

West Coast Multiplex Survey



Prepared for: Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Prepared By: Vancouver Island University

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Background

The communities along the Central West Coast of Vancouver Island have been exploring the possibility of constructing and operating a multiuse recreational facility in partnership with the West Coast Multiplex Society. This has been supported by a memorandum of understanding signed by the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD), Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, Ahousaht First Nation, Yuutu?it?ath Government, Hesquiaht First Nation, Toquaht First Nation, the District of Tofino, and the District of Ucluelet.

At the direction of the ACRD, a survey was conducted in November 2017 by students and faculty from Vancouver Island University. Residents were surveyed on their support for the current proposal, which includes the construction of an ice rink/dry surface/emergency shelter (along with seating, change rooms, and meeting areas) adjacent to the Tofino Airport.

As noted on the survey, all individual survey responses returned for analysis have been kept strictly confidential: this report presents the aggregate data only to ensure no individual responses can be identified.

Survey results

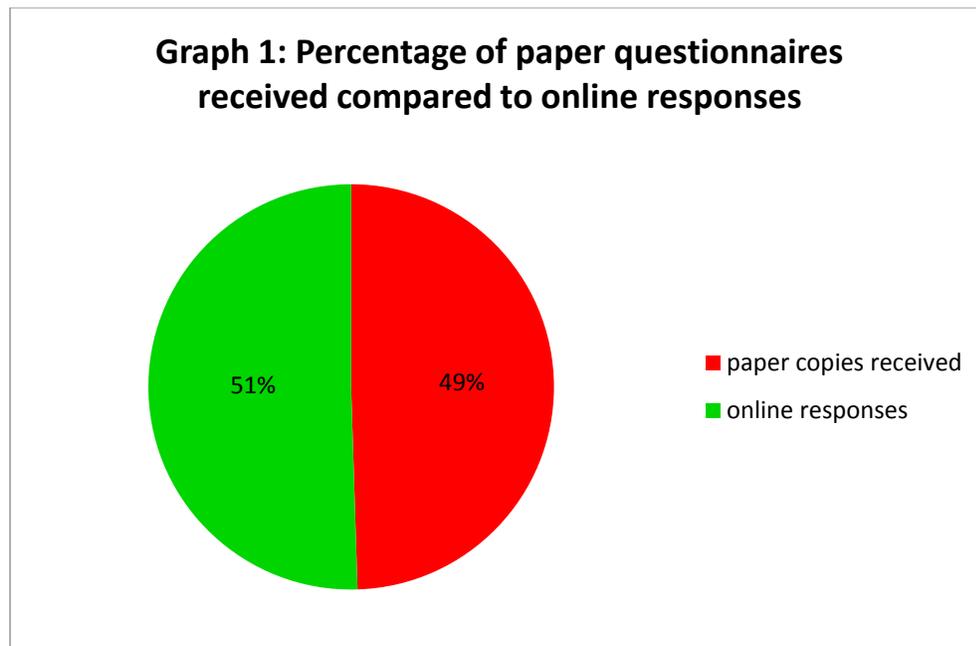
Data was collected in November of 2017 through two methods of collection. The first was a paper survey sent to private residences, with a return pre-paid envelope to encourage the return of the questionnaire. In total, 2,672 paper copies were sent out: 2,222 were mailed to private residences in Tofino, Ucluelet, and the Long Beach Electoral Area (Area C) of the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD), and 450 were distributed to residents on Reserve Lands held by Tla-o-quaht First Nation, Yuutu?it?ath Government, Toquaht Nation, Hesquiaht First Nation, and Ahousat First Nation (see Table 1). Of the 2,672 paper copies, 27% (n=728) were returned.

