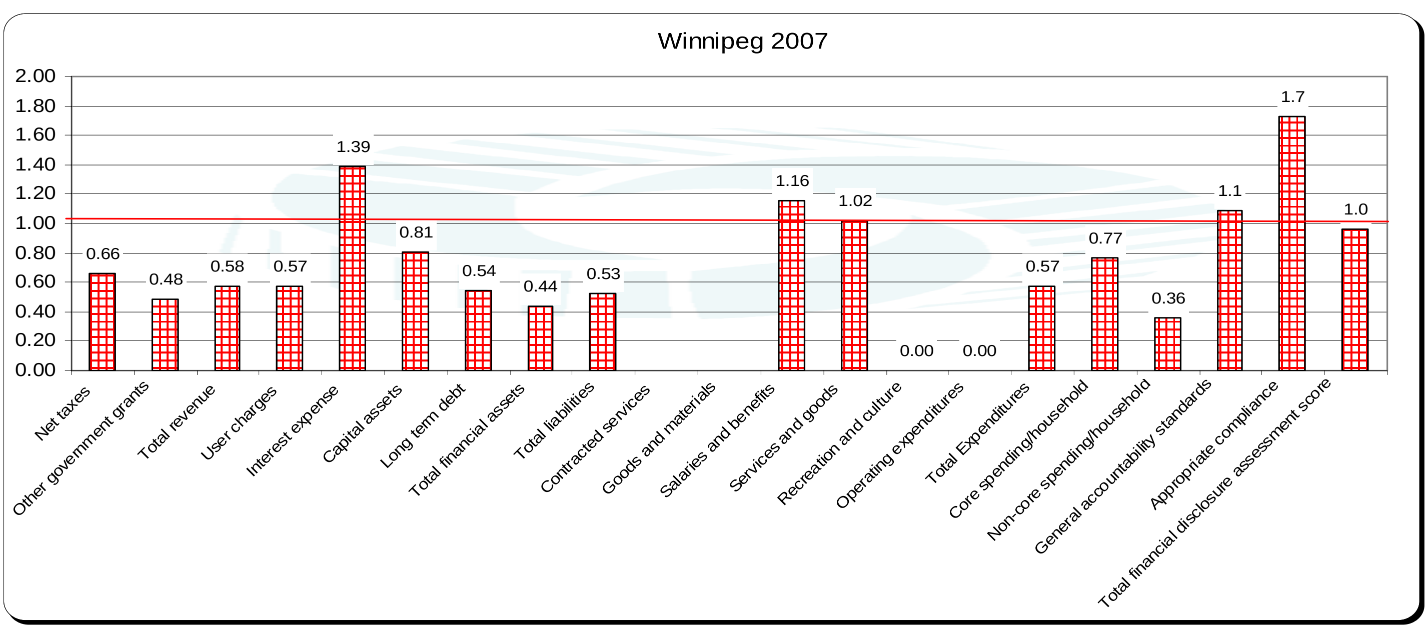
Expenditures by object (operating)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	61.8%
	2007	59.9%
Contracted services/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Goods and materials/household	2006	0.0%
	2007	0 0.0%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	31.6%
	2007	32.3%
Interest expense/household	2006	5.3%
	2007	5.2%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	1.3%
	2007	2.5%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	0 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
General government expenditure	2006	10.7%
	2007	8.7%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	32.6%
	2007	32.6%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Core expenditure/household	2006	63.3%
	2007	65.4%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	57.7%
	2007	34.6%

Type of reporting assessment used: 5-factor Comment: A barely satisfactory standard of reporting with significant compliance omissions plus a possibly misleading presentation given the failure to disclose municipal position and the resultant full liabilities total, excludes future amounts owing.



