



The Daily

Statistics Canada

Tuesday, April 29, 1997

For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

There are no major releases today.

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OTHER RELEASES

Department store sales and stocks

March 1997

Seasonally adjusted department store sales rose 0.7% in March to reach \$1,290.4 million. The marginal increase in sales follows February's reported 2.2% increase. Sales for the first quarter of 1997 (seasonally adjusted) closed at \$3,825.3 million, up 8.7% compared with the first quarter of 1996. Department store sales have followed an upward trend since the end of 1993 except for a pause in the last half of 1995.

Year-over-year seasonally adjusted sales were up 10.4% from March 1996. This follows a 9.2% increase in February. Unadjusted sales in March were \$111.0 million higher than in March 1996 (+11.4%). The unadjusted increase is partly attributable to the Easter holiday falling in March this year. Easter typically generates higher sales for the month in which it falls.

On a regional basis, Nova Scotia (+14.9%), Ontario (+13.6%) and Alberta (+13.1%) registered strong unadjusted year-over-year gains followed by Saskatchewan (+11.1%), Manitoba (+10.5%), British Columbia (+9.0%) and Quebec (+7.7%). One additional store operated in Nova Scotia during March than a year earlier. Overall, Maritime year-over-year sales increased 11.4%.

All 10 census metropolitan areas reported increases in year-over-year unadjusted sales. Halifax — Dartmouth, with the addition of one new store, recorded the largest increase, climbing 16.9% from March 1996. Calgary sales rose 15.2% compared with a year earlier. Ottawa — Hull registered a 13.9% increase, followed by Hamilton (+12.8%) and Toronto (+11.9%). There were three additional stores in Ottawa — Hull and one less operating in both Toronto and Hamilton than in March 1996. Québec posted a modest 2.4% year-over-year increase, reversing the sharp 9.4% decline in February.

Department store sales including concessions

	March 1997	March 1996 to March 1997	Jan. 1997 to March 1997	Jan.- March 1996 to Jan.- March 1997
	unadjusted			
	\$ millions	%	\$ millions	%
	change	change	change	change
Canada	1,084.7	11.4	2,753.9	8.4
Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island	19.1	8.3	47.5	5.8
Nova Scotia	35.0	14.9	82.8	9.1
New Brunswick	24.1	9.0	58.8	3.9
Quebec	197.4	7.7	504.9	5.4
Ontario	453.6	13.6	1,154.9	9.8
Manitoba	45.8	10.5	116.2	8.2
Saskatchewan	34.2	11.1	88.4	9.7
Alberta	122.9	13.1	308.4	10.2
British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories	152.7	9.0	392.1	7.4

Note: Seasonally adjusted sales, inventory and accounts receivable data have been revised back to January 1994. The unadjusted monthly inventory data for January and February 1997 have also been revised. These revisions, as well as March 1997 data, are now available on CANSIM, or upon request from the Retail Commodity Section, Distributive Trades Division. The revised sales, inventory and accounts receivable totals will also appear in the March 1997 issue of *Department store sales and stocks* (63-002-XPB).

Available on CANSIM: matrices 111-113.

The March 1997 issue of *Department store sales and stocks* (63-002-XPB, \$17/\$165) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For analytical information, contact Irwin Bess (613-951-4166) Retail Commodity Section, Distributive Trades Division. For further information on this release, contact Louise Généreux (613-951-3549). ■

Employment insurance

February 1997 (preliminary; seasonally adjusted)

The estimated number of Canadians who received regular employment insurance benefits declined for a fifth consecutive month in February, down 3.3% to 597,000. Declines were recorded in eight provinces and the Northwest Territories. The downward trend in the number of beneficiaries throughout 1996 continued into February. Since September 1996, the number of regular beneficiaries has declined 14%.

Regular benefit payments declined 1.5% in February to \$755 million. Eight provinces and the Northwest Territories recorded declines, with the largest drop in Quebec (-4.8%). Payments have generally remained flat since June 1996.

Number of beneficiaries receiving regular benefits

	Feb. 1997	Jan. 1997 to Feb. 1997	% change
	seasonally adjusted		
Canada	597,130		-3.3
Newfoundland	36,110		-2.2
Prince Edward Island	9,590		-1.3
Nova Scotia	32,560		-2.3
New Brunswick	37,510		-3.9
Quebec	210,450		-1.8
Ontario	153,550		-3.3
Manitoba	13,900		1.9
Saskatchewan	10,070		1.6
Alberta	32,210		-3.3
British Columbia	68,310		-1.6
Yukon	1,240		5.5
Northwest Territories	1,150		-2.1

The number of individuals who applied for employment insurance benefits in February declined 6.2% to 226,000, with the largest declines in Ontario (-5.6%) and Quebec (-6.3%). The declines in February continue the trend that began in April 1996.

