



97% of Canadians' Travel Plans Held During Swine Flu Outbreak Industry Response Was Immediate and Consumer-Friendly

Vancouver, BC, May 19, 2009 - Although concerns surrounding the outbreak of novel influenza A (H1N1), also known as the Swine Flu, were prevalent among Canadian residents, 97% of those who had plans to travel between May to August, 2009, kept those plans intact. This is just one of the findings from an Ipsos Reid survey conducted among 1,713 adult Canadian residents during the period May 1-5, 2009.

"While awareness of Swine Flu among Canadians was nearly universal, we see that the health concerns associated with this specific flu were not strong enough to convince Canadians that cancellation of their immediate travel was necessary," says Dave Pierzchala, Vice President of Travel and Tourism Research at Ipsos Reid.

Just how aware were Canadian residents of the Swine Flu outbreak? Among those polled, 98% reported being Very or Somewhat Aware. To put this in context with other current world news events, 84% percent reported familiarity with the attacks by pirates on cruise and cargo ships off the Somali coast, 78% were aware of the ongoing AIDS epidemic in Africa, and 69% were aware of the recent North Korean missile tests.

In wake of the Swine Flu, many travel companies, including airlines and hotels, offered consumer-friendly cancellation policies in direct response to the concerns of travelers.

How do consumers feel about how their travel partners responded to the situation? Forty percent (40%) of all respondents were aware of the cancellation policies offered by travel companies. Of those, 79% were Very/Somewhat satisfied with these policies.

"This topic prompted a very quick response from travel partners," adds Pierzchala "It is a delicate balance and a significant challenge to be consumer-friendly, timely, and weigh the cost-benefit of cancellations to specific geographic regions."

When asked what else travel partners can do to help Canadians who expect to travel over the coming weeks, 76% expect travel companies to communicate the actions they are taking to minimize the Swine Flu risk to travelers; 57% would like to see postings of travel advisories on company websites; followed closely by 49% who would like travel alerts via email.

How effectively did the effected countries respond to the Swine Flu situation? Among Canadians, 79% reported that Canada was Very/Somewhat effective in its response. By comparison, when asked how Mexico – where the outbreak originated – responded, only 50% felt that nation was very/somewhat effective.

Travel inclination if the Swine Flu continues

How will consumers respond should the Swine Flu situation worsen? Among those surveyed who had travel plans, only 7% responded they would cancel those plans without question. Twenty-five percent (25%) reported being willing to take a wait-and-see approach; and the remaining 68% intend to travel as planned.



At this point, Swine Flu concerns surrounding travel within Canada appear to have subsided; Swine Flu is not the leading barrier for travel. All respondents were asked what factors would impinge on their future plans for travel between May to August of this year. Concerns about the Swine Flu ranked 4th – cited by 29% as a concern. Of greater importance were concerns over their lack of funding/personal financial situation (65%), followed by concerns about the economy (35%) and not having time to travel (35%).

While the Swine Flu is top of mind for most, consumers are evaluating its potential ongoing risk, and their future travel plans, in the context of other challenges and concerns they face.

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted from May 1 - 5, 2009. This online survey of 1,713 Canadian adults (18+) was conducted via Ipsos' Opinions online forum. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within 2.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population in Canada been polled. The margin of error for sub-samples may be higher.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

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