Wood Buffalo

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to City Reports

Financial position

Financial assets/household	2006	$15,590
	2007	$ unknown
Liabilities/household	2006	$14,290
	2007	$ unknown
Capital assets/household	2006	$25,817
	2007	$ unknown
Long-term debt/household	2006	$ 9,722
	2007	$ unknown
Investment in subsidiaries/household	2006	$ 1,525
	2007	$ unknown

Revenue

Total revenue/household	2006	$11,554
	2007	$ unknown
Net taxes/household	2006	$ 5,680
	2007	$ unknown
Other government grants/household	2006	$ 1,759
	2007	$ unknown
User charges/household	2006	$ 1,079
	2007	$ unknown
Development contributions/ household	2006	$ 790
	2007	$ unknown

Reporting standards judged out of 7

General accountability standards	no data
Appropriate compliance	no data
Total financial disclosure assessment	no data

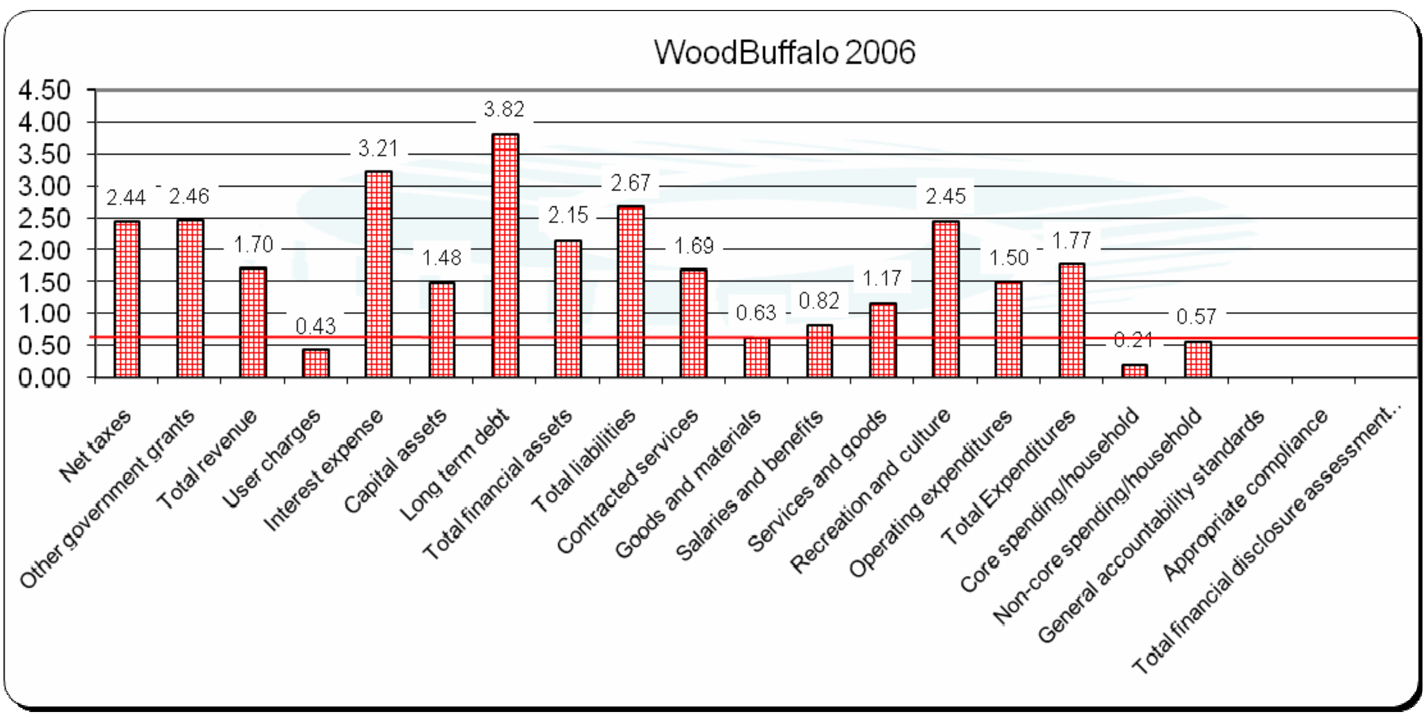
Expenditures by object (no data)

