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High inflation likely to stick around, consumers and businesses tell Bank of Canada in 2 surveys

Canadian businesses and consumers anticipate high inflation will stick around, impacting buying and selling, hiring and firing.
 (Justin Tang/Bloomberg)

Canadian businesses and consumers think the current era of high inflation will persist for longer than they'd previously hoped, according to two surveys from the Bank of Canada released Monday.

The two reports - known as the Business Outlook Survey and the Canadian Survey of Consumer Expectations - are the result of the central bank's quarterly polling of Canadian businesses and consumers for their outlook on what's happening on the ground in Canada's economy.

While the findings differed in a few ways, the dominant theme in both was inflation and the impact it is having on buying and selling, hiring and firing.

The main takeaway from the business survey was that most businesses are seeing higher sales than they were seeing earlier in the pandemic, as economic activity is returning to some sort of normal. But demand continues to outstrip supply across almost all types of businesses, which is both a factor of and a contributor to the high inflation currently plaguing the economy.

Nearly two-thirds of businesses told the central bank they are seeing labour shortages. Nearly half - 43 per cent - say they are experiencing bottlenecks in their supply chains, and they're taking longer to resolve than



previously anticipated.

Businesses expect Canada's inflation rate to still be more than five per cent a year from now, and still more than four per cent two years out. But five years from now, the survey suggests they expect the inflation rate to come back to within the range the central bank targets, between one and three per cent.

It was a similar story on the consumer side. Long-term inflation expectations increased from 3.2 per cent to four per cent, while short-term expectations increased to 6.8 per cent, up from 5.1 per cent last quarter.

"Consumers clearly took notice of the recent [consumer price index] releases and the high prices for food and gasoline," CIBC economists Andrew Grantham and Karyne Charbonneau said of the data. "Uncertainty around the evolution of inflation has increased."

Wages set to increase
 On the employment front, on average, business owners expect their labour costs to increase by 5.8 per cent this year.

That's significantly higher than the two per cent wage increases that consumers told the bank they were expecting.

"Workers do not anticipate their wage gains will keep up with inflation," the bank said, adding that those in the private sector think their wages will increase this year by more than those in the public sector will.

Economist Leslie Preston with TD Bank said the survey shows just how big a concern inflation is in the minds of ordinary consumers.

"This survey suggests consumer spending in real terms is likely to slow in the coming months as wages can't keep up with inflation, and households are already being forced to economize," she said, adding that expectations of high inflation to come "is a source of concern for low-income consumers in particular, who are adjusting to high inflation by cutting spending, postponing major purchases, looking for discounts more often, and buying more affordable items."

The unemployment rate across Canada dropped to a new low of 5.1 per cent in May - the lowest since at least 1976 - yet some businesses are struggling to fill job vacancies. One of the main reasons for that, according to one expert, is that people are more "picky" when it comes to applying for jobs because of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the work environment.

"It's very hard to make the argument that you need to physically come to work five days a week," said Sarah McVanel, chief recognition officer and founder of Greatness Magnified, a company that helps organizations retain top talent and combat burnout.

McVanel says that COVID-19 presented Canadians with a different reality that changed the way people think about work.

Government spending isn't sole cause of Canada's inflation woes, new reports suggest.

According to a report released by Statistics Canada on May 24, the number of job vacancies at the beginning of April hit just over one million, up more than 40 per cent compared to last year amid a tight labour market pushing up wages and fuelling inflation concerns.

The agency said on its website that employers in Canada were actively seeking to fill 1,001,100 vacant positions, up 23,300 from March of this year and a gain of 308,000 compared to April 2021.

Vacancies in the health care and social assistance sectors reached a record high of 136,800, up five per cent from the peak of three months earlier and up 90.9 per cent compared

Unemployment in Canada has dropped, yet some firms are struggling to hire. Here's why



with the first quarter of 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic pummeled the economy, according to a report by Statistics Canada, which was released on May 21.

The report went on to state that nurse aide positions, in addition to registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, accounted for 67.7 per cent of the overall vacancies in the health sector compared to the first quarter of 2020.

Employers in the construction industry also found it challenging to fill jobs in the first quarter, as 81,500 positions were vacant, up 7.1 per cent compared to the fourth quarter of 2021, and more than double the number observed in the first quarter of 2020.

Helper and labourer job vacancies soared 97 per cent and vacant carpenter positions were up 149.1 per cent compared to the first quarter of 2020.

