

**Public Opinion on the City of Winnipeg Wastewater  
Services Contract with Veolia Canada**

Prepared for the Canadian Union of Public Employees



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project, please contact:

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## 1.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND

This city-wide Omnibus survey was designed and conducted by Probe Research via telephone interviews taken between September 16<sup>th</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010 among a random and representative sampling of 601 adults residing in Winnipeg.

With a sample of 601 one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points of what they would have been if the entire adult population of Winnipeg had been interviewed. The margin of error is higher within each of the survey's population sub-groups.

Modified random digit dialing was used to ensure that all city adults would have an equal opportunity to participate in this Probe Research Inc. survey. Minor statistical weighting has been applied to this sample to ensure that age and gender characteristics properly reflect known attributes of the city's population. All data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical analysis software.

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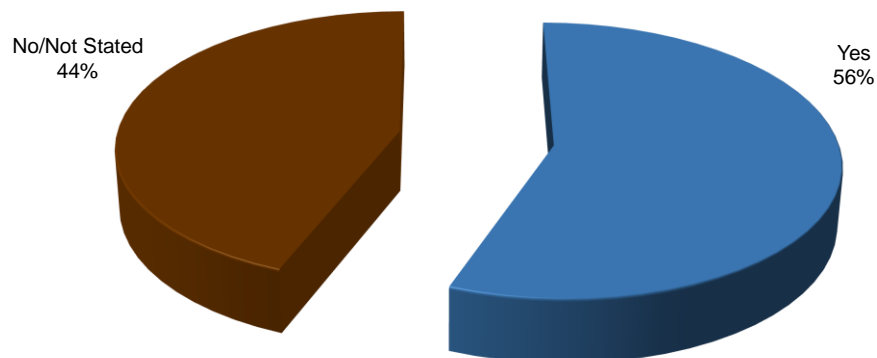
## 2.0 RESEARCH RESULTS

### 2.1 AWARENESS OF CONTRACT TO MANAGE WASTEWATER PLANTS

Winnipeg adults were asked if they had recently seen, heard or read anything about the City of Winnipeg entering into an agreement with a private company to manage the city's wastewater treatment facilities. More than one-half of respondents (56%) were familiar with this agreement, while 44 percent of those surveyed were unaware that the city had signed a contract with a private firm to manage its wastewater treatment facilities.



**QCP1.** "Have you heard, seen or read anything recently about the City of Winnipeg entering a contract with a private company to manage the city's wastewater treatment facilities?" (n=601)



Base: Winnipeg respondents

Those who were most likely to be aware of the contract included:

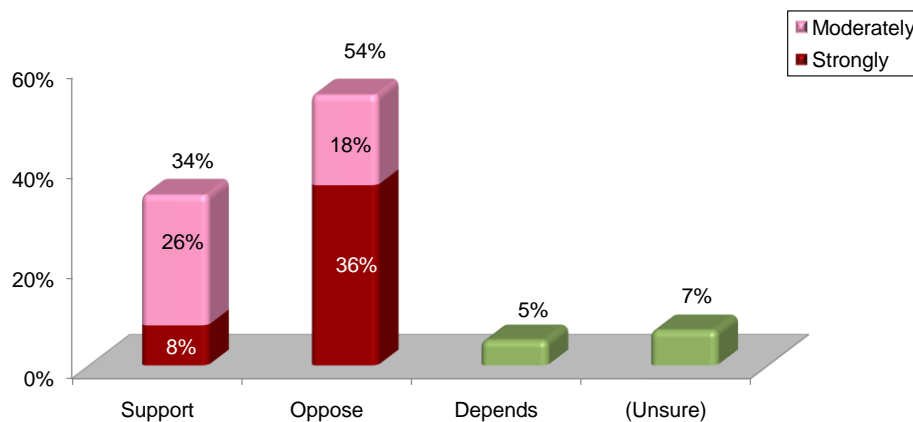
- Older citizens (68% of those aged 55 years and over, versus 56% of those aged 35-54 years and 46% of those aged 18-34 years)
- University and college graduates (62%, versus 55% of those with a partial post-secondary education and 42% of those with high school or less).

## 2.2 PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CONTRACTING OUT SERVICES

Regardless of their level of awareness, citizens were asked in principle whether they supported or opposed municipalities entering into agreements with private companies to provide services to citizens. More than one-half of Winnipeg adults (54%) indicate they oppose governments contracting out services to the private sector, with 36 percent *strongly opposed* to this form of service delivery. One-third of respondents, meanwhile, support the use of private companies to deliver what are traditionally public-sector services (34%, with 8% expressing *strong support*). Five percent of respondents said their support for private delivery or traditional public services depended on the situation, while seven percent were undecided or did not respond.