Table 1: Distribution of paper copies of the survey

	<i>Percentage of paper copies distributed</i>	<i>Number of copies distributed</i>
Mailed to private residences	83.2	2,222
Delivered (breakdown as follows):	16.8	-
Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation	5.6	149
Yuutu?it?ath Government	5.6	149
Toquaht Nation	1.9	51
Hesquiaht First Nation	1.9	51
Ahousaht First Nation	1.9	50
TOTAL	100.0	2,672

At the request of the ACRD, an online version of the survey was also made available. In total, 51% (n=744) were online respondents¹ (see Graph 1). The total number of respondents is 1,472.

In order to provide representative results, it is important to collect data from a representative sample. The criteria for a representative sample are met when it is possible to calculate the probability of participating for every individual or household in the population. While sending out one paper copy to all private residences would have permitted this calculation of probabilities of participating, the online survey and the free distribution of surveys do not. The results presented here, therefore, are not representative of the population and must be examined in that light. The results represent the opinions of the respondents who took time to participate in the survey, and not necessarily those of the entire population.



Respondent Profile

Over 85% of the total respondents live in Ucluelet (47%) and in Tofino (41%). Table 2 indicates the breakdown of their place of residence. Three percent (3.3%) of the total number of respondents did not answer this question; the comments provided suggested that some people who received the paper questionnaire did not know how/chose not to/provide an additional response when answering this question. For example, Salmon Beach is not included in the suggested answers, but some residents added this as their place of residence. It may also be that residents identify with other non-incorporated areas within Area C. Respondents are free to leave any questions blank and/or provide an additional response in the “Comments” section of the survey: if no additional comment is provided, a definitive analysis of the

¹ Although online surveys provide opportunities for all respondents to complete the questionnaire, they can not and do not provide a representative sample of the population. In addition, the data collected must always be heavily scrutinized because it is possible for one or two people to complete multiple versions of the survey. In an effort to control for this, the data was examined and any duplicate data was deleted. In addition, any data from duplicate IP addresses was examined for repetition of information.

3.3% of non-responses cannot be provided, and as it is a small fraction of total responses, this missing data does not hold a large impact on the aggregate results.

Table 2: Respondents' place of residence

Where do you live?	%	Number
Ucluelet	46.9	690
Tofino	40.9	602
Long Beach (Area C)	6.0	88
Yuutu?it?ath Gov't	2.1	32
Ahousat FN	1.3	19
Toquaht Nation	1.3	19
Tla-o-qui-aht FN	1.2	18
Hesquiaht FN	0.3	4
Total	100	1,472

Over 75% of the respondents (78%) are full-time residents and 82% are owners or co-owners. Only 4% see themselves moving out of the area in the next 5 years.