Job vacancies continued to reach

record highs in the manufacturing and retail trade sectors as well, up 5.3 per cent and 12.8 per cent, respectively, compared with the fourth quarter of 2021.

McVanel said people are making huge career choices right now. Many are switching industries, not just employers.

"As people are looking out there in other industries, they're seeing how there is an ability to have a different lifestyle, so they find that they can make the same amount of money, perhaps without needing to work in an environment that's physically uncomfortable," she said.

"Some businesses are struggling to keep (up), let alone attract people because of their policies, because of their work culture," McVanel said.

"People can read on Glassdoor (about companies). That means that people don't even apply. So this well is drying up."

She says good qualitative data is

needed to assess workplaces based on the amount of respect and recognition they have for their employees.

"If you're not treating employees like human beings, not just as a number, and investing in their careers, then you are more than likely - no matter what sector you are in - you are less likely to be able to fill your position and attract people," McVanel said.

An economics professor at the University of Ottawa, David Gray, says there are several obstacles coming between Canadians searching for jobs and employers looking to fill vacancies at the moment and the unwillingness to provide proper training to employees is one such.

"There are a lot of jobs begging - but there are frictions or obstacles when it comes to hiring and training employees," said Gray.

Gray says there are jobs that "typically want their workers to be fully trained and ready to go." But, he is "often reluctant to invest in their training for fear of having their employees poached by some competing firm."

Three-quarters of Canadians have returned to their pre-COVID work setting: Ipsos poll

Gray explains that there are some jobs, which require seven years or more experience, but not all companies offer the necessary training for that and are often looking for

workers who already have it.

"There are jobs that you can do practically right away, but most jobs require at least some training," he said. "You have to invest (in employees) to reduce the turnover of workers."

The issue of filling roles "can also be alleviated by offering higher wages," said Gray.

Another obstacle that Gray points out is commuting.

"The jobs that are available, they aren't necessarily geographically close to the location of the job searchers among the unemployed workers," he said.

For some businesses, hiring is also an obstacle due to a shortage of affordable places for workers to rent. One such business that's struggling is Fish & Sips in Collingwood, Ontario.

The owner Paul Heather said in an interview with The Canadian Press on Saturday that "it's the affordability, but also the availability" that's causing the issue.

"There isn't enough rental stock for people to choose from," said Heather.

He also said that his latest kitchen hire couldn't find a place in town and commutes by car - another hurdle when gas prices are soaring and regional public transit lags.

Rentals.ca, a Canadian website for apartment rental searches, said the average rent for all Canadian properties listed on its site rose 10.5 per cent year over year to \$1,888 per month in May. The average national home price topped \$700,000 last month, up 41 per cent from two years earlier as mortgages ballooned from Vancouver Island to Atlantic Canada, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association.

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Doctors urge Ontario to open 4th doses of COVID-19 vaccine to all adults

Some doctors are calling on Ontario to allow all adults to get a second booster of a COVID-19 vaccine this summer, something that the province is currently limiting to only a portion of the population.

Around 7.4 million Ontarians have received one booster, and nearly 90 per cent of those shots were administered at least five months ago, according to Public Health Ontario data.

Studies have shown the COVID-19 boosters begin to lose some effectiveness four months after being administered, leading to growing calls for Ontario to widen eligibility for a second booster, equivalent to a fourth dose of vaccine.

"We know that the protection provided by these vaccines has been effective in reducing serious illness and death, but it's waning," said Dr. Nili Kaplan-Myrth, a family physician in Ottawa.

Ontario is currently limiting fourth doses to people over age 60, as well as adults of any age who are Indigenous, living in long-term care, or immunocompromised. About 1.4 million people qualify, leaving roughly six million people who had a booster last winter ineligible to get another shot now.

CBC News asked the Ministry of Health last week how many vaccine doses Ontario currently has in stock, but officials did not provide an answer.

Next door in Quebec, all adults became eligible for fourth doses in May.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) said last week that the provinces should offer a booster shot this fall to all people at high risk of severe disease from COVID-19 infection, regardless of how many boosters they've previously received.

That recommendation applies to everyone age 65 and older. NACI said people age 12 to 64 "may be offered" additional doses in the fall.

There are no indications that Ontario plans to change its policy on fourth-dose eligibility this summer.

