



Halifax Water Study

— Final Report —

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Ipsos  **Reid**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Background and Objectives*

Halifax Harbour is polluted by approximately 100 million litres per day of untreated water, both sanitary and storm wastewater¹. In an effort to address this problem, Halifax Regional Council has approved the Halifax Harbour Solutions project, a \$315 million undertaking over a 10-year period designed to eliminate the flow of raw sewage and other contaminants into the Halifax Harbour, with a four treatment plant concept plan.

In order to assess public attitudes towards the private operation of new wastewater treatment facilities, a survey of the Halifax population was commissioned by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). The research also assessed public attitudes towards the privatization of wastewater treatment services in general.

1.2. *Methodology*

Ipsos-Reid conducted 400 interviews with Halifax residents aged 18 and older between July 30th and August 8th, 2001. The data was statistically weighted to ensure that the sample's age and gender composition reflects that of the actual Halifax population according to 2000 Census data. Respondents were randomly selected using the "next birthday" method.

With a sample of 400 respondents, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results are within ± 4.9 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult population in Halifax been polled.

¹ Source: Halifax Regional Municipality website (<http://www.region.halifax.ns.ca/harboursol/>)

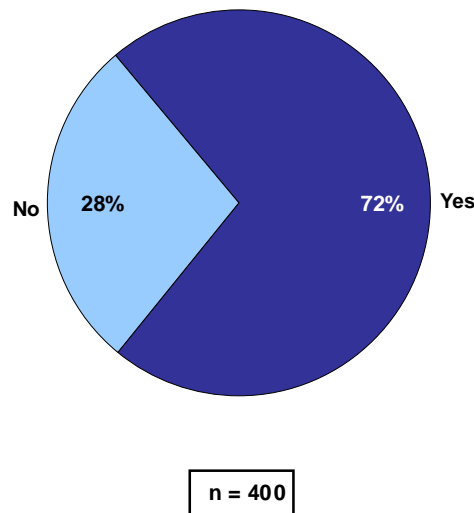
2.0 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

2.1. Awareness of Halifax Harbour Cleanup Project

News of the Halifax Harbour Cleanup Project has permeated the minds of Halifax residents. Seven-in-ten (72%) recall having “read, seen or heard” something about the plans to build new wastewater treatment facilities.

Awareness of Plans to Build New Wastewater Treatment Facilities

“First of all, have you read, seen or heard anything recently about the Halifax Harbour Cleanup Project involving plans to build new wastewater treatment facilities in Halifax?”



Older residents (55 years and older) are more likely than those in the youngest age category (18 to 34 years) to report they are aware of the plans (84% vs. 63%). Meanwhile, lower income residents (less than \$30,000) are less likely than their counterparts (\$30,000 or greater) to be aware (58% vs. 76%).

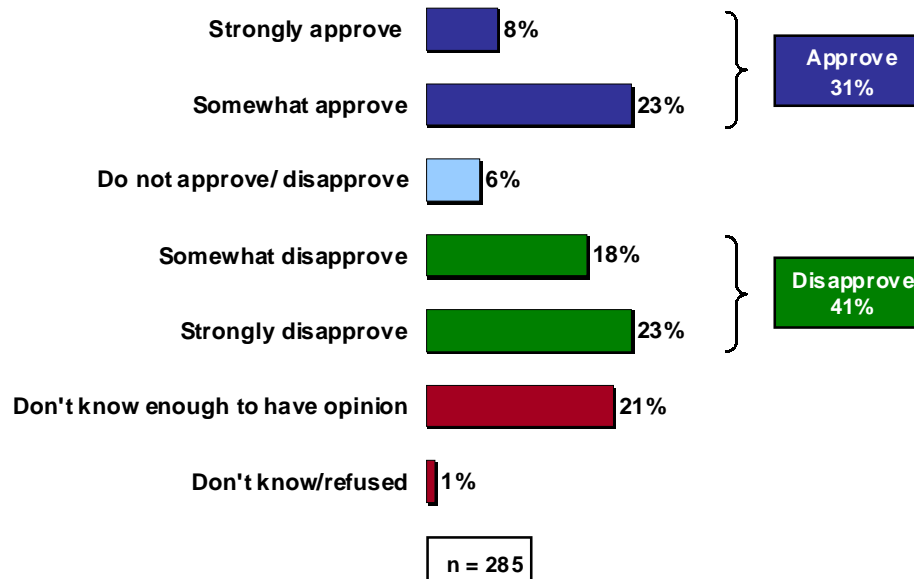
2.2. Approval of Halifax Mayor's and Council's Handling of Plans