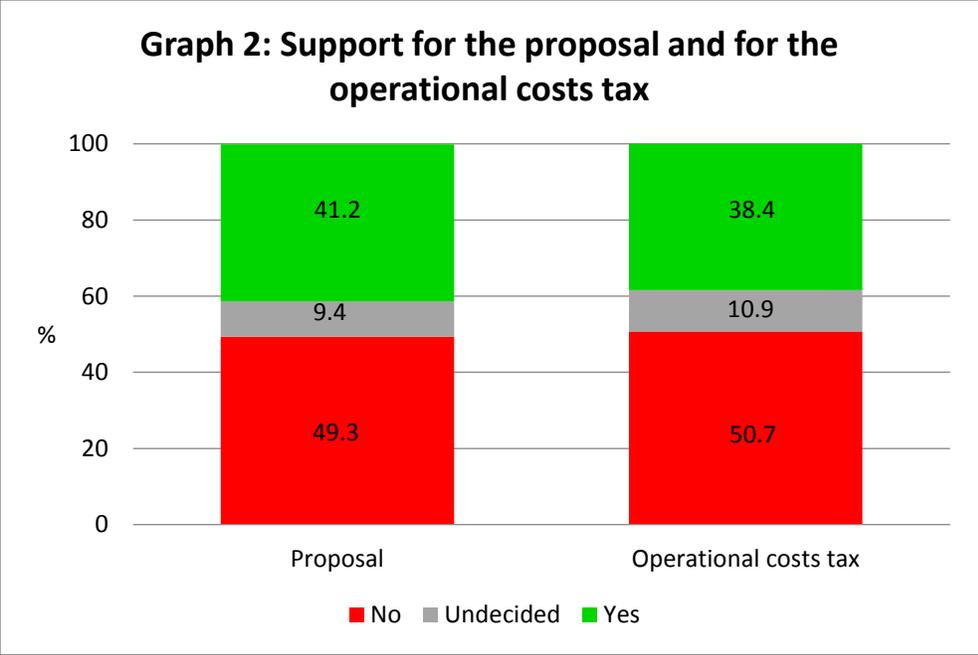
Support for the proposal

Graph 2 illustrates the total opinion of all respondents (paper and online) on the proposed project. The response is split: 49% indicate that “no”, they do not support the proposal as it is presented; 41% state that “yes”, they do support it. An additional 9% indicate that they are “undecided”.

The same pattern appears for the question regarding support for the multiplex operational costs tax: 51% indicate they do not support it, 38% indicate they do support it, and 11% are undecided.

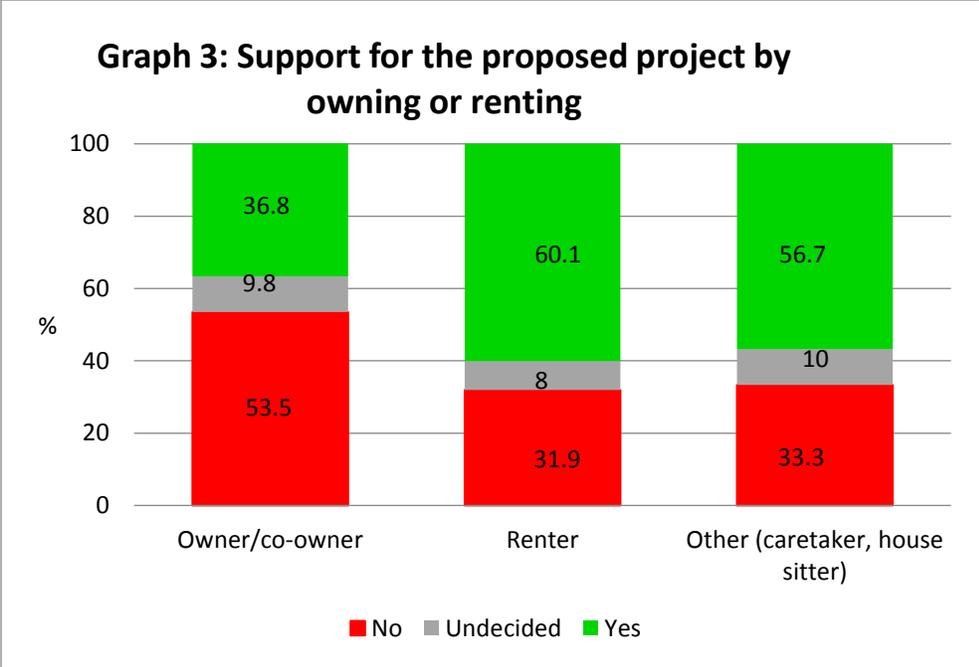
The survey intentionally did not offer a range of response options (such as strongly support/support/oppose/strongly oppose) as the objective was to gain as clear an indication as possible on the respondents support/not support for the multiplex concept as currently envisioned.

These results indicate that more respondents do not support the proposal by a margin of approximately 8% when asked about the concept plan. A stronger response is received on the operational costs tax with just over half of the respondents indicating they do not support the tax; it is noted that the proportion of respondents of this question who are undecided is slightly larger when compared to the response for the concept plan.