"We are reviewing NACI's most recent guidance and will be providing details for fall booster shots over the coming weeks," said a spokesperson for the Ministry of Health in an email to CBC News.

That doesn't satisfy Kaplan-Myrth. "Ontario is kind of saying, 'Just wait, we'll give you something in the fall.' But that's not good enough when it's already past time for people to have boosters now," she said in an interview with CBC News.

Dr. Steve Findall, an emergency room physician in the Greater Toronto Area, is also advocating for the province to open up the extra booster to all adults.

"The time to offer fourth doses to prevent further problems down the road is now," Findall told CBC News.

He said he's concerned that a longer gap between boosters will mean people mount a less robust immune response.

"This leaves many vulnerable individuals exposed to severe illness, not to mention the tenuous staffing levels of health-care workers," said Findall.

He and Kaplan-Myrth point out that the people under 60 who are not eligible for a fourth dose are currently more vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 than older people because they are in the workforce, with those in essential front-line jobs at the greatest risk.

"It's actually unconscionable to expect doctors and nurses and other health-care workers to be in a situation where we no longer have protection," said Kaplan-Myrth.

She believes much of the current vaccine supply will pass its expiration date before fall. "We're talking probably tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of doses that are going to just go in the garbage," she said.

Putin declares victory in battle for Eastern Ukraine region of Luhansk

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday declared victory in the Eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk, one day after Ukrainian forces withdrew from their last remaining bulwark of resistance in the province.

Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin in a televised meeting Monday that Russian forces had taken control of Luhansk, which together with the neighbouring Donetsk province makes up Ukraine's industrial heartland of Donbas.

Shoigu told Putin that "the operation" was completed on Sunday after Russian troops overran the city of Lyyschansk, the last stronghold of Ukrainian forces in Luhansk.

Putin, in turn, said that the military units "that took part in active hostilities achieved success, victory" in Luhansk. "Should rest, increase their combat capabilities."

Retreat chosen rather than encirclement, Ukrainians say. While the Russian army has a massive advantage in firepower, military analysts say that it doesn't have any significant superiority in the number of troops. That means Moscow lacks resources for quick land gains and can only advance slowly, relying on heavy artillery and rocket barrages to soften Ukrainian defences.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made capturing the entire Donbas a key goal in his war in Ukraine, now in its fifth month. Moscow-backed separatists in Donbas have battled Ukrainian forces since 2014 when they declared independence from Kyiv after the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimea.

Russia formally recognized the self-proclaimed republics days before its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky acknowledged the withdrawal, but vowed that Ukrainian forces will fight their way back.

"If the command of our army withdraws people from certain points of the front where the enemy has the greatest fire superiority, in particular this applies to Lyyschansk, it means only one thing: We will return thanks to our tactics, thanks to the increase in the supply of modern weapons," Zelensky said.



Sunday.

An intelligence briefing Monday from the British Defence Ministry supported the Ukrainian military's assessment, noting that Russian forces will "now almost certainly" switch to capturing Donetsk.

The briefing said the conflict in Donbas has been "grinding and attritional," and is unlikely to change in the coming weeks.

Moscow lacks resources for quick land gains

Grain exports only expected to reach 35% of 2021 total. In its Monday intelligence report, Britain's defence ministry pointed to the Russian blockade of the key Ukrainian port of Odesa, which has severely restricted grain exports. They predicted that Ukraine's agricultural exports would reach only 35 per cent of the 2021 total this year as a result.

As Moscow pushed its offensive across the border, the governor of the Belgorod region in Western Russia said fragments of an intercepted Ukrainian missile killed four people Sunday.

In the Russian city of Kursk, two Ukrainian drones were shot down, according to the Russian Defence Ministry.

In other developments: "Ukrainian soldiers returning from the front lines in Eastern Ukraine's Donbas region - where Russia is waging a fierce offensive - describe life during what has turned into a gruelling war of attrition as apocalyptic."

"Two Russian airplanes departed Bulgaria on Sunday with scores of Russian diplomatic staff and their families amid a mass expulsion that has sent tensions soaring between the historically close nations, a Russian diplomat said.

Ontario's modified G road test to remain in place indefinitely

There's good news for drivers in Ontario who hate parallel parking and don't currently have a G class license.

The measure was supposed to be temporary and was set to expire on March 31.

However, Transportation Minister Caroline Mulroney announced that same day that the modified test wasn't going anywhere due to "high demand for class G road tests across Ontario."