Residents who are aware of the Halifax Harbour Cleanup Project report mixed opinions on how the Halifax Mayor and Council have handled the plans so far to build new wastewater treatment facilities. Four-in-ten (41%) residents disapprove, including 23 percent saying they strongly disapprove. However, just under a third (31%) approve of how officials have handled plans so far (8% strongly approve). Six percent say they neither approve nor disapprove and two-in-ten (21%) residents say they do not know enough about the project to have an opinion.

Approval of Halifax Mayor's and Council's Handling of Plans to Build Facilities

- Among Those Aware of Halifax Harbour Cleanup Project -

"And, generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the Halifax Mayor and Council have handled plans so far to build new wastewater treatment facilities?"



Approval of the performance of the Mayor and Council is highest among older residents (45% of those 55 years and older vs. 23% of those between 18 and 34 years).

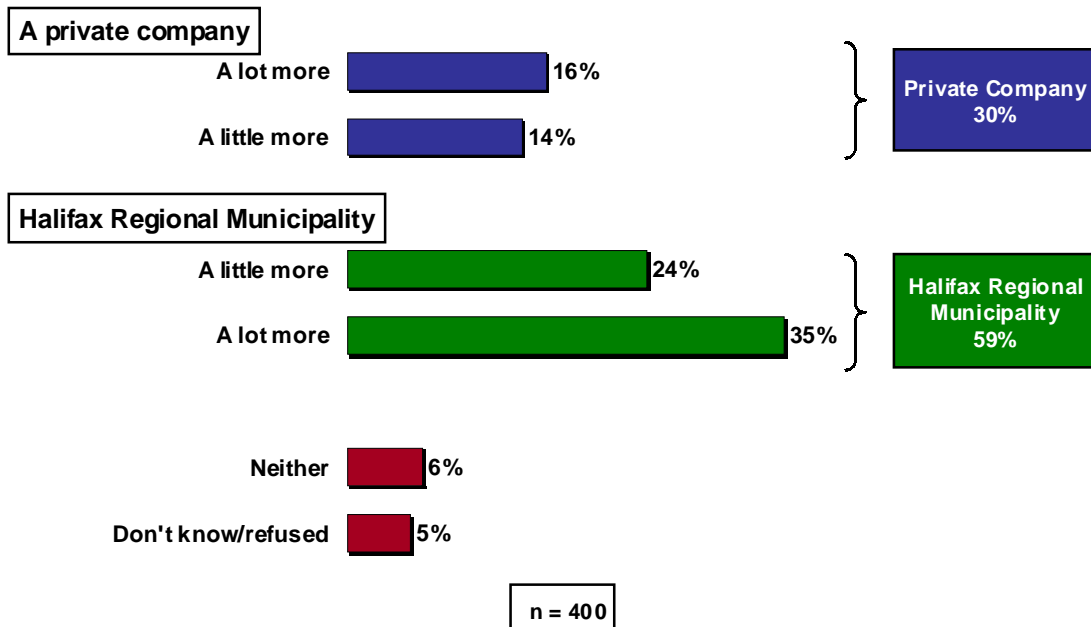
2.3. Water Treatment in Halifax

Safe Wastewater Treatment

Twice as many residents say they put more trust in the Halifax Regional Municipality to provide safe wastewater treatment in Halifax as those that say they put more trust in a private company. Six-in-ten (59%) report their trust lies more with the municipality with over a third (35%) specifying they trust it “a lot more” than a private company. Comparatively, three-in-ten (30%) residents say they put more trust in a private company to provide safe wastewater treatment, with half of those (16%) reporting they trust a private company “a lot more” than the municipality. Six percent of residents trust neither the Halifax Regional Municipality nor a private company in this regard.

