

Canadians have a long-distance romance with the Arctic and polar bears, but hope to visit in future, says survey

78 per cent believe Arctic research is as important as military spending

Churchill, MB and Toronto, ON – February 24, 2011 – Polar bears (37 per cent) edge out climate change (29 per cent) as the first thing Canadians think of when asked about the Arctic, significantly ahead of Santa Claus (2 per cent). As [International Polar Bear Day](#) on February 27 approaches, new survey findings released today by the [Churchill Northern Studies Centre](#) (CNSC) indicate Canadians believe our country has a special role in the Arctic.

The survey finds that only 14 per cent of Canadians have visited one of the three territories, but over two-thirds (68 per cent) of the remainder hope to visit the north in future. The survey was sponsored by [The W. Garfield Weston Foundation](#) and conducted by [Leger Marketing](#).

Canada's role in the Arctic

The survey also found that 4 out of 5 Canadians (78 per cent) agree that Canada's investment in Arctic scientific research is as important as Arctic military spending. Overwhelmingly, almost 9 out of 10 Canadians agree that the Arctic region is important to Canada's future economic prosperity (86 per cent).

“Each year, the single largest non-indigenous presence in the Arctic is researchers. Together with local communities, it is the human presence that represents Canada's true claim to sovereignty,” says Michael Goodyear, Executive Director, Churchill Northern Studies Centre. “The Centre exists to help understand and sustain the north, and we are encouraged that Canadians feel so passionately about many of the issues we touch each day.”

Support for the Arctic continues with over 90 per cent of Canadians believing that among northern nations, Canada should be a leader in Arctic research (91 per cent). While half of Canadians indicate that scientific research in the north may have an impact on Arctic security.

“Arctic research spreads across many provinces in Canada not just the territories, so ensuring a greater understanding of the Arctic and the role it plays closer to where Canadians live is an important part of what Arctic research does,” said Mr. Goodyear, who is located in Churchill, Manitoba.

Generational divide

The survey also found some interesting generational differences among Canadians' perceptions of the Arctic, for example:

- Canadians under the age of 55 are more likely to think of polar bears (41 per cent) while older Canadians age 55+ are more likely to think of climate change (35 per cent).
- Similarly, Canadians age 55 and older are also more likely than those younger than them to believe that Canada should be a leader in Arctic research (95 per cent versus 89 per cent of those under the age of 55).

To encourage researchers, [The Weston Family Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Northern Research](#) was developed to recognize significant contributions and the broad impact of a career devoted to natural science research in the Canadian north. The inaugural \$50,000 Prize will be presented as part the new [Churchill Northern Studies Centre opening](#) events in the fall of 2011.

“By establishing this prize, we continue our mandate to support Canadian scientists in this exciting and strategically important part of our country,” says Geordie Dalglish, Chairman of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation. “Canadian scientists have been world leaders in northern research for decades and this award will honour them for their contributions and sacrifices over a lifetime.”

About the survey

The survey was completed online from February 7, 2011 to February 10, 2011 using Leger Marketing’s online panel, *LegerWeb*, with a sample of 1532 Canadians.

A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$.

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation and Northern Research

The launch of the International Polar Year in 2007 was a response to a widespread concern about the decline of research in the North. It was at this time that The W. Garfield Weston Foundation entered into the dialogue about our great North. In response to this growing concern, the Foundation adopted a goal of advancing northern science and research in Canada’s North as part of its mandate.

Beyond The Weston Family Prize, the Foundation also offers research scholarships at the graduate level, to encourage and cultivate Canada’s next generation of northern scientists.

Through a challenge grant, the Foundation has also enabled the Churchill Northern Studies Centre to leverage matching funds needed for the renewal of the Centre, a key hub for northern research.

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation is a private Canadian family foundation, established in the 1950’s by Willard Garfield Weston and his wife Reta. In 1924 Garfield inherited his father’s company and during his life established bakeries and other successful enterprises throughout Canada and in many parts of the world. Today, these businesses include George Weston Limited and Loblaw Companies Limited, companies in food retailing, processing and distribution. The founders believed that as the funds are

generated through the hard work and success of these Canadian companies, grants should be given in Canada for the benefit of Canadians. For three generations, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has maintained a family tradition of supporting charitable organizations across Canada. Today the Foundation directs the majority of its funds to projects in the fields of land conservation, education, and science in Canada's North.

About Churchill Northern Studies Centre

Founded in 1976, the Churchill Northern Studies Centre is an independent, non-profit research and education facility located 23 km east of the town of Churchill, Manitoba. In addition to research, the Centre facilitates a wide range of educational programming ranging from general interest courses for the visiting public to university credit courses for students.

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