Salaries and benefits/household	2006	42.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Contracted services/household	2006	27.8%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Goods and materials/household	2006	9.8%
	2007	0 0.0%
Goods and services combined/household	2006	37.6%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Interest expense/household	2006	5.8%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Grants to other organizations/household	2006	6.3%
	2007	unknown 0.0%

Expenditures by function

Percentage capital expenditure/household	2006	53.2%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Percentage operating expenditure/household	2006	46.8%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
General government expenditure	2006	6.6%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Protection services expenditure/household	2006	unknown 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Recreation and culture expenditure/household	2006	17.9%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Core expenditure/household	2006	34.8%
	2007	unknown 0.0%
Non-core expenditure/household	2006	no data 0.0%
	2007	unknown 0.0%

Type of reporting assessment used:



LGPI Public Financial Disclosure Assessments

Introduction to the assessment framework

In this, the second year of the LGPI project, an expanded evaluation process was used for assessing the quality, completeness and accuracy of the 2007 public financial disclosures of the 66 Canadian municipalities surveyed.

The assessment process used is more objective this year. Only three of the 14 selected assessment measures involve the use of judgments, and these are only applied to the larger city assessments. The remaining tests are derived from observed and recorded (compliance-based) assessment criteria.

Selection of a compliance-based approach is appropriate in the current Canadian context for it acknowledges the fact that in Canada public sector accounting and other reporting is conducted in compliance with (and denotes an adherence to) a *form over substance* emphasis.

Canadian municipal reporting is presently characterized by its legalistic form. Other jurisdictions have advanced beyond this to more of a mixture of both form and substance. Form *and* substance reporting arises from the inclusion of expanded financial and non-financial often performance-related information. It invariably involves the use of judgments, the exercise of which tend toward achieving improvements of both the quality and intelligibility of the finished product.

Canadian municipal reporting has not, by world standards, advanced very far. The outgrowth of purely financially based and legally compliant public reporting into its expanded role of triple bottom line financial and non-financial performance measurement has yet to arrive in Canada.

Adherence by local government to codes of practice (*the "forms")* is mandated from two sources. A significant part of the compliance directives are set by provincial legislation as well as at the behest of the public sector accounting standard setters.

To make the required fair and balanced LGPI assessments within the Canadian public sector financial reporting environment, and given the existing emphasis upon compliance standards rather than upon a wider (*substance over form*) framework, the scope and focus of this report is toward assessments made principally on a compliance basis.

Two groups for assessment

The assessments of this section are set out to cover two separate groupings of municipalities:

- The first group, (**Group I**), numbers 44 municipalities. They comprise the largest Canadian cities when measured by population numbers of over 150,000. The accounting treatments, disclosures and accounting practices of this group have been analyzed for compliance and in greater detail for matters of judgment relating to best practice. The group includes mostly the same set of municipalities that were assessed in the first year of the LGPI project. Their assessment this time includes a discovery of discernible improvement trends (if any) over the course of the three years surveyed. Note: the December 31, 2005, financial statements were reviewed last year (2007, Year 1 of the LGPI). This year, both 2006 and 2007 financial statements are reviewed.

- The second group, (**Group II**), of smaller Canadian cities totals 44. They are derived from the expanded scope of this year's LGPI to include if possible a total of the top 100 cities. The second group has been analyzed with the same criteria used for the larger city group but with the emphasis on compliance issues alone.

- While we intended at the outset to select the top 100, this has not been achieved as only a total of 66 municipalities were able to provide adequate data. Adequacy for our purposes meant that we were able to acquire, either from the municipal web site or through direct enquiry, a set of 2007 audited financial statements in English.