Trust in Providing Safe Wastewater Treatment

“Who would you trust more when it comes to providing safe wastewater treatment in Halifax, a private company or the Halifax Regional Municipality?”



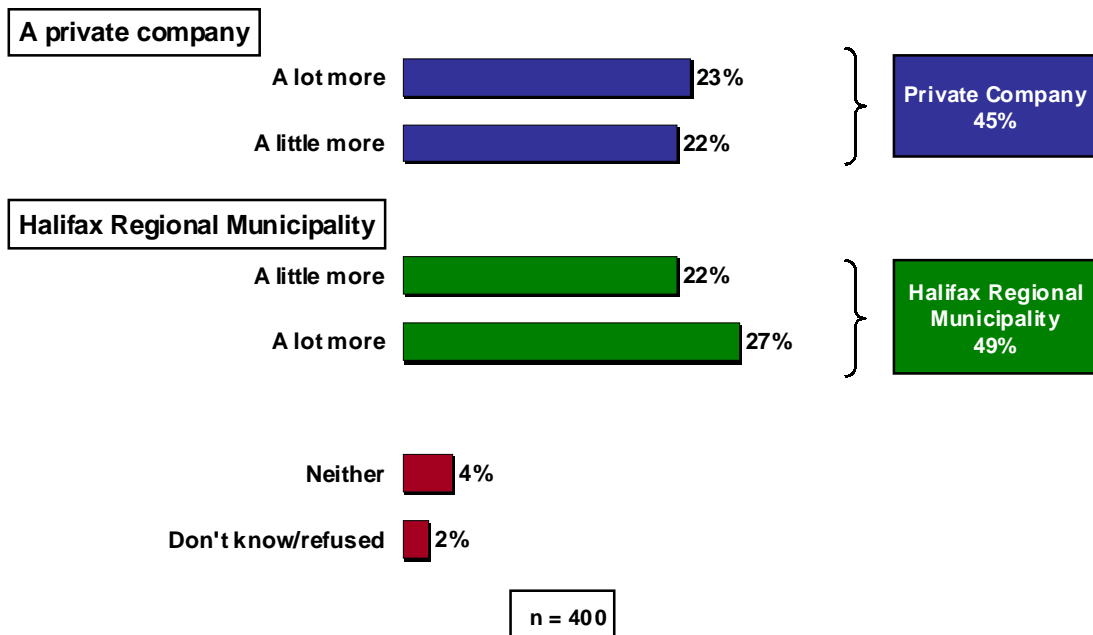
Older residents are the most likely to put more trust in the Halifax Regional Municipality (75% vs. 56% of those between 18 and 54 years).

Most Cost-effective Wastewater Treatment

With regard to the provision of the most cost-effective wastewater treatment, the Halifax public is a little more divided in their opinions. One-half (49%) of residents report they put more trust in the Halifax Regional Municipality to provide the most cost-effective wastewater treatment, with over a quarter (27%) specifying that they trust it “a lot more.” Nearly as many (45%) residents put more trust in a private company to provide the most cost-effective wastewater treatment, including 23 percent who trust a private company “a lot more.”

Trust in Providing Most Cost-effective Wastewater Treatment

“And, who would you trust more when it comes to providing the most cost-effective wastewater treatment in Halifax, a private company or the Halifax Regional Municipality?”



Again, older residents are the most likely to put more trust in the Halifax Regional Municipality (67% vs. 44% of those between 18 and 54 years).

