

Crude Language: Investor discretion is advised

By Ethan Currie & Taylor Schleich (with contributions from NBC's Daniel Semenjok)

Crude prices have soared and remain lofty, which has brought sovereign bond yields decisively higher. Recast central bank pricing—in Canada and abroad—is entirely consistent with this move as inflation expectations are pointed higher, but mostly in the near-to-intermediate term. Longer-term inflation swaps are better behaved, in contrast to how they reacted in 2022. We expect policymakers to sift through the energy noise in what will be a busy week for rate-setting (BoC, Fed, BoE, ECB, BoJ all on tap). While the RBA's second consecutive hike was aided by this shock, we expect other central banks not already pursuing tighter policy to caution against the need for immediate restraint, while conceding the rise in inflationary pressures and broader uncertainty. However, there's still justification for the renewed OIS tightening *bias*, in our view.

Zooming out, the war in the Middle East has effectively shut down the Strait of Hormuz, suppressing ~20MMb/d of crude and refined products.

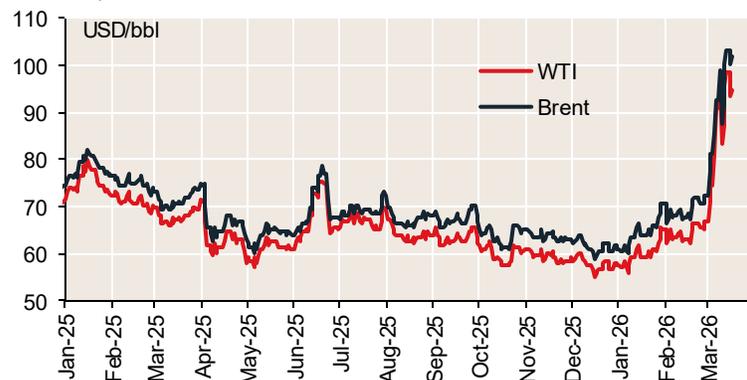
While G7 reserves can offer a partial offset, inventory builds have been muted in recent years, and the capacity to draw is limited in the near term, and unable to bridge the supply gap. Geopolitical risk premia in crude are likely to persist, evidenced in part by a futures strip pointed higher overall (and flatter in more recent sessions).

The persistence of this supply shock will need to carefully be assessed by central bankers, but the near-term impact will not go unnoticed. In Canada, the highest pump price in two years could contribute upwards of 60 bps to March's CPI print (to ~2.4%). We don't expect headline inflation to cap there, either, as base effects from last year's carbon tax removal will also provide a boost in April. If recent economic data were the sole driver, it's likely that additional rate relief at the Bank would be priced. Instead, broader volatility and inflation risks will provide a counterbalance to softer indicators, keeping the BoC on the sidelines for 2026.

Did you know? NBC has a dedicated Commodity Strategy team! For best-in-class analysis, interested investors are encouraged to reach out to their sales representative for further information.

Chart 1: Crude price has soared on Middle East conflict...