A caveat relating to variable provincial reporting and other "local" requirements

There exist certain distinctive, provincially mandated local government accounting standards and practices with which affected municipalities are bound to comply. The scrutiny and assessments of the LGPI project and this report have excluded any detailed consideration of these. Fortunately, these provincial directives are the exception rather than the rule for all but a few of the critically important compliance standards that have been assessed and which are set at the national level.

Missing data and the resulting non-assessments

As mentioned above, this year's project was broadened to include the largest 100 Canadian cities according to population numbers. In collecting data for the project, municipal web site-based financial statements and other supplementary information were sought.

Questionnaires to elicit further information were sent to all 100 municipalities but only four replies were received. Apart from the use of this questionnaire, with reply numbers proving to be disappointing, the project team adopted the position that the data that would be used should be confined to that which is readily available to the public.
After all, it is these taxpaying stakeholders, as users of the information, who are entitled to excellent accountability relating to "their" finances. They are the people to whom the account preparers address the annual (financial and other related) reports. This information needs to be readily accessible. We found major gaps in these important accountabilities.

Our data is incomplete for a number of reasons, some of which have serious implications and uncover a lack of public accountability in local governments.

To summarize: Our coverage arising from the data gathering described achieved the following results:

- A group of 24 large municipalities provided adequate financial statements and comprised the majority of the group of 29 units surveyed in the 2007 LGPI project;

- Five municipalities from this group failed to provide adequate data (for the reasons detailed below) and were therefore not able to be fully assessed. Unfortunately, they have not been assessed this year;

- A group of 44 smaller municipalities provided data that was sufficient for a compliance-based assessment;

- Many of the remaining councils, including the five larger ones referred to (above), failed for the following reasons to provide information capable of useful assessment:

- French Canadian municipalities (apart from Montreal) failed to provide adequate and complete information translated into English. While the 2007 project spent considerable time and effort translating French reports, this year, we took the view that this should be unnecessary. We look forward to receiving English versions. In passing, it can be observed that many of these largely Quebec-based entities received very poor assessments in 2007.
- Following strenuous efforts to obtain audited financial statements from the balance of our sample (a group of about 25 smaller English-speaking units and some French-speaking), we were unsuccessful in these endeavors. Late completion of account preparation or audits or both were often given as explanations, although our enquiries continued up until mid-October 2008, nine months after the balance date.
- A small number of municipalities did not respond to any of our numerous attempts to acquire the desired information. None of these municipalities provided explanations for this stance. The Halifax Regional Municipality, whose balance date is March 31, could not supply its statements in time for our assessment.

Our attempts to conduct our project using complete data have consequently been adversely affected by these difficulties. A 66 per cent response rate, though adequate for gaining averages for this study, is plainly unsatisfactory for local residents and must improve.

Preliminary observations as to the adequacy of the data and the standards of reporting

Although there are some (a small minority) municipalities in Canada that reach good standards of reporting, none currently achieve best practice when judged on an international scale. Reasons and evidence for this are reported in detail elsewhere but can be summarized as follows:

- the low questionnaire response rate,
- the significant unavailability of public accountability information,
- other matters including the patchy audit coverage referred to later in this report, and
- both non-demanding national accounting-standard setters and provincial municipality legislation.

The bar is set too low.

The sector shows ample evidence of settling for accountability and performance reporting standards that in many parts of the world were discarded over 20 years ago. Included in this category are the current advances of Canadian accounting standard setting that will result in only a partial accruals basis of municipal accounting being achieved. The flawed tangible-asset-accounting standard proposed for next year is a clear example of this malaise.

Municipal audit performance

The five generally accepted measurement criteria of performance include timeliness and quality. For the purposes of this report, price, quantity and location will be ignored in order to concentrate on the first two factors.

In assessing audit performance, only one of the five verifiable performance measures (that of timeliness) was recorded within our survey and indicated an overall good result. Completion and sign-off of the audit opinion within 120 days of the balance date was deemed timely.