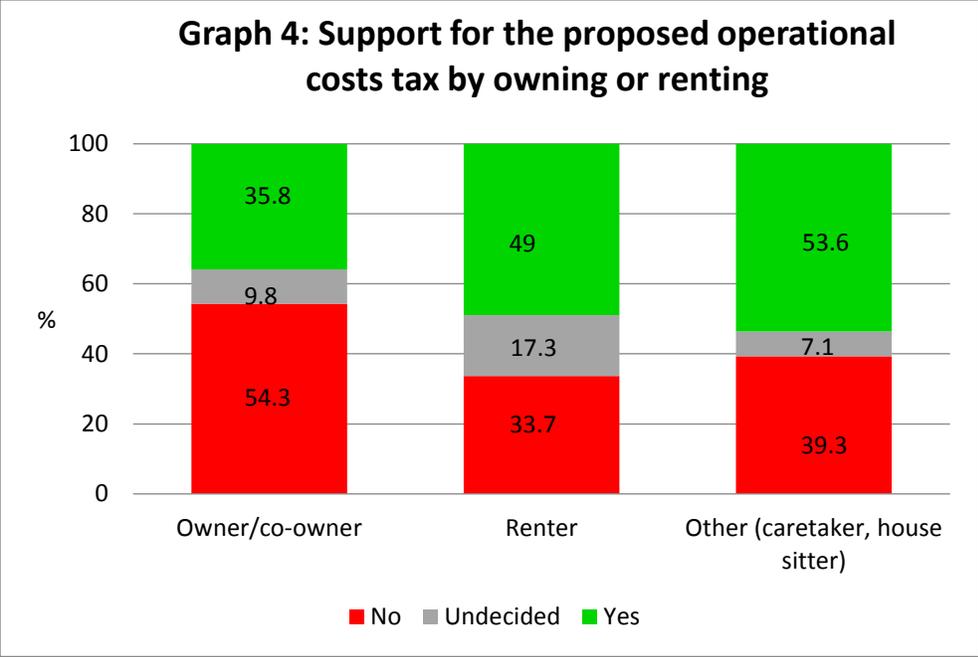


The results indicate that among those who support the concept plan, there is opposition to the operational cost tax – this is illustrated in the differences between the first column (support for the proposal) and the second column (support for the operational costs tax). Those responding “yes” declined from the first to the second question, and increased for those responding “no” as illustrated on Graph 2.

Graph 3 breaks down the responses from those who own or do not own their property. The graph illustrates that 53% of respondents who own/co-own property do not support the proposal, compared to 32% of renters and 33% in the “other” category. It is noted that the “other” category includes respondents who may be property caretakers, house sitters, or otherwise living in the area but not (by their own definition) owning or renting property. That is, support for the proposal is higher among renters/others.



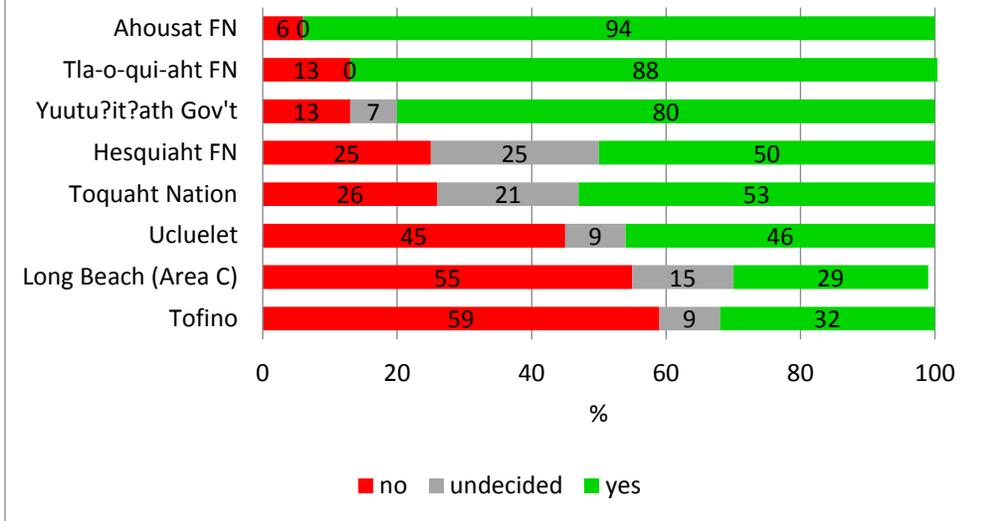
This same pattern is illustrated in the question regarding support for the operational costs tax: once again, property owners show the least amount of support. Fifty-four percent do not support the tax, compared to 34% of the renters and 39% in the “other” category (see Graph 4). This may speak to owner/co-owners seeing a direct relationship between their household costs and taxes, while household costs tend to be aggregated in property rental calculations and may not be seen as having direct impacts on renters. The comments received from survey respondents supports this interpretation.



