



The Daily

Statistics Canada

Thursday, November 19, 1998

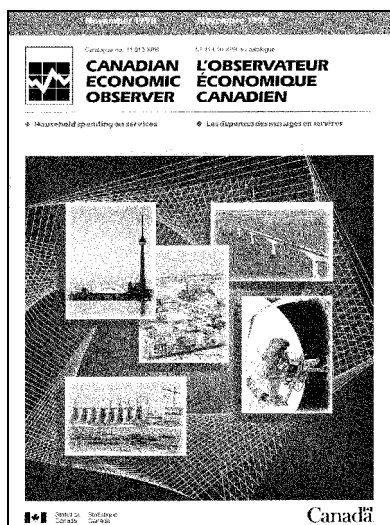
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Consumer Price Index, October 1998** 3
In October, the Consumer Price Index rose 1.0% from a year ago. Although higher than the 0.7% annual increase recorded in September, this month's movement remained well below the annual average change of 1.6% posted in both 1996 and 1997.

- **Wholesale trade, September 1998** 6
Wholesalers reported a 0.7% gain in sales in September, continuing the cautious upswing started in August.

(continued on following page)



Canadian economic observer

November 1998

The November issue of Statistics Canada's flagship publication for economic statistics, *Canadian economic observer*, analyses the current economic conditions, summarizes the major economic events that occurred in October and presents a feature article on household spending on services. A separate statistical summary contains a wide range of tables and graphs on the principal economic indicators for Canada, the provinces and the major industrial nations.

The November 1998 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, contact Cyndi Bloskie (613-951-3634; ceo@statcan.ca), Current Economic Analysis Group.



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PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

MAJOR RELEASES

Consumer Price Index

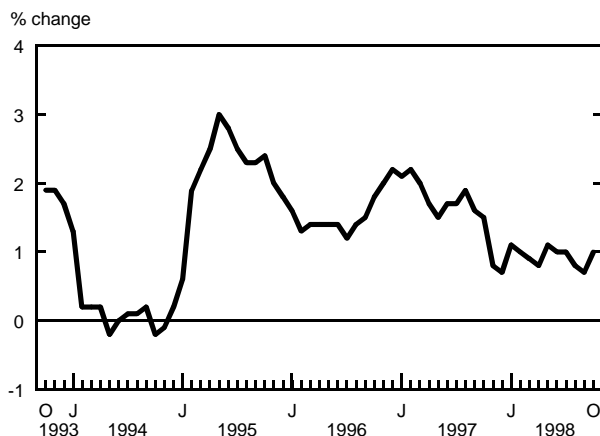
October 1998

Consumers paid 1.0% more for the goods and services in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket in October than they did in October 1997. Since January 1998, the 12-month change has ranged from a low of 0.7% (September) to a high of 1.1% (January, May), well below the annual average change of 1.6% posted in both 1997 and 1996.

Prices for gasoline and computer equipment continued to exercise major downward pressure on the annual change, while prices for food, university tuition, piped gas and property taxes were the major contributors to the upward movement.

Property taxes increased on average 2.3% for Canadians in the last year. Average property taxes at the provincial level were up for all provinces. Newfoundland (+5.8%), Manitoba (+5.0%) and Ontario (+3.3%) experienced the largest average increases mostly due to province-wide reassessments based on updated market values, although Manitoba also had increased school taxes. In Ontario, the impact of the introduction of current value assessment was eased by the option taken in some municipalities to use a phased implementation mainly over the next three years. Alberta, Quebec and Prince Edward Island were the only provinces with average annual property tax increases less than 1%.

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



The CPI increased 0.4% between September and October

The 0.4% increase in the CPI from September to October was mainly due to price increases for gasoline, electricity, and fresh vegetables. These increases were largely offset by decreases in the price of furniture and meat.

While gasoline prices increased 2.2% over last month, they remain 9.0% lower than last October. The month-to-month rise in the CPI for gasoline followed a climb of 11.6% in the price of crude oil from August to September 1998. Higher crude oil prices were partially due to OPEC's ongoing supply cuts. Further upward pressure on prices followed the announcement by the United States that they will buy significantly more oil for their Strategic Petroleum Reserve. With the exception of April and May 1998, the price index for gasoline has declined each month since November 1997.

Electricity rates rose 2.9% over last month. This is mostly explained by electricity bills no longer being influenced by the one-time rebate given last month to customers in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Alberta.

