



The Daily

Statistics Canada

Wednesday, October 21, 1998
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Consumer Price Index, September 1998** 2
Over the last 12 months, the Consumer Price Index increased by 0.7%. This annual price increase represented the lowest 12-month change since December 1997.
- **Composite Index, September 1998** 5
The leading index was steady in September for the second straight month.

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MAJOR RELEASES

Consumer Price Index

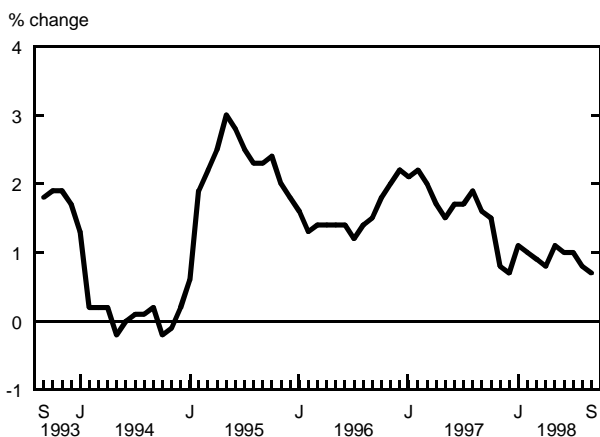
September 1998

Canadian consumers paid 0.7% more in September than in September 1997 for the goods and services contained in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket. This 0.7% annual price increase was the lowest 12-month change since December 1997 (+0.7%). The last time a lower annual price increase was recorded was in May 1962 — discounting the period between February 1994 and January 1995 when annual price increases in the CPI were artificially low due to tobacco tax reductions.

The annual increase in the CPI has slowed since June 1998. The modest increase in the CPI in September was due primarily to moderate increases in fresh fruit prices and in traveller accommodation rates. Lower gasoline and computer prices, as well as lower electricity rates dampened the upward movement in the All-items index.

Commodities exhibiting notable price increases in September from a year ago included piped gas, university tuition fees, cigarettes and travel tours. Lower mortgage interest costs helped moderate the annual increase in the CPI.

Percentage change in the Consumer Price Index from the same month of the previous year



The CPI fell 0.2% between August and September

The 0.2% decline in the CPI between August and September was the largest monthly decline this year.

This latest drop is not unique as monthly declines were observed five times in the last year.

Lower prices for fresh fruit and vegetables, electricity, traveller accommodation, computers and air transportation contributed to the 0.2% decline in the CPI between August and September. The largest offsetting factor was the increase in university tuition fees. An increase in furniture prices also had a moderating effect.

The price of fresh vegetables fell by 11.0% between August and September. A drop of this magnitude is not out of the ordinary at this time of year since local harvests result in an abundant supply of vegetables. Although the price of potatoes fell by 10.0%, this decline was not as large as those observed between August and September in previous years. Between August and September, the price of fresh fruit fell by 5.1%, which was consistent with declines usually reported at this time of year. Even with this decline, prices of fresh fruit were still 6.1% higher than a year ago.

Electricity rates fell by 2.8% in September due mainly to one-time rebates given to customers in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Alberta.

A 5.1% seasonal decline in the cost of traveller accommodation in September was consistent with the end of the peak tourist season.

Between August and September, the price of computer equipment and supplies fell 7.7%. On average, computers cost 24.0% less than they did a year ago. A combination of factors has been responsible for the sharp decline in computer prices. Since demand for personal computers has slowed, companies have reduced prices to preserve market share and to lower inventories in anticipation of receipt of new stock. Prices for computer chips and other computer components imported from Asia reflect the weakness of Asian currencies.

The price of air transportation fell by 3.4% from August to September. Airline travellers were paying, on average, 4.4% more in September 1998 than they did a year earlier. February 1996 marked the last time that a smaller annual increase had been posted.

A 7.8% increase in university tuition fees was the major factor moderating the overall price decline in the All-items CPI between August and September. Annual increases in tuition fees have exceeded increases in the annual average of the All-items CPI since 1983. The share of university revenues attributable to tuition fees has continued to grow in recent years while that share attributable to government grants has fallen.

Furniture prices rose 3.2% between August and September. This bigger than usual price increase was mainly due to the widespread return to regular prices after promotional sales.

