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## **PUBLICATION BANS INEFFECTIVE, CANADIANS SAY: SURVEY**

### **Few Canadians, however, looked on the Internet for banned information from the Gomery Inquiry**

**Toronto, April 11, 2005** – A new survey by TNS Canadian Facts suggests that explosive testimony in the Gomery Inquiry is having a significant impact on the voting intentions of online Canadians, even though few online Canadians are so engaged in the story that they actively sought out the banned information on the Internet.

TNS Canadian Facts conducted the survey Thursday night when Justice Gomery partially lifted the publication ban. For several days up until then, the sponsorship scandal was unfolding in Ottawa and Montreal with many of the facts hidden from public view.

Much of the information subsequently released was available on the Internet, posted on U.S.-based blogs. Although those who did look for banned testimony on the Internet were largely successful at finding the information, few Canadians were motivated enough to search for it themselves. Just over one in ten (12%) online Canadians looked for the banned material on the Internet and about two in ten (23%) knew someone who had searched for the information.

“Those close to a political controversy tend to overestimate how motivated or interested the average person is in the story,” said Richard Jenkins, a vice-president and corporate director of public opinion research at TNS Canadian Facts. “In many ways, the publication ban was effective in reducing widespread exposure to the facts, even as it encouraged speculation and rumour.”

In fact, there are a number of indications that the scandal is not overwhelming public interest or attention. A small minority (12%) is following the inquiry closely but almost two in five (38%) are not following the inquiry much at all. In fact, when asked whether they knew about the Gomery Inquiry, 27% said they did not.

Still, the banned testimony is having an impact. More than two in five (42%) online Canadians say that the Gomery inquiry results will have a high or very high impact on their vote in the next federal election.

“The startling revelations in the recent testimony are clearly shaking the fortunes of the parties and making an election more likely,” said Jenkins.

When it comes to the use of publication bans in judicial hearings, online Canadians tend to question their effectiveness:

- 69% believe that publication bans unnecessarily limit the public’s right to know and 56% think that they are ineffective.
- More than half (52%), however, acknowledge that publication bans protect the rights of people to a fair trial.
- Although the widespread ability to access the information over the Internet was said to be a factor in lifting the ban, few online Canadians are confident that the information was available (42% do not know).

“Reflecting the same kinds of considerations that judges must make, many people perceive the conflicting values at stake. Given the widespread belief that publication bans are ineffective, it is probably not surprising that this ban was lifted,” said Jenkins. Of course, in the coming weeks several more witnesses are scheduled to provide evidence to the inquiry that will also be protected by publication ban for some undetermined time.

TNS Canadian Facts conducted the survey using the firm's national weekly Internet omnibus service, TNS Express Online. E-mail invitations were sent at 5 p.m. EDT on April 7 to 3,200 members of the TNS Canadian Facts Internet panel comprising more than 70,000 Canadian Internet users who have agreed to participate in survey research from time to time. In total, 971 online interviews were completed in 24 hours, a 30 per cent response rate. The survey results are nationally representative of the online Canadian adult population and are considered accurate to within 3.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

TNS Canadian Facts ([www.tns-cf.com](http://www.tns-cf.com)) is one of Canada's most prestigious full-service marketing, opinion and social research organizations.

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TNS is a leading global provider of market information. The company collects, analyzes and interprets information to help its clients better understand the needs and wants of their customers. TNS provides research, advice and insight on market segmentation, advertising and communications, new product development, brand performance and stakeholder management. The company is also one of the leading providers of social and political polling.

From its global network, which spans 70 countries, TNS provides local expertise and knowledge, together with internationally consistent information and analysis to multi-national organizations.

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