Place of residence

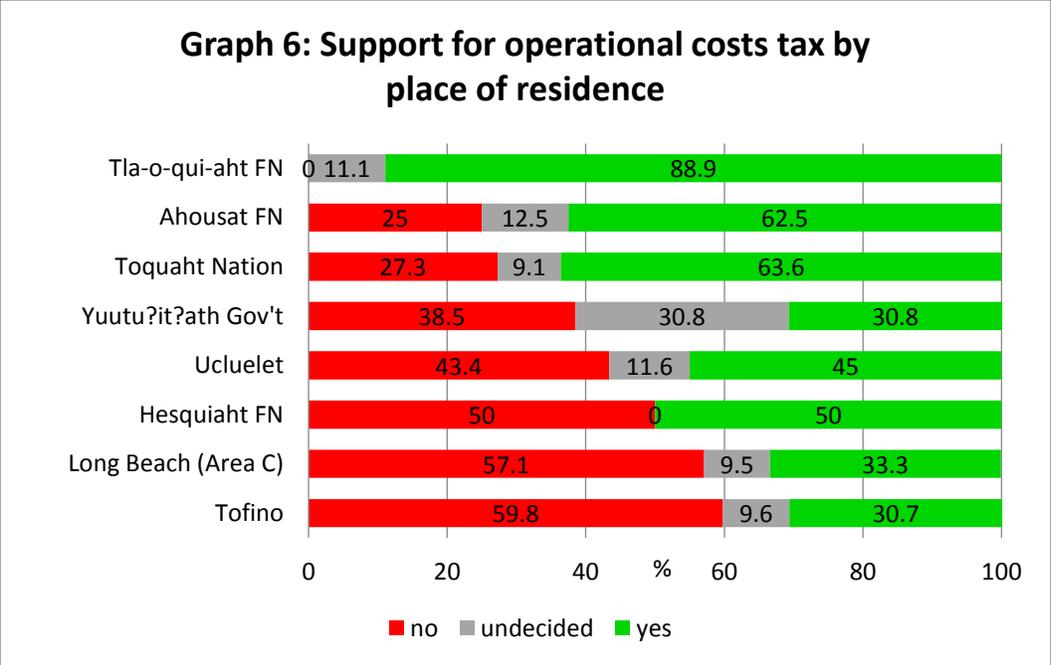
Support for the proposal differs according to the respondents’ place of residence. As indicated in the following two graphs, the project receives greater support from respondents who live on First Nations land than in the incorporated municipalities or the Regional District. For example, 94% of respondents from Ahousat First Nation said that they support the proposal compared to 32% in Tofino. The lowest support for the project was in Long Beach (Area C): 29% said that they support the proposal.

Graph 5: Support for proposal by place of residence



A similar pattern exists when respondents were asked if they support the operational costs tax. However, in some instances, there appears to be greater indecision on this question (see Graph 6).

It is important to specify that, although only respondents from Tofino, Ucluelet and Area C were asked to respond to this question, respondents from other areas did as well. These results have not been excluded from this table because they offer the opinion of respondents living in locations that, in some areas, are moving toward taxation. These results also show the differentiation between support for the proposal and support for the operational costs tax. For example, in Yuutu?i?ath Government, support is higher for the multiplex than it is for the tax, which mirrors the results from residents within the incorporated local governments and the Regional District.