Provincial highlights

Residents of Newfoundland benefited from the largest annual price declines among the provinces (-1.0%), while residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan experienced the highest price increases among provinces (+1.5%).

Between August and September, Ontario and Saskatchewan faced the highest price increases (+0.1%) among provinces while all other provinces enjoyed price declines ranging from 1.1% in Nova Scotia to 0.1% in Prince Edward Island and Manitoba.

Provincial spotlight: Newfoundland and Alberta

Over the last 12 months, the All-items index for Alberta increased by 1.1% while Canadians on average experienced an increase of 0.7%. On the other hand, the All-items index for Newfoundland decreased by 1.0% over the same period.

Between September 1997 and September 1998, residents of Alberta have seen gasoline prices decline by 9.4% while Canada as a whole registered a 13.0% decrease. Costs related to homeownership increased faster in Alberta (+2.3%) than they did in Canada overall (+0.7%). Increases in piped gas rates and household operation costs were also more pronounced in Alberta than they were in Canada as a whole. On the other hand, Albertans benefited from a 20.0% drop in electricity rates while these rates fell, on average, by only 1.8% in Canada. Prices of footwear, fresh fruit, and automotive insurance premiums decreased in Alberta

while they increased for Canada as a whole. Cigarettes and travel services prices also increased at a slower rate in Alberta than they did in Canada overall.

Over the last 12 months, residents of Newfoundland benefited from price decreases for electricity and fuel oil that were larger than the decreases experienced by the average Canadian. Electricity and fuel oil rates dropped 18.0% and 20.5%, respectively, in Newfoundland, while they dropped only 1.8% and 10.5% in Canada as a whole. Prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages also increased by a smaller percentage in Newfoundland (+0.5%) than they did in Canada (+1.3%). Since September 1997, women's clothing, automobiles, sporting and athletic equipment, and cigarettes dropped in price in Newfoundland while corresponding prices at the Canada level showed mainly increases. On the other hand, gasoline prices dropped 13.0% in Canada while declining only 6.3% in Newfoundland. Residents of Newfoundland also faced larger price increases for telephone services (+7.3%) than did Canadians as a whole (+1.3%).

Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9970.

Available at 7 a.m. on the Internet at www.statcan.ca.

The September 1998 issue of the *Consumer Price Index* (62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. See *How to order publications*.

The October 1998 *Consumer Price Index* will be released on November 19, 1998.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, call (613-951-9606; fax: 613- 951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division. □

The Consumer Price Index and major components (1992=100)

	Sept. 1998	Aug. 1998	Sept. 1997	Aug. to Sept. 1998	Sept. 1997 to Sept. 1998
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
All-items	108.6	108.8	107.8	-0.2	0.7
Food	108.3	109.2	106.9	-0.8	1.3
Shelter	103.6	103.7	103.1	-0.1	0.5
Household operations and furnishings	108.5	107.9	106.9	0.6	1.5
Clothing and footwear	104.4	104.7	103.4	-0.3	1.0
Transportation	119.9	120.2	122.2	-0.2	-1.9
Health and personal care	108.5	108.4	105.9	0.1	2.5
Recreation, education and reading	119.0	119.3	117.2	-0.3	1.5
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	93.2	93.0	89.6	0.2	4.0
Goods	105.1	105.7	105.4	-0.6	-0.3
Services	112.6	112.4	110.6	0.2	1.8
All-items excluding food and energy	109.3	109.2	107.8	0.1	1.4
Energy	102.6	104.0	110.0	-1.3	-6.7
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared with 1992	92.1	91.9	92.8		
All-items (1986=100)	139.1				

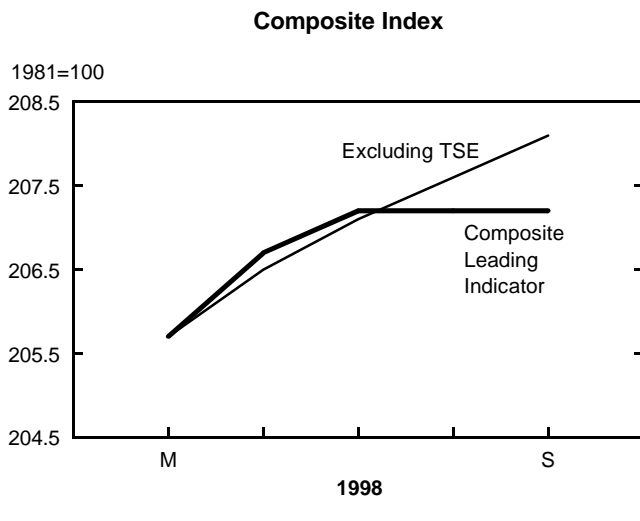
The Consumer Price Index by province, Whitehorse and Yellowknife (1992=100)