Of the 66 municipalities surveyed, only seven (11 per cent) failed to meet this timeliness objective for their 2007 reports. This is an improvement upon results observed last year (covering the 2005 reports).

Of those municipalities that failed to provide financial statements for our review, many (of the remaining top 100) advised that their accounts and/or their audits were still incomplete.

In this context, no *detailed* evaluation of matters relating to the *quality* of municipal audits was possible nor was it undertaken. Readers of this report are left to judge these issues from the limited evidence that is advanced. The implications to audit quality of the following observations and comments arise from any comparisons that might be made of Canadian audit practice when compared to other jurisdictions. For example, the use made (or not) of appropriate audit resources to adequately promote and monitor improved municipal performance.

To the extent that the following matters affect audit quality, the following observations can be made:

- Most municipalities, particularly the larger units, employ internal auditors. Many have also established their own audit committees. Municipal internal auditors appear to be preoccupied with the prevention and detection of fraud and verification and compliance matters. There is little evidence of the use of internal audit personnel or the appointment of a performance auditor to conduct performance-improvement programs. This is hardly surprising, as the sector shows little performance improvement culture.
- No doubt consultancy contracts are raised from time to time to investigate matters pertaining to performance. This does not constitute hard evidence of a continuing determination to embed a performance-based culture, as these initiatives by their nature are more reactive and less habitual.
- External audits are conducted mainly by two large CA firms. There is some evidence of provincial reviews of their work, a practice that is more common in other jurisdictions. In general, the external auditors employed conduct their audits without this type of supervision. A significant level of interest, control and involvement by other government audit entities is fully justified, because of the use by municipalities of higher government funding (provincial and federal transfers and subsidies).
- All audit procedures, irrespective of the size of the municipality, are conducted in accordance with Canadian public sector auditing standards. Smaller municipalities generally engage local CAs to conduct their audits. The quality of some of their public accounts suggests that lower standards are accepted by auditors. Smaller city audit practice is not the subject of higher government review. It is instead left to the accounting profession to monitor and use sanctions over its members. It is not known to what degree these sanctions, if any, are in use.
- Some evidence of these lower audit standards is revealed given the relatively large number of municipal financial statements that were unavailable for our review. In other cases, the financial reports of some other units exhibited deficiencies.

- There were a small number of financial statements (leaving aside those that were unavailable) that were not published on a web site or in an acceptable form. In addition to the fact that public stakeholders are denied access to their basic accountability documents, some of the unsatisfactory financial statements nevertheless bore the signature and the unqualified audit opinion of an auditor.
- Municipal audits are compliance based in nature, as this is all that is demanded of them. There is little or no observable audit coverage, nor is there a responsibility for issues of improved municipal performance at every level including financial administration, management and audit process. This prevailing performance-related deficiency by itself may be contributing to the generally low audit standards.
- Only two of the 66 municipalities surveyed received qualified audit opinions for their 2007 annual reports. This is surprising, as there were many instances observed where (even merely for compliance disclosure matters) a great variability of disclosure and application of standards of financial reporting were apparently accepted without further (audit) comment or actions.
- If the bar for municipal financial accounting and reporting has been set too low across Canada, this is also true of municipal auditing standards. With apologies to the good ones — those municipalities and practitioners who do a good job (of which there are some) — based on the evidence reviewed, the audits of Canadian municipalities are not given the importance they deserve. The result is an overall low standard.

Assessment scale used for disclosure and financial reporting standards

Given the reported deficiencies and the quality of audit and accounting practice currently in force and inherent in the Canadian municipal accounting regime, a relatively undemanding scale of assessment of Canadian practice has been used. This is intended to take some account of the shortfall of current standards that remain well below those acceptable in other jurisdictions.

