

# **BC REACTIONS TO REFERENDUM ON ABORIGINAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS**

## **BC REID EXPRESS POLL**

**APRIL 2002**

***MAJORITY OF BC PUBLIC (52%) THINKS REFERENDUM WILL HAVE  
NEGATIVE IMPACT ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS***

***NO REAL CONSENSUS ON REFERENDUM; SUPPORT SLIPS 6 POINTS  
SINCE DECEMBER (60% TO 54%); 43% OPPOSE THE REFERENDUM***

***GROWING MAJORITY OF BC PUBLIC BELIEVES REFERENDUM IS A  
WASTE OF MONEY (60%, UP 6 POINTS SINCE DECEMBER - 54%)***

***LIKELIHOOD OF PARTICIPATING IN REFERENDUM DROPS  
DRAMATICALLY (65% IN DECEMBER TO 51% IN APRIL)***



**Public Release Date: April 18, 2002**

*This BC Ipsos-Reid poll is based on the BC Reid Express provincial omnibus telephone survey conducted between April 2<sup>nd</sup> and April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002 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.*

---

© Ipsos-Reid

***New York • Washington D.C. • Minneapolis • San Francisco  
Vancouver • Calgary • Edmonton • Winnipeg • Toronto • Ottawa • Montreal***



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

## **BC REID EXPRESS POLL APRIL 2002**

**(Vancouver, BC – April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2002)** – A new BC Ipsos-Reid poll taken immediately after the provincial government sent out aboriginal referendum ballots to the BC population in early April, finds British Columbians losing enthusiasm for the referendum due in part to a concern about the consequences for treaty negotiations. Despite the government's intention to "kick-start" the treaty process with the referendum, the BC public believes it could have a more negative (52%) than positive (25%) effect on the treaty process. Perhaps as a result, fewer people support the referendum process today than was the case just 4 months ago (54% vs 60% in December 2001), and far fewer are prepared to participate in the referendum (65% "very likely" in December 2001 vs 51% in April 2002). Indeed, a solid majority of people in British Columbia now feel the referendum is a waste of money, given other government priorities – 60%, up from 54% in December.

"The BC public clearly has some doubts about this referendum – what it means, whether to hold it, and what it's trying to achieve", comments Daniel Savas, Senior Vice-President with Ipsos-Reid in Vancouver. "The Liberal government has gambled that the referendum can inject a degree of momentum to the treaty process, and thereby bring public support behind its efforts. The challenge for the Liberals will be to make the results useable, that is translate them into action at the treaty negotiation table. This will be especially important given the expectations the government raised by holding the referendum in the first place. If it doesn't

---

© Ipsos-Reid

*New York • Washington D.C. • Minneapolis • San Francisco  
Vancouver • Calgary • Edmonton • Winnipeg • Toronto • Ottawa • Montreal*

deliver the goods in terms of a rejuvenated treaty process, or worse, if further delays in the process happen, the Liberals could lose credibility on this issue.”

***MAJORITY OF BC PUBLIC (52%) THINKS REFERENDUM WILL HAVE  
NEGATIVE IMPACT ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS***

A slim majority of British Columbians – 52% - believes that holding the referendum on aboriginal treaty negotiations will have a negative impact on negotiations with BC’s aboriginal peoples; one-in-three (32%) think the effect could be “very negative”. To contrast, 25% feel the referendum is going to have a positive impact, with just 7% holding strong views in this regard. Meanwhile, 20% believe the referendum will have “no impact at all” on treaty negotiations. Overall, then, almost three-in-four people in BC do not see anything positive emerging from the referendum when it comes to treaty negotiations with BC’s aboriginal peoples.

This view is held broadly across all regions of the province, and among all demographic groups. The concern about a negative impact is nonetheless stronger with middle-aged British Columbians (58% of 35-54 years of age vs. 48% older and younger), university graduates (62% vs. 41% high school grads), people living in upper income households (55% vs 41% lower income), and individuals who are currently employed (57% vs 43% unemployed).

