

Inside Canadian Commerce:

Q1 2026 Trends, Tactics and Standout Activations

From AI-powered shopping experiences to hockey-themed in-store theatrics, the first quarter of 2026 offered a clear view into where Canadian commerce is heading. This quarterly roundup highlights the campaigns, activations and trends that stood out, along with fresh shopper insights to help put it all in context.



TRENDING

Marketing Strategies

Brands are leaning into a mix of value messaging, cultural relevance and experiential engagement to stay top of mind and drive meaningful interactions.

- [“No Frills” advertising](#): The Loblaw-owned chain unveiled a campaign underscoring how shoppers could get more bang for their Loonies and Toonies at the discount banner.
- [Starting Five Flavors](#): Hellmann’s Canada teamed with the Toronto Raptors’ Brandon Ingram to promote its many mayonnaise options.



- [Boursin Ski-Thru](#): Group Bel promoted its Boursin cheese with a “ski-thru” pop-up at an Ontario resort, where guests could sample the fare, lounge by the fire pits and partake in immersive experiences.
- [Parent Assist](#): Kruger Products was a sponsor of the CBC’s Olympic Games coverage and launched a new campaign during the opening ceremony. It focused on hockey parents who encourage their kids’ on-ice dreams.

Artificial Intelligence

Retailers are rapidly embedding AI across both the front end and back end of commerce to streamline discovery and purchase, as well as better anticipate demand.

- [Loblaw and Google](#) teamed to give shoppers the chance to buy health, beauty and apparel products directly through conversational AI.



How do I get 'glass skin' without a 12-step routine?

+ -

Fast >

Personal Shopping Assistant

shoppersdrugmart.com

You can get that smooth, hydrated “glass skin” look with just a few essentials: a gentle cleanser, a hydrating serum, and a lightweight moisturizer. These help plump, smooth, and boost your natural glow without adding complexity.

I found some great options available at the Shoppers Drug Mart you usually shop to help you build a simple, effective routine:



Review your order

Toleriane Double Cleanser
\$28.80 \$56
Size: 400 mL
Qty: 1

Water Slide Hydration Boosting Serum...
\$19.99 \$24.99
Size: 30 mL
Qty: 1

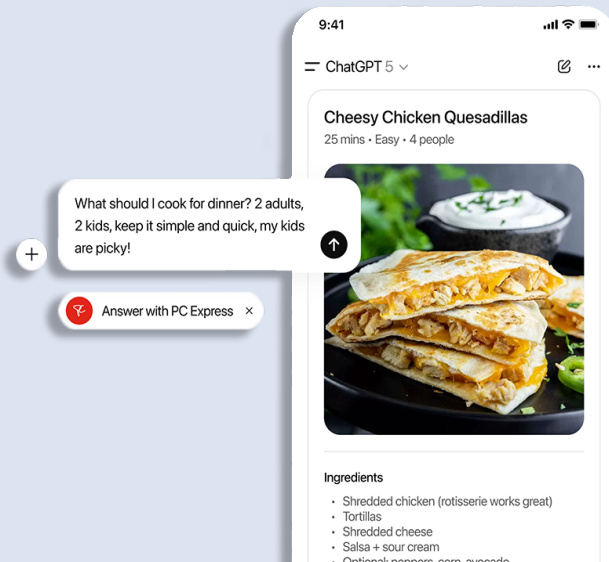
PC Financial Mastercard
Ending in 1234

Aaliyah Fernandes
4527 Maple Grove Avenue
Mississauga, ON L5B 3Y2

Free Shipping
1-3 business days

Pay Shoppers Drug Mart \$55.1

Pay with Google Pay



- Loblaw also is weaving its grocery delivery app into [OpenAI's ChatGPT](#). A shopper can ask the chatbot to help plan a themed party, for example, and the platform will offer suggestions and streamline the path to purchase.
- [Canadian Tire and Microsoft](#) launched an AI platform called MOSaiC, designed to take data on internal sales, the retailer's loyalty program and external factors such as weather patterns to anticipate and meet customer demand.

E-Commerce

Retailers are shifting toward third-party delivery partnerships to scale e-commerce more efficiently, signaling a move away from costly owned fulfillment models.