A 7-point scale is used for the 14 characteristics set as assessment criteria and include

- **1: Excellent:** when judged against international public sector accounting reporting best practice. This includes both financial and non-financial performance measurements. Note: it was *not* anticipated that this standard would be achieved by any Canadian municipality.
- **2 to 3: Good:** when judged by Canadian municipal public sector standards and practice, though currently exhibiting little if any evidence of non-financial performance measurement.
- **3 to 4: Acceptable to average**: barely acceptable when judged within the undemanding context of Canadian standards.
- **6 to 7: Poor to unsatisfactory:** an overall unacceptable standard reached for a variety of reasons including omissions and errors that could materially affect the required true and fair view of the financial statements.

On this scale, the LGPI Canadian scores range from a possible high of 2 to a low of 7.
The scoring of the smaller (Group II) municipalities is less complicated (see below).

Assessments

The following table sets out the criteria for disclosure and financial reporting standards assessments along with their details and comments. A chart detailing the scores achieved by each group follows. This section concludes with the findings from this analysis.

Group I of 24 large Canadian Cities Assessments

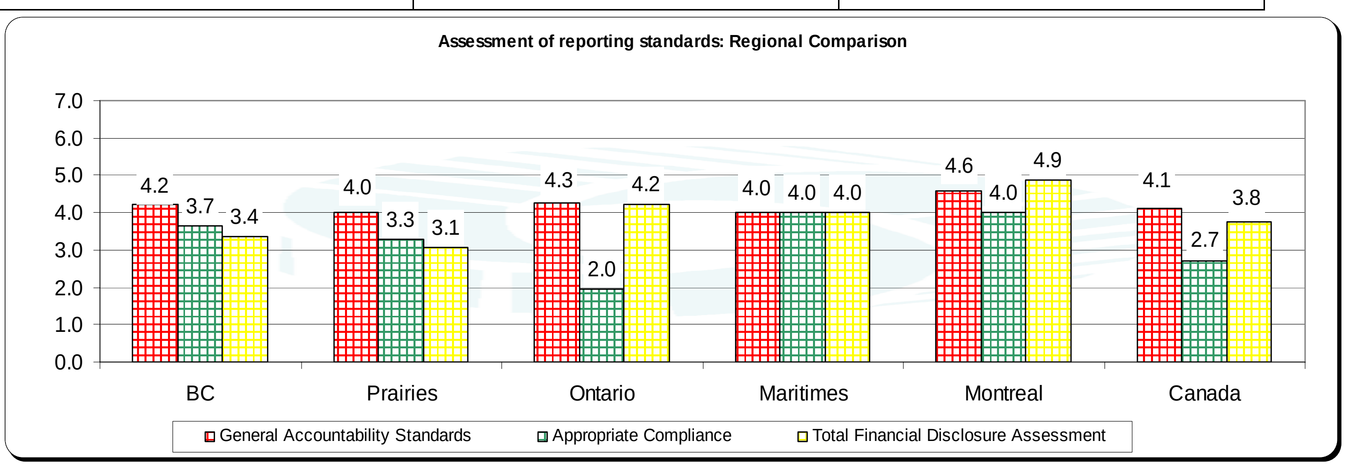
Assessment Criteria	Details of actual assessment	Comments
General accountability standards Five tests of performance relating to non-accounting matters ... non-weighted, three compliance based, with one judgment		
Frontier LGPI questionnaire ... sent to all 100 municipalities and returned completed	Only four completed questionnaires were received. Information requested concentrated upon gaining an understanding of the separate provincial contexts in which municipalities operate, e.g., their compliance codes. In addition, this process could be used to validate our preliminary findings; for example, to confirm the accuracy of our assessments such as involvement in improvement programs, etc.	This very low response rate will no doubt be judged from differing standpoints. *Frontier* will persist in the use of this approach in the interests of obtaining the information necessary to interpret existing local (provincial) and national standards. Without a level of better co-operation, the inference is that of a general unwillingness to raise the standards that *Frontier* has attempted to encourage.
Completeness and Timeliness of audit All audit processes completed to sign-off, audit opinions unqualified and signed off/published within 120 days of balance date.	All audits of this group were completed and unqualified audit opinions issued. There were seven cases where municipalities failed to meet reasonable timeliness completion timetables.	Legislation in other countries specifies the 120-day test. Failure to observe such timetables can indicate poor administration (or worse) of accounting and audit procedures.

