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CONFIDENCE IN ECONOMY CONTINUES TO BE STRONG: SURVEY

But Regional Differences Remain Profound

TORONTO, JANUARY 17, 2007 – Canadians entered 2007 with a remarkable level of confidence about the economy says a new survey by TNS Canadian Facts.

“In the face of some mixed news about the sustainability of the performance of the Canadian economy, Canadians remain overwhelmingly positive,” said Richard Jenkins, vice-president of TNS Canadian Facts and director of the marketing research firm’s monthly *Consumer Confidence Index* tracking study.

The *Present Situation Index*, which captures evaluations of the overall state of the economy and the employment situation, now stands at 118.0, a slight increase from 115.7 in December. That said, fully 61 per cent of Canadians evaluate the economy as either good or very good.

Although the economy is perceived as strong everywhere, there is continued regionalization of economic perceptions. Only 43 per cent of Quebec residents evaluate the economy as good or very good compared with 73 per cent of Prairie residents and 72 per cent of British Columbians.

The *Expectations Index*, which measures consumers’ estimation of the economy, household income and employment six months from now, has been stable over the past three months. In January the index dropped marginally from 103.3 in December to 103.0.

The *Buy Index*, which gauges the degree to which people think the current period is a good time to make major purchases, fluctuated wildly in the latter half of 2006 and now stands at 92.5, up slightly from last month. The index continues to show the relative weakness of big

purchase intent compared to the free spending days of 2004 when lower interest rates encouraged consumer borrowing.

Consumer Confidence Index tracks Canadians' attitudes about the economy each month and is part of a global study conducted by TNS in 18 countries. Three indices are produced each month to show how confidence in the economy is changing: *Present Situation Index*; an *Expectations Index*; and a *Buy Index*. The Canadian fieldwork is conducted using the firm's national bi-weekly telephone omnibus service, TNS Express Telephone. A total of 1,015 nationally representative Canadian adults were interviewed between January 8 and 11. The survey results are considered accurate to 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

TNS Canadian Facts (www.tns-cf.com) is one of Canada's most prestigious full-service marketing, opinion and social research organizations.

About TNS

TNS is a market information group:

- The world's largest provider of custom research and analysis
- A leader in political and social polling
- A major supplier of consumer panel, media intelligence and TV and radio audience measurement services.

TNS operates across a global network in over 70 countries, allowing us to provide internationally consistent, up-to-the-minute and high quality information and analysis.

The group's employees deliver innovative thinking and excellent service to local and multi-national clients worldwide. In the custom business, they combine in-depth sector knowledge with expertise in the areas of new product development, positioning and segmentation research, brand and advertising research and stakeholder management.

TNS' strategic goal is to be recognized as the global leader in delivering value added information and insights that help our clients to make more effective decisions.

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