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Vancouver, BC – With the 2010 Olympic Winter Games entering the home stretch, Canada's medal count is lower than expected and the organizers have had several legitimate set-backs. However, results from the most recent Ipsos Reid poll shows that a majority of British Columbians remain enthusiastic and are actively taking part in the Olympic festivities.

Similar to a week ago, more than seven in ten (73%) of British Columbians are very/somewhat excited about the 2010 Winter Games, a slight drop from 78% last week. About one third of residents remains not very excited (15%) or not at all excited about the Games (12%), compared to one in five residents who were not very excited (14%) or not at all excited (8%) last week. There has been no change in the large number of British Columbians that are taking in the Games. Similar to last week, three in four say they are following the games very or somewhat closely (75% this week, 74% last week), while one in four say they are not following the games closely or not at all (25% this week, 26% last week).

Participation in the activities and events is notably high among the two thirds (64%) of local BC residents surveyed who live in the Olympic area (Greater Vancouver/Whistler corridor). Even if they are not among the one in five (19%) who are fortunate enough to have attended an Olympic sporting event live, a majority of the Olympic area residents say they have been to an activity or event in downtown Vancouver (57%) and nearly half say they have been to an activity or event in the local community where they live (49%). The Olympic area locals also appear to be part of the large crowds and long line-ups at cultural venues, as nearly one in four (38%) say they have visited one of the various country or province houses that are part of the 2010 Winter Olympic festivities. A small minority has attended a victory ceremony at BC Place stadium (9%) or has traveled to attend an activity or event in Whistler (6%).

The 2010 Winter Olympic Games have not been without their fair share of controversies. A majority of British Columbians feel that the controversies are fairly significant issues impacting the Games. By far, the two issues that are most concerning to more than eight in ten British Columbians are the death of the young Georgian luger, Nodar Kumaritashvili, (51% major, 32% moderate issue) and the lack of snow on Cypress (43% major, 39% moderate issue). A further seven in ten BC residents feel that the warmer than seasonal temperatures (70%) is a major (32%) or moderate issue (38%) impacting the Games. About two thirds (65%) feel that the security fence around the Olympic cauldron is a major (30%) or moderate issue (35%) impacting the games. Slightly more than half of British Columbians (52%) view these two security incidents as significant issues impacting the Games: the protestors in Vancouver's downtown core (19% major issue/33% moderate issue) and crowd control at the LiveCity Yaletown concert (12% major issue/40% moderate issue).

While the controversies are seen to be pretty significant, not all British Columbians agree with the international media's criticisms for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Nearly half of Olympic host residents (47%) think that the criticisms are sensationalistic and not an accurate reflection of the Games at all. A further four in ten BC residents (42%) agree that much of it is overblown, but admit that the criticisms are partly legitimate and that a little improvement is needed. Slightly more than one in ten (11%) believe that the criticisms by the international media are mostly legitimate and that much improvement is needed over the rest of the Games.

Steve Mossop, President of Ipsos Reid Canada West says, "Despite the controversies and medal disappointments, British Columbia residents remain upbeat, engaged, and are enthusiastic about the Olympic events that are happening in the Province. The level of participation and involvement is pretty significant".

Based on Canada's medal count so far (11), it is not surprising that British Columbians' hope for Canada's top placement in medals for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games is waning. In fact, the expectation for Canada to better the medal performance in the Turin 2006 Olympic Winter Games has completely reversed from last week. The net positive momentum score has dropped from +50 last week (difference between those who expected Canada to achieve more medals 54% compared to less medals 4%) to -22 this week (15% expecting more compared to 37% expecting less medals). However, a large number of British Columbians (48% this week compared to 42% last week) remain optimistic and expect Canada to achieve the same number of medals as in Turin 2006; 24 medals in total.



This is Ipsos Reid's third poll in an ongoing series that will measure the momentum of games through the views of British Columbian residents over the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The next poll will be released on Monday after the Games have finished.

These are the findings of an online study conducted by Ipsos Reid from February 21, 2010 to February 23, 2010 with 1,274 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 2.75 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of British Columbia been polled.

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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For more information on this news release, please contact:

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