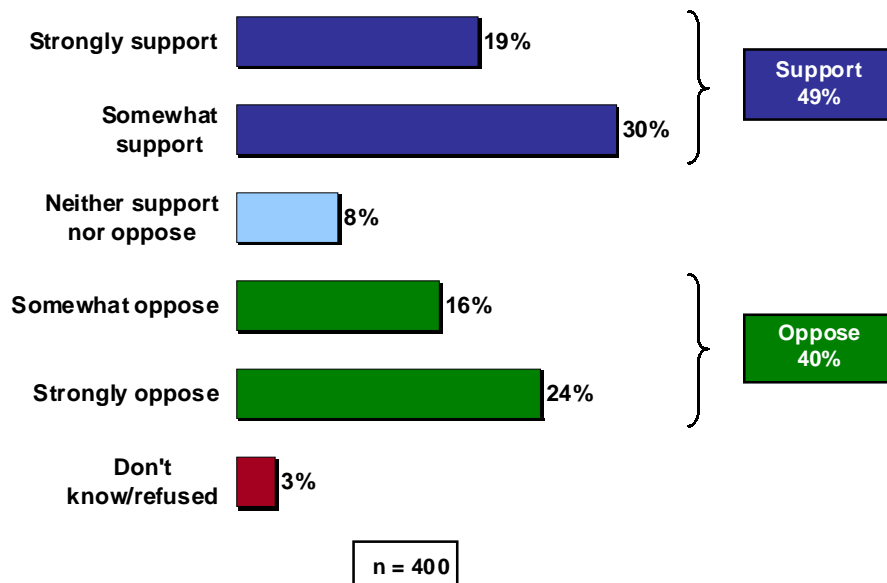
2.4. Privatization of Wastewater Services

Support for/Opposition to Privatization

Halifax residents are also divided on their opinions of privatization of wastewater services. One-half (49%) of residents say they support privatization, however, it appears to be fairly lukewarm support as only 19 percent say they “strongly support” it. Meanwhile, four-in-ten (40%) report they are opposed to the privatization of wastewater services, including 24 percent in strong opposition. Fewer than one-in-ten (8%) say they neither support nor oppose privatization.

Support for / Opposition to Privatization of Wastewater Services

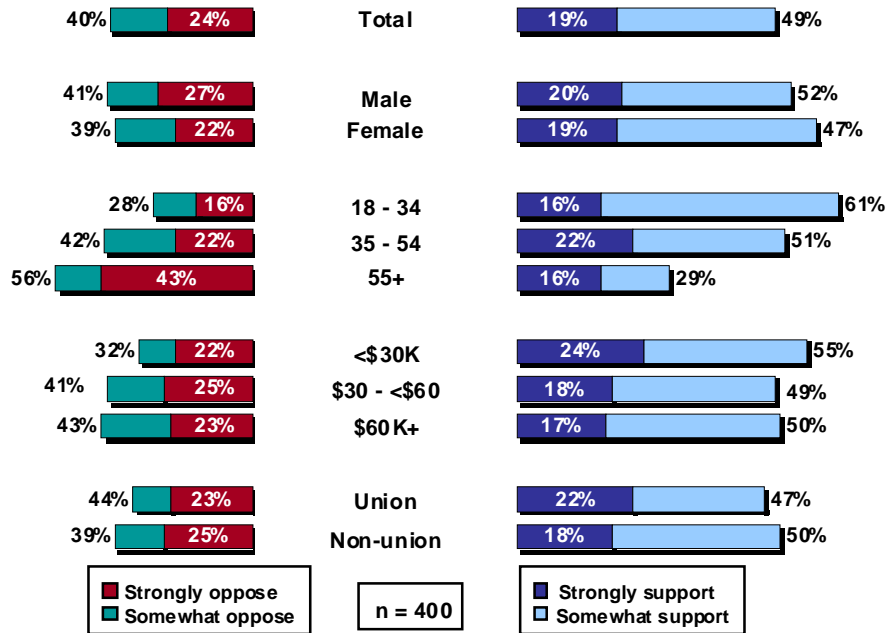
“On the whole, would you say that you support or oppose the privatization of wastewater service in Halifax? (Original wording: On the whole, would you say that you support or oppose the privatization of wastewater services, including the Halifax Harbour Cleanup?)”