"This allows for more streamlined tests to take place while continuing to evaluate fundamental driver skills," Mulroney said in a tweet at the time.

While emergency stops, three-point turns and parallel parking will remain in place for standard G2 tests, driving instructors who spoke to The Canadian Press following the January announcement said the modification could shave as many as 15 minutes off the standard 30-minute exam.

Driving safety advocates took issue with the changes earlier this year saying that, among other things, the modifications to clear the backlog weren't worth the potential dangers they could bring to Ontario's streets.

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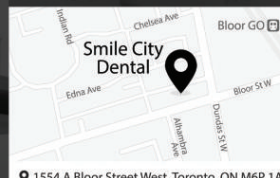
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Ontario increases amount landlords can raise rent by highest level in a decade

Ontario is more than doubling the maximum rate a landlord can raise a tenant's rent next year - marking the highest rent increase guideline in the province in a decade.

On Wednesday, the province announced Ontario's rent increase guideline for 2023 is 2.5 per cent.

Previously, landlords were allowed to raise rent by 1.2 per cent in 2022, following a rent freeze that rolled out in 2020 to help Ontarians through the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last time Ontario's rent increase guidelines reached 2.5 per cent was in 2013.

"As Ontario families face the rising cost of living, our government is providing stability and predictability to the vast majority of tenants by capping the rent increase guideline below inflation at 2.5 per cent," Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, said in a statement on Wednesday.



The guideline is based on Ontario's Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation calculated monthly by Statistics Canada that uses data that reflects economic conditions over the past year.

This follows an unprecedented move from the Bank of Canada earlier this month, increasing its key interest rate by half a percentage point to 1.5 per cent for the second time in two months.

If Ontario's rent increase matched recent inflation, the 2023 guideline would have surged to 5.3 per cent. "However the guideline is capped to help protect tenants from significant rent increases," the province said.

The new rent guideline comes on the heels of a report that found rent prices in Toronto rose by 20 per cent over the last year. On average, rent prices in the city rose to \$2,474 in May, up from \$2,035 a year ago. That marked the most substantial monthly increase in rent prices since 2019, before the pandemic began.

The government says rent increases are not automatic or mandatory. They are the maximum amount a landlord can raise a tenant's rent without the approval of the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Landlords must give tenants at least 90 days' written notice before pursuing a rent hike. At least 12 months must have passed since either the first day of the tenancy or the last rent increase.

The 2023 rent increase is applicable between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2023.

sent back to the waiting room because there were no examination rooms available.

The family waited, but around 10:30 p.m., the father approached the nurse, again telling her the baby had been bleeding since the morning. She replied that there were patients who needed more urgent care, and repeated that the situation was not an emergency.

The child's father said that if it wasn't an emergency, they should just go home. The nurse said they could do so, but didn't look in the infant's diaper or inspect the circumcision before they left the hospital, according to the statement of claim.

The nurse took the baby's chart to another doctor who was working in the emergency room, also named as a defendant in the lawsuit, and explained what had happened.

He signed the chart without inspecting the baby and gave no instructions for bringing the child back to the hospital to be treated, the lawsuits say.

Airflight to HSC
The parents took the baby home, but later that night, he became paler and started having trouble breathing. They rushed him back to the hospital again around 2:40 a.m. the statement of claim says.

naming due to private health information, was born healthy in 2017, according to the statement of claim.

In August, when he was one month old, he was taken to the Portage Clinic to be circumcised by a doctor - an important part of his family's Muslim faith.

About four hours after the circumcision, the parents opened his diaper and found bloodstains.

They took him back to the clinic to see the doctor who performed the circumcision. He is named as a defendant in the lawsuit, accused of not performing the circumcision properly and not properly following up on the baby's care.

The doctor checked out the baby, put Vaseline on him and sent him home with his parents, the suits say.

Sent home from ER without treatment

Baby who bled for hours after circumcision was sent home from ER twice, suffered brain damage: lawsuit

The mother of a boy who suffered permanent brain damage after he bled into his diapers all day following his circumcision says they were twice turned away from a Manitoba emergency department when they sought care.

She is now suing the Southern Health region and three health-care workers in the city of Portage la Prairie, alleging her son didn't receive timely medical attention and treatment in 2017.

Her statement of claim was filed on June 22 of this year with Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench.