Employment insurance statistics

	Jan. 1997	Feb. 1997	Jan. to Feb. 1997
	seasonally adjusted		
			% change
Reg. beneficiaries ('000)	618 ^P	597 ^P	-3.3
Reg. payments (\$ millions)	766.1	754.8	-1.5
Claims ('000)	241	226	-6.2
	Feb. 1996	Feb. 1997	Feb. 1996 to Feb. 1997
	unadjusted		
			% change
All beneficiaries ('000)	1,171	996 ^P	-14.9
Reg. beneficiaries ('000)	929	784 ^P	-15.6
Claims ('000)	220	181	-17.8
Payments (\$ millions)	1,370.6	1,172.1	-14.5
	Year-to-date (Jan. to Feb.)		
	1996	1997	1996 to 1997
			% change
Claims ('000)	594	532	-10.4
Payments (\$ millions)	2,917.9	2,577.6	-11.7

^P Preliminary figures.

Note: "All beneficiaries" includes all claimants paid regular benefits (e.g., due to layoff) or special benefits (e.g., due to illness).

The seasonally adjusted regular beneficiaries data series have been revised with the receipt of the final data for December 1996.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 26 (series 1.6), 5700-5717, 5735 and 5736.

For further information on this release, contact Michael Scrim (613-951-4090; Internet: labour@statcan.ca; fax: 613-951-4087), Labour Division. ■

Employment insurance: Number of contributors and their contributions

1995

Annual data on the number of employees who made employment insurance contributions and the amount of their contributions are now available for 1995. Data are also available on insurable earnings and work earnings.

In 1995, 12.9 million employees contributed to employment insurance premiums, a 0.4% increase from 1994. Despite the slight increase, the number of contributors remained 4.2% lower than the 1990 peak of 13.4 million.

Employees paid \$8.4 million in employment insurance premiums in 1995, up 1.4% from 1994. This increase is in large part attributable to more contributors.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 5718, 5719 and 5729 and 5730.

For further information on this release, contact Michael Scrim (613-951-4090; Internet: labour@statcan.ca; fax: 613-951-4087), Labour Division. ■

Crude oil and natural gas

February 1997

In February, steady foreign demand resulted in a 1.6% increase in natural gas production compared with February 1996. This is the 10th consecutive monthly year-over-year advance in natural gas production. Crude oil production fell 0.4% in February, following a 3.1% advance in January.

Natural gas exports rose a solid 6.6% from February 1996. This continued record export level was fuelled by growing demand from U.S. electric utilities and residential consumers. Natural gas from Canada now accounts for nearly 13% of U.S. consumption.

Crude oil and natural gas

	Feb. 1996	Feb. 1997	Feb. 1996 to Feb. 1997 % change
	thousands of cubic metres		
Crude oil and equivalent hydrocarbons¹			
Production	9 139.8	9 104.6	-0.4
Exports	4 604.5	5 072.4	10.2
Imports ²	3 385.9	3 193.3	-5.7
Refinery receipts	7 700.0	7 332.6	-4.8
	millions of cubic metres		
Natural gas³			
Marketable production	12 380.9	12 582.7	1.6
Exports	6 469.8	6 893.6	6.6
Canadian sales ⁴	7 325.1	7 306.3	-0.3

	Jan. to Feb. 1996	Jan. to Feb. 1997	Jan.- Feb. 1996 to Jan.- Feb. 1997 % change
	thousands of cubic metres		
Crude oil and equivalent hydrocarbons¹			
Production	18 860.9	19 125.4	1.4
Exports	10 479.7	10 984.6	4.8
Imports ²	6 624.8	7 053.5	6.5
Refinery receipts	15 376.1	15 807.1	2.8
	millions of cubic metres		
Natural gas³			
Marketable production	26 220.2	26 817.3	2.3
Exports	13 616.1	14 339.3	5.3
Canadian sales ⁴	16 067.3	15 831.1	-1.5

¹ Disposition may differ from production due to inventory change, industry own-use, etc.

² Crude oil received by Canadian refineries from foreign countries for processing. Data differs from International Trade Division estimates due to timing differences and the inclusion in "trade" of crude oil landed in Canada for future re-export.

³ Disposition may differ from production due to inventory change, usage as pipeline fuel, pipeline losses, line-pack fluctuations, etc.

⁴ Includes direct sales.

Crude oil exports climbed for a ninth straight month, as low reserves and improving economic conditions in the United States continued to boost demand. Crude oil stocks in the United States remained unusually low, recording the lowest February level since 1977. Canadian crude oil has found a ready market in the United States, where reduced reliance on shipments from the Persian Gulf and declines in indigenous production have increased the demand for shipments from Canada.

Domestic sales of natural gas declined 0.3% from February 1996. The sales decrease was due to one less business day this February, compared with last February's 29 days.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 530 and 539.

