

POLL

Canadians steady with their savings

By NORMA GREENAWAY
Canwest News Service

OTTAWA — Only a small number of Canadians are in a panic over salvaging their life savings, according to an Ipsos Reid poll that says a solid chunk of Canadians are coping with their plunging worth by directing investment dollars to safer options than the stock market.

The poll, conducted exclusively for Canwest News Service and Global National, says 26 per cent of those surveyed said they have or will make changes in how their money for retirement will be invested this year.

Of those who have made changes, most appear to be choosing safer investment options than the stock market, among them Guaranteed Income Certificates (45 per cent), cash (20 per cent), bonds (18 per cent) and gold (five per cent).

Of the 74 per cent who are not making changes in their investment portfolios, almost three in 10 say they are staying put because they are "concerned that if they change things now they might lose more or not make up lost ground."

"In many ways, the mindset of Canadians is very much like the marketplace. It's coming at it from all angles. There is a lot of scrambling going on," said pollster John Wright.

The poll said, for example, one in three Canadians has directed themselves or their adviser to specifically avoid the stock market and to get into less risky areas of investment.

Despite the scrambling, the poll paints a picture of a relatively prudent, relatively calm population, Wright said.

It said 76 per cent of those surveyed rated their mood regarding their retirement savings as either "steady," understanding the market has "its ups and downs, and that it will get back on track and make up for any losses so far," or "fine," meaning they "don't think about what happened and don't have any worries."

"So, three-quarters of the population is managing quite well," said Wright, senior vice-president of Ipsos Reid. "Many (Canadians) are choosing safer (investment) options but there's no panic in the land."

The poll said 24 per cent of those surveyed are anxious or panicked over the state of their retirement portfolio, a number that Wright suggested might surprise those who think panic is more widespread.

Only five per cent said they are in "panic mode" and "doing everything they can to salvage their life savings," while 19 per cent agreed with the statement they have "anxiety" and are "pretty concerned" about their standing and are "doing some revisions to their investments and life plans."

The online survey of 1,003 Canadians, released during the countdown to next Monday's deadline for RRSP contributions for the 2008 tax year, was conducted from Feb. 17 to Feb. 23. In a poll of this nature, the estimated margin of error is 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

INSPECTIONS

Airlines sought confidentiality

By SARAH SCHMIDT
Canwest News Service

OTTAWA — Some of Canada's large commercial airlines required government inspectors to sign confidentiality agreements to comb over company documents to assess a controversial new oversight system, Canwest News Service has learned.

Over the coming year, inspectors will be conducting in-depth assessments of the safety management systems (SMS) at Canada's large airlines, including Air Canada, WestJet, Air Transat, Porter Airlines and SkyService, among others. The new safety system — a first in civil aviation — puts more onus on airlines in managing safety risks in their operations, and is now fully phased in at Canada's large commercial carriers.

Transport Canada confirmed Tuesday that some of the companies approached government inspectors to sign confidentiality agreements to ensure they do not disclose any details of their safety records as part of the SMS assessment process.

Career Opportunities

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Kathy Kaiswatum
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ECONOMY

Companies create cheerful logos to try to get consumers to spend

By MISTY HARRIS
Canwest News Service

With more than 210,000 Canadian jobs lost in the last three months alone, marketers are grappling with a recession-era dilemma: How do you sell to consumers who have no income or are terrified of losing it?

For Walmart Canada, the answer is optimism — or at least the semblance of it. This month, the retailing giant debuts a new logo that puts it among a growing number of brands that have redesigned their iconography to highlight softer colours, friendlier imagery and more childlike fonts.

"Consumers have their hands stuffed in their pockets and they aren't going to spend," says Lindsay Meredith, a professor of marketing at Simon Fraser University. "If you can make them feel better by providing an aura to your logo that's more uplifting, it could work to your advantage."

Walmart's new logo, which was rolled out in American markets last year, incorporates warmer colours, is written in what the company calls a "welcoming font," and features a sun-like "spark" at the end.

"There's certainly a suggestion of optimism in the logo," says Kevin Groh, spokesman for Walmart Canada. "In these days and times, it seems almost uniquely appropriate."

Kraft Foods has taken a page from the same playbook, this month unveiling a new corporate logo that supplants its harsh block letters with an approachable lowercase font. It also features a "colourful flavour burst" that resembles a flower with a smiling red stem.

Cal McAllister, co-founder of Seattle marketing company Wexley School for Girls, says it's all part of a macro-movement that has culture as a whole trending toward comfort.

"Graphically, that takes you back to happier times when all you had to worry about was crayons, baseball cards and Barbies," says McAllister, whose clients have included Nike, Pepsi and Microsoft.

"(Corporations) are reaching out for help, truly begging people to buy things because the economy needs to get out of this cycle. They are banking on us pulling over to the lemonade stand instead of the chain grocery, so they're doing everything they can to look like it."

Psychologist Nancy Montagna says these softer designs tap our need to be comforted, eliciting positive emotions evocative of being mothered.

"It reminds me of Henry Harlow's experiments with orphan monkeys," says Montagna, who studies happiness. "The youngsters clung to the soft-cloth mother-



This month, several retailing giants introduce new logos that put them among a growing number of brands that have redesigned their iconography to highlight softer colours, friendlier imagery and more childlike fonts. Above, top, is the old Wal-Mart logo, while under it is the new Walmart logo. Below is the old Kraft logo, while at the bottom is the new Kraft logo.



substitute even when (another substitute made) of wire was the source of milk."

All this visual posturing, however, isn't cheap.

Experts estimate Pepsi's upbeat new logo, which forms a series of smiles, cost more than \$1 million US, not including implementation.

Greater Montreal's recently unveiled logo, a rainbow-hued M in a kindergarten-like bubble font, reportedly set back municipalities within the region \$487,000, with \$200,000 more budgeted for its promotion.

According to Simon Fraser's Meredith, it can be all for naught if executed poorly.

"You want to watch the extent to which you alter the main presentation," says Meredith. "If you go too far down the fuzzy-

and-friendly track, you'll be starting over at zero."

Such was the case with Tropicana, whose new logo and packaging redesign looked so unfamiliar to consumers it was widely rejected, forcing the juice maker to scrap the changes and announce it would bring back the original look in March.

Greg De Koker, managing partner at Toronto's Instinct Brand Equity Coaches, says companies that make major changes to their image right now are conspiring against their own success.

"Consistency is the most important rule in branding," says De Koker, co-author of Brand: It Ain't the Logo. "Especially in this kind of economy, consumers are not looking for a change. That's the last thing they want."

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