It’s interesting to note that whether or not one is likely to vote in the referendum process is related to one’s position on the impact it could have on treaty negotiations. While most BC residents do see a negative effect from the referendum, those most likely to vote are more than twice as likely to see the referendum having a *positive* impact on the treaty process than

those unlikely to vote (35% positive vs 15%), suggesting voters are participating in the referendum for this reason. By contrast, 61% of non-voters think the referendum will have a negative impact, compared to 43% of voters.

***NO CONSENSUS ON REFERENDUM; SUPPORT SLIPS 6 POINTS SINCE DECEMBER (60% TO 54%); 43% OPPOSE THE REFERENDUM***

British Columbians have not reached any consensus when it comes to their reaction to the provincial government's decision to hold the referendum on treaty negotiations with BC's aboriginal peoples. While a majority supports the referendum (54%), fully 43% oppose the decision. A closer look at the intensity of the positions reveals the degree to which both sides are polarized; while 26% strongly support the referendum, 29% are strongly against the initiative. Further, enthusiasm with the referendum has waned since December when the initiative was officially launched. Current support levels are 6 percentage points lower than 4 months ago when 60% supported the decision to hold the referendum.

These broad trends hold true across all regions in the province, though there is some variation in views, depending upon where one lives. For example, support for the referendum is somewhat stronger in the suburban Lower Mainland (58%) and the Interior/North (58%). Strongest opposition is registered in Vancouver/Burnaby (52% oppose vs 45% support).

Among the different demographic groups, support is significantly stronger among high school graduates, and individuals with some post-secondary education (60% each respectively) than among university graduates (42% support). Further, while 50% of BC

residents aged 55 years or more oppose the referendum, just 38% of younger British Columbians (aged 18-34) are against it.

Members of the BC public most likely to vote in the referendum are also those with the most positive reactions to it; fully 75% support the government's decision, compared to fewer than half as many non-voters (34%).

***GROWING MAJORITY OF BC PUBLIC BELIEVES REFERENDUM IS A WASTE OF MONEY (60%, UP 6 POINTS SINCE DECEMBER - 54%)***

When asked to give their views on the idea of spending 9 million dollars to hold the referendum, British Columbians are increasingly of the view that the money could be spent better on other government priorities. A solid majority (60%) 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. This is up 6 percentage points since December 2001 (54%). Still, a solid, though decreasing, minority – 38% - thinks holding the referendum is a good idea, because they say it would bring certainty to the treaty process, and positive long-term economic benefits to BC.

British Columbians from all walks of life and all parts of the province share similar overall views on the referendum, though certain groups hold them more definitively than others. For example, women are more likely than men to consider the referendum a waste of money (64% vs 55%). Much the same is true of university graduates (66% waste of money vs 54% of high school graduates), and residents living in lower or middle income households (63% vs 53% of upper income households).

BC residents most likely to vote in the referendum are more than three times as likely to also think the outcome will bring greater certainty for the treaty process and economic benefits (59% good idea vs 18% of non-voters).

***LIKELIHOOD OF PARTICIPATING IN REFERENDUM DROPS  
DRAMATICALLY (65% IN DECEMBER TO 51% IN APRIL)***

A reduced number of British Columbians say they intend to participate in the referendum on aboriginal treaty negotiations. Currently, 51% of those surveyed say they are “definitely” going to fill out a ballot and mail it in to Elections BC by the May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. This is down substantially from the 65% last December who said they’d very likely vote. Another 20% of those surveyed said they’d probably vote, bringing the total potential number of voters to 71%; this is down 14 points from December. Overall, 27% of people in the province say they would not participate in the exercise (up 7 points), with 14% “definitely not voting” (up 3 points.)

Those most likely to vote in the referendum include people in the following groups: Vancouver Island (58% “very likely” to vote), suburban Lower Mainland (52%), and Interior/North (53%) residents (vs just 42% in Vancouver/Burnaby); individuals living in households with \$60K or more in annual income (56% vs 42% lower income).