Assessment Criteria	Details of actual assessment	Comments
Receipt of an accounting award.	Ten members of this group reported receiving an award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). No other (international) awards for financial reporting were found by our survey.	Commendable though receipt of these awards appears to be, they are distributed quite freely. In some cases, recipients report that they have received theirs for 10 consecutive years.
* Receipt of award but inconsistent with standards achieved.	Of the group members who received awards, there were no occurrences of substandard reporting	The GFOA award status appears to be consistent with good reporting.
Evidence of a municipality embarking or currently involved in a performance improvement program, business excellence or similar scheme.	There was no evidence that any municipality in Canada was, by April 2008, involved in such programs	Many councils/municipalities in other jurisdictions are undertaking extensive internationally recognized improvement programs, including for example, the *Baldridge Award* process.
Added disclosure accountability standards Two tests of disclosure matters where their inclusion suggests progress with improved accountability. Non-weighted, one (early) compliance based, with one judgment * exercised.		
* Inclusion of useful supplementary financial, non-financial and other related information.	Only four (17 per cent) of the group failed to include (to varying degrees of quality and completeness) additional useful explanatory information. This is an area where some improvement (since 2005) has been observed. Many municipalities are including extensive additional useful information in their annual reports. These include financial highlights, statistical summaries, economic data, etc.	**This progress is very encouraging,** as it can often be a first step to a more comprehensive reporting of municipal performance, both of financial and non-financial measures.

Assessment Criteria	Details of actual assessment	Comments
Accounting (on the Statement of Financial Position … balance sheet) for physical-tangible assets. This is an early adoption of parts of the new standard.	Eight (33 per cent) members of this group (one partially) have elected to disclose their tangible assets. The Canadian public accounting-standard setters, the PSAB and the CICA, have set 2009 as the date for the adoption of a new standard involving the recording and valuation of municipal assets. Many councils have elected to commence this process early.	Another **encouraging sign of recent progress** that indicates a willingness to embrace new concepts and to move closer to the adoption of more acceptable accruals-based accounting treatments.
Appropriate compliance based indicators of good or indifferent accountability standards Seven tests of disclosure matters largely of a mandated compliance nature where their inclusion suggests adherence to accepted financial reporting practice. Non-weighted, with five compliance based, with two judgments * exercised.		These criteria were chosen (from an extensive list) for their perceived ability to indicate good practice by at least Canadian standard compliance levels. Any departures from these standards would be treated as breakdowns in both accounting and audit standards.
Separate disclosure within the detailed category of municipal Expenditures by Object for operating and capital expenditures.	Eleven (46 per cent) of this group appropriately reported a breakout of capital and operating expenditures at this category level.	Non-compliance leads to a diminution of accountability and a possible breach of local standards

Assessment Criteria	Details of actual assessment	Comments
Complete disclosure within the detailed category of Amounts to be Recovered in Future.	Eighteen (75 per cent) of this group appropriately reported a complete total of the components (including long-term debt and pension fund liabilities) within this category level.	Non-compliance here has more serious possible consequences than just accountability issues. In certain circumstances, a failure to correctly and completely report this total could result in a misleading balance sheet statement of (net) Municipal Position.
Complete disclosure within the detailed category of Wages and Salaries for Expenditures by Object.	Nine (37 per cent) of this group appropriately reported a complete total of the components within this category level.	Non-compliance leads to a diminution of accountability and a possible breach of local standards.
Complete disclosure within the detailed category of Pension Fund Liabilities.	Twenty-two (92 per cent)of this group appropriately reported a complete total of the components within this category level	Non-compliance leads to a diminution of accountability and a possible breach of local standards. Note that there are issues with the standard of reporting pension fund liabilities as regards their completeness.
Separate disclosure within the correct categories of operating and capital expenditures.	Eighteen (75 per cent)of this group appropriately reported separate totals for the split of capital and operating expenditures.	A failure to correctly and consistently distinguish operating from capital expenditure can lead to serious issues of (lack of) comparability and performance assessment within a municipality's statement of financial performance Note that one instance was observed where a change was made and this was not adequately noted.

