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MEDIA RELEASE

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SUPPORT FOR CARBON TAX IS INCREASING

New research showing that the BC carbon tax is gaining support within the province and across Canada was among the key findings revealed at a three-day forum hosted by the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) and Sustainable Prosperity in Vancouver this week.

Around 250 people participated in the “Decoding Carbon Pricing” forum (8-10 June), which heard from a wide range of climate change experts and policy-makers from government and the business, academic and NGO communities. The forum is the first of an annual PICS series.

Environics’ founder Michael Adams presented the forum with a new *Canadian Environmental Barometer* public opinion survey conducted by Environics Research, which has been publicly released today. It found that BC’s groundbreaking carbon tax—which has had a rough ride since being introduced almost 12 months ago—has recaptured public support over the past year, not only in BC, but across the country.

In BC, close to half (48 per cent) of residents now say they strongly or somewhat support the tax on all carbon-based fuels used by consumers and businesses as a way to encourage reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. This compares with 47 per cent who oppose it.

These findings reflect increased support since last July (shortly after the tax came into effect) when only 40 per cent expressed support versus 56 per cent who opposed it. Current support for the tax is close to, but not quite fully back to, the level achieved in February 2008 soon after the measure was first announced by the BC government.

BC is the only jurisdiction that has implemented a carbon tax to date, but results from the survey reveal that Canadians across the country are also warming up to this approach to fighting climate change. Support has increased since last July in every province, most noticeably in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Across the country, support approaches 50 per cent from the Atlantic provinces to Manitoba, and remains somewhat lower in Saskatchewan (41 per cent) and Alberta (44 per cent).

The poll's trends back the comments made by speakers at the forum. Delegates heard widespread reaction from BC's business community, NGOs and economists that the carbon tax is a well-designed and efficient policy, and is starting to stimulate investment in clean technologies and actions that can significantly reduce GHG emissions.

However, PICS Forum co-chair and Simon Fraser University professor Nancy Olewiler says speakers also expressed concern about the current lack of action at the national level on pricing carbon. "There are fears Canada may be competitively disadvantaged in the face of fast-developing climate change initiatives in the US. We simply cannot sit back and wait for the US to develop its policy without having our own concerted federal action on climate change."

Ottawa University law professor Stewart Elgie from Sustainable Prosperity says the forum has highlighted the widespread support for carbon pricing, and it is now time to act. "We need to put a price on carbon nationally - not just within BC. BC has shown the kind of strong leadership we need to see across all of Canada if we are to build a stronger, cleaner economy, and if Canada is to have any real say in global climate decisions."

"This latest Environics survey demonstrates that it is premature to "write off" carbon taxes as a failed climate change policy in Canada," comments Dr. Keith Neuman, group vice president with Environics Research. "Taxes of any kind will never be vote-winners, but the outcome of the recent BC provincial election validates Premier Gordon Campbell's decision to stick with a tax-based approach to fighting climate change in the face of serious opposition."

For a copy of the full Environics report and information on the methodology used visit: http://www.environicsresearch.com/media_room/

PICS is hosted and led by the University of Victoria in collaboration with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University and the University of Northern British Columbia. PICS was created in 2008 by the provincial government to: increase understanding of the magnitude and patterns of climate change; evaluate its physical, economic, and social implications; assess options and develop solutions; and communicate climate change issues to government, industry and the general public.

The forum co-sponsor, Sustainable Prosperity, is a new policy research centre that aims to build a healthy environment and economy.

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