British Columbians who are unlikely to vote in the referendum say they won’t participate, mainly because they’re critical of the idea of conducting the referendum in the first place. For example, one-in-five non-voters (19%) state that they’re “protesting against holding the referendum”; another 10% objected to “the majority voting on minority rights”; 11% “don’t believe the referendum was set up fairly, particularly as far as question wording is



concerned”; and 7% simply “don’t believe in referendums”. Among other reasons given for not voting, we found 13% admitting to “not being informed enough about the issues”, while 9% believe “it’s a waste of money”. A smaller number (4%) are worried the referendum “will create animosity between native and non-native people”. Finally, 12% expressed some degree of alienation from the voting process (“Vote won’t make a difference” (4%), “I don’t vote” (3%), “Can’t be bothered/Don’t have time” (3%), “Don’t have an opinion” (2%).

- 30 -

For more information on this news release, please contact:

Daniel Savas  
Senior Vice-President  
Ipsos-Reid  
(604) 893-1610 (office)

Visit our website at [www.ipsos-reid.com](http://www.ipsos-reid.com)

**News Releases are available at** [http://www.ipsos-reid.com/media/content/PRE\\_REL.cfm](http://www.ipsos-reid.com/media/content/PRE_REL.cfm)

*Established in 1979, Ipsos-Reid is Canada’s leading market research and public opinion company. It is best known for the Angus Reid Express poll, the most widely quoted source of public opinion in the country. Founded by Dr. Angus Reid, Ipsos-Reid has conducted extensive market and social research in 80 countries and in 40 languages, and serves clients around the world through more than 300-professionals and 1,000 data collection staff in 11 offices. The company is a member of the Paris-based Ipsos Group, ranked among the top ten research companies in the world, with specialties in advertising, media, customer satisfaction, public opinion and market research.*

---

© Ipsos-Reid

***New York • Washington D.C. • Minneapolis • San Francisco  
Vancouver • Calgary • Edmonton • Winnipeg • Toronto • Ottawa • Montreal***



<b>PERCEIVED IMPACT OF REFERENDUM ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS</b>	
	April 2002
(Base=800)	%
Very positive	7
Somewhat positive	18
Somewhat negative	20
Very negative	32
No impact at all	20
Don't know	3
<i>Question: Overall, do you think that holding this referendum will have a positive on or negative impact on treaty negotiations with BC's aboriginal peoples over the next few years, or do you think it will have no impact at all?</i>	

<b>REACTIONS TO DECISION TO HOLD MAIL-IN REFERENDUM</b>		
	December 2001	April 2002
(Base=800)	%	%
Strongly support	31	26
Moderately support	29	29
Moderately oppose	11	14
Strongly oppose	26	29
Don't know	3	3
<i>Question: [Read in December only: 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. [Read in April: And, overall...] Do you support or oppose the provincial government's decision to hold this referendum?</i>		





<b>REACTIONS TO IMPACT OF REFERENDUM</b>		
	December 2001	April 2002
(Base=800)	%	%
Good idea, bring certainty and long-term economic benefits	44	38
Bad idea, waste of money, other more important priorities	54	60
Don't know	2	2
<p><i>Question: [Read in December: The proposed mail-in referendum will cost about 9 million dollars to implement.] [Read in April: As you may know, this referendum will be conducted by a mail-in ballot, which has been estimated to 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></p>		

<b>LIKELIHOOD OF PARTICIPATING IN REFERENDUM</b>		
	December 2001	April 2002
(Base=800)	%	%
Very likely/Definitely	65	51
Somewhat likely/Probably	17	20
Not very likely/Probably not	6	13
Not at all likely/Definitely not	11	14
Don't know	1	3
<p><i>Question: [April 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?] [December question: Based on how you feel right now, how likely is it that you will vote in the referendum by filling in the referendum ballot and mailing it in to Elections BC for the May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline? Will you ....]</i></p>		