Age is the only demographic that reveals differentiation in opinions among Halifax residents. Younger residents are the most supportive of privatization (61% support vs. 28% oppose), while older residents are the most opposed (56% oppose vs. 29% support).

Support for / Opposition to Privatization of Wastewater Services

“On the whole, would you say that you support or oppose the privatization of wastewater service in Halifax? (Original wording: On the whole, would you say that you support or oppose the privatization of wastewater services, including the Halifax Harbour Cleanup?)”



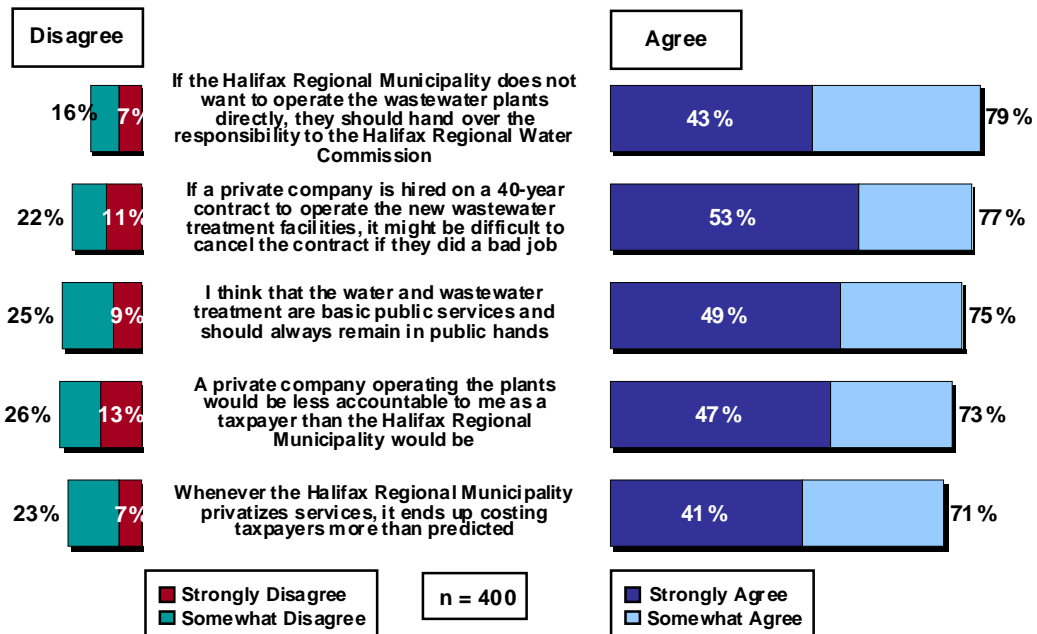
Attitudes Towards Privatization

Halifax residents were also asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements related to the Halifax Harbour Cleanup and privatization of wastewater services. Women are generally more receptive than men to arguments against privatization. Similarly, older residents are somewhat more receptive than younger residents to anti-privatization arguments. It is interesting to note that we see no differences by household union status or by household income.

The chart below shows the statements that achieved agreement of more than seven-in-ten respondents.

Attitudes Towards Privatization

"I am now going to read you some things that other people have said about water services. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each statement"



The most-agreed with statement is "If the Halifax Regional Municipality does not want to operate the wastewater plants directly, they should hand over the responsibility to the Halifax Regional Water Commission, with eight-in-ten (79%) residents in agreement (43% agree strongly). Women (85% vs. 73% of men) are more likely to agree with this statement.

Further evidence of a concern about a private company's independence in operating the wastewater plants is the fact that just over three-quarters (77%) agree with, "If a private company is hired on a 40-year contract to operate the new wastewater treatment facilities, it might be difficult to cancel the contract if they did a bad job," with over half of all respondents (53%) agreeing strongly. Again, women (84% vs. 69% of men) are more likely to agree with this statement.

