

REFERENDUM ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

BC REID EXPRESS POLL

DECEMBER 2001

***60% OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS SUPPORT GOVERNMENT DECISION
TO HOLD MAIL-IN REFERENDUM, 37% OPPOSE***

***PUBLIC DIVIDED ON SPENDING MONEY TO HOLD REFERENDUM;
54% SAY IT'S A WASTE OF MONEY, GIVEN OTHER PRIORITIES, 44%
BELIEVE IT WILL BRING CERTAINTY/ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO BC***

***65% OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS "VERY LIKELY" TO FILL OUT
REFERENDUM BALLOT AND MAIL IT IN***



Public Release Date: December 20, 2001

This BC Ipsos-Reid poll is based on the BC Reid Express provincial omnibus telephone survey conducted between December 4th and 10th, 2001 among a representative cross-section of 800 British Columbian adults. These data are statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, age and sex composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to 1996 Census data. With a provincial sample of 800, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results are within +3.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult BC population been polled. The margin of error will be larger for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

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BC PUBLIC'S VIEWS ON DECISION TO HOLD REFERENDUM ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

BC REID EXPRESS POLL DECEMBER 2001

(Vancouver, BC – December 20th, 2001) – In a BC Reid Express poll taken following the provincial government's release of a series of questions it intends to put on a mail-in referendum ballot related to treaty negotiations on aboriginal land claims, Ipsos-Reid finds British Columbians largely behind the provincial government's decision to hold this referendum; 60% back the initiative, 37% are against it. This support is unchanged from an Ipsos-Reid poll taken in June of this year following the Liberal election victory. However, despite backing the idea in principle, when told it will cost about 9 million dollars to hold the referendum, British Columbians are much more divided in their views. A slim majority (54%) believes the exercise is a waste of money given other more important government priorities, but 44% see the referendum as an opportunity to bring certainty to the treaty process and positive economic benefits to British Columbia. Regardless of the lack of consensus, a solid majority of the BC public intends to fill out the referendum ballot and mail it back to the government (65% "very likely").

"The BC public appears quite supportive of and willing to participate in the BC Liberal government's proposed referendum on aboriginal treaty negotiations," comments Daniel Savas, Senior Vice-President with Ipsos-Reid in Vancouver. "This finding is quite consistent with polling results over the past 5 or 6 years; British Columbians keep telling us they want to have their voice heard on this very difficult, but important public policy issue, and this

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desire seems to override all other concerns. The fact that two-thirds of the public say they're "very likely" to mail in their referendum ballot is significant. Still, findings show the government has a big challenge ahead to convince the public of the benefits of the referendum, and particularly of spending money to have their voice heard. Given the belt tightening going on within government, and recent announcements of funding changes in high priority areas like health care and education, the prospect of spending 9 million dollars on a referendum with no apparent tangible outcome could turn public opinion against the idea. One can fully expect opponents of the referendum to exploit this very point in the months leading up to the referendum. Should opponents be successful in convincing people not to participate in the exercise, its legitimacy could be questioned. The Liberals may then find themselves facing a more sceptical and unwilling public as they attempt to kick start treaty negotiations with aboriginal peoples."

60% OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS SUPPORT GOVERNMENT DECISION TO HOLD MAIL-IN REFERENDUM; 37% OPPOSE IT

The BC population is supportive of the provincial government's decision to hold a mail-in referendum to establish principles that would guide treaty negotiations with aboriginal peoples. Fully 60% of those surveyed following the legislative committee on aboriginal affairs release of the proposed referendum questions said they support the referendum, compared to 37% who were opposed. This broad picture is virtually identical to that expressed by British Columbians in the aftermath of the May provincial election (57% support vs. 34% oppose).

Support for the decision to hold the mail-in referendum crosses all regions and population groups, though the strength of the support does vary. For example, while 70% of BC

residents in the Interior/North region of the province are behind the referendum, fewer than 6-in-10 British Columbians elsewhere support it. Specific population segments with greater levels of support for the referendum include: men (65% vs. 56% women), high school graduates (67% vs. 51% of university graduates), and middle income British Columbians (66% vs. 55% lower income).

Politically, the Liberals appear to be satisfying their base; fully 78% of people who voted Liberal in the May election support the referendum. Far fewer other party supporters are behind the referendum (50% of Green party supporters, and just 33% of New Democrats).

***BC PUBLIC DIVIDED ON SPENDING MONEY TO HOLD REFERENDUM;
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When asked to give their views on the idea of spending 9 million dollars to hold the referendum, British Columbians are quite divided. A slim majority (54%) believes spending 9 million dollars on the referendum is a ***bad idea***, because they feel it's a waste of money, and there are more important priorities for the government. However, a solid minority – 44% - thinks holding a referendum is a ***good idea***, because they say it would bring certainty to the treaty process, and positive long-term economic benefits to BC.

Those most convinced of the arguments for holding the referendum include: men (54% vs. 34% women), and people living in upper income households (48% vs. 37% lower income).

Politically, 59% of those who voted Liberal in May think the government's initiative is a good idea, compared to 39% who say it's a waste of money. Among other party supporters, we



find 38% of people who voted for the Green party, and 26% of New Democrats saying it's a good idea.

65% OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS “VERY LIKELY” TO FILL OUT REFERENDUM BALLOT AND MAIL IT IN; JUST 17% NOT LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE

A substantial proportion of the BC population – 82% - says they intend to participate in the referendum. Among these, fully 65% of those surveyed said they are “very likely” to fill out a ballot and mail it in to the government; another 17% are somewhat likely to do so. At this level, it appears the participation level could be quite high, perhaps comparable to that of a provincial election. Just under 1-in-5 people in the province (17%) said they would not participate in the exercise, with 11% very unlikely to do so.

British Columbians from all regions and all walks of life said they are committed to participating in the government’s referendum on treaty negotiations, with very few variations.

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REACTIONS TO DECISION TO HOLD MAIL-IN REFERENDUM	
(Base=800)	%
Strongly support	31
Moderately support	29
Moderately oppose	11
Strongly oppose	26
Don't know	3
<i>Question: As you may or may not know, the provincial government has decided to hold a mail-in referendum on the principles that should guide BC's approach to treaty negotiations on aboriginal land claims. Do you support or oppose the provincial government's decision to hold this referendum?</i>	

REACTIONS TO IMPACT OF REFERENDUM	
(Base=800)	%
Good idea, bring certainty and long-term economic benefits	44
Bad idea, waste of money, other more important priorities	54
Don't know	2
<i>Question: The proposed mail-in referendum will cost about 9 million dollars to implement. (READ BOTH STATEMENTS - ROTATE) (Some/Other) people say spending money on this referendum is a bad idea, because it's a waste of money, and there are other more important priorities for the government. (Some/Other) people say spending money on this referendum is a good idea, because it establishes principles for treaty negotiations that will bring greater certainty to the process, and have positive long-term economic benefits for the province. Which one of these two views comes closest to how you feel about the government's proposed referendum.</i>	

LIKELIHOOD OF PARTICIPATING IN REFERENDUM	
(Base=800)	%
Very likely	65
Somewhat likely	17
Not very likely	6
Not at all likely	11
Don't know	1
<i>Question: The provincial government intends to hold the mail-in referendum some time in 2002. How likely is it that you will fill out the referendum ballot and mail it in to the provincial government?</i>	