



## **PRAIRIES REMAIN CONFIDENT IN THE FACE OF RISING COSTS: RBC CANADIAN CONSUMER OUTLOOK INDEX**

**TORONTO, April 12, 2011** — Nearly one-third (32 per cent) of Prairie residents say that rising food and gas prices have had a significant impact on their budgets, according to the March 2011 [RBC Canadian Consumer Outlook Index](#) (RBC CCO).

Those higher costs are not dampening economic optimism in the region, however, with 45 per cent of Saskatchewan and Manitoba residents believing the Canadian economy will improve and 75 per cent registering a positive opinion about the current Canadian economy – the highest such ranking in the country and well above the national average of 61 per cent. In addition, people in the Prairies are expressing the least concern about job loss or layoffs, with job anxiety levels at 16 per cent.

The RBC CCO also found that 43 per cent of residents in Saskatchewan and Manitoba feel confident they are managing their debt well – higher than the national average of 38 per cent – while 33 per cent feel they could be doing better, compared to 35 per cent across the country.

“People here continue to feel optimistic about the economy and employment, but they too are starting to feel the impact of a rise in daily expenses,” said Rob Johnston, regional president, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and North Western Ontario, RBC. “By partnering with your financial advisor, you can develop a budget strategy that can mitigate rising costs, while still keeping your long term financial goals on track.”

The overall outlook index for the Prairies rose to 87 points, seven points higher than last quarter. Both of the Prairie provinces are expected to see economic growth this year, with Saskatchewan anticipated to lead the country with an impressive 4.9 per cent growth and Manitoba projected to grow by 3.5 per cent, according to the most recent [Economic Outlook](#) from RBC Economics.

“We’re expecting that continued robust global demand for most natural resource products will mean real GDP growth in Saskatchewan will be the strongest in the country this year and next,” said Craig Wright, senior vice-president and chief economist, RBC. “For Manitoba, we’re expecting to see a boost from sustained recoveries in both the U.S. and elsewhere in Canada, which will fuel further gains in manufacturing and construction activity in the province.”

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 Outlook:** Forty per cent of Saskatchewan and Manitoba residents expect their personal finances to improve over the next year, just slightly above the national average (39 per cent).
- **Spending Outlook on Major Purchases:** Forty-three per cent of people in the Prairies say they have delayed major purchases due to the current economy. Additionally, only 20 per cent expect to increase spending over the next year, lower than the Canadian average (23 per cent).

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](http://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](http://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  $\pm 1.65$  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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