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maintaining winter roads*

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finance improved plowing of residential streets*



Ipsos Reid

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Calgary, AB – As summer vacations come to an end and Calgarians return to work and school, a new Ipsos Reid/Calgary Herald poll finds that nearly one-third (29%) of Calgarians have seen an overall increase in their typical daily commute time over the past five years. Another four-in-ten (41%) indicate their commute time has not changed during this time period, while two-in-ten (21%) have noticed an overall decrease in the length of their typical commute.

The poll also shows that despite increasing commute times, Calgary's transportation system, including roads, traffic lights, intersections, and other similar traffic infrastructure, receives high marks overall. In all, 71% of Calgarians rate The City's overall road system as 'very good' or 'good'. In contrast, only 29% provide a 'very poor' or 'poor' rating, which is less than half of those giving a positive rating.

Not only are Calgarians' overall perceptions of the road system positive, but the majority of residents also believe The City is doing a good job when it comes to the maintenance of winter roads. Overall, two-thirds (66%) of Calgarians say The City is

doing a 'very good' or 'good' job maintaining winter roads. This is double the proportion that rates The City's performance in this area as 'very poor' or 'poor' (total of 32%).

While there is some division among City residents over willingness to pay an additional fee to improve the plowing of residential streets, a slight majority indicates they would be unwilling to pay such a fee (55% 'no', 44% 'yes').

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Calgary Herald between September 2nd and September 7th, 2005 (no fielding on Labour Day). The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 500 adult Calgarians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 4.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Calgary 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 Calgarian population according to the 2001 Census data.

Nearly one-third (29%) of Calgarians have seen their commute time increase over the past five years

When asked to consider the length of their daily commute now as compared to five years ago, 29% of Calgarians report seeing an overall increase in their typical commute time during this time period, including 10% saying this has gotten 'much longer' and 19% saying 'somewhat longer'. Another 41% of Calgarians say the length of their daily commute has stayed 'about the same' over the past five years. Meanwhile, 21% of Calgarians report a decrease in their overall commute time now as compared to five years ago, with 14% saying 'much shorter' and 6% saying 'somewhat shorter'.

Currently, Calgarians' daily commute lasts just under half-an-hour on average (28.5 minutes). Those Calgarians who say their daily commute time has increased as compared to five years ago indicate this has been extended by an average of 20.6 minutes. When asked the reasons why their commute time has increased, half (52%)

point to an increase in 'traffic congestion'. Other reasons include 'moved farther from work' (18%) and 'changed jobs' (12%).

Meanwhile, turning our attention to those Calgarians who report an overall decrease in the length of their daily commute time shows that these residents say their daily commute is now 27 minutes shorter, on average, than it was five years ago. When asked the reasons behind this decreased commute time, responses do not focus on an overall reduction in traffic congestion. Instead, these Calgarians indicate they have taken steps to reduce their commute time, with a quarter (25%) saying they are now commuting to a 'different location'. Another 18% say they 'moved closer to work or school' and 11% say they 'changed jobs'.

- Calgarians living in the Southwest are the most likely to report an increase in their daily commute time (37%), while those in the Northeast are the least likely to say so (19%).
- Calgarians who have lived in The City for 11 to 30 years are the most likely to have seen an increase in their daily commute time (37%), compared to just a quarter of those who have lived in the area for 10 years or less (24%) or for more than 30 years (25%).
- Homeowners are more likely than renters to report a longer commute time now as compared to five years ago (33% vs. 21%).
- Calgarians who typically drive or take transit to work or school are more likely than those who rely on some other mode of transportation to report an increase in their daily commute time (34%, 33% and 14%, respectively).
- Younger Calgarians (aged 18 to 34) are the most likely to say their overall commute time has decreased (31%, compared to just 13% of those aged 35 to 54 and 18% of those aged 55 or older).

Yet, Calgary's road system receives high marks overall (71% good)

Despite increasing commute times, the majority of Calgarians rate The City's transportation system (including roads, traffic lights, intersections, and other similar traffic infrastructure) highly. In all, seven-in-ten (71%) Calgarians rate the 'overall road system in Calgary' as 'very good' (5%) or 'good' (66%). This is more than double the proportion rating Calgary's transportation system poorly (29%, including 4% saying 'very poor' and 25% saying 'poor').

Calgarians also give high marks to specific aspects of The City's transportation system. Overall, the highest rating is noted for 'speed limits in Calgary', with 84% of Calgarians rating these as 'very good' (9%) or 'good' (74%). The aspect of Calgary's transportation system receiving the next highest rating is the 'traffic light system' (74% overall, 9% 'very good', 64% 'good'), followed by the 'quality of the roads in Calgary' (69% overall, 8% 'very good', 60% 'good'), the 'design of intersections' (66% overall, 5% 'very good', 61% 'good'), and the 'design of on and off ramps' (63% overall, 10% 'very good', 53% 'good').

- No significant differences in opinion are noted across the key demographic variables.

Majority of Calgarians (66%) think The City is doing a good job maintaining winter roads

As Calgarians prepare for the upcoming winter season, the issue of winter road maintenance becomes a more immediate concern. Overall, Calgarians are generally pleased with The City's maintenance of winter roads, with two-thirds (66%) rating The City's performance in this area as 'very good' (10%) or 'good' (56%). This is double the proportion that feels The City is performing poorly in this regard (32% overall, including 8% saying 'very poor' and 24% saying 'poor').

- Calgarians living in the Northwest are the most likely to say The City does a 'very good' or 'good' job maintaining winter roads (75%, compared to 66% of

those in the Southwest, 63% of those in the Southeast, and 57% of those in the Northeast).

- Men are more likely than women to say The City does a 'very good' or 'good' job maintaining winter roads (72% vs. 60%).
- Calgarians who have lived in The City for more than 30 years are the most likely to say The City does a 'very good' or 'good' job maintaining winter roads (76%, compared to 62% of those who have lived in the areas for 10 years or less).

Only 44% of Calgarians willing to pay an additional fee to finance improved plowing of residential streets

When asked if they would be willing to pay an additional fee to The City of Calgary (roughly \$40 per household per year) to finance improved plowing of residential streets, a slightly majority of Calgarians indicate they would not be willing to do so (55% 'no'). Nonetheless, there is a relatively large proportion of residents (44%) who say they would be willing to pay such a fee.

- Younger and middle-aged Calgarians are the most willing to pay an additional fee to finance improved plowing of residential streets (48% of those aged 18 to 34 and 47% of those aged 35 to 54, compared to just 33% of those aged 55 plus).
- Newer residents to The City are also more willing to pay an additional fee (50% of those who have lived in the area for 10 years or less, compared to just 33% of those who have lived in Calgary for more than 30 years).
- Renters are more willing than homeowners to pay an additional fee for improved plowing of residential streets (53% vs. 42%).
- Unwillingness to pay an additional fee for improved plowing of residential streets is higher in men (60%) than in women (50%).

-30-

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