From September to October, the prices of fresh vegetables went up 6.7%. The price of tomatoes was up 32.8% compared with last month, while the price of lettuce increased 16.3%. These seasonal increases were somewhat moderated by a 1.2% drop in the price of potatoes. Weak price increases for vegetables still supplied from local markets also contributed a moderating effect on the fresh vegetable index.

The end of the growing season forced a return to imports for part of the fruit supply. As a result, the price of most fresh fruit rose in October with the exception of apples. The price decrease of 7.4% for local apples more than offset the price increases of other fruit and pushed the price index for fresh fruit down by 0.4%.

Lower prices for furniture and meat were the major factors moderating the overall increase in the CPI from September to October. Since 1991, discounts on furniture have become more prevalent in the month of October. The 3.3% decline this month continued to reflect that new trend. Price decreases occurred in all categories of furniture with the category "Other furniture" registering the biggest drop (-7.2%) while prices of upholstered furniture and wooden furniture fell 1.1% and 1.5%, respectively.

Meat prices fell 1.5% over last month. Price decreases were observed in all categories of meat as the result of a very competitive market. Pork and beef

prices fell 2.4% and 0.9%, respectively, due largely to over supplied markets. Increased promotional activities related to the Thanksgiving holiday were responsible for the 2.1% decline in the prices of poultry meat.

Provincial highlights

Since October 1997, the largest average price increase in the All-items index among provinces was registered in Manitoba (+1.8%) while Prince Edward Island was the only province in which an average price decline was reported (-0.6%).

Between September and October, the All-items index increased in all provinces. Nova Scotians faced the largest advances (+1.2%) while residents of Alberta and British Columbia experienced the smallest price movements (+0.1%).

Provincial spotlight: Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island

Since October 1997, residents of Saskatchewan faced price increases averaging 1.5% compared with the 1.0% advance in the All-items index for Canada. In Prince Edward Island, prices dropped, on average, 0.6% over the same period.

In Saskatchewan, rate increases for telephone services (+10.1%) and automotive vehicle insurance (+12.6%) were much higher than corresponding advances at the Canada level. Moreover, gasoline prices dropped only 4.4% in Saskatchewan over the past year while most other Canadians enjoyed larger price decreases. On the other hand, Saskatchewan residents benefited from a 9.8% drop in the price of fresh fruit compared with a 6.7% price advance in this commodity for Canada as a whole.

In Prince Edward Island, residents experienced price declines for gasoline (-14.2%) and fuel oil (-15.4%) that were considerably larger than corresponding decreases at the national level. Furthermore, lower prices for fresh fruit (-6.5%) and automotive vehicle insurance (-1.6%) were recorded in Prince Edward Island, whereas at the Canada level, price increases were posted for these commodities. Over the past year, prices of new homes have fallen by 1.5% in Prince Edward Island compared with a 0.9% increase at the national level. Residents of Prince Edward Island have encountered lower rate increases for homeowners insurance and property taxes than most other Canadians since October 1997. In contrast, residents of Prince Edward Island have faced price increases for beef (+4.9%) and telephone services (4.9%) that were substantially higher than the average price movements posted for these same commodities at the national level.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9970.

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

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

The November 1998 Consumer Price Index will be released on December 18, 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. □

Consumer Price Index and major components 1992=100

	Oct. 1998	Sept. 1998	Oct. 1997	Sept. to Oct. 1998	Oct. 1997 to Oct. 1998
not seasonally adjusted					
				% change	
All-items	109.0	108.6	107.9	0.4	1.0
Food	108.5	108.3	107.0	0.2	1.4
Shelter	104.2	103.6	103.2	0.6	1.0
Household operations and furnishings	108.0	108.5	107.0	-0.5	0.9
Clothing and footwear	106.1	104.4	104.7	1.6	1.3
Transportation	120.5	119.9	121.3	0.5	-0.7
Health and personal care	108.7	108.5	106.2	0.2	2.4
Recreation, education and reading	119.1	119.0	117.0	0.1	1.8
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	93.3	93.2	89.9	0.1	3.8
Goods	105.7	105.1	105.7	0.6	0.0
Services	112.7	112.6	110.4	0.1	2.1
All-items excluding food and energy	109.5	109.3	108.0	0.2	1.4
Energy	104.8	102.6	109.1	2.1	-3.9
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared with 1992	91.7	92.1	92.7		
All-items (1986=100)	139.6				

