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CANADIANS LACK KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PRIME MINISTERS

Six in Ten (60%) Fail Three Question Quiz About Three of Canada's Most Famous Prime Ministers

Friday, January 11, 2002

Only Half (51%) Can Identify John A. Macdonald as Canada's First Prime Minister, 49% Know that Trudeau Invoked War Measures Act and 19% Know Laurier was First Francophone PM

Canadians are Divided on Whether a Public Holiday Recognizing Prime Ministers is a "Good Idea" (47%) or a "Bad Idea" (52%)

Toronto, ON

— An Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Dominion Institute and released today shows that Canadians lack basic knowledge about their Prime Ministers. Six in ten (60%) Canadians failed a three question quiz about three of Canada's most famous Prime Ministers, including 34% who did not answer any of the questions correctly. On individual questions only 51% can name John A. Macdonald as Canada's first Prime Minister, 49% know that it was Pierre Trudeau who invoked the War Measures Act and only one in five (19%) know that Wilfrid Laurier was Canada's first francophone Prime Minister. Canadians are divided on the issue of whether it is a good (47%) or bad (52%) idea to have a new public holiday to commemorate Prime Ministers who are no longer living.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Dominion Institute between December 14th and 20th, 2001. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1000 adult Canadians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1996 Census data.

Six in Ten (60%) Fail Three Question Quiz About Three of Canada's Most Famous Prime Ministers

Most Canadians (60%) failed a short three-question quiz about three of Canada's most famous Prime Ministers, including a third (34%) who could not answer any of the questions correctly and a quarter (26%) who got only one question correct. In contrast, 39% passed the quiz with a quarter (25%) correctly answering two questions and only 14% correctly answering all three questions.

Men (47%) were more likely than women (32%) to pass the quiz.

Older Canadians (56%) were more likely to pass than middle aged (39%) or younger (28%) Canadians.



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Only Half (51%) Can Identify John A. Macdonald as Canada's First Prime Minister, 49% Know that Trudeau Invoked War Measures Act and 19% Know Laurier was First Francophone PM

Results for individual questions show that on an open ended basis, only half (51%) of Canadians could name John A. Macdonald as the "Scottish immigrant, skilled lawyer and Father of Confederation who became Canada's first Prime Minister". A similar number (49%) correctly named Pierre Trudeau as the Prime Minister who, when invoking the War Measures Act, famously declared: "Just watch me". Finally, only one in five (19%) Canadians could correctly identify Wilfrid Laurier as "Canada's first francophone Prime Minister who optimistically proclaimed: the 20th century will belong to Canada". Instead, Canadians were more likely (23%) to attribute this to Pierre Trudeau.

On every question, Albertans were most likely to get the answers correct (66%, 61%, 23%).

Similarly, older Canadians (60%, 71%, 23%) were more likely than middle aged (52%, 49%, 22%) or younger Canadians (46%, 30%, 13%) to answer these questions correctly.

On all questions, men (55%, 58%, 27%) outperformed women (48%, 40%, 12%) often by a wide margin.

Canadians are Divided on Whether a Public Holiday Recognizing Prime Ministers is a "Good Idea" (47%) or a "Bad Idea" (52%)

Public opinion is split on whether it is a "good" (47%) or "bad" (52%) idea to create a new public holiday to commemorate Prime Ministers who are no-longer living. While 47% think a new holiday is a good idea because "we need to do more to celebrate the accomplishments of important people in Canadian history", a slightly larger number (52%) agreed with the opposing viewpoint, saying a new holiday is a bad idea because "the accomplishments of past Prime Ministers are not important enough to justify creating a new holiday".

Support for creating a new public holiday to honour past Prime Ministers is strongest in Ontario (55%) and Atlantic Canada (54%) and weakest in Quebec (35%).

Respondents aged 18 to 34 are almost twice as likely (59%) to support the creation of a new public holiday versus those 55 and older (32%).

To view the complete media release and tables, please download the PDF files.

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