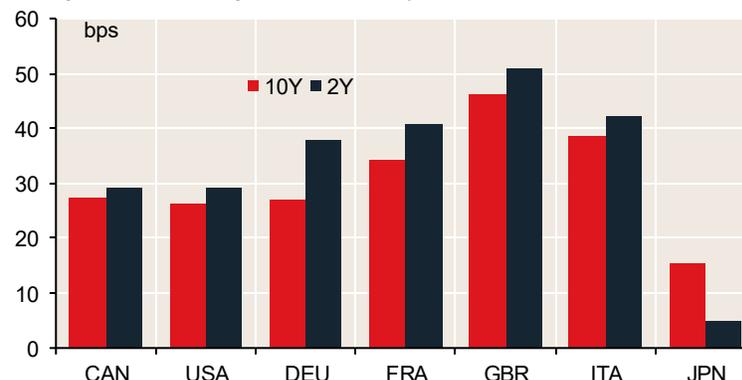
Crude oil price



Source: NBC, Bloomberg | Note: Prompt contract; daily through 16-Mar-2026

Chart 2: ...dragging up global interest rates with it

Change in 10Y and 2Y government bond yields since 27-Feb-2026

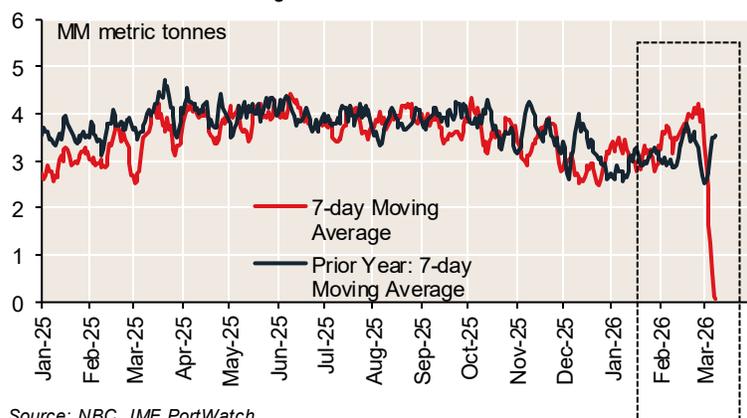


Source: NBC, Bloomberg | Note: G7 economies are presented

Unlike Middle East episodes last year which caused crude to spike, this rally hasn't been handed back. Instead, WTI/Brent have settled near multi-year highs for consecutive sessions. While rates have managed to make back some ground, they remain elevated since the conflict began—with net oil importing nations hit particularly hard.

Chart 3: Strait of Hormuz activity has grinded to a halt

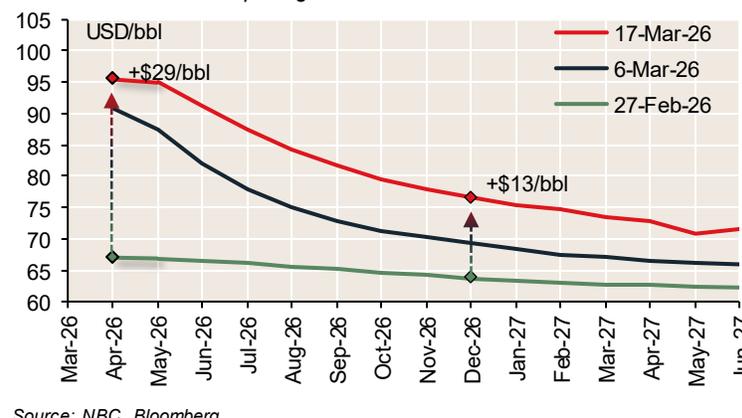
Transit trade volumes through the Strait of Hormuz



Source: NBC, IMF PortWatch

Chart 4: Markets expect stickier WTI as strip flattens

WTI oil futures contract pricing on select dates



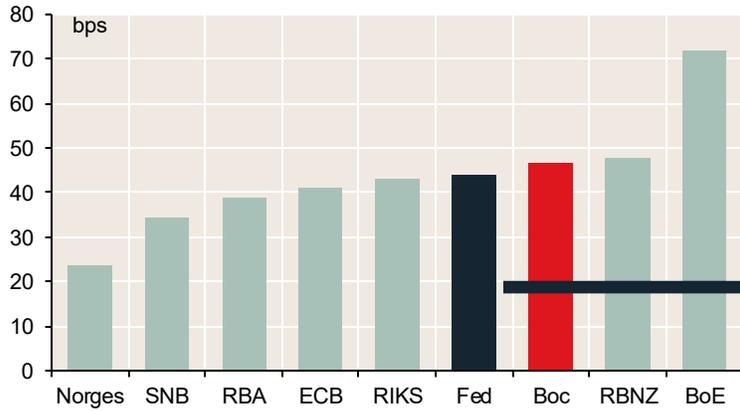
Source: NBC, Bloomberg

Tanker activity in the Strait of Hormuz has fallen off a cliff, suppressing ~20MM barrels/day of crude and related products. While we concede that crude futures aren't necessarily an indication of the future spot level, flattening out the curve signals market anxiety about the stickiness of this price action. Indeed, even with G7 reserve intervention, global supply will remain under pressure.



