



ALBERTA'S ECONOMIC OPTIMISM TEMPERED BY RISING COST OF FOOD, GAS: RBC CANADIAN CONSUMER OUTLOOK INDEX

TORONTO, APRIL 12, 2011 — Albertans are among the most likely in Canada to feel positive about the current economy, with 69 per cent rating it as good compared to 61 per cent nationally, according to the latest quarterly [RBC Canadian Consumer Outlook Index](#) (RBC CCO).

In addition, Alberta residents are the most optimistic in Canada about the outlook for the national economy. Fifty per cent believe the Canadian economy will improve over the next year, which is well above the national average of 42 per cent, but 11 per cent lower than Albertans expressed in the last quarter.

This weakening optimism may be a result of rising food and gas prices, with over 36 per cent saying those higher costs have had a significant impact on their budget. The RBC CCO also found that 40 per cent of Albertans are confident in their debt management skills, while 37 per cent see room for improvement.

“Albertans remain confident in spite of the emerging reality of higher daily expenses, which are starting to put pressure on the household budgets,” said Bruce MacKenzie, regional president, Alberta and the Territories, RBC. “A good financial advisor can help Albertans adjust their budgets to address these new demands while at the same time, develop key strategies to comfortably manage their existing debt.”

Job anxiety in the province remained virtually unchanged at 18 per cent and lower than the national average of 22 per cent. In fact, Alberta's improving job market is setting the stage for further growth in the overall provincial economy, according to the most recent [Economic Outlook](#) issued by RBC Economics.

“We expect job creation to gain traction in Alberta. This will be an important piece of the provincial growth puzzle that was missing last year,” said Craig Wright, senior vice-president and chief economist, RBC. “We project that Alberta's economy will be among the top three fastest growing provincial economies this year, with an anticipated real GDP growth of 4.3 per cent, up from 3.3 per cent in 2010.”

The RBC CCO is Canada's [most comprehensive consumer assessment](#) of the economy, personal financial situation and economic and purchasing expectations. [Other provincial highlights](#) from the March 2011 RBC CCO include:

- **Personal Financial Situation:** Forty-five per cent of Albertans expect their personal financial situation to improve over the next year, the highest in the country and compared to 39 per cent nationally.

- **Interest rates:** If interest rates rise, 35 per cent of Albertans would be most likely to invest more in order to take advantage of the rates, higher than the national average of 27 per cent.
- **Spending Outlook on Major Purchases:** Fifty-two per cent of Albertans have delayed a major purchase because of the current economy, a rise of six per cent from last quarter, but still lower than the national average of 55 per cent. However, 24 per cent of Albertans do expect to spend more in the coming year.

The national RBC CCO release, full set of regional releases and related comparative data charts can be accessed via www.rbc.com/newsroom/2011/0412-cdn-consumer.html.

About RBC's debt management and other financial advice and interactive tools

RBC's [myFinanceTracker](#), a new online financial management tool, offers all personal RBC [online banking](#) clients the ability, at no cost, to create a set budget and track their spending habits. Whether Canadians want to get more from their [day to day banking](#), protect what's important, save and invest, borrow with confidence or take care of their businesses, the [RBC Advice Centre](#) can help answer their questions (www.rbcadvicecentre.com). Interactive tools and calculators provide customized information covering many facets of personal finance. In addition, online advice videos are updated regularly to reflect current trends and to answer the questions that are top of mind with Canadians. With the guidance of RBC advisors who are available to chat live, Canadians have access to free, no-obligation professional advice about RBC products and services and personalized one-on-one [banking](#) service.

About the RBC Canadian Consumer Outlook Index

The [RBC Canadian Consumer Outlook Index](#) (RBC CCO) is Canada's most comprehensive consumer assessment of the economy, personal financial situation and economic and purchasing expectations. Benchmarked as of November 2009, the RBC CCO is conducted online via [Ipsos Reid's](#) national I-Say Consumer Panel to 3,520 Canadians (534 British Columbia, 502 Alberta, 482 Saskatchewan/Manitoba, 901 Ontario, 582 Quebec, 519 Atlantic Canada). Weighting is then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. Data collection was March 11 to 15, 2011. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100 per cent response rate would have an estimated margin of error of ± 1.65 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled.

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