- Empire Co., the parent company of Sobeys, is cutting back on its proprietary Voila delivery and instead going forward with [expanded partnerships](#) with third-party fulfillment options, including DoorDash.
- Asian supermarket and Loblaw banner T&T [partnered with Uber Eats](#) to offer on-demand delivery.



Retail Media

February brought the return of the third annual P2PI Retail Media Summit Canada and yet another year of a packed room and exciting conversations. Hot topics included in-store measurement, AI and organizational alignment:

- Amar Singh, Kantar's senior director of retail insights, talked about [agentic AI's role](#) in in-store shopping and research.
- Avie Leang-Lorenzo, Sobeys' vice president of merchandising solutions and business intelligence, identified the [top five areas](#) of shopper value.
- [Digital leaders](#) from Kenvue Canada and Newell Brands discussed the importance of communication, budget, consistency and adaptability in powering retail media and e-commerce success.



TRENDING

RESEARCH

at a glance

These factoids are just a quick glimpse of P2PI's [proprietary study](#) on Canadian shopper engagement, which was unveiled at Retail Media Summit Canada. Among the findings:

Walmart, Amazon and Loblaw grocery banners lead in monthly shopping incidence, followed by Dollarama, Shoppers Drug Mart and Costco.

In a typical month:

- **60%** of grocery shoppers said they shopped at Loblaw.
- **70%** of mass merchant/club customers shopped at Walmart.
- Among drug/dollar/convenience customers, **55%** shopped at Dollarama, and **51%** at Shoppers Drug Mart.
- Gen Z is more likely than other generations to shop at convenience stores, with **25%** saying they patronize 7-Eleven, and **19%** choose Circle K/Couche-Tard.
- Among online-only customers, **63%** said they shopped on Amazon.
- Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than other generations to opt for delivery, with:
 - **35%** of Gen Z and **30%** of Millennials choosing Uber Eats.
 - **28%** of Gen Z and **23%** of Millennials opting for DoorDash.
 - **16%** of Gen Z and **13%** of Millennials selecting Skip.

In terms of shopping frequency, **78%** of respondents said they shopped for groceries once a week or more often.

Groceries (**91%**), alcohol (**91%**) and medications (**87%**) are most likely to be bought in-store, while Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than Boomers to use their smartphone to shop for beauty/cosmetic products, home improvement, non-food household essentials, alcoholic beverages and groceries.

The Path to Purchase Institute team always has an eye out for interesting and relevant digital and in-store marketing and merchandising activity at top retailers. Recent field reports include an exclusive sweepstakes and a new brand landing at PetSmart.

[Schick Sweeps](#)

Edgewell Personal Care's Schick held a sweepstakes for comic, sci-fi and fantasy fans where they could win a trip to Fan Expo Canada 2026. Loblaw Cos.' Shoppers Drug Mart set out in-store signage, and social media activity touted the prize. To enter, shoppers had to make a qualifying purchase using their PC Optimum loyalty card.

[Stella & Chewy's](#)

PetSmart added to its raw and natural pet food assortment by adding Stella & Chewy's to their shelves. A gondola touting the brand's arrival occupied prime store space, and in-store sampling events and social media activity helped raise awareness.

FIELD

Reports

IN-STORE INSPIRATION

P2PI Favorites



Maple Leaf Foods

Maple Leaf Foods had a floorstand and other signage at a Toronto Metro store, touting the brand as “official protein partner” of Team Canada at the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, fueling athletes on their road to glory. Other signage included a shelf talker with a QR code where shoppers could scan and upload their receipt when they spent CA\$20 on qualifying products to receive a prepaid Visa card and enter for a chance to win Team Canada prizes.



Kraft Heinz

Kraft Heinz showed its support for hockey and Canadian communities with several in-store displays, including this mini spectacular at a Toronto Metro. A display served as a miniature hockey rink, with Kraft Heinz products taking to the ice like hockey players waiting for the puck to drop. The ends of the display had further information about a chance for a community to win CA\$250,000 and bring National Hockey League action to its town.



Bush's

A Great Canadian Superstore in Toronto had signage and a sweepstakes for a hockey getaway. Shoppers could scan a QR code and enter for a chance to win playoff prizes from Bush's, the Ontario Hockey League and Western Hockey League. Social media activity also promoted the giveaways.