Chart 5: Central bank pricing has been sharply recast...

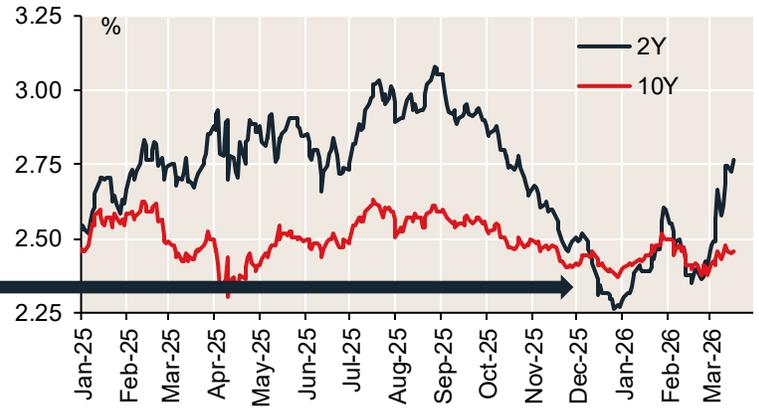
Change in OIS-implied 1Y ahead central bank policy rates, since 27-Feb-2026



Source: NBC, Bloomberg

Chart 6: ...as CPI expectations up, but anchored long-term

USD inflation swap zero coupon 2Y and 10Y

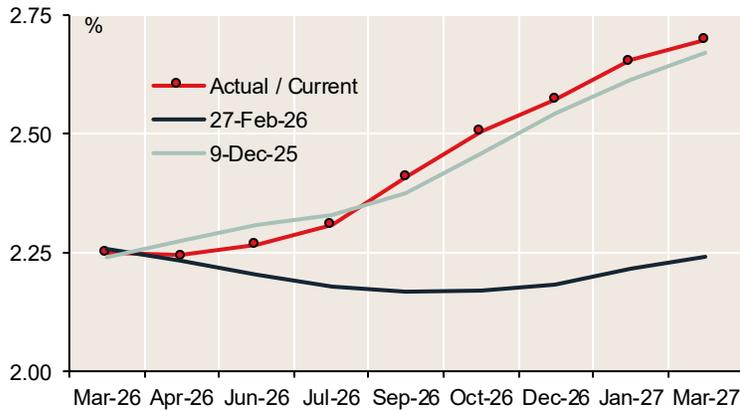


Source: NBC, Bloomberg

As energy prices trended lower in 2025, central banks were largely spared from inflationary pressure here. This price shock has, unsurprisingly, pushed policy rate expectations higher as inflation is set to run warmer globally. While market measures of expected inflation have risen in the near term, longer-dated inflation swaps (5Y+) remain well anchored, unlike during previous crude shocks.

Chart 7: In Canada, evolution on Bank pricing no different

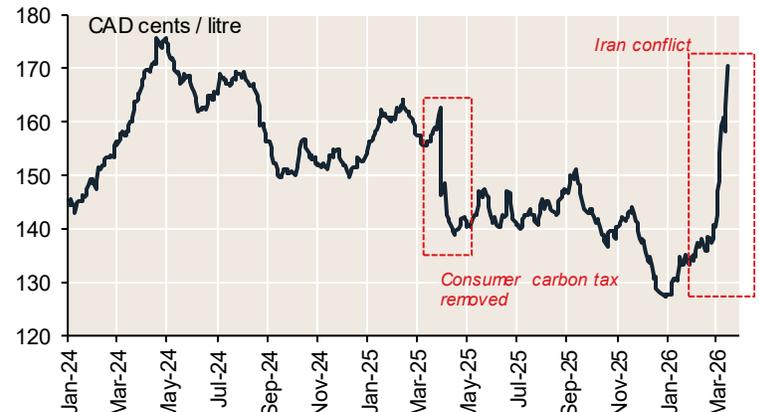
OIS-implied BoC policy rate path: Latest, pre-Iran conflict & Dec-2025



