

NAVIGATING THE ENDURANCE ECONOMY: A BC PERSPECTIVE ON BRAND RESILIENCE



AN IPSOS CANADA
POINT OF VIEW ON
THE ENDURANCE ECONOMY

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A BC PERSPECTIVE ON BRAND RESILIENCE

Reflections from Ipsos' BC's Most Loved Brands Event, Vancouver, April 14, 2026

When I moved to Vancouver in 2014, a friend joked that BC stood for "Bring Cash." Like many local sayings, it carried more truth than humour. British Columbia has long been associated with premium costs in housing, transportation, and everyday living, but also with a premium lifestyle. For many residents, the equation balanced out: higher costs in exchange for living in one of the world's most desirable places.

That math is now under significant strain.

At our recent BC's Most Loved Brands event in Vancouver, Kyle Braid, Ipsos SVP Public Affairs, offered the group a different way of looking at the affordability picture. He opened with a story.



For the first time ever, for our family of four... our weekly grocery shop exceeded \$500. I don't actually remember it ever being more than \$400.

The anecdote landed because it captured a common experience these days: the growing disconnect between what households expect to pay and what everyday life actually costs.

Kyle then reframed the affordability conversation in a way that got everyone's attention.



The affordability crisis is officially over... because a crisis is something temporary. It has an ending.

For many Canadians, especially for those in Metro Vancouver, rising costs no longer feel like a short-term disruption. They feel permanent, woven into the fabric of daily life with no end in sight.

This is the premise behind what Ipsos has termed the [Endurance Economy](#).



From Crisis to Condition

Rather than a conventional downturn followed by recovery, the Endurance Economy describes a prolonged period of pressure in which households adapt to ongoing financial constraint. Inflation may ease in headline terms, but the lived experience of affordability remains difficult. Housing costs stay elevated. Interest rates have lasting effects. Public systems feel stretched. Confidence in future upward mobility weakens.

As Kyle went on to note:



We're not waiting out a cycle. We're not expecting things are going to reverse... This is the situation we're in."

That shift in perception matters because it changes behaviour. Consumers are not necessarily retreating from spending altogether, nor are they operating in panic mode. Instead, spending decisions are

becoming more deliberate, more selective, and more intensely scrutinized.

Consumers are asking harder questions before they buy:

- Is this worth the price?
- Is there a smarter option?
- Will this improve my life in a meaningful way?
- Can I justify this purchase today?

These aren't recession-era questions. They are endurance-era questions, and they aren't going away.

Why BC Offers an Important Lens

British Columbia provides a particularly useful case study because many of the pressures now felt nationally have existed here for years.

During the presentation, Kyle shared another striking statistic:

92%

of Metro Vancouver residents say that life has become unaffordable



But there was a catch.



*That wasn't from this year.
That was from 2011.*

This reinforced the point that while affordability has become a defining issue across Canada, British Columbians have been navigating some version of this reality for many years.

Housing costs, rent pressure, childcare expenses, transportation costs, and a general sense of being priced out of traditional milestones have shaped consumer behaviour in BC well before similar anxieties became mainstream across the nation.

Selective Spending, Not Permanent Austerity

One of the more valuable insights from the presentation was that consumers under pressure do not simply abandon discretionary spending. They re-prioritize it.

Kyle illustrated this through a familiar contradiction: households expressing concern over grocery bills while concerts, travel experiences, and premium leisure activities continue to sell out.



People adapt. They don't live in permanent austerity. They rebuild meaning, pleasure, and progress inside constraint.

This helps explain much of the current consumer landscape.

Households are reducing spending in lower-priority areas to protect what matters most. A recent Ipsos poll found that 42% of Canadians are eating out less and 30% are limiting social and entertainment activities. This reflects intentional trade-offs, delaying a renovation while preserving a family holiday, or trading down in everyday categories while spending up on products or experiences tied to identity, celebration, or emotional reward.