The majority of residents concur with the statement, "I think that the water and wastewater treatment are basic public services and should always remain in public hands," with three-quarters (75%) agreeing and one-half (49%) agreeing strongly. There are no significant differences in opinion among the demographic subgroups.

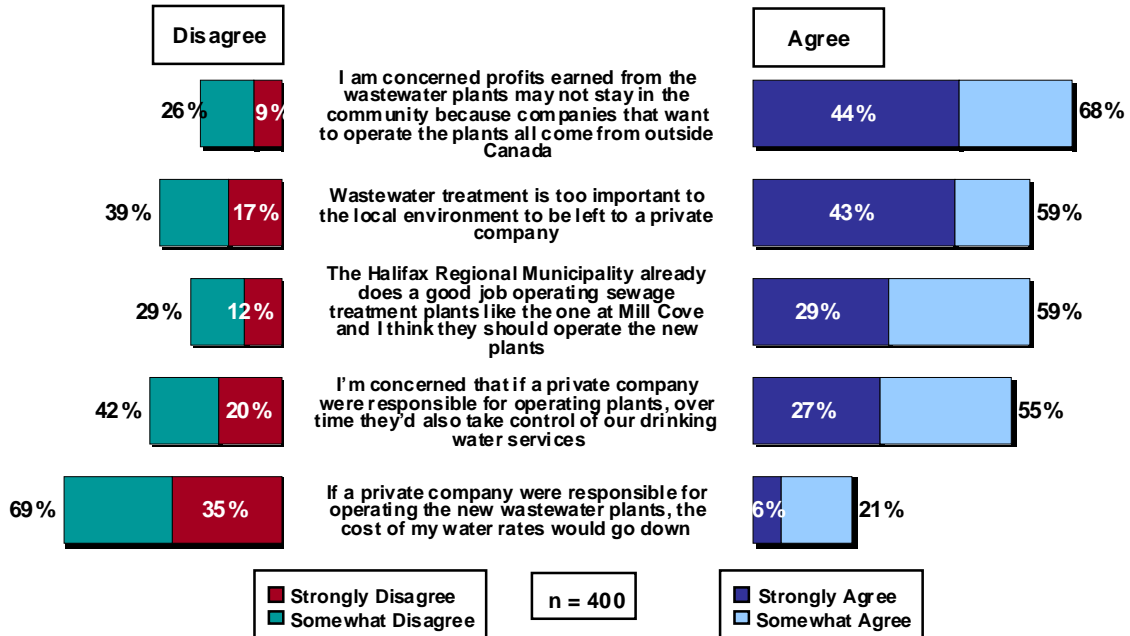
While residents are concerned about the independence of a private company in operating a wastewater plant, they are also concerned about that company's accountability. Just under three-quarters (73%) agree with the statement, "A private company operating the plants would be less accountable to me as a taxpayer than the Halifax Regional Municipality would be," with just under one-half (47%) agreeing strongly. Women (78% vs. 68% of men) are more likely to agree with this statement.

While it is a less of a concern than the previously mentioned statements, most residents worry about the financial consequences of privatization. Seven-in-ten (71%) agree with the statement, "Whenever the Halifax Regional Municipality privatizes services, it ends up costing taxpayers more than predicted," with four-in-ten (41%) agreeing strongly. There are no significant differences in opinion among the demographic subgroups.

The chart below shows the statements that achieved agreement of fewer than seven-in-ten respondents.

Attitudes Towards Privatization

"I am now going to read you some things that other people have said about water services. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each statement"



Concerns about financial issues and specifically about returning profits to the community are also evident as over two-thirds (68%) of residents agree with the statement, "I am concerned profits earned from the wastewater plants may not stay in the community because companies that want to operate the plants all come from outside Canada," with over four-in-ten (44%) agreeing strongly. Women (73% vs. 63% of men) are more likely to agree with this statement.

