



Gearing Up for Canada's 150th: Canadians enthusiastic to celebrate
150!Canada Conference kicks off planning for Canada's Sesquicentennial

March 10, 2008, OTTAWA – Eighty per cent of Canadians say it is important that Canada begin preparing to significantly mark the milestone of the country's 150th birthday in 2017 through national and community celebrations, according to the MasterCard 150!Canada Poll released today.

The survey reveals broad public support for Canada celebrating its sesquicentennial, and it's a sentiment that is not limited to those who remember or have heard about the celebrations that accompanied Canada's Centennial in 1967.

The poll findings were unveiled in advance of this week's 150!Canada Conference hosted by the Institute for Public Administration of Canada and public engagement firm MASS LBP in Ottawa March 11 – 12, 2010.

"This conference will serve as the first big meeting to begin imagining and planning the 150th celebration of Canadian Confederation," said Peter MacLeod, Principal, MASS LBP. "It's an opportunity for public servants, business leaders, social innovators, and artists to gather in Ottawa and share ideas about how Canadians will celebrate the next great year in Canadian history."

In response to the question of what aspects of Canada should be celebrated at 150, the most common response pertained to Canadians' beliefs and values. Half of those polled identified with a core belief or value, principally multiculturalism (27 per cent), but also the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, freedom, democracy and tolerance (24 per cent).

Other themes included Canada's people and history, for example its Aboriginal heritage, Canadians' "niceness" (22 per cent), notable achievements such as maintaining a safe and peaceful country, Canada's arts and culture, and health care system (17 per cent), Canada's resources and natural beauty (10 per cent), and its role/position in the world (9 per cent).

"Overall, these findings suggest that Canadians are most proud to celebrate the current realities of the country as it is today," said Keith Neuman, Group Vice President - Public Affairs, Environics Research.

Although Canada's sesquicentennial is seven years away, 80 per cent of Canadians say they are interested in participating in events to take place in their community and region. Notably, such interest is not dependent on fond memories of Canada's Centennial as interest in the 150th is as strong among those who have no memory or awareness of

what happened in 1967. Six in 10 Canadians say they would be prepared to volunteer in some way to help make local events a success.

“MasterCard Canada has a strong track record of gauging what Canadians consider priceless about the country they live in,” said Jennifer Reed, Vice President, Government Relations and Communications, MasterCard Canada. “Looking ahead to 2017, Canadians from coast to coast are enthusiastic about celebrating the sesquicentennial and what makes Canada a great country in the 21st century. That’s why we were pleased to sponsor this research in support of the 150! Canada Conference.”

Canada’s last big bash - 1967

The 1967 Centennial celebration, which took place nearly a half-century ago, has had a lasting impact on Canadians. Six in ten Canadians over 18-years-old recall this event, either directly or from hearing about it from others.

What Canadians remember most about the 1967 Centennial are national events, principally Expo 67 (35 per cent), commemorative coins (5 per cent) and the Canada song (four per cent) as well as local celebrations (8 per cent). Three-quarters of those with direct recall of the celebrations can remember some aspect of it. Perhaps more notably, a majority of those with direct recall can still remember how they felt about 1967, with the predominant sentiments being pride in Canada (27 per cent) and happiness or joy (12 per cent).

The Centennial year helped define Canada's modern identity. It focused Canadians' sense of public imagination and it made citizens feel proud to be Canadian.

Centennial celebrations took foresight and planning. The Centennial year succeeded because millions of Canadians worked with thousands of dedicated public servants to make it a year to remember.

“Since 1967, Canada and the world have changed. Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017 is an opportunity to look back and to look forward as we assert our ambitions for an even better Canada,” added MacLeod.

“Canada’s sesquicentennial is an important milestone in the history of Canada and it is an opportunity for all of us to learn about our country and about ourselves and to collectively define our future”, said Gabriel Sékaly, CEO of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada.

“As an organization that promotes excellence in public service, IPAC believes we must work together to build an even better Canada. This conference signals the start of a new era of nation building.”

About the survey

The survey was completed by Environics Research. Interviews were conducted by telephone and surveyed 1,001 Canadians 18 years of age and over between February 22 and February 24, 2010. Results to a survey of this size can be considered accurate to within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

About the 150!Canada Conference, March 11 / 12 (Media passes on request)

Organized by IPAC and MASS LBP, more than 300 delegates from across the country are gathering at the National Arts Centre to hear from 24 remarkable Canadians including Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, Roch Carrier, Mary Simon, General Romeo Dallaire, Rita Cox, Peter Aykroyd, Monica Patten, Marlo Reynolds, and Sudjit Choudhry, and begin planning the country's Sesquicentennial celebrations.

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