



Jasmine Surani fits her son Mika, 22 months, at her southwest Little Footprints children's footwear store.

Photograph by: Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald

CALGARY - The growth rate in retail sales in Alberta in November was the highest in the country.

Statistics Canada reported Friday that retail sales in the province hit \$5.2 billion in the month, an increase of 8.8 per cent from November 2009 and up by 2.2 per cent from October.

At the national level, retail sales increased 1.3 per cent to \$37.3 billion in November, the sixth consecutive monthly rise in sales and the largest increase since March 2010. They were also up 5.3 per cent from a year ago.

Jasmine Surani, owner of Little Footprints, a footwear store for children, opened her business in May in Aspen Glen Landing and overall has benefited from the resurgence of the retail sector in the city and in the province.

"We did a lot of research before we opened the store and we first signed the lease to open the store about five years ago when the economy was at its peak and then when the economy crashed we really hesitated about opening the store but we decided to go ahead and do it anyways because economists were saying that Canada was rebounding quite well," she said.

Surani said overall expectations have been met and exceeded despite some bumps along the way.

“We’ve seen first hand that things are actually quite good and people are buying and it is a good time to start a business,” she said.

Statistics Canada said the 2.2 per cent sales increase in Alberta was a sixth consecutive monthly gain.

Todd Hirsch, senior economist with ATB Financial in Calgary, said consumer confidence in Alberta is on the rise as November had the highest level of monthly sales in the province in over two years.

“Alberta’s surge in retail activity is consistent with other indicators showing that the province is definitely getting its economic groove back,” he said.

“A small part of the increase in total retail spending, of course, is due to price increases . . . Nonetheless, with overall annual price inflation very low in Alberta during November (of) 0.1 per cent, the rising level of retail sales in the province is due mostly to higher volume. That implies Albertans are feeling more confident about their economy and jobs.”

Quebec retailers registered sales gains of 1.3 per cent in November, a fifth month of uninterrupted growth. Sales in British Columbia rose for the fourth month in a row, increasing 1.3 per cent. The largest gain in the Atlantic provinces was in New Brunswick, where sales rose 2.2 per cent.

The only decline occurred in Nova Scotia, where sales fell 0.7 per cent after three consecutive months of growth.

mtoneguzzi@calgaryherald.com

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