To maintain this standard they are also borrowing more, [17% of Canadians are relying on credit to cover essential expenses](#), taking on more debt to maintain their standard of living. This is driving the household debt-to-income ratio steadily higher with it climbing for the fifth consecutive quarter in Q4'25, per [Statistics Canada](#).

As a result, "price" has risen in importance. A recent Ipsos poll found that 54% of BC residents say either that "price is everything" (11%) or that "getting the lowest price is very important" (43%) when making a purchase.

But, price alone does not tell the full story.

Why Small Indulgences Matter

In the panel conversation from that day, Kriston Dean, VP Sales & Marketing for Purdys Chocolatier offered a great example of an Endurance Economy indulgence.

At first glance, premium chocolates might appear vulnerable in a period of economic pressure. Yet Kriston described continued demand driven by gifting, ritual, and celebration.



People are choosing small indulgences to gift and they're finding a way to keep us as part of their meaningful celebrations.

She also noted that while basket size or order patterns may shift, customers continue to make room for products that carry emotional significance.

This reflects a broader consumer truth. When larger aspirations become less attainable, smaller moments of reward can become more important. Affordable luxuries often gain relevance in constrained periods because they provide visible value at a manageable cost.

Realism Paired with Optimism

Another notable theme emerged in the discussion from Gurpreet Jhaj, VP Marketing at Vancity.

Gurpreet's theory is that many brands are facing a communications challenge. Overly optimistic messaging can feel detached from reality, while messaging focused entirely on hardship can feel heavy and unhelpful.

This is driving Vancity to try to strike a balance with their [brand refresh](#):



We didn't want to go in with full hope optimism in a way that didn't feel realistic... we wanted to be really meeting people where they are.

And to deliver a message that:



We're going to help you through this.

That approach feels particularly relevant in financial services, where economic pressure is deeply personal. Consumers are not simply looking for promotional messaging. They are looking for confidence, clarity, flexibility, and evidence that an institution understands the realities they are navigating.

The broader lesson is that optimism still matters, but it must be credible.

Community as Competitive Advantage

Another recurring theme across the panel was the growing importance of community connection.

This was not discussed in abstract terms, but in practical ones; through local presence, staff relationships, neighbourhood familiarity, and a demonstrated understanding of regional realities.



Being in those communities, understanding their needs and building for them.

Yvonne Anyon, VP Marketing & Communications, from London Drugs echoed a similar point:



It really comes down to community and humanity.

In periods of economic strain, consumers often become more attentive to which organizations feel present and useful versus distant and transactional. Local relevance, trust, and responsiveness can become stronger differentiators than broad awareness alone.

What This Means for Brands

First, acknowledge reality. Consumers know when messaging feels disconnected from what they are experiencing. As Kyle noted:

“You shouldn’t deny that constraint exists. You should validate it.”

Second, broaden the definition of value. Value can mean price, but it can also mean durability, convenience, flexibility, service, or emotional reward.

Third, leave room for joy. Even in constrained times, consumers seek enjoyment, celebration, and relief. Brands that understand this tension are often better positioned than those that assume purely defensive behaviour. Tread carefully though, As Yvonne said:

“What might make one person smile could be the breaking point for another.”

Fourth, stay close to customers. Gurpreet emphasized a key point that resonated throughout the discussion: exposure to customers remains irreplaceable:



Get in your stores, get in your branches, because you’re going to learn a lot about what people are feeling.

Why This Matters Beyond BC

British Columbia has often served as an early indicator for shifts that later ripple across the country. The pressures now defining the Endurance Economy, stretched household budgets, deliberate trade-offs, and the search for meaningful value, took root here first. This story doesn’t end with constraint though. It is more complex than that.

Consumers remain engaged, aspirational, and willing to spend, but they are demanding clearer value, stronger trust, and more relevance in return.

That will be the defining shift of this period, and it started here in BC.



For more insights on the Endurance Economy, visit the Ipsos Canada [Endurance Economy Hub](#) or reach out to discuss what this means for your brand:



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