### PRBE RESEARCH INC. General Support for Private Service Delivery

**QCP2.** "Some cities have entered into contracts with private companies to provide services like drinking water and sewage treatment. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the use of private companies to deliver these services?" (n=601)



Base: Winnipeg respondents

Demographic sub-groups most likely to oppose contracting out public services include:

- Core-area residents (67%, including 47% who *strongly oppose* the private delivery of public services)
- Those aware of the city's agreement with Veolia (62%, versus 45% opposition among those who are unaware of this agreement)

While both men and women expressed the same level of generic opposition to the contracting out of public services (55% and 54% respectively), men were somewhat more receptive to these types of arrangements (38% *support*, versus 30% among women) while women were more likely to indicate that their support or opposition might vary on a case-by-case basis (16%, versus 7% among men).

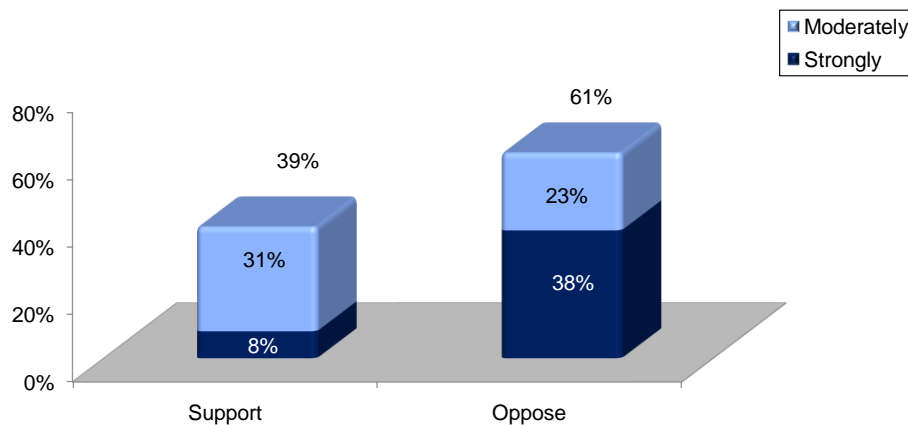
### 2.3 PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CITY-VEOLIA CONTRACT

After considering contracted-out service delivery in principle, respondents were asked if they support or oppose the City of Winnipeg’s decision to contract out the construction and maintenance of its wastewater treatment plants to Veolia Canada for a 30-year period. It is important to note that approximately one-quarter of all Winnipeg adults (26%) were undecided or did not express an opinion about this topic.

Looking only at those with an opinion about the issue (n=445), a solid majority of those surveyed are *opposed* to this contract between the City of Winnipeg and Veolia Canada (61%, including 38% who *strongly oppose* this deal). Approximately four-in-ten of those with a view on this topic are in favour of the city entering into an agreement with Veolia Canada to build and operate its wastewater treatment plants (39%, though only 8% *strongly support* this arrangement).



**QCP3.** “Based on what you know about this contract, would you say that you support or oppose the City of Winnipeg entering this deal with Veolia Canada? Is that strongly or moderately?” (n=445)



Base: Those with opinions regarding the contract (26% of the overall population were undecided)

Those most likely to support having Veolia run the City of Winnipeg’s wastewater treatment facilities include:

- Those with some post-secondary education (54%, versus 37% of those with Grade 12 or less and 37% of post-secondary graduates)

Those most likely to oppose Veolia’s involvement in the city’s wastewater treatment services include:

- Residents of the Core Area (73%, versus 61% throughout Winnipeg)

- Those with prior awareness of this contract (66%, versus 51% of those who reported they are not aware of this issue)

Those most likely to strongly oppose the Veolia agreement include:

