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Ipsos  **Reid**

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Vancouver, BC – Canadians' use of real estate websites has remained at a very high level, according to a new Ipsos-Reid study. The study, which involved 1,000 telephone interviews with Canadian adults and 1,000 online interviews with Canadian adults who have Internet access¹ in June shows that the Internet is a key component in the new home purchase process for online Canadians. In fact, 85% of those who have purchased a new home in the past two years have used the Internet to look for home information, slightly above the 80% who had done so in 2001.

Not only is use of the Internet as a housing resource very high, but the impact of the Internet on the house purchase experience is significant. Of those home purchasers who have used the Internet for information, 78% say that the Internet played a significant role in the purchase experience (51% saying somewhat significant, 27% saying very significant). And overall, Canadians who have looked for housing information online give very positive reviews. Eighty-three percent (83%) say that the Internet allowed them to look at more houses, 65% say that the Internet saved them time in the overall house hunting process, and 57% say that the Internet made it easier to find the property they wanted. Overall, almost three-quarters (73%) say that the Internet met their expectations as a house-hunting resource.

"The Canadian real estate sector was quick to adopt and utilize the capabilities that the Internet was able to offer to those looking for a house," says Rhys Gibb, Senior Research Manager at Ipsos-Reid. "And Canadians are embracing this resource in looking for new home information."

¹ 74% of Canadian adults have Internet access from at least one location.

The use of the Internet as a housing information resource is not limited to those purchasing a home. Among those who have not purchased a home in the past two years and do not intend to do so over the next two years, 42% have still used the Internet to gather information about purchasing a new home. It is a useful tool for those who are only looking and dreaming.

The Internet has distinct advantages to assist Canadians with their real estate information gathering. One-in-four online Canadians using it cite viewing a whole range of properties without leaving home as an advantage, with another 15% listing the benefit of easy access to home information. In addition, 23% list the ability to comparison shop as an advantage. On another note, some people prefer to avoid dealing with an agent as 18% say being able to avoid dealing with an agent when looking for information is an advantage.

The Internet does have limitations as a house-hunting resource. The information available is seen as limited and incomplete (19% list this as a disadvantage). In addition, 16% say that they cannot see enough details or get a feel for the house while 12% see the inability to ask questions as a disadvantage. In some areas of the country, the selection in an area can be quite limited and one-in-ten online house hunters list this as a disadvantage. In addition, while some Internet users may not enjoy dealing with a realtor, the realtor still plays a very important role. Online Canadians see the realtor as someone with more experience and knowledge and as someone who better knows markets and processes. In fact, 38% of people list this as an advantage of using a realtor in the house-hunting process with 19% seeing the personal service that the realtor provides as an advantage.

“A big implication of this research is that realtors must incorporate the Internet into their total marketing package,” says Gibb. “If they do not provide easy access to information online, they are doing themselves and their customers a disservice.”

MLS (Multiple Listings Service) and Remax lead the way for online websites. Almost two-thirds (63%) of Canadians going online for housing information visited the MLS site with 57% visiting the Remax site. The next two most popular sites are Royal LePage at 39% and Century 21 at 34%.

*The “**Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report**” is the largest, most comprehensive and authoritative source of its kind about quarterly Internet trends in Canada. The results are based on 1,000 online questionnaires completed by members of Ipsos-Reid’s Canadian Internet Panel. Panelists are chosen through random telephone surveys conducted on an ongoing basis across Canada. Results are complemented by a further 1,000 interviews via telephone with Canadian adults selected by random digit dialing. Telephone interviewing was conducted from June 18 to 23, 2003 using Ipsos-Reid’s computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) facilities in Edmonton and Montreal. Online interviews were completed using confirmit, and they were completed between June 24 and 30, 2003. These data are statistically weighted to reflect the population proportions of regular online users by online expertise and regional distribution. Our panelists represent approximately 14.9 million Canadian adult Internet users who are online for one hour a week or more (there are a total of 17.5 million adults who have Internet access).*

With a national sample of 1,000 (for each component), one can say with 95% certainty that the overall results are within a maximum of ± 3.1 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire population of Canada’s regular online users been surveyed. The margin of error will be larger for sub-groupings of the survey population.

Established in 1979, Ipsos-Reid is Canada’s leading marketing research and public opinion company. It is best known for the Angus Reid Express Poll, the most widely quoted source of public opinion in the country. Founded by Dr. Angus Reid, Ipsos-Reid has conducted extensive market and social research in 80 countries and in 40 languages, and serves clients around the world through more than 300 professionals and 1,000 data collection staff in eleven offices. The company is a member of the Paris-based Ipsos Group, ranked among the top ten research companies in the world.

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