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*There is Bare Support For Alternative Forms of Revenue Such as Gambling (56%), User Fees (51%) - Even Fewer (40%) Support Increased Pay Parking*

*Seven-in-Ten (70%) Say They Receive "Good Value" For Their Municipal Tax Dollars and 83% Are Satisfied With Quality of Programs and Services They Receive*



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**Vancouver, BC** – A new Ipsos-Reid poll released today shows that overall, twice as many BC residents (60%) would prefer to see their property taxes go up than their municipal services cut (29%). This is a change from results to a similar question asked in Fall 2002 when residents were split over whether they would prefer a tax increase (47%) or cuts to services (47%). Beyond tax increases, residents offer lukewarm support to two much talked about alternative forms of municipal revenue generation. A bare majority (56%) would support using gambling revenues from casinos or slot machines and an even smaller majority (51%) would support increased or new user fees on programs and services. Less than a majority (40%) would support expanding or increasing pay parking. Overall, most residents (70%) say they get “good value” for their municipal tax dollars and 83% are satisfied with the overall level of programs and services they receive from their local municipality.



*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup> 2004. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 800 adult British Columbians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult British Columbian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual British Columbian population according to the 2001 Census.*

## ***Twice as Many Residents Would Rather See Their Property Tax Increase (60%) as Opposed to Cutting Services (29%)***

Many municipalities are preparing to enter their budget process for 2005 and as part of that process they will have to make tough decisions to balance taxation and service levels. As BC residents weigh in, twice as many say they would prefer a property tax increase (60%) as opposed to service cuts (29%). Those residents who favour tax increases are split as to whether they would like to see taxes increased to “enhance or expand services” (28%), or to “maintain service at current levels” (31%). For those who would rather see services cut, 15% say this should be done to “maintain current tax level” while a slightly smaller number (13%) would like to see services cut to “reduce taxes”. This represents a 13 point shift in attitudes compared to results to a similar question obtained in Fall 2002. At that time residents were evenly split with almost half (47%) saying they would like their municipality to “raise property taxes to maintain the same level of services they receive” and the same number (47%) saying they would like to “keep property taxes at the same level and reduce some services”.

- Vancouver residents (36%) are more likely than residents of the Rest of the Lower Mainland (25%) to say they would like to see taxes increased to expand services.
- Residents under the age of 35 (38%) are more likely to prefer service cuts than those aged 35 and older (24%).

- Residents earning \$30,000 or more per year (31%) are more likely to prefer service cuts than residents earning less than \$30,000 per year (22%).

### ***There is Bare Support For Alternative Forms of Revenue Such as Gambling (56%), User Fees (51%) - Even Fewer (40%) Support Increased Pay Parking***

As municipalities search for additional forms of revenue, many municipalities have considered implementing or increasing gambling, user fees and pay parking. BC residents have a lukewarm reaction to all three of these. In all, a bare majority (56%) of BC residents would support (32% “strongly support”, 24% “somewhat support”) and 42% would oppose (10% “somewhat oppose” and 32% “strongly oppose”) their municipality using “gambling revenues such as casinos or slot machines” to generate additional revenue.

- Vancouver residents (51%) are more likely than residents of the Rest of the Lower Mainland (39%) to oppose using gambling to generate revenue.
- Women (47%) are more likely than men (37%) to oppose using gambling to generate revenue.
- Opposition to gambling as a means of generating revenue increases with age from 36% among 18-35 year olds to 48% among those aged 55+.
- Opposition to gambling as a means of generating revenue also increases with education from 36% among those with a high school education or less to 49% among those with a university degree.
- Residents earning \$30,000 or more per year (40%) are less likely to oppose gambling than those earning less than \$30,000 per year (51%).

An even smaller majority (51%) says they would support “increased or new user fees on

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programs and services” while 45% would oppose. On this issue, opposition is much more intense than support. The number of residents who would “strongly oppose” (24%) increasing existing or introducing new user fees is almost twice as high as the percentage who would “strongly support” (13%) it.

- Residents with a university degree (58%) are more likely than those without a university degree (49%) to support increased or new user fees.
- Residents earning \$60,000 or more (59%) are more likely to support user fees than those earning less than \$30,000 per year (42%).

Expanded or increased pay parking receives the lowest level of support (40%), out of the three options tested. In all, 57% of residents oppose expanded or increased parking as an option to generate additional revenue. Opposition to this option is quite strong, with 38% of residents saying they “strongly oppose” compared with only 12% who “strongly support” (28% “somewhat support” and 19% “somewhat oppose”).

- Residents of the Interior (45%) are more likely than residents of the Rest of Lower Mainland (36%) to support expanded or increased pay parking.
- Residents aged 18-34 (47%) are more likely to support pay parking than residents aged 35 years and older (37%).

### ***Seven-in-Ten (70%) Say They Receive “Good Value” For Their Municipal Tax Dollars and 83% Are Satisfied With Quality of Programs and Services They Receive***

When BC residents think about the programs and services offered by their local municipality, a large majority (70%) say they get “good value” for the property taxes they pay. Although the overall results are similar to results obtained in Fall 2002 (67% said they get good value),

the percentage who say they get “very good value” has increased five points from 11% in 2002 to 16% today. Meanwhile, the percentage who say they get “fairly good value” remained essentially unchanged at 54% (it was 56% in 2002). In contrast, less than three-in-ten (28%) say they get “poor value” for the taxes they pay including 20% who say “fairly poor value” and 8% who say “very poor value”.

- Residents of the Lower Mainland (74%) are more likely than residents of the Interior (63%) to say they get good value for the property taxes they pay.
- Residents earning \$30,000 a year or more (73%) are more likely than those earning less than \$30,000 (63%) to say they get good value for their municipal tax dollars.
- Residents with a university degree (79%) are more likely than those without (66%) to say they get good value for their property taxes.

These results are set in the context of a high level of citizen satisfaction. In all, 83% of BC residents say that with the overall level and quality of services provided by their local municipality (23% are “very satisfied”, 59% are “somewhat satisfied”). Only a small number of residents (15%) say they are not satisfied, including 11% who are “not very satisfied” and 4% who are “not at all satisfied”. These results are virtually the same as those obtained in December 2001 when 82% of residents were “satisfied” and 17% were “dissatisfied” with the “level and quality of services” provided by their municipality.

- Residents of the Lower Mainland (87%) are more likely than residents of the Interior (76%) to say they are satisfied with the level and quality of municipal services they receive.
- Residents earning \$60,000 a year or more (87%) are more likely than those earning less than \$30,000 (76%) to say they are satisfied with municipal services.



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