



Majority Believe First SARS Scare Not Isolated, CTV/The Strategic Counsel Poll Reveals-- May 26, 2005

-- Poll Also Reveals Canadians Confident Health Care System Prepared for Next Occurrence --

With the threat of potential pandemics such as Avian Flu securing headlines in both Canada and abroad, the poll, from CTV and The Strategic Counsel, indicates that two thirds (62 per cent) of people surveyed disagree that the SARS outbreak was an isolated incident. Only 8 per cent strongly agreed that SARS was an isolated incident and a similar outbreak will not happen again. However, Canadians remain confident that Canada's health care system is equipped to handle the next occurrence of a similar outbreak. More than half (54 per cent) of those surveyed agree that the health care system is prepared to handle another SARS-like crisis.

"Clearly, most Canadians see SARS as a kind of wake-up call, a vanguard for the new kind of infectious health threats that can cross oceans and continents in record time, says Tim Woolstencroft, Managing Partner, The Strategic Counsel. "It conditions the way they look at today's headlines about disease outbreaks in remote corners of Africa or Asia. And it increases the demand they're placing on their government and international organizations to be more vigilant and proactive."

The poll was commissioned to gauge current attitudes of Canadians towards SARS and the readiness of Canada's Health Care system two years after the epidemic shut down Canada's largest city (full poll details can be found below). The results of the poll are released in advance of the premiere of the CTV original movie, *Plague City: SARS in Toronto*, airing Sunday, May 29th at 9 p.m. ET/PT (check local listings) on CTV.

Commenting on the movie, Dr. Don Low, Chief of Department of Microbiology, Toronto Medical Laboratory, said: "CTV's dramatization takes viewers behind the scenes and into the heart of the crisis for the first time. And as someone who was there, I can tell you *Plague City* is right on the mark in its tribute to the tireless and fearless efforts of the health care workers who fought this battle one patient at a time."

Indeed, *Plague City* brings to television the stories of the actual heroes of the SARS crisis: the many health care workers who risked their lives on a daily basis caring for sick and dying patients. Based on true events and bolstered by extensive research with medical experts, the CTV movie underscores the struggle of Toronto's public health officials and politicians as they attempted to control the quickly spreading disease, suppress the rising public panic and mitigate the devastating economic repercussions.

** Media Note ** Photography from the film *Plague City: SARS in Toronto* is available on-line at www.ctvmedia.ca

The CTV / The Strategic Counsel poll indicates that residents of Ontario were mostly likely to strongly agree (20 per cent) that the health care system is ready to handle another SARS-like crisis, should it happen again. Residents of Quebec were least likely to strongly agree (11 per cent). As well, British Columbians were mostly likely to strongly disagree (66 per cent) that SARS was an isolated incident while Quebecers were least likely to strongly disagree (58 per cent).

CTV, Canada's largest private broadcaster, offers a wide range of quality news, sports, information, and entertainment programming. It boasts the number-one national newscast, *CTV News With Lloyd Robertson*, and is the number-one choice for prime-time viewing. CTV owns 21 conventional television stations across Canada and has interests in 14 specialty channels, including the number-one Canadian specialty channel, TSN. CTV is owned by Bell Globemedia, Canada's premier multi-media company. More information about CTV may be found on the company site at www.ctv.ca.

CTV / The Strategic Counsel Poll Information

A CTV / The Strategic Counsel Poll was conducted from May 12 to May 15, 2005. The findings are based on interviews conducted by telephone among a weighted national sample of 1500 adult Canadians 18 years of age or older. A sample of 1500 yields a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Findings from Atlantic Canada have not been included due to insufficient sample size. Note: Due to rounding, proportions may not total to exactly 100%.

The survey asked two separate questions related to SARS outbreak: The first statement was "The 2003 SARS outbreak was an isolated incident and a similar outbreak will not happen again." Respondents were asked to Strongly agree (8 percent), Somewhat agree (20 percent), Neither agree nor disagree (7 per cent), Somewhat disagree (29 per cent) or Strongly disagree (33 per cent). The second statement posed was "The Canadian health care system is prepared to handle another SARS-like crisis if it happens again". Again respondents were asked to Strongly agree (16 per cent), Somewhat agree (38 per cent), Neither agree nor disagree (7 per cent), Somewhat disagree (19 per cent) or Strongly disagree (15 percent).

-30-

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