Source: NBC, Bloomberg

Chart 8: Canadians to face highest pump prices since 2024

Canada regular gasoline average retail pump price (including tax)

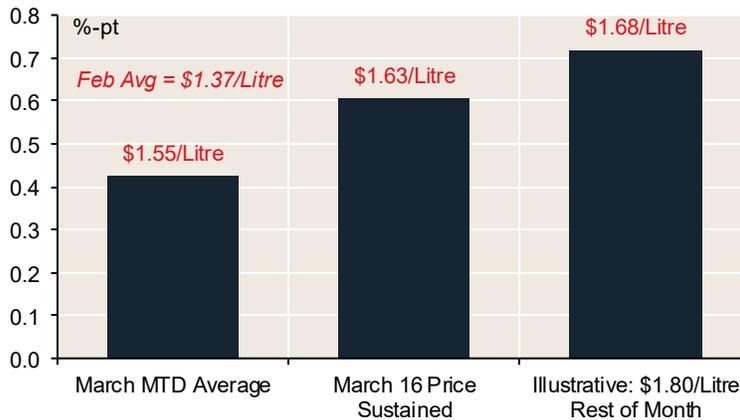


Source: NBC, Bloomberg

BoC repricing of late is second only to net energy importers. If it weren't for sharply higher prices at the pump, OIS would likely be pricing in additional rate relief—a better reflection of recent inflation and employment data. If loftier gasoline prices are sustained, and price pressures spill to core inflation, it will become increasingly difficult for the Bank to look through this.

Chart 9: Energy will contribute big to March's CPI print...

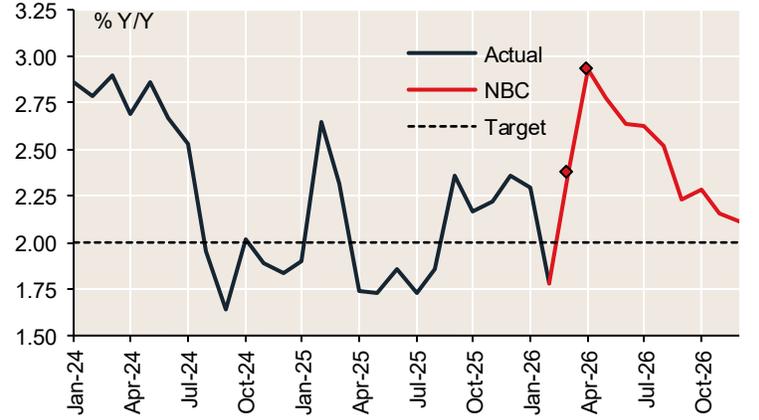
Estimated contribution to Canadian March CPI from average gasoline prices



Source: NBC, StatCan | Note: Simulated using non-seasonally adjusted figures

Chart 10: ...but peak inflation to come later due to tax impact

Canadian headline CPI inflation and NBC forecast



Source: NBC, StatCan

If Canadian gasoline prices remain at current levels for the remainder of March, this could contribute up to 60bps to the monthly CPI advance (C9, middle bar). And while that's significant, we don't expect the peak of this shock to be reflected in the March print. Combined with higher energy costs, the roll-off of last April's base effect (via the removal of the carbon tax) suggests that the BoC may be contending with headline inflation near 3% yet again. Assuming some moderation in the cost per barrel, we'd expect the Bank to remain patiently on the sidelines for the remainder of 2026.



