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Albertans most likely to use their “dividend” to pay bills/debt (36%) – 23% will save it, 21% will spend it



Ipsos Reid

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Calgary, AB – Following a week of intense debate over the Alberta government’s plan to distribute some of this year’s provincial surplus back to Albertans in the form of a “dividend” cheque, a new Ipsos Reid poll shows Albertans are evenly divided on the issue. Half (48%) say the government should “keep this surplus and use it to address provincial priorities”, while half (47%) say the money should be “given directly to Albertans in the form of a one-time payment”.

Thinking ahead to what they will do with their “dividend”, the largest number of Albertans (36%) plan to pay off bills or debt while almost a quarter (23%) will save it and one-in-five (21%) will spend it.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between September 19th and September 23rd, 2005. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 800 adult Albertans. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Alberta been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Albertan population according to the 2001 Census data.

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With oil and gas prices at an all-time high, the Alberta government is facing a much higher than expected surplus. After their recent retreat, Premier Klein announced that part of this surplus would be given back to Albertans in the form of a one-time dividend payment. This triggered intense debate over whether this was the appropriate thing to do with the surplus money. Albertans themselves are evenly divided on the issue with 48% saying “the government should keep this surplus money and use it to address provincial priorities” and 47% saying “this surplus money should be given to directly to Albertans in the form of a one-time payment”. Another 5% say they “don’t know” which of the two options the government should pursue.

- Calgarians (54%) and Edmontonians (48%) are more likely than residents in the rest of the province (42%) to say that the government should keep the surplus.
- Albertans under 35 (57%) are more likely than those aged 35 and older (43%) to say the surplus should be distributed to Albertans.
- Albertans earning \$70,000 a year or more (56%) are much more likely than those earning less than \$70,000 a year (43%) to say the government should keep the surplus.
- Albertans with a university education (57%) are more likely than those without one (42%) to say the government should keep the surplus.

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There has also been much speculation about what the impact of distributing this money will be on the economy. But, Albertans’ plans for their dividend cheques suggests the economy will not get as big an injection as some have expected. Assuming they personally received a cheque for between \$100 and \$300 the largest number (36%) of Albertans say they will use it to pay off bills and debt, including: utilities (8%),

education (5%) and mortgage (2%). Meanwhile 23% say they will save or invest the money. Only 21% plan to spend it – on things like: gas for vehicles (4%), living expenses (2%), Christmas (2%), vacations (1%) and renovations (1%).

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