Frequency of use

Respondents were asked how often they potentially see themselves using the facilities at the multiplex, and to respond for themselves and for members of their household. Table 3 illustrates that 46% of respondents indicated that they would “never” use it and 44% said the members of their households would “never” use it. It is important to note that only the 728 respondents who received a paper copy of the questionnaire were asked this question.²

Table 3: Potential frequency of use by respondents and by the members of their households

	Frequently		Often		Seldom		Never		Unsure	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Respondent	56	8.1	64.0	9.2	162.0	23.4	315.0	45.5	95.0	13.7
Household	58	9.5	58.0	9.5	142.0	23.3	268.0	44.0	83.0	13.6

Comments Included on the Survey

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were provided with a space to include comments. Approximately half of the respondents did add additional text (52.3%). These were coded according to the themes and Table 4, below, lists the themes and the percentage of respondents who mentioned them. It

² Due to a technical issue, this question did not appear in the online survey.

is noted that the total percentage will not equal 100% because some of the comments covered more than one theme and are represented in more than one place for ease of analysis by the readers of this report.

The most frequent comment was related to a pool: 20% of comments indicated that the respondent preferred a pool over an ice rink.

Taxes were the next most occurring subject for those providing comments: 13% of respondents provided additional text indicating that they did not support a raise in taxes and/or preferred any tax increase be otherwise expended.

The third most occurring comment was about money (unrelated to taxes or maintenance). Approximately 10% of respondents felt the price tag of the proposal was too high.

Although the majority of the comments were unsupportive, leaning to the negative, or critical of the project, 8% of respondents provided a positive comment such as “can’t wait!”, “all for it”, and “good for communities and area.” Positive comments were also received in the themes “Kids and Youth” and “Recreation” with respondents indicating that the multiplex would provide a new activity for young people and a new sport/rec function.

The themes are summarized below, along with the percent of comments relating to these themes. This commentary provides additional detail otherwise not available through the analysis of the survey questions.

Table 4: Respondents’ comments

	n	%
Pool	298	20.2
Taxes	197	13.4
Money or costs (not taxes)	144	9.8
Positive comment	116	7.9
Not catering to community	83	5.6
Priorities	81	5.5
Kids and youth	75	5.1
Location and transportation	73	5.0
Too ambitious for community	72	4.9
Hockey	70	4.8
Age restrictive	55	3.7
Won't be used	51	3.5
Recreation	37	2.5
Environmental	21	1.4
Maintenance	12	0.8
TOTAL	1472	---

Pool

In total, 20% of respondents mentioned the pool in their comments. The general consensus is that the respondents are more interested in building a pool than an ice rink. Some respondents commented on how they would support a tax increase if it was specifically for a public pool in their community. Respondents explained how, compared to an ice rink, a pool is accessible to every age category, and suggested that a pool provides a wider range of benefits to many different people. For instance, one respondent said *“our west coast communities need access to a public pool for drowning-prevention, water safety, swimming lessons, year round aquatic fitness, water therapy and recreation for our residents of all ages and varying abilities. I do not support a tax increase to operate an inaccessible arena. I would be in favour of a tax increase to support a public aquatic facility in Tofino”*. In addition to the pool benefitting all age brackets, respondents commented that a pool does not require expensive extra equipment such as skates and hockey equipment.

Taxes

Approximately 13% of respondents commented on taxes. Many spoke in opposition to additional tax increases. Others stated that their taxes are already too high or that they will not be able to afford to stay if taxes increase. Additional comments regarding taxes are related to the category “too ambitious for the community” (see below): for example, one respondent indicated *“the tax base is not large enough to support such a large expenditure.”*

Money or costs (not taxes)

Of the total number of respondents, 10% mentioned money or other costs. In general, this category contains comments about expenses related to hockey and skating. Comments indicate that parents would not be able to afford to have their children play hockey; overall, the equipment is seen as expensive as is the ice time. Respondents expressed concerns about the feasibility of the multiplex when it is *“just as cheap to travel to Port Alberni.”* Other comments were related to costs or expenses which appeared unknown, such as how much would it cost to convert the ice rink to a dry surface for other events, and what the user fees would be once the facility is constructed.