The February 1997 issue of *Crude petroleum and natural gas production* (26-006-XPB, \$19/\$186) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Gérard O'Connor (613-951-3562; Internet: oconger@statcan.ca), Energy Section, Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Asphalt roofing

March 1997

Asphalt shingle production totalled 4 153 945 metric bundles in March, a 32.2% increase from 3 141 842 metric bundles produced a year earlier.

January to March production amounted to 11 582 557 metric bundles, a 41.1% increase from 8 210 977 metric bundles produced during the same period in 1996.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 32 and 122 (series 27).

The March issue of *Asphalt roofing* (45-001-XPB, \$7/\$62) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Liisa Pent (613-951-3531; Internet: pentlii@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Cereals and oilseeds review

February 1997

Farmers in the United States are planning to seed large areas of soybeans and corn but less spring wheat in 1997, according to the United States Department of

Agriculture's Prospective Plantings Survey. The results of Statistics Canada's Seeding Intentions Survey will be released on April 30. During March, prospects of short oilseed supplies from the 1996 crop and plentiful supplies from the 1997 crop created market volatility. Farmers took advantage of the price rallies to sell their old-crop canola.

The February issue of *Cereals and oilseeds review* (22-007-XPB, \$15/\$144), containing the March situation report, will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Jeannine L. Fleury (613-951-3859) or Karen Gray (204-983-2856; Internet: graykar@statcan.ca), Grain Marketing Unit, Agriculture Division. ■

Air travel within Canada and between Canada and the United States

January to June 1996 (preliminary)

Results for the first six months of 1996 show that, for the first time, scheduled air travel between Canada and the United States exceeded travel within Canada.

Between January and June 1996, 6,070,450 passengers travelled on scheduled flights between Canada and the United States, while the number of scheduled air trips within Canada during that period was 6,037,790. The largest Canadian domestic market was Montréal — Toronto with almost 300,000 passengers, while the largest transborder market was Toronto — New York with just under 200,000 passengers.

For further information, please contact Carol Gudz at (819-997-1386), Aviation Statistics Centre, Transportation Division. ■

Legal aid expenditures

1995/96

Following a decade of growth, legal aid expenditures appear to have stabilized. Expenditures totalled \$622 million in 1995/96, down 4% from the previous year. Expressed in per capita terms, legal aid spending dropped \$1.09 per Canadian in 1995/96 to \$21.01 compared with \$22.10 in 1994/95. The decrease was due in large part to lower expenditures in Ontario.

Payments to private lawyers totalled \$401.3 million, down 7% from last year. In contrast, payments for work done by staff lawyers rose 6% to \$150 million in 1995/96. Over the past decade the proportion of direct

legal aid expenditures made to private law firms has increased from nearly two-thirds in 1986/87 to about three-quarters in 1995/96.

Total legal aid applications in 1995/96 fell 9% to 975,577, the third consecutive annual decline. The number of applications approved for legal aid dropped 8% to 642,742, also the third straight decline. These decreases are mainly due to declines in Ontario.

Legal aid in Canada: resource and caseload statistics, 1995/96 (85F0015XPB, Canada: \$33) is now available. The report presents data on revenues, expenditures, caseload and personnel involved in the delivery of legal aid services in Canada. See *How to order publications*.

Legal aid in Canada: description of operations, 1995/96 (85-217-XDB, Canada: \$35) is now available on diskette only, directly from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. This report describes the structure and administration of legal aid services in Canada and includes information on legislation, organization, coverage, eligibility, duty counsel and tariffs. A list of legal aid office locations is also provided.

For further information on this release, contact the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (613-951-9023 or 1 800 387-2231). ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Legal aid in Canada: Resource and caseload statistics, 1995-1996 (microfiche version)

Catalogue number 85F0015XMB

(Canada: \$26; United States: US\$26; other countries: US\$26).

Legal aid in Canada: Resource and caseload statistics, 1995-1996 (paper version)

Catalogue number 85F0015XPB

(Canada: \$33; United States: US\$33; other countries: US\$33).

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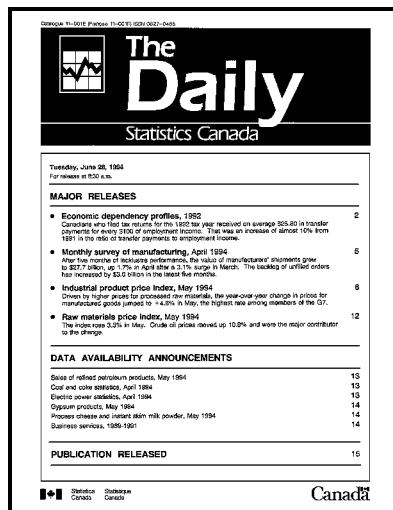
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