Economics and Strategy

Subscribe to our publications:
NBC.EconomicsStrategy@nbc.ca

To contact us:
514-879-2529

Stéfane Marion
Chief Economist and Strategist
stefane.marion@nbc.ca

Matthieu Arseneau
Deputy Chief Economist
matthieu.arseneau@nbc.ca

Jocelyn Paquet
Senior Economist
jocelyn.paquet@nbc.ca

Kyle Dahms
Senior Economist
kyle.dahms@nbc.ca

Alexandra Ducharme
Senior Economist
alexandra.ducharme@nbc.ca

Daren King, CFA
Senior Economist
daren.king@nbc.ca

Warren Lovely
Chief Rates and Public Sector Strategist
warren.lovely@nbc.ca

Taylor Schleich
Rates Strategist
taylor.schleich@nbc.ca

Ethan Currie
Strategist
ethan.currie@nbc.ca

Angelo Katsoras
Geopolitical Analyst
angelo.katsoras@nbc.ca

Nathalie Girard
Senior Coordinator
n.girard@nbc.ca

Giuseppe Saltarelli
Desktop Publisher
giuseppe.saltarelli@nbc.ca

General: This Report was prepared by National Bank Financial, Inc. (NBF), (a Canadian investment dealer, member of CIRO), an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of National Bank of Canada. National Bank of Canada is a public company listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

The particulars contained herein were obtained from sources which we believe to be reliable but are not guaranteed by us and may be incomplete and may be subject to change without notice. The information is current as of the date of this document. Neither the author nor NBF assumes any obligation to update the information or advise on further developments relating to the topics or securities discussed. The opinions expressed are based upon the author(s) analysis and interpretation of these particulars and are not to be construed as a solicitation or offer to buy or sell the securities mentioned herein, and nothing in this Report constitutes a representation that any investment strategy or recommendation contained herein is suitable or appropriate to a recipient's individual circumstances. In all cases, investors should conduct their own investigation and analysis of such information before taking or omitting to take any action in relation to securities or markets that are analyzed in this Report. The Report alone is not intended to form the basis for an investment decision, or to replace any due diligence or analytical work required by you in making an investment decision.

This Report is for distribution only under such circumstances as may be permitted by applicable law. This Report is not directed at you if NBF or any affiliate distributing this Report is prohibited or restricted by any legislation or regulation in any jurisdiction from making it available to you. You should satisfy yourself before reading it that NBF is permitted to provide this Report to you under relevant legislation and regulations.

National Bank of Canada Financial Markets is a trade name used by National Bank Financial and National Bank of Canada Financial Inc.

Canadian Residents: NBF or its affiliates may engage in any trading strategies described herein for their own account or on a discretionary basis on behalf of certain clients and as market conditions change, may amend or change investment strategy including full and complete divestment. The trading interests of NBF and its affiliates may also be contrary to any opinions expressed in this Report.

NBF or its affiliates often act as financial advisor, agent or underwriter for certain issuers mentioned herein and may receive remuneration for its services. As well NBF and its affiliates and/or their officers, directors, representatives, associates, may have a position in the securities mentioned herein and may make purchases and/or sales of these securities from time to time in the open market or otherwise. NBF and its affiliates may make a market in securities mentioned in this Report. This Report may not be independent of the proprietary interests of NBF and its affiliates.

This Report is not considered a research product under Canadian law and regulation, and consequently is not governed by Canadian rules applicable to the publication and distribution of research Reports, including relevant restrictions or disclosures required to be included in research Reports.

UK Residents: This Report is a marketing document. This Report has not been prepared in accordance with EU legal requirements designed to promote the independence of investment research and it is not subject to any prohibition on dealing ahead of the dissemination of investment research. In respect of the distribution of this Report to UK residents, NBF has approved the contents (including, where necessary, for the purposes of Section 21(1) of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000). This Report is for information purposes only and does not constitute a personal recommendation, or investment, legal or tax advice. NBF and/or its parent and/or any companies within or affiliates of the National Bank of Canada group and/or any of their directors, officers and employees may have or may have had interests or long or short positions in, and may at any time make purchases and/or sales as principal or agent, or may act or may have acted as market maker in the relevant investments or related investments discussed in this Report, or may act or have acted as investment and/or commercial banker with respect hereto. The value of investments, and the income derived from them, can go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount invested. Past performance is not a guide to future performance. If an investment is denominated in a foreign currency, rates of exchange may have an adverse effect on the value of the investment. Investments which are illiquid may be difficult to sell or realise; it may also be difficult to obtain reliable information about their value or the extent of the risks to which they are exposed. Certain transactions, including those involving futures, swaps, and other derivatives, give rise to substantial risk and are not suitable for all investors. The investments contained in this Report are not available to retail customers and this Report is not for distribution to retail clients (within the meaning of the rules of the Financial Conduct Authority). Persons who are retail clients should not act or rely upon the information in this Report. This Report does not constitute or form part of any offer for sale or subscription of or solicitation of any offer to buy or subscribe for the securities described herein nor shall it or any part of it form the basis of or be relied on in connection with any contract or commitment whatsoever.