Positive comments

As noted previously, approximately 8% of respondents provided positive comments on some aspect of the facility/operational costs. Examples of the positive feedback include *“Please make this a reality”*, *“beautiful plans, good luck”*, and *“long time running, support this from beginning to end.”* Besides an indication of overall enthusiasm, respondents in this category stated that the facility would build community strength and continuity, benefitting families as well as the economy.

Not catering to the community

This category captures the sentiment that an ice rink would not cater to everyone in the community and as such, would not be used by the majority of the community. Approximately 6% of respondents provided a comment that was related to this theme. For example, some respondents stated that *“an ice rink serves a small population out here”* and *“it targets a smaller segment of the population.”* The main issue was related to the older members of the community who do not skate. This theme was often combined with comments supporting a pool, and how a pool would be beneficial to everyone, regardless of their age or physical abilities. Respondents also indicated that an ice rink does not represent or fit into the West Coast lifestyle. One participant stated *“an ice rink is not appropriate for the West Coast.”* Another stated *“We need to embrace where we live and have a multiplex that reflects that... we are beach goers, hikers,*

mountain climbers. Also, I don't believe that tourists will be using this complex because they pay thousands of dollars to come here to SEE here.” It was mentioned that children of the West Coast should learn to swim rather than to skate since they live by the ocean. For these respondents, an ice rink was not seen as matching a West Coast lifestyle.

Priorities

Some respondents (6%) felt that the community should be addressing more pressing priorities. For example, respondents mentioned that improving the infrastructure at local beaches (i.e. public bathrooms and change rooms) is more important than building a multiplex. Others questioned the need for a new building when the existing community buildings are underutilized; they recommended renovations to the theatre and community hall. Some of the other priorities mentioned include: an exercise or sports gym (basketball, tennis, volleyball, etc.); a swimming pool, community meeting rooms or a library, and improvement of the road system into the area. It was also suggested that the money be put towards more affordable housing, better childcare, care for the elderly, transit systems, water treatment centre and sewage development, or a new hospital/medical services building that is at a higher elevation and not so close to the water.

Kids and youth

Approximately 5% of respondents provided a comment that was generally supportive on the positive impact that the proposed facility would have for kids and youth in the area. Some examples are: *“would be ideal for our children”* and *“this would be good for my nieces, nephews, and grandchildren.”* While there are many outdoor activities in the area, participants indicated that there are limited indoor activities for youth, especially during the rainy winter months. One participant stated: *“This is a very needed facility on the West Coast, there is nothing for our kids and I find that the kids are bored and wandering the streets and need to be active.”* Participants indicated that having this facility for youth would make people, especially young families, want to move to and stay in the area.

Contrasting the desire for an indoor recreation facility a concern held by participants is that the ice rink would draw their children away from the outdoors. One participant represents this concern: *“We had an amazing childhood in Tofino and used the natural environment as our playground. I raised my now teenage kids the same way. I believe we are all blessed with different environments and opportunities and can be grateful and creative with what we have. We have beaches, hire lifeguards instead!”* Another issue that came up was transportation; young people are most likely to utilize the facility, however, they are dependent on others for transportation. Respondents felt as though something must be implemented to address this problem.

Location/transportation

This category contains comments regarding the location of the multiplex and the difficulties in accessing the facility. For the 5% of respondents who provided a comment that fit this theme, public transportation to and from the multiplex was the issue: *“It should be built at the intersection of Hwy 4 to Ukee-Tofino”, “inconvenient for every community”,* and *“I do not see reliable public transport in the near future.”* Also of concern is the road that links Port Alberni and the west coast communities. Some respondents suggested it was too dangerous, others requested that the money be spent on improving the Pacific Rim Highway: *“our Hwy 4 is too dangerous to have families coming out to play hockey at a multiplex on the westcoast.”*