Most residents communicate concern for the environment with six-in-ten (59%) agreeing with the statement, "Wastewater treatment is too important to the local environment to be left to a private company" (43% strongly agree). Older residents (78% vs. 54% of those between 18 and 54 years) are more likely to agree with this statement.

The majority of residents are satisfied with the job that the municipality is doing on current wastewater treatment projects with six-in-ten (59%) agreeing with the statement, “The Halifax Regional Municipality already does a good job operating sewage treatment plants like the one at Mill Cove and I think they should operate the new plants” (29% strongly agree). Older residents (75% vs. 54% of those between 18 and 54 years) tend to be more likely to agree with this statement.

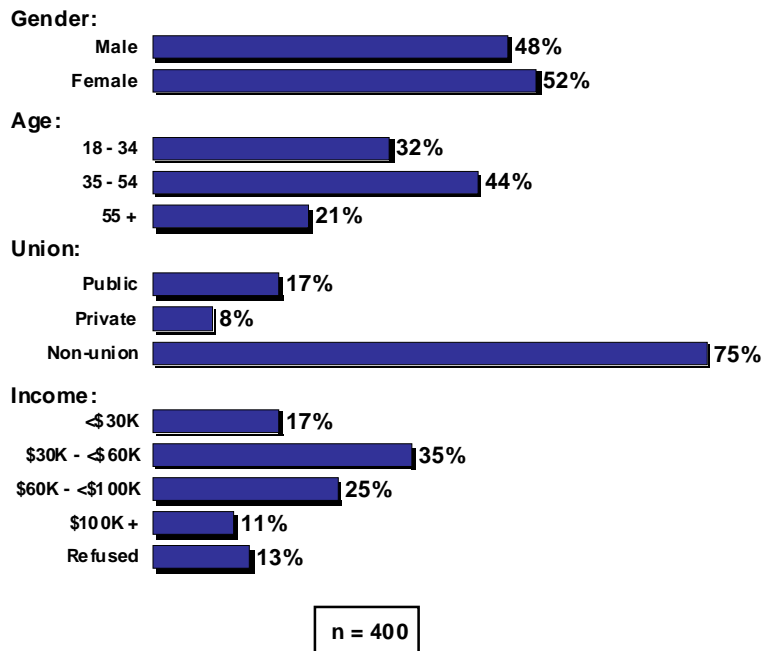
Just over half (55%) of residents agree with the statement, “I’m concerned that if a private company were responsible for operating plants, over time they’d also take control of our drinking water services,” with over a quarter (27%) agreeing strongly. Women (61% vs. 49% of men) are more likely to agree with this statement.

Halifax residents are not optimistic that privatization will lower their water rates. The statement, “If a private company were responsible for operating the new wastewater plants, the cost of my water rates would go down,” receives the lowest level of agreement from residents with two-in-ten (21%) agreeing and six percent strongly agreeing. Younger residents (33% vs. 15% of those 35 years and older) are more likely to agree with this statement.

3.0 APPENDIX – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The following chart shows the demographic profile of respondents for this survey.

Demographic Profile of Respondents



4.0 APPENDIX-QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello, this is _____ calling from Ipsos-Reid, the professional research company formerly known as the Angus Reid Group. Today we're conducting a very short survey about an important issue that concerns people in your area. The survey will only take about 5 minutes of your time.

- A. I'd like to speak to the person in your household who is 18 years of age or older, and who last had a birthday. Would that be you?

IF YES, CONTINUE

IF NO, Is that person available?

IF NOT AVAILABLE, When may I call back to reach him/her?

- B. GENDER (DO NOT READ)

Male

Female

- C. Do you, or does any member of your household, currently work for any of the following types of companies? (READ LIST)

An advertising agency

A market research company

A public relations company

A media company (TV, radio, newspaper)

DO NOT READ: None of the above

IF YES OR DK/REF TO ANY OF THE ABOVE, THANK AND TERMINATE, OTHERWISE CONTINUE

1. First of all, have you read, seen or heard anything recently about the Halifax Harbour Cleanup Project involving plans to build new wastewater treatment facilities in Halifax?