	Sept. 1998	Aug. 1998	Sept. 1997	Aug. to Sept. 1998	Sept. 1997 to Sept. 1998
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
Newfoundland	107.6	108.7	108.7	-1.0	-1.0
Prince Edward Island	105.4	105.5	106.3	-0.1	-0.8
Nova Scotia	107.4	108.6	108.2	-1.1	-0.7
New Brunswick	107.1	107.5	107.4	-0.4	-0.3
Québec	106.2	106.5	105.0	-0.3	1.1
Ontario	109.0	108.9	108.1	0.1	0.8
Manitoba	113.2	113.3	111.5	-0.1	1.5
Saskatchewan	111.9	111.8	110.3	0.1	1.5
Alberta	111.0	111.4	109.8	-0.4	1.1
British Columbia	110.0	110.4	110.0	-0.4	0.0
Whitehorse	111.5	111.6	110.6	-0.1	0.8
Yellowknife	108.2	108.7	109.0	-0.5	-0.7

Composite Index

September 1998

The leading indicator was unchanged in September, as the steep descent for the stock market that began in May came to an end. Five of the ten components were up, the same as in August, and one more than in July when strike effects were intensifying. The end of strikes in the auto industry also contributed to the growth of the U.S. leading indicator.



Financial market conditions improved. The stock market stabilized in September, while so far in October

it has regained some of the ground lost since May. Falling stocks were the major factor behind the slowdown in the Composite Index over the summer.

Household demand firmed, mirroring the boost to incomes as several strikes were settled and employment continued to pick up. The housing index was steady after two monthly declines. Spending on durable goods also turned for the better. Meanwhile, services employment accelerated thanks to demand for personal services, snapping out of a year-long slowdown.

Manufacturers did not follow the enthusiasm shown by consumers. New orders remained on a downward trend due to widespread weakness outside of capital goods. The slack in demand pushed down rapidly the ratio of shipments to stocks, to its lowest level in two years. Subsequently, manufacturing employment in September fell sharply for the third straight month.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 191.

For further information on the economy, the October issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) will be available later this week. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627), Current Economic Analysis Group. □

Composite Index

	April 1998	May 1998	June 1998	July 1998	Aug. 1998	Sept. 1998	Last month of data
							% change
Composite leading indicator (1981=100)	204.6	205.7	206.7	207.2	207.2	207.2	0.0
Housing index (1981=100) ¹	127.0	127.3	127.4	126.8	126.6	126.6	0.0
Business and personal services employment ('000)	2,236	2,250	2,260	2,265	2,269	2,278	0.4
TSE 300 stock price index (1975=1,000)	7,112	7,275	7,383	7,385	7,138	6,788	-4.9
Money supply, M1 (\$ millions, 1981) ²	39,452	39,859	40,194	40,524	40,927	41,389	1.1
U.S. composite leading indicator (1967=100) ³	224.2	224.6	224.9	225.0	225.2	225.4	0.1
Manufacturing							
Average workweek (hours)	38.6	38.5	38.5	38.4	38.4	38.3	-0.3
New orders, durables (\$ millions, 1981) ⁴	15,393	15,401	15,354	15,290	15,179	15,081	-0.6
Shipments/inventories of finished goods ⁴	1.65	1.64	1.64	1.64	1.63	1.60	-0.03 ⁵
Retail trade							
Furniture and appliance sales (\$ millions, 1981) ⁴	1,334.5	1,345.2	1,354.2	1,363.3	1,369.4	1,376.9	0.5
Other durable goods sales (\$ millions, 1981) ⁴	4,509.7	4,520.4	4,539.1	4,557.2	4,562.4	4,564.7	0.1
Unsmoothed composite	207.8	209.1	207.7	206.7	205.0	206.4	0.7

¹ Composite Index of housing starts (units) and house sales (multiple listing service).

² Deflated by the Consumer Price Index for all items.

