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Tibetan rights trump trade with China say Canadians

CTC/News Release[Monday, September 17, 2007 12:11]

Montreal, September 14: Over two thirds of Canadians believe that the federal government should raise the issue of Tibetan human rights and freedoms with the Chinese government, regardless of its potential impact on trade with China, according to a SES Research poll conducted for the Canada Tibet Committee (CTC) from July 28th to August 4.

Overall 68.6 per cent of Canadians surveyed put raising these issues with China ahead of concerns that it might jeopardize our trading relationship. Support cut across all regions and demographic groups including committed Conservative and Liberal voters.

"Canadians believe that the Canada-China relationship should reflect Canadian values," said CTC Executive Director Dermod Travis today. "When a major trading partner abuses human rights at home and has put the health of children and the security of the food and pharmaceutical supply at risk abroad, it's time to reassess that relationship so that it better reflects the interests of Canadians."

The SES Research findings are consistent with earlier findings by various polling companies that indicate Canadians are increasingly concerned with Canada-China relations. According to surveys over the past two years, only a third of Canadians believe that China "will soon be a true democracy" and over half of Canadians feel that diplomatic and trading relationships should not be encouraged until China improves its human rights record. Most notably, Canadian business leaders believe that a strong human rights position by the Canadian government will either not affect trade or improve it.

"While the Canada-China relationship represents a serious strategic challenge for the Canadian government, the only way ahead is when human rights and democratic values are at the core of our foreign policy," said Travis.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama will visit Ottawa from October 28 to 30 before leaving for a two day visit of Toronto. The Dalai Lama will give a Public Talk on Global Citizenship through Universal Responsibility on October 28th, 3:00 PM at the Ottawa Civic Centre.

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