



Release

Large Majority of Canadians Unaware of Recent Reforms in Party Financing Law

Canadians have a somewhat positive view of parties, but don't know they're paying for them

September 7, 2005 – Almost three quarters of Canadians are unaware that taxpayers are funding political parties at the federal level, according to a SES/Crossing Boundaries/Public Policy Forum poll released today.

When asked if they were aware or unaware that “each federal political party received \$1.75 of taxpayers’ money per year for every vote they received in the most recent federal election,” only 25.2 percent of Canadians indicated that they knew of the change.

“The final element of former Prime Minister Chrétien’s ‘Legacy Agenda’ went largely unnoticed,” said SES President Nik Nanos. “Were future governments to consider further amendments to Canada’s party financing legislation, they would have to include a significant public education component to their efforts because Canadians simply don’t know they are now paying for parties.”

The poll also asked Canadians their view on parties in general. Almost half of those polled felt parties were either very effective (4 percent) or somewhat effective (41.7 percent). Just over fourteen percent of Canadians thought parties were neither effective nor ineffective, and one in three Canadians had a negative view of party performance.

“This poll is a mixed blessing for parties,” added Graham Fox, Vice President at the Public Policy Forum. “On the one hand, they probably do better than one would have guessed given the widespread view that Canadians are cynical about politics in general. But on the other, their position is tenuous at best. As it is, virtually no one thinks they are very effective, and one has to wonder if Canadians would be as generous in their assessment if they knew they were paying for them. My warning to all federal parties would be that it is their responsibility to make a positive case for the work they do and the role they play – and right now, their message is not getting through. They may not yet be out, but they are certainly down.”

“There are a number of messages here for governments who are thinking about democratic reform,” noted Don Lenihan, CEO of the Crossing Boundaries National Council. “Parties are a cornerstone of our democracy. If we want to overcome the



democratic deficit, they must be part of the fix. For example, governments might want to earmark some part of the \$1.75 for other purposes, like policy development. But they need to make sure they are bringing Canadians along. Based on these results, we cannot assume public support for such a change.”

The polling company SES Research conducted a random telephone survey of 1,000 adult Canadian between Aug. 4 and Aug. 8, 2005. The research was registered with the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association of which SES Research is a member. The results were produced for Crossing Boundaries and the Public Policy Forum.

The poll is considered accurate to within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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September 7, 2005

Canadian Political Parties

SES/Crossing Boundaries/Public Policy Forum Poll

The SES national random telephone survey of 1,000 Canadians completed between August 4th and August 8th, 2005. The survey is accurate to within 3.1 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20. The margin of accuracy will be wider for sub samples. Percentages may exceed 100 due to rounding.

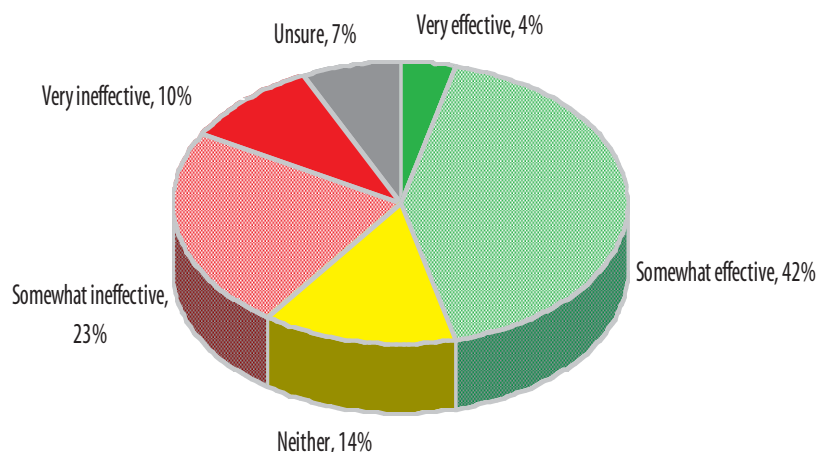
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About SES

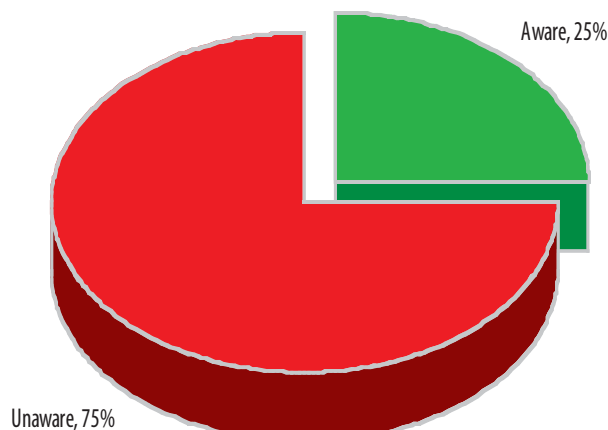
Established in 1987, SES Canada Research Inc. is a full service public opinion research and management consulting firm. SES is regularly called upon by corporate, government and para-public clients in Canada and the United States to conduct research and provide strategic advice.