The health authority says it hasn't yet been served, a spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Statements of defence hadn't been filed as of then, and none of the allegations have been proven in court.

The child, whom CBC News is not

Why your options may be limited if your employer wants you back in the workplace

The pandemic necessity of doing your job away from the workplace is ending as restrictions and mandates ease and employers refocus on getting people back to in-person work.

While employers can wind down temporary measures, they should also consider how the work environment has changed since COVID-19 took hold early in 2020, that flexible arrangements have proved to be possible, and how employees may feel about going back to in-person work, experts in Canada say.

"Employees have proven - at least in their own minds - that they are as productive, if not more productive, working from home," said Janet Kandora, a Toronto-based human resources (HR) consultant.

"So, that's where the pushback is." Agreements arrangements Nadia Zaman, an employment lawyer with Rudner Law in Markham, Ont., said she and her colleagues have fielded an increasing number of return-to-workplace questions in recent months.

"Employees can generally dictate whether the employee can work from home or must return to the office - whether fully or on a hybrid model - unless there was an agreement to the contrary," Zaman said in an interview.

There are some exceptions, mostly limited to legitimate needs for accommodation or concrete concerns about safety.

But Zaman said "employees do not have the right to choose where they work unless they already had that right" prior to the pandemic.

The prolonged stretch of time employees have spent working at home is part of a wider context of change.

Matthew Fisher, an employment lawyer and partner at the Toronto-based Lecker & Associates, said many employees have learned there can be a different way, that there can be flexibility, that there can be remote work.

He predicts some employees will point to the success of alternative



arrangements when employers ask them to get back to in-person work - and that may be part of eventual legal challenges alleging constructive dismissal, when an employee feels they've been forced to leave the job because of job requirements.

In an interview with CBC's Canada Tonight, Fisher said employees can tell their bosses: "You have broken a very fundamental aspect of our employment relationship that I do the best I can, but I have a level of flexibility that can work remotely."

Zaman said it's more likely that will happen as such arrangements continue, particularly if the employer has not clearly communicated that alternative working arrangements are temporary.

"One way that employers can make sure that they are protecting themselves ... is to clearly communicate to employees that remote work is only continuing as the pandemic and its after-effects, and that workers will be expected to return to the office at some point," said Zaman.

Candido, founder and principal of an HR consulting group, said she advises clients to ensure this messaging gets repeated "a couple of times a year," for the very reason Zaman outlined.

Persuasion can be helpful Beyond any legal context, employers have reason to convey their plans to employees - if only to drive home the fact that change is coming, experts said.

Wimpy Shen, an associate professor of organization studies at York University's Schulich School of

Business in Toronto, recommends that organizations share with staff why workplace requirements are changing.

"I think sometimes organizations just say, 'We want everyone back in the office,' but they're not very explicit on why ... they feel it's a compelling need or maybe they really think needs to be back at the office."

That communication also gives employees a chance to assess the information and possibly provide feedback, which could include employees highlighting "some of the things that the organization hasn't thought of."

Look to negotiation Where there are divides between what employees want and what their employers demand, both sides should look at what's possible under the circumstances, said Candido.

"Don't draw a line in the sand - just try and negotiate," said Candido. For example, employers can bring up the idea of easing their way back into the workplace, she said, and employers should make a point of hearing them out.

"Employers shouldn't dismiss employee concerns and probably won't if they're presented in more of a co-operative manner."

Returning staff is also a consideration when employees make long-term work-arrangement decisions, experts said.

David Kraichy, an assistant professor at the University of Saskatchewan's Edwards School of Business, said employers who continue to offer flexible work plans may find it easier to recruit talent.

Canada signs \$20B compensation agreement on First Nations child welfare

The federal government says it has signed a \$20-billion final settlement agreement to compensate First Nations children and families harmed by chronic underfunding of child welfare.

The Assembly of First Nations and plaintiffs in two class-action lawsuits agreed to the deal, which also accounts for the government's narrow definition of Jordan's Principle.

Indigenous Services Canada says the settlement is the largest in Canadian history.

The \$20 billion accounts for half of an overall \$40-billion deal that aims to reform the child-welfare system, including five-year funding for the First Nations Child and Family Services program.

The deal must still be approved by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and Federal Court.

The court had dismissed Canada's application to review two human-rights tribunal orders around child welfare and Jordan's Principle, which is meant to eliminate jurisdictional squabbles in paying for services for First Nations kids.

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