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Vancouver, BC - The first 'gold medal' of the Vancouver Olympics apparently goes to the creative team behind last Friday's 2010 Opening Ceremony. An Ipsos Reid poll found an overwhelming 89% of British Columbians who said they watched the ceremonies gave the event a positive rating. The Opening Ceremony for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games was an event that followed day-long activity through the streets of Vancouver as large crowds – both supporters and protestors – followed the Olympic flame in the torch relay before its arrival at BC Place Stadium.

"Friday's highly anticipated Opening Ceremony clearly struck a chord with the people of British Columbia," says Steve Mossop, President of Market Research Canada West for Ipsos. "Olympic enthusiasm in the province is burning just as brightly as the Olympic flame."

There is little dispute over the reaction British Columbians had to the Opening Ceremony. Nine in ten British Columbians who viewed the ceremony gave it a rating of excellent (57%) or good (32%) and only 10% gave a rating of fair (10%) or poor (1%). Similarly, nine in ten believed that the event made them feel proud to be Canadian (63% excellent and 27% good).

All aspects of the Opening Ceremony received excellent and good ratings by over eight in ten viewers including the overall enjoyment of the event (88%), the way Vancouver and the province were portrayed (88%), the selection of the stars and celebrities (88%), and the selection of Wayne Gretzky as the final torchbearer (85%). The only aspect that received a lower rating overall was the way the flame was lit, which is not surprising given a technical glitch in the way the cauldron emerged. Just over seven in ten gave an excellent or good rating for the joint lighting of the cauldron by the athletes Nancy Greene, Catriona LeMay Doan, Steve Nash and Wayne Gretzky. About one in four (26%) gave a fair (15%) or poor (11%) rating on the lighting of the flame.

It appears that excitement levels for the Olympic Games are rising among British Columbians after the initially hesitant anticipation about the Games prior to their start. Nearly eight in ten British Columbians (78%) are very or somewhat excited about the Games -- a full 25 points higher from a poll released last week (53% very/somewhat excited). About one in five (22%) remain less than enthusiastic about the Olympic Games (14% not very and 8% not at all excited).

This rising excitement levels in the host province have translated into a growing number saying that they are currently following the Olympic events. Over seven in ten (74%) British Columbians are following the games very or somewhat closely. This is compared to a week ago where six in ten British Columbians (60%) said they would follow the games very or somewhat closely. The remaining one in four (26%) are not planning to take in much of the Games (18% are not following very closely and 8% not at all).

“British Columbians are very proud of every aspect of the games thus far, and the level of excitement continues to build as the Games progress,” adds Mossop

“Ratings are through the roof on nearly every element of the Games this far, the optimism is pervasive”.

British Columbians’ views on the way VANOC is running the games are fairly positive after the first weekend of Olympic events. About seven in ten (73%) give VANOC an excellent (26%) or good (47%) rating overall. The remaining one in three (27%) give VANOC a fair rating (17%) or a poor rating (10%). This is a dramatic improvement from the pre-Olympic poll, which showed ratings of 15% excellent, and 41% good.

In comparison, British Columbians give a high rating (87%) to local residents and businesses as hosts to the games.

Lastly, even views towards the highly anticipated traffic congestion have abated. Six in ten (63%) feel the travel aspect for the Olympics is excellent (16%) or good (47%). A further one in four (26%) say it is fair and one in ten (11%) give it a poor rating overall. This is also an improvement over the 5% excellent and 24% good rating prior to the start of the games.

This is Ipsos Reid’s second poll in an ongoing series that will measure the momentum of games through the views of British Columbian residents over the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. The next poll will be released early the week of February 22nd, 2010.

These are the findings of an online study conducted by Ipsos Reid from February 14, 2010 to February 16, 2010 with 1,455 British Columbians. The results were statistically weighted to ensure that the age and gender composition of respondents reflects that of the actual British Columbian population according to 2006 Census data. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within 2.57 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of British Columbia been polled.



Ipsos Reid

The polling was conducted using Ipsos Reid's "Voice of the West Interactive Forum" – an online panel of nearly 6, 000 British Columbians who have been randomly recruited to match the overall characteristics of the adult residents of the province.

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