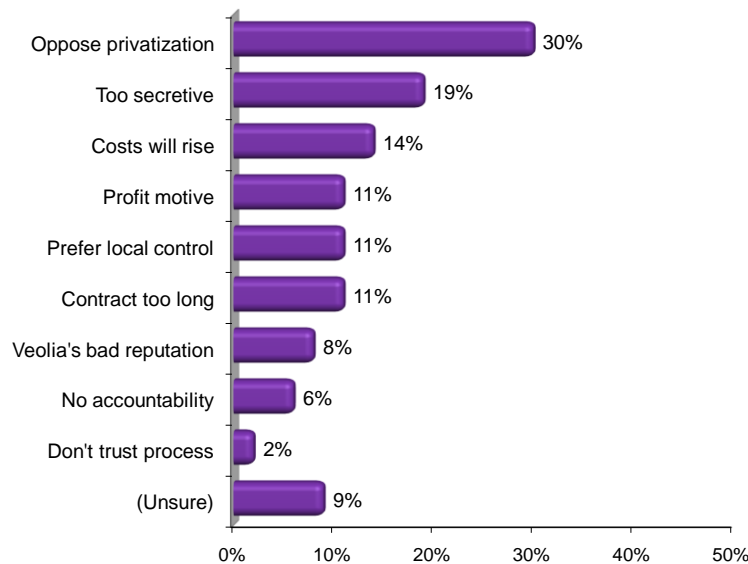
- Post-secondary graduates (42%, versus 32% among those with Grade 12 education or less)
- Core area residents (48%, versus a city-wide average of 38%)

When asked to explain why they oppose this contract, three-in-ten (30%) said they are *opposed to the private delivery of water services*, while one-in-five (19%) said elements of this contract are *too secretive*. Fourteen percent are concerned that *costs will rise*, while approximately one-in-ten expressed concerns related to the *length of the contract*, a preference for *local ownership and control* or concerns that *private companies are motivated by profit* (11% each). Other reasons were each mentioned by fewer than one-in-ten respondents and can be found in the graph below and in the data tables.



## Rationale for Opposition

**QCP4.** "Why are you opposed to the city entering this contract? Any other reasons?" (n=270)\*



Base: Those who strongly or moderately oppose contract  
 \*Multiple mentions, totals will not equal 100%

Notable variations include:

- Younger adults were more likely to oppose the private delivery of water and wastewater services as a matter of course (37% of those aged 18-34 years, versus 29% of those aged 35-54 years and 26% of those aged 55 years and over).
- Those who were aware of the contract were more likely to be uncomfortable with the "secretive" nature of this deal (25%, versus 7% of those who were unaware)

- Lower-income individuals were more likely to express the fear that rates would rise as a result of this deal (33% of those earning less than \$30,000/year, versus 12% of those earning more than \$60,000/year). Wealthier individuals were more likely to express reservations about the secretiveness of the contract (24%, versus 6% of those earning less than \$30,000/year).

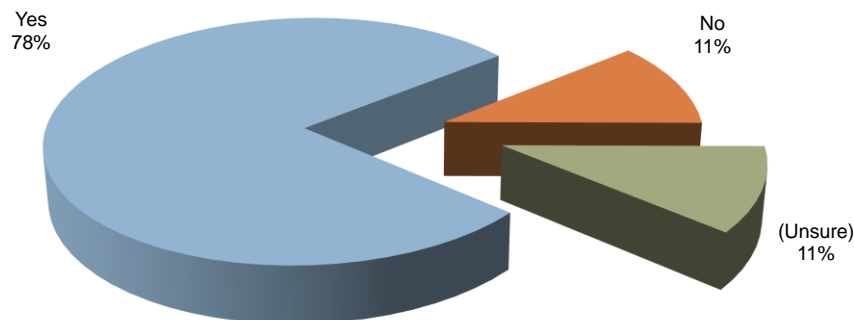
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## 2.4 VIEWS REGARDING CONTRACT DISCLOSURE

A strong majority of respondents (78%) feel that the details of the contract between the City of Winnipeg and Veolia Canada should be made public, with just one-in-ten (11%) indicating that these terms should remain confidential. One-in-ten respondents (11%) were undecided or did not respond.



**QCP5.** "Some people have argued that all of the details of the contract should be publicly released during the election campaign so that voters can understand where candidates for mayor and council stand on this issue. Other people have argued that the details of this contract with Veolia Canada must remain confidential because they contain sensitive details about the company's operations. Which of these two views would you say is closest to your own?" (n=601)



Base: Winnipeg respondents

- Individuals with higher levels of education (81% of post-secondary graduates, versus 74% of those with Grade 12 or less) and income (84% of those earning more than \$60,000/year, versus 76% of those earning less than \$30,000/year) were slightly more likely to be in favour of the City immediately releasing details of its contract with Veolia.
- Men were slightly more likely than women to accept the City's position that the contract with Veolia Canada should remain confidential (15% versus 7%, respectively)