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CONFIDENCE RISES WITH DOLLAR STRENGTH: SURVEY

Market concerns about long term impact of credit issue spilling over

TORONTO, November 16, 2007 – TNS Canadian Facts' *Consumer Confidence Index* for November shows that consumers have set aside any concern about the impact of the credit issue and overall U.S. weakness, to arrive at unprecedented levels of economic confidence.

“With confidence overflowing, consumers are poised to open their wallets this holiday season,” said Richard Jenkins, vice-president of TNS Canadian Facts and director of the marketing research firm’s monthly *Consumer Confidence Index* tracking study.

The *Present Situation Index*, which captures evaluations of the overall state of the economy and the employment situation, now stands at 122.8. This represents an increase from 119.8 (2.5% increase) and the highest level in the more than three years that TNS has been conducting the study. Two-thirds of Canadians think the economy is very or fairly good at this time.

The *Expectations Index*, which measures consumers’ estimation of the economy, household income and employment in six months also rose for the second consecutive month. The November index value is 103.6 compared to 103.1 in October and 99.5 in September.

The *Buy Index*, which gauges the degree to which people think the current period is a good time to make major purchases, continues to exhibit the volatility it has shown over the past two years. The index now sits at 96.0, which is well below the highs of 2004 but well above the September value (91.3). At present, 42 per cent think it is a good time to make major purchases (37% think it is neither a good time nor a bad time).

“With employment at record levels and the high dollar strengthening purchasing power, consumer optimism is translating into an early good news story for retailers as they enter the important holiday season as long as they can head off the resurgence of cross-border shopping,” added Jenkins.

The survey found that Canadians plan to spend \$986 on holiday gifts, decorations or other holiday items this season, a significant 12 per cent increase over estimated holiday spending in 2006, which averaged \$877.

Consumer Confidence Index tracks Canadians’ attitudes about the economy each month and is part of a global study conducted by TNS in 18 countries. Three indices are produced each month to show how confidence in the economy is changing: *Present Situation Index*; an *Expectations Index*; and a *Buy Index*. The Canadian fieldwork is conducted using the firm’s national bi-weekly telephone omnibus service, TNS Express Telephone. A total of 1,015 nationally representative Canadian adults were interviewed between November 5 and 8. The survey results are considered accurate to 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

TNS Canadian Facts (www.tns-cf.com) is one of Canada's most prestigious full-service marketing, opinion and social research organizations.

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As industry thought leaders, our people deliver innovative thinking and excellent service to global organizations and local clients worldwide. We work in partnership with our clients, meeting their needs for high-quality information, analysis and foresight across our network of over 70 countries.

We are the world's foremost provider of custom research and analysis, combining in-depth industry sector understanding with world-class expertise in the areas of Retail and Shopper Insights, Stakeholder Management, New Product Development, and Brand and Communications. We are a major supplier of consumer panel, media intelligence and internet, TV and radio audience measurement services.

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Media Contacts:

Richard W. Jenkins

Vice President, Corporate Director, Public Opinion Research

Tel: (613) 230-4408 x101

e-mail: richard.jenkins@tns-global.com

David Stark

Vice President, Public Affairs

Tel: (416) 924-5751 x238

e-mail: david.stark@tns-global.com