

# No Signs of an Improved BC Economy This Back-to-School Season

*Shoppers in BC Tell Us They Are Spending the Same as Last Year*



Ipsos Reid

**Public Release Date: Thursday, August 19, 2010, 11:00 AM EDT**

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## **No Signs of an Improved BC Economy This Back-to-School Season**

### ***Shoppers in BC Tell Us They Are Spending the Same as Last Year***

**Vancouver, BC, August 19, 2010** — It's that time of year again – students are gearing up for back-to-school. Last year, the *2009 Back-To-School Shopping Study* found that the economy appeared to be having an impact on shoppers. While only a small minority expected to spend less in 2009 compared to the previous school year, changes in shopping behaviours (such as looking for special deals, using coupons, buying store brands, shopping at thrift stores, etc.) were reported in reaction to the weak economy. This back-to-school season, Ipsos Reid's Retail Team was curious to know if there are signs of a recovered economy. As such, Ipsos Reid conducted its second annual back-to-school study in British Columbia to investigate shoppers' spending and opinions when it comes to retail and the 2010-2011 school year.

Spending expectations are virtually identical in 2010 when compared to 2009. The majority of shoppers will continue to spend less than \$300 for all their back-to-school items this year (51% in 2010 and 53% in 2009) and the median amount spent remains at \$350 this year – exactly the same as last year.

Further, half of BC back-to-school shoppers tell us they have spent or will be spending about the same amount on back-to-school items compared to the previous school year in 2010 (50%). One quarter spent or will be spending more (26%), while fewer shoppers spent or will be spending less than last year (14%). The remaining 10% either did not shop for back-to-school items last year (7%), or are unsure of how their spending will compare this year (3%). These results are statistically the same as findings from the *2009 Back-To-School Shopping Study* (44% the same amount, 27% more, and 16% less).

Still, many back-to-school shoppers remain not particularly mindful of budgets. Nearly half (46% in 2010 and 42% in 2009) of shoppers do not set a budget and just buy the items that they like/want. On the flip side, four-in-ten set a budget range and generally follow it (38% in 2010 and 37% in 2009). The other 16% in 2010 (21% in 2009) are either somewhere in the middle – initially have a budget but rarely stick to it (14% in 2010, 17% in 2009), or are unsure (2% in 2010, 4% in 2009).

In summary, signs of an improved economy are not evident this back-to-school year, suggesting that retail back-to-school spending in 2010 will be a repeat of 2009.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid study fielded from August 13 to 17, 2010. This online survey of 321 adult British Columbians who have done or plan to do back-to-school shopping for the 2010-2011 school year was conducted using Ipsos Reid's proprietary "Voice of the West Interactive Forum" – an online panel of more than 6,500 British Columbians who have been randomly recruited to match the overall characteristics of the adult residents of the province. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online studies of this nature, however, an unweighted probability sample of this size, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 5.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.*

**- 30 -**

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