³ The figures in this row reflect data published in the month indicated, but the figures themselves refer to data for the month immediately preceding.

⁴ The figures in this row reflect data published in the month indicated, but the figures themselves refer to data for two preceding months.

⁵ Difference from previous month.



OTHER RELEASES

Employment Insurance

August 1998 (preliminary)

The estimated number of Canadians who received regular Employment Insurance benefits in August decreased by 2.7% to 565,060. Seven provinces and the Yukon recorded monthly decreases. Increases in the number of beneficiaries were reported in Newfoundland (+10.1%) and the Northwest Territories (+0.8%) while Manitoba and British Columbia remained unchanged. Regular benefit payments increased (+10.2%) in August to \$720.0 million.

Number of beneficiaries receiving regular benefits

	Aug. 1998	July to Aug. 1998
	seasonally adjusted	
		% change
Canada	565,060	-2.7
Newfoundland	36,510	10.1
Prince Edward Island	9,300	-1.4
Nova Scotia	31,120	-0.2
New Brunswick	38,010	-1.1
Quebec	194,150	-5.5
Ontario	124,600	-4.6
Manitoba	13,540	0.0
Saskatchewan	11,510	-14.4
Alberta	31,070	-0.2
British Columbia	70,100	0.0
Yukon	1,290	-5.0
Northwest Territories	1,190	0.8

The discrepancy between the estimated number of regular beneficiaries and regular payments series can be explained in part by differences in their reference periods. The number of beneficiaries is a measure of all persons who received Employment Insurance benefits for the week containing the 15th of the month. The regular benefit payments series measures the total of all monies received by individuals for the entire month.

Employment Insurance statistics

	July 1998	Aug. 1998	July to Aug. 1998
	seasonally adjusted		
			% change
Regular beneficiaries	580,620 ^P	565,060 ^P	-2.7
Regular payments (\$ millions)	653.1	720.0	10.2

	Aug. 1997	Aug. 1998	Aug. 1997 to Aug. 1998
	unadjusted		
			% change
All beneficiaries ('000)	688.9	663.3 ^P	-3.7
Regular beneficiaries ('000)	520.0	504.3 ^P	-3.0
Payments (\$ millions)	802.6	916.9	14.2

	Year-to-date (January to August)		
	1997	1998	1997 to 1998
			% change
Payments (\$ millions)	8,531.5	8,285.3	-2.9

^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).

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

Note: Statistics on Employment Insurance claims were not released in today's *Daily* because of administrative changes to claimant reporting procedures.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, Gilles Groleau (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division. ■

Food consumption

1997

Canadians still reach for the humble potato at the dinner table more than any other vegetable, according

to 1997 figures on the amount of food available for consumption from the Canadian food supply. Potatoes are the principal vegetable crop in Canada, and remain the overwhelming favourite among consumers.

In 1997, each individual ate on average more than 72 kilograms of potatoes, either fresh or as processed products such as french fries and potato chips. In fact, potatoes comprise about 40% of all the vegetables Canadians eat in a year.

Overall, the preference for vegetables has soared over the past 25 years as Canadians have altered their eating habits and lifestyles to include healthier food. In 1997, they consumed more than 181 kilograms of vegetables, up 27% from the early 1970s.

In terms of fresh vegetables, excluding potatoes, consumption increased from 41 kilograms per person 25 years ago to just over 68 kilograms in 1997. The growing use of fresh-cut products in the food service industry and in retail grocery outlets is one factor in this growth. Lettuce, onions, carrots, tomatoes and cabbage were all popular choices.

Canadians are also a traditional lot when it comes to fruit. Bananas again topped the list of favourites, with each Canadian consuming almost 14 kilograms in 1997. Bananas were followed by apples and oranges (including mandarins and clementines), each at 10 kilograms per person. The growing popularity of cantaloupe and watermelon has pushed the consumption of all melons to more than seven kilograms per person in 1997, double the level from 25 years ago.

Overall, each Canadian ate almost 128 kilograms of fruit in 1997, up more than 50% from the early 1970s due in large part to higher juice consumption.

Fuelled by the growing use of salad and shortening oils, consumption of oils and fats increased from 21 kilograms per person 25 years ago to over 32 kilograms in 1997.

