

## **2013 Client Satisfaction Survey Municipal Administrators**

The 2013 Client Satisfaction Survey for Municipal Administrators was directed specifically at Chief Administrative Officers, Clerk/Treasurers, or Directors of Finance in Nova Scotia municipalities. The respondents were asked to complete a survey based on their interaction with the Municipal Finance Corporation (MFC). Questions included how they perceived the level of service they received, their opinion on current and potential services, and any suggestions they may be able to offer. Of the 54 municipalities to potentially complete the survey, 20 municipalities responded, providing a 37% response rate.

### **Demographics**

Of the respondents who completed the survey, 55% were from Towns; 40% were from Rural Municipalities; and 5% were from Regional Municipalities. Those who completed the survey indicated that they participate in MFC debenture issues frequently, with 72% of respondents having borrowed from MFC within the last two years and 74% of the respondents borrowing on a regular basis (more than once every five years). Those who completed the survey appear to be familiar with MFC and typically borrow through MFC. This is beneficial to the survey results because these are administrators who are familiar with MFC, and can help provide an informed opinion on suggestions and improvements.

### **Section I: Communication and Client Satisfaction**

The first section of the survey was developed to determine if municipal administrators were satisfied with their level of communication and contact with MFC. The most common answer indicated that they contact MFC twice a year (63%), typically about information on debenture pricing (16 respondents - 76%) and information on the debenture process (11 respondents - 52%). All respondents (100%) indicated that they were either Very Satisfied (74%) or Satisfied (26%) with the products and services provided by MFC.

### **Section II: Debenture Process**

The second section of the survey asked the respondents for their opinion of MFC's debenture process and staff's knowledge in this area. The majority of respondents (90%) indicated that the current debenture schedule of twice a year met their needs. Eighty-five percent of respondents were satisfied with the timing of the debentures (spring and fall) and indicated they did not need debentures any other time of year. A positive response was also received with 90% of respondents indicating that they either Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the terms and structures offered by MFC on its debenture issues were flexible enough to meet their needs.

When surveyed about MFC's turnaround time from the pricing of the debenture to the time the municipality received its funds, the responses were positive. Of the 20 respondents, 90% indicated that they either Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the turnaround time was reasonable, while 10% were Neutral.

Respondents were positive about how their questions about the debenture issues were dealt with by MFC. They were asked if MFC staff was knowledgeable regarding the debenture process, and 90% Strongly Agreed, and 10% Agreed, providing a 100% positive response. The respondents were also asked if their questions about the debenture process were answered in a timely manner, 85% Strongly Agreed and 10% Agreed, providing a 95% positive response.

**Section III: MFC Products and Services**

The third section of the survey was designed to determine the respondents’ opinion of the services that are currently offered by MFC and other services MFC has considered offering. These answers can help MFC determine any appetite for maintaining or taking on different products and services. The following table includes respondents’ assessments of current and potential products and services offered by MFC.

	Very Effective	Effective	Neutral	Ineffective	Very Ineffective
Short-Term Financing of Capital Projects	25%	60%	15%	0%	0%
Training of Municipal Finance	20%	50%	20%	10%	0%
Long-Term Capital Financial Planning	25%	45%	25%	5%	0%
Sponsorship of Municipal Administrators Conferences	30%	40%	30%	0%	0%
More Flexible Debenture Process	0%	45%	55%	0%	0%
Training on Financial Management and Capacity Building Committee’s Best Practices	25%	40%	35%	0%	0%
Training of the Debt Affordability Model	25%	35%	40%	0%	0%
Finance Workshops for Elected Officials	10%	40%	45%	5%	0%

Based on these results, most respondents agreed that short-term financing of capital projects is or would be effective in their municipality. The respondents also agreed that having a more flexible debenture process and training on financial management and capacity building best practices would be effective. In fact, all of the products and services presented to respondents garnered a positive response from those surveyed.

**Section IV: Other Financial Programs**

This section was designed to determine how well MFC promotes its programs and services, aside from the fall and spring debentures. The respondents were asked about our Short-Term Borrowing Program, the Federation of Canadian Municipality’s Green Fund Program, the Government Finance Officers Association Sponsorship Program, the Financial Management Capacity Building Committee, and the

Debt Affordability Model. Information about the Debt Affordability Model has reached 95% of respondents: half have used it (50%), and 45% are aware of it, but have not used it. Most respondents indicated that they were aware of the short-term borrowing program (65%), the FCM Green Fund (60%) and the GFOA Sponsorship program, but have not used them. These results are indicative of a successful communication strategy. There is, however, an area where improvement is necessary. Twenty-five percent of respondents did not know that MFC's Financial Best Practices existed, but thought they may be of some benefit. This response represents an opportunity for MFC to reconsider current strategies for communication about their Financial Best Practices.

## **Section V: Services Offered by MFC**

The fifth section of the survey was designed to determine the respondent's opinion on any future products and services that MFC may undertake. The respondents were asked if MFC should be more innovative in the capital financing options it offers, and while only one respondent indicated that they Disagreed with the statement, 50% of the respondents answered that they were Neutral. The remaining respondents indicated that they Agreed and Strongly Agreed with 40% and 5% respectively. Although none of the respondents were overly opposed to more innovative capital financing options, there was not an overwhelming response to pursue this endeavor further.

The second question asked the respondents if they considered MFC to be a valuable organization that provides long-term capital financing for municipalities. Overwhelmingly, 70% of the respondents indicated that they Strongly Agree, and 30% Agreed that MFC is valuable. The respondents made it clear that MFC does provide a role for municipalities in Nova Scotia for long-term capital financing.

The final question in this section asked municipalities if MFC should offer more training and presentations to councils. The majority (60%) of respondents either Strongly Agreed (10%) or Agreed (50%) with this statement. Respondents have indicated that this is an area where MFC should invest resources.

## **Conclusion**

The last time MFC distributed a client satisfaction survey was 2010. Overall, the tone of the 2013 surveys has improved since that time. The results from 2010 were positive, but this year more respondents choose the superlative option (e.g., strongly agree, very effective) more often than the positive option (agree, effective). Notably, when asked to assess their overall satisfaction with the products and services provided by MFC staff 18% more respondents answered Very Satisfied in 2013, than in 2010. When asked if they agreed "Staff at MFC is knowledgeable regarding the debenture process", 54% more respondents answered that they strongly agreed than in 2010. When asked if they agreed "Responses regarding the debenture process are received in a timely manner", 47% more respondents answered that they strongly agreed than in 2010. These are not the only examples of improvement from 2010; they are the most striking examples of improvement. These results demonstrate that not only MFC is meeting their client's needs, but that client satisfaction is improving with time.

The respondents who completed this survey provided MFC with useful information. It is clear that the municipal administrators who completed the survey are pleased with the services they are receiving from MFC and its staff members. There is room for MFC to improve in terms of communication surrounding its programs and services, especially with communicating the benefits of the programs and services to municipal administrators so they can be utilized more frequently. Furthermore, municipal administrators appear to be pleased with the twice a year debenture issue pricing, and relatively pleased with the flexibility that MFC has to offer. With 37% of municipal administrator's completing the survey, this provides MFC with an accurate indication of how Nova Scotia municipalities view MFC.