Assessment Criteria	Details of actual assessment	Comments
*<u>Overall assessment</u> of good or indifferent disclosures. For example, presentation issues such as a detailed breakdown and notes supporting an analysis of municipal revenues, etc. To varying (judged and assessed standards) Two (8 per cent) municipalities received a poor assessment	• Twelve (50 per cent) municipalities received an average/acceptable assessment • Nine (37 per cent) municipalities received a good assessment • One (4 per cent) municipality, (Ottawa) received an excellent assessment	This is an encouraging result. It is **an improvement** from the first year of the project when only five (16 per cent) units scored assessments of average or above. This year, 10 scored such assessments (44 per cent).
<u>*Evidence of serious errors and/or omissions</u>	There were four observed occurrences of financial reporting that <u>could</u> involve serious errors and/or omissions. Without further analysis, it is difficult to tell from the public record if this is the case. At the very least, the stakeholders require further explanations.	Without more detailed information and an audit of these issues, they remain unresolved. One example involved the apparent shift of operating expenditure to capital without adequate reasons given and with no change in this accounting policy disclosed.
Combined Public Financial Disclosure Assessment The total score for all three aggregated test categories.	Separate section (below) refers	



The results of the compliance review for this group were as follows:

Assessment Criteria (for combined tests … of compliance only)	**Details of actual assessment**	**Comments**
General accountability standards	• Five (12 per cent) were poor to unsatisfactory • Thirty-nine (89 per cent) were satisfactory	In this first year of assessment for this group of smaller municipalities, the evidence for making this appraisal is thin.
Added disclosure accountability standards (confined to the recording of tangible assets)	A total of 16 (36 per cent) of the 44 municipalities met this test.	This is encouraging progress in meeting early (some of) the 2009 tangible-asset standard requirements.
Appropriate compliance based indicators of good or indifferent accountability standards	• Five or 11 per cent scored 2 and over • Fifteen or 34 per cent scored 3 and over • Twenty-four or 55 per cent scored 4 and over	A better result arising as much from the system of scoring used and is probably more favourable than is warranted.
Combined Public Financial Disclosure Assessment total score for all three aggregated test categories	• Five or 11 per cent scored 2 and over • Seventeen or 39 per cent scored 3 and over • Twelve or 27 per cent scored 4 and over • Ten or 23 per cent scored 5 and over	A normal/bell-shaped curve showing an acceptable average level of compliance with Canadian accountability standards.

This group of 44 municipalities, larger in number than the other, comprises smaller (measured by population numbers) units of local government.

As stated, the assessment of these was conducted solely on a compliance basis. No judgments such as those used for first group of larger councils have been undertaken for the following reasons.

The smaller councils (with some notable exceptions) report their finances in a wholly compliant fashion, eschewing extended reportage of their performance or any inclusion of additional information or, in some cases, they do not bother at all.

As anticipated, the basis of assessment chosen has proved to be less demanding than that used for the larger group. For this reason, the scoring between the two (large and small) groups is NOT comparable. The septile scale used tends to overstate (artificially improve) the scores of the smaller municipalities, likely by at least one septile step. Note: The compliance assessments used for the small city group are exactly those (without the denoted judgments) that were used to assess the larger city group.