These data represent food that is available for consumption and not actual quantities of food consumed in Canada. This is because they do not allow for losses in stores, households, private institutions or restaurants. Consumption patterns of other products such as dairy, beef and poultry were released in *The Daily* on June 17, 1998.

Statistics Canada now has data on consumption trends of selected products in the United States that can be compared with Canadian data. These data show that the trend to lower milk consumption is occurring in both Canada and the United States. For example, in 1997, each Canadian consumed 89 litres of fluid milk, compared with 91 litres per person in the United States, a decline of about 8% in Canada and 23% in the United States from the early 1970s.

The shift to lower-fat varieties has also occurred in both countries, although the trend from homogenized milk is more pronounced in Canada. In the United States, whole milk accounted for about 34% of all fluid milk consumed in 1997 compared with only 17% in Canada.

The data also show that both Canadians and Americans are increasing their consumption of poultry, and are shifting from red meats. However, Americans are eating more red meat and poultry than Canadians.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2268-2272.

Historical consumption data (1983-1997) for fruits, vegetables, oils and fats and fish plus detailed information on production, stocks, international trade and supplies used by manufacturers will be available shortly in *Food consumption in Canada, Part II* (32-230-XPB, \$33 or 32-230-XIB, \$25). See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Debbie Dupuis (613-951-2553), or Patricia Chandler (613-951-2506; fax: 613-951-3868), Agriculture Division. ■

Crushing statistics

September 1998

Canadian oilseed processors crushed 297 717 metric tonnes of canola in September. Oil production totalled 123 736 tonnes while meal production amounted to 186 520 tonnes.

In the first two months of the 1998/99 crop year, the canola crush volume increased slightly (+1.5%) from the August-September 1997 crush of 512 899 tonnes.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 5687.

The September 1998 issue of *Cereals and oilseeds review* (22-007-XPB, \$15/\$149) will be released in early December. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Rick Burroughs (613-951-2890; burric@statcan.ca) or Les Macartney (613-951-8714; macales@statcan.ca), Grain Marketing Unit, Agriculture Division. ■

Health statistics: Catalogue of products and services

Health statistics: Catalogue of products and services, a comprehensive guide to health information available from Statistics Canada, is now available. The products, services and surveys listed in this publication cover broad subject areas such as vital statistics, health status, health determinants and health care.

Health statistics: Catalogue of products and services (82F0058XIE, free) is now available (www.statcan.ca). The menu path is Products and services and Downloadable publications (free).

For further information on this product, contact Paula Woollam (613-951-0879; woolpau@statcan.ca), Health Statistics Division. ■

Construction type plywood

June 1998

Canadian firms produced 140 764 cubic metres of construction type plywood during June 1998, down 12.6% from the 160 998 cubic metres produced during June 1997.

Year-to-date production totalled 891 466 cubic metres, down 5.1% from the 939 020 cubic metres produced during the same period in 1997.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 122 (level 1).

The June 1998 issue of the *Construction type plywood* (35-001-XPB, \$6/\$60) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Gilles Simard (613-951-3516; simales@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction, and Energy Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Consumer Price Index, September 1998
Catalogue number 62-001-XPB
(Canada: \$11/\$103; outside Canada: US\$11/US\$103).

Health statistics: Catalogue of products and services
Catalogue number 82F0058XIE
(Canada: \$Free; outside Canada: US\$Free).

Quarterly demographic statistics, Vol. 12, no. 2,
April-June 1998
Catalogue number 91-002-XIB
(Canada: \$8/\$25; outside Canada: US\$8/US\$25).

Quarterly demographic statistics, Vol. 12, no. 2,
April-June 1998
Catalogue number 91-002-XPB
(Canada: \$10/\$33; outside Canada: US\$10/US\$33).

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Catalogue 11-001E (PDF) 11MB (13,584,037 bytes)	
	
Statistics Canada	
Thursday, June 3, 1997	
For release at 8:30 a.m.	
MAJOR RELEASES	
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• Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1995 Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was notably weak again in 1995 accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow nominal growth during the year.	4
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Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

Catalogue 11-001E.

Published each working day by the Communications Division, Statistics Canada, 10-H, R.H. Coats Bldg., Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6.

To access *The Daily* on the Internet, visit our site at <http://www.statcan.ca>. To receive *The Daily* each morning by E-mail, send an E-mail message to listproc@statcan.ca. Leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type "subscribe daily firstname lastname".

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