For more information on our full range of services please visit our website www.sesresearch.com or contact: Mr. Nikita Nanos at (613) 234-4666 ext.237 or nnanos@sesresearch.com

Do you think that political parties have been very effective, somewhat effective, neither effective nor ineffective, somewhat ineffective or very ineffective in fulfilling roles you identified?



Are you aware or unaware that each federal political party received \$1.75 of taxpayers' money per year for every vote they received in the most recent federal election?





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About the Partners

SES Research

Canada's leading corporate, government and political decision-makers trust SES to conduct research and provide strategic advice on a full range of market challenges and public opinion issues. In addition to media polling and public opinion research, SES also specializes in public policy polling and measuring retail behaviour and customer satisfaction. SES draws on a number of research tools to ensure relevant and comprehensive results, from telephone surveys through to online research. The firm proved itself to be a national leader in opinion and market research during Canada's recent federal election when it was recognized by the national media for providing the most accurate polling results.

(Contact: Nikita Nanos 613.234.4666 :: www.sesresearch.com)

The Crossing Boundaries National Council

The Crossing Boundaries National Council (CBNC) is a not-for-profit national forum whose mission is to foster the development of Canada as an information society through the transformation of government and governance.

The Council helps Canadians and their governments understand and prepare for the Information Age by fostering debate and action on the special challenges and opportunities it poses for them.

CBNC is co-chaired by the Hon. Tony Valeri, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, and Dan Bader, Deputy Minister, Municipal Affairs, Government of Alberta. It is made up of about 40 members, including senior public servants and elected representatives from each of the 10 provinces and the federal government, as well as representatives from territorial and municipal governments and the Aboriginal community. The initiative is sponsored in part through a partnership with the Social Science and Humanities Research Council under its Initiative on the New Economy program. (Contact: Don Lenihan 613.795.6828 :: www.crossingboundaries.ca)

The Public Policy Forum

The Public Policy Forum is an independent, non-profit organisation aimed at improving the quality of government in Canada through better dialogue between the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Forum's members, drawn from businesses, federal and provincial governments, the voluntary sector and the labour movement, share a common belief that an efficient and effective public service is a key element in ensuring our quality of life and global competitive position.

Established in 1987, the Public Policy Forum has gained a reputation as a trusted, neutral facilitator, capable of bringing together a wide range of stakeholders in productive dialogue. Its research program provides a neutral base to inform collective decision-making. By promoting more information sharing and greater linkages between governments and other sectors, the Public Policy Forum ensures that Canada's future directions become more dynamic, co-ordinated and responsive to the challenges and opportunities that lie before us. (Contact : Graham Fox 613.238.7160 :: www.ppforum.ca)



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About the Crossing Boundaries Democratic Renewal Project

Crossing Boundaries, in partnership with the Public Policy Forum and SES Research, will be using this year to lead discussions with experts and citizens about the prospects and challenges for renewing Canadian democracy.

The project will have three parts:

- **Citizen Engagement**-The Crossing Boundaries National Council is organizing small deliberative discussions with citizens across Canada, focusing on how to improve the relationship between elected officials and citizens. Universities and community organizations will also be engaged in the discussion, as the Council seeks to connect with venues and people to present its learning and get feedback from a wider audience. Combining the views of experts and citizens gathered over the past several years, the report will then be published in Spring 2006.
- **Project on Political Parties**-In the last 30 years political parties have shifted away from being generators of ideas and brokers of national policies to being electoral machines. This has left a void in Canadian public policy development. The Public Policy Forum, in partnership with the Crossing Boundaries National Council, will engage Canadians and experts across the country in a discussion of how the transition to the Information Age creates an opportunity for political parties to regain some of their traditional role as brokers of ideas and forums for public debate and discussion. The consultation will be followed by Forum on National Political Parties in May 2006.
- **Public Opinion Research**-In partnership with SES Research, this work is gauging the views of Canadians about democratic renewal as well as political parties, informing and shaping the work of CBNC and the Public Policy Forum.

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