Too ambitious for the community

A further 5% of respondents provided a comment that suggested the multiplex is too ambitious for the community. This category contains comments that indicate the community does not have a large enough population or tax base to support the multiplex; comments indicated that there will be low user rates and thus not enough money to fully support it. Several respondents suggest that the project is a waste of money. One respondent speaks directly about the population and states that we *“simply do not have the population.”*

Hockey

Approximately 5% of respondents believe there is too much focus on hockey and on the small number of people who play hockey. Hockey is viewed as an expensive sport that is limited to specific ages and tends to be gender specific. Respondents noted that the population base is small and other teams will have to travel on dangerous roads to get to the area. Respondents said that it is a dangerous, aggressive, competitive, and violent sport that has many risks of concussions. Many stated that hockey is not a priority sport and is not diverse enough for the area.

Age restrictive

Four percent of the respondents were concerned that an ice rink is age restrictive: *“only a small percentage will get use out of an ice rink, whereas a pool would get used by everyone. Elderly, babies, children.”* Another respondent stated *“I understand that families with young children might support the multiplex but as I’m a senior I would only support a pool that accommodates people of all ages.”* According to these respondents, a pool could accommodate residents of all ages and all physical abilities.

Won’t be used

This category represents the comments from respondents (4%) who mentioned that they do not think they or their family would ever use the facility. According to respondents, the community does not seem to be interested in the ice rink and there is not enough local hockey to support the use of an ice rink. Some respondents refer to the ice rink as being a *“white elephant”* and indicate it is unnecessary. As one respondent states: *“an ice rink is NOT used as much as a community pool. It targets a smaller segment of the population.”* Overall, these respondents believe the complex would not be used and see it as unnecessary.

Recreation

Three percent of respondents stated that they support all types of recreation and that the ice rink is too restrictive. They ask if it will be converted to incorporate curling or other options than hockey. For example, *“I support recreation in our communities, but this is not the right facility in our surf town.”* There are requests for a facility that includes more recreational options: *“We would be interested in a more ‘multi’ multiplex incorporating as well as ice rink, a swimming pool/ kids water park, gym/exercise areas for yoga/zumba etc., meeting rooms.”* Overall, the responses that make up this category indicate that there is support for recreational activities, but not necessarily an ice rink as the primary proposed use. However, it should be noted that this category also includes support for the multiplex: *“based on winter months on the West Coast alone, this makes sense (offer folks something to do indoors!)”*

Environmental

The comments in this category (1%) relate to the amount of energy required to operate the facility and suggestions for the use of renewable energy: *“No to carbon footprint of keeping ice frozen in a temperate*

climate”, and “there should be self-powered sustainable technologies applied to this design, to subsidize these costs [...] Solar and wind assisting the power needs to this complex should be a priority when considering operating costs over the short and long term”. They also include comments about the beauty of the region and the attraction of outdoor activities for tourists: “we are one of the few communities that is resort/eco activity based”, and “why spend more to keep us from this beautiful nature out?”

Maintenance

Some of the respondents (1%) questioned the resources that would be needed to maintain the multiplex. Most comments were related to costs associated with the maintenance, others were closely linked to the previous category of environmental concerns. *“I don’t believe we should be building large buildings that need intensive and expensive maintenance when we are naturally blessed with ocean, lakes, mountains and forest that provide us with free recreational activities which help develop respect for our natural environment”, and “the cost for maintenance is probably underestimated and the demographics that a rink appeals to is too small.”*

Conclusion

The data obtained from 1472 respondents suggests that more respondents oppose than support the project by a margin of 49% to 41%. The remaining 10% were either undecided or did not answer the question. Similarly, the respondents also do not support the additional operation tax with 51% of respondents indicating “no” and 38% indicating that “yes” they do support the tax. The remaining 11% of respondents either were undecided or did not respond to this question.

Overall, while the results cannot be considered as scientifically representative of the community given the two survey methods, they do illustrate the opinions of a large number of community members who took the time and attention required to complete the survey.