Yes

No

IF YES, ASK Q.2; IF NO/DK SKIP TO Q.3

2. And, generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the Halifax Mayor and Council have handled plans so far to build new wastewater treatment facilities? (Would that be strongly/somewhat approve/disapprove?)

Strongly approve

Somewhat approve

DO NOT READ: DO NOT APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE

Somewhat disapprove

Strongly disapprove

DO NOT READ: DO NOT KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT IT TO HAVE AN OPINION

3. Who would you trust more when it comes to providing safe wastewater treatment in Halifax, - [a Private Company] or [the Halifax Regional Municipality]? ROTATE ITEMS (Would that be a little more or a lot more?)

A lot more – A private company

A little more - A private company

A little more - The Halifax Regional Municipality

A lot more - The Halifax Regional Municipality

DO NOT READ: Neither

4. And, who would you trust more when it comes to providing the most cost-effective wastewater treatment in Halifax, - [a Private Company] or [the Halifax Regional Municipality]? ROTATE ITEMS (Would that be a little more or a lot more?)

A lot more – A private company

A little more - A private company

A little more - The Halifax Regional Municipality

A lot more - The Halifax Regional Municipality

DO NOT READ: Neither

Revised August 7, 2001

5. On the whole, would you say that you support or oppose the privatization of wastewater services in Halifax? PROBE: (Would that be strongly/somewhat support/oppose?)
(*Original wording:* On the whole, would you say that you support or oppose the privatization of wastewater services, including the Halifax Harbour cleanup?)

Strongly support

Somewhat support

DO NOT READ: Neither Support nor Oppose

Somewhat oppose

Strongly oppose

6. I am now going to read you some things that other people have said about wastewater services. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each statement. How about (INSERT ITEM)? (Would that be strongly/somewhat agree/disagree) RANDOMIZE ITEMS

I am concerned the profits earned from the wastewater plants may not stay in the community because the companies that want to operate the plants all come from outside Canada.

The Halifax Regional Municipality already does a good job operating sewage treatment plants like the one at Mill Cove and I think they should operate the new plants.

If a private company is hired on a 40-year contract to operate the new wastewater treatment facilities, it might be difficult to cancel the contract if they did a bad job.

A private company operating the plants would be less accountable to me as a taxpayer than the Halifax Regional Municipality would be.

If a private company were responsible for operating the new wastewater plants, the cost of my water rates would go down.

Wastewater treatment is too important to the local environment to be left to a private company.

I think that water and wastewater treatment are basic public services and should always remain in public hands.

I'm concerned that if a private company were responsible for operating the wastewater plants, over time they'd also take control of our drinking water services.

If the Halifax Regional Municipality does not want to operate the wastewater plants directly, they should hand over the responsibility to the Halifax Regional Water Commission.

Whenever the Halifax Regional Municipality privatizes services, it ends up costing taxpayers more than predicted.

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

DEMOGRAPHICS

7. Now, just before we finish, I just have a few questions to ask you for statistical purposes....

In what year were you born?

RECORD YEAR

8. Do you or does any member of your household currently belong to a labour union?

- Yes – myself
- Yes – someone else
- Yes – both myself and someone else
- No

IF YES IN Q.13, ASK Q.14, OTHERWISE SKIP TO Q.15

9. Is it a private-sector or a public-sector union? That is, do you work for a private company, or do you work for the government or a government agency or Crown corporation?

- Private sector (private company)
- Public sector (government/ government agency/ crown corp.)

10. And finally, which of the following categories best describes your household income? That is, the combined total income of all persons in your household, before taxes? (IF RESPONDENT HESITATES OR REFUSES, READ: "That's fine, we understand that some people prefer not to answer this question)

- Under \$30,000
- \$30,000 to \$59,999
- \$60,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

Those are all the questions I have for you today. On behalf of Ipsos Reid, I'd like to thank you very much for your time.