

BC PUBLIC HAS A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT BC-STV

*Only Half (50%) Aware of Either Citizens' Assembly or
Upcoming Referendum*

*Among Those Aware: Nearly Two-Thirds (63%) Know "Very
Little" or "Nothing" About BC-STV*



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Vancouver, BC – With only three months to go until British Columbians vote on whether to adopt a new electoral system, a new Ipsos-Reid BC poll reveals that most residents are either unaware of the upcoming vote or know next to nothing about the proposed BC-STV system. Only half (50%) of British Columbians say they have read, seen or heard anything about the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform or the May 17 province-wide referendum on changing BC's electoral system. And awareness does not mean knowledge – nearly two-thirds (63%) of those aware of this issue say that they know "very little" or "nothing" about the proposed BC-STV electoral system.

The poll also asked those aware of the referendum to indicate how they might vote on the draft referendum question, "Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform?" The results favour the "Yes" side (51%) by more than a two-to-one margin over the "No" side (23%). Given the low level of awareness and knowledge of this issue, these early returns are unlikely to be a good predictor of the final outcome.

"It's all about education at this point," says Kyle Braid, Vice-President in the Vancouver office of Ipsos-Reid. "With awareness and knowledge so low, both sides still have a real opportunity to frame the debate to their advantage."

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid telephone poll conducted February 8 to 14, 2005 with a randomly selected sample of 800 adult British Columbia residents. The results are considered accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire BC adult 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 BC population according to the 2001 Census.

Only Half (50%) Aware of Either Citizens' Assembly or Upcoming Referendum

Depending on how you look at it, the cup is either half full or half empty in terms of awareness of the upcoming referendum on the future of BC's electoral system. Exactly half (50%) of BC residents say they have read, seen or heard something about the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform or the May 17 province-wide referendum on changing BC's electoral system.

Awareness of this issue is higher among men than women (56% vs. 45%). Awareness also increases with age (30% 18-34 years, 50% 35-54, 70% 55+), education (38% high school or less, 48% some post-secondary, 63% university degree) and household income (46% <\$60K, 59% \$60K+).

Among Those Aware: Two-Thirds (63%) Know "Very Little" or "Nothing" About BC-STV

Awareness does not necessarily translate into knowledge of the BC-STV, or single transferable vote electoral system that has been proposed by the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. In fact, nearly two-thirds (63%) of those aware of this issue say that they know "very little" (52%) or "nothing" (11%) about the proposed BC-STV electoral system. Only 3% of those aware say they know "a great deal" about the BC-STV. A further one-third (34%) say they know "a fair amount" about the BC-STV.

Among Those Aware: "Yes" to BC-STV Leads by Two-to-One Margin

The poll asked those aware of the referendum to indicate how they might vote on the draft referendum question, "Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform?" The results at this point favour the "Yes" side (51%) by more than a two-to-one margin over the "No" side (23%). Two-in-ten (22%) say they are not leaning in either direction at this point, while 5% say they will not vote in the referendum. Given the low level of awareness and knowledge of this issue, these early returns are not considered to be a good predictor of the final outcome.

Knowledge about the BC-STV has an impact on voting intentions. Those who claim to know “a great deal” or “a fair amount” about the BC-STV are more likely to support a change in the electoral system (66% “Yes”, 23% “No”) than those who know “very little” or “nothing” about the BC-STV (42% “Yes”, 23% “No”).

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