URBAN POLICY TRENDS

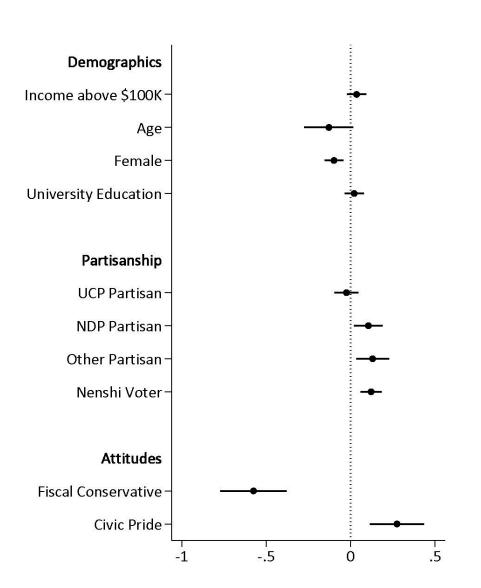## UNDERSTANDING THE OLYMPIC BID PLEBISCITE

By Jack Lucas

On November 13, 2018, Calgarians voted 56-44 to terminate the city's bid for the 2026 Winter Olympics. To understand who supported and opposed the bid, The School of Public Policy partnered with the Canadian Municipal Election Study to survey Calgarians in the weeks that followed the vote. Here's our first look at the data.[1]

We focus on three sets of factors that may have shaped Calgarians' feelings about the Olympic bid – these are listed along the left-hand side of the figure. The first are demographic variables like age, gender and income. The second are political variables such as provincial partisanship and support for Nenshi in the 2017 election. The final two factors are attitudes: support for spending cuts across a range of municipal services (fiscal conservatism) and strongly identifying as Calgarian (civic pride). We use regression analysis to describe the distinctive relationship between each factor and Olympic bid support.

Beside each factor in the figure is a black circle, which represents our estimate of the relationship between that factor and Olympic support or opposition; the circle tells us how much we'd expect the probability of support to increase or decrease if we compared two people who differed in that factor (say, income) but who were similar in the other

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[1] The survey was carried out by Forum Research between November 14 and December 13, 2018. For technical documentation along with data and replication files, see https://dataverse.scholarsportal.info/dataverse/jacklucas

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factors listed in the figure. Circles to the right of the vertical dotted line mean the factor is linked to higher probability of Olympic bid support, and circles to the left mean the factor is linked to lower probability of support. The black lines attached to each circle are 95% confidence intervals; if these lines touch the dotted vertical line, the relationship is not statistically significant.

What do we discover? Some of the demographic variables, such as gender, along with most of the partisan and political variables, are statistically significant.

All else equal, women were less likely than men to support the bid, and NDP and "other" (Liberal, Alberta Party) partisans were more likely to support the bid than UCP partisans and non-partisans. 2017 Nenshi voters were also much more likely to support the bid than those who did not vote for Nenshi. Calgarians' demographic backgrounds and political affiliations were clearly related to their plebiscite vote.

The most striking factors, however, are the attitudes. Those who strongly identify as Calgarians were substantially more likely to support the Olympic bid. Strong fiscal conservatives, on the other hand – those who felt the city should be spending less money on a wide variety of city services – were powerfully inclined to vote against the bid. For these fiscal conservatives – of whom there were many – the Olympics carried a price tag that was simply not worth paying.