This information is only for distribution to Eligible Counterparties and Professional Clients in the United Kingdom within the meaning of the rules of the Financial Conduct Authority. NBF is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and has its registered office at 70 St. Mary Axe, London, EC3A 8BE.

NBF is not authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority to accept deposits in the United Kingdom.

EU Residents: With respect to the distribution of this report in the member states of the European Union ("EU") and the European Economic Area ("EEA") by NBC Paris, the contents of this report are for information purposes only and do not constitute investment advice, investment research, financial analysis or other forms of general recommendation relating to transactions in financial instruments within the meaning of Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 ("MiFID 2"). This report is intended only for professional investors and eligible counterparties within the meaning of MiFID 2 and its contents have not been reviewed or approved by any EU/EEA authority. NBC Paris is an investment firm authorised by the French Prudential Control and Resolution Authority ("ACPR") to provide investment services in France and has passported its investment services throughout the EU/EEA under the freedom to provide services and has its registered office at 8 avenue Percier, 75008 Paris, France. "NBC Financial Markets, a subsidiary of National Bank of Canada" is a trade name used by NBC Paris S.A.

NBF is not authorised to provide investment services in the EU/EEA.

U.S. Residents: With respect to the distribution of this report in the United States of America, National Bank of Canada Financial Inc. ("NBCFI") which is regulated by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) and a member of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation (SIPC), an affiliate of NBF, accepts responsibility for its contents, subject to any terms set out above. To make further inquiry related to this report, or to effect any transaction, United States residents should contact their NBCFI registered representative.

This report is not a research report and is intended for Major U.S. Institutional Investors only. This report is not subject to U.S. independence and disclosure standards applicable to research reports.

HK Residents: With respect to the distribution of this report in Hong Kong by NBC Financial Markets Asia Limited ("NBCFMA") which is licensed by the Securities and Futures Commission ("SFC") to conduct Type 1 (dealing in securities) and Type 3 (leveraged foreign exchange trading) regulated activities, the contents of this report are solely for informational purposes. It has not been approved by, reviewed by, verified by or filed with any regulator in Hong Kong. Nothing herein is a recommendation, advice, offer or solicitation to buy or sell a product or service, nor an official confirmation of any transaction. None of the products issuers, NBCFMA or its affiliates or other persons or entities named herein are obliged to notify you of changes to any information and none of the foregoing assume any loss suffered by you in reliance of such information.

The content of this report may contain information about investment products which are not authorized by SFC for offering to the public in Hong Kong and such information will only be available to, those persons who are Professional Investors (as defined in the Securities and Futures Ordinance of Hong Kong ("SFO")). If you are in any doubt as to your status you should consult a financial adviser or contact us. This material is not meant to be marketing materials and is not intended for public distribution. Please note that neither this material nor the product referred to is authorized for sale by SFC. Please refer to product prospectus for full details.

There may be conflicts of interest relating to NBCFMA or its affiliates' businesses. These activities and interests include potential multiple advisory, transactional and financial and other interests in securities and instruments that may be purchased or sold by NBCFMA or its affiliates, or in other investment vehicles which are managed by NBCFMA or its affiliates that may purchase or sell such securities and instruments.

No other entity within the National Bank of Canada group, including National Bank of Canada and National Bank Financial Inc, is licensed or registered with the SFC. Accordingly, such entities and their employees are not permitted and do not intend to: (i) carry on a business in any regulated activity in Hong Kong; (ii) hold themselves out as carrying on a business in any regulated activity in Hong Kong; or (iii) actively market their services to the Hong Kong public.

Copyright: This Report may not be reproduced in whole or in part, or further distributed or published or referred to in any manner whatsoever, nor may the information, opinions or conclusions contained in it be referred to without in each case the prior express written consent of NBF.