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

	Oct. 1998	Sept. 1998	Oct. 1997	Sept. to Oct. 1998	Oct. 1997 to Oct. 1998
not seasonally adjusted					
				% change	
Newfoundland	108.8	107.6	108.6	1.1	0.2
Prince Edward Island	106.1	105.4	106.7	0.7	-0.6
Nova Scotia	108.7	107.4	108.3	1.2	0.4
New Brunswick	107.9	107.1	107.4	0.7	0.5
Quebec	106.5	106.2	105.1	0.3	1.3
Ontario	109.4	109.0	108.3	0.4	1.0
Manitoba	113.7	113.2	111.7	0.4	1.8
Saskatchewan	112.2	111.9	110.5	0.3	1.5
Alberta	111.1	111.0	109.8	0.1	1.2
British Columbia	110.1	110.0	109.7	0.1	0.4
Whitehorse	111.2	111.5	110.6	-0.3	0.5
Yellowknife	108.7	108.2	108.3	0.5	0.4

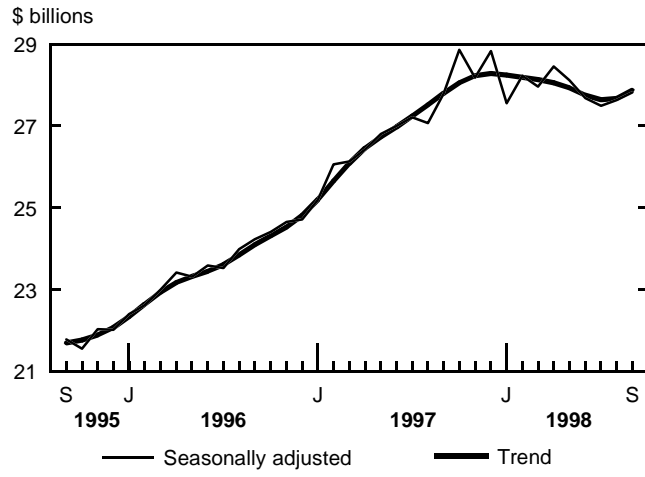
Wholesale trade

September 1998 (preliminary)

Wholesalers reported a 0.7% gain in sales in September, continuing the cautious upswing started in August. The increase in sales was broadly based with 8 of the 11 trade groups posting advances. Wholesale sales have been generally declining since the end of 1997 after two years of steady increases. Increases in both August and September could not help third quarter sales, which dropped 1.5% over the previous quarter.

Total wholesale sales amounted to \$27.8 billion in September. Important declines continued in farm machinery, equipment and supplies (-6.8%). Drops in sales were also reported in computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery (-1.5%), and household goods (-0.9%). On the other hand, lumber and building materials (+1.7%); metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies (+1.6%); other products (+1.5%); and industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies (+1.4%) posted the largest sales increases.

Wholesale sales continue their cautious rebound



Farm machinery sales lagging

Wholesalers of farm machinery, equipment and supplies continued to report dwindling sales. Following a heavy decline of 18.5% from July to August, sales dropped a further 6.8% in September. Sales of farm machinery, equipment and supplies had been generally increasing during 1996 and the first half of 1997. Subsequently, sales began to flatten until March 1998

and have been declining ever since. Low commodity prices played a major role in the decline. In addition, proposals by some politicians in certain U.S. states to impose border blockades and trade sanctions on wheat may also have contributed to the deterioration of sales. The decline in farm machinery, equipment and supplies was the major factor contributing to the 5.9% drop in sales for wholesalers located in Saskatchewan.

Sales of computers and packaged software dropped 1.5% over last month. Following a period of falling sales in the latter half of 1997, sales of computer and packaged software had been posting steady increases since the beginning of the year. Price reductions in personal computers and the growing awareness and interest in the Internet are contributing to the current strength in computer sales.

Upswing in sales continues for lumber and building materials

Of the 11 trade groups, sales of lumber and building materials reported the strongest increase (+1.7%). Although lower than August's increase of 3.7%, September continued the upswing started in August. Prior to this upturn, sales of lumber and building materials had been in a general decline since mid-1997. Positive sales may be a result of a time-lag from August's increase in building permit issues. In addition, significant sales from establishments in this trade group are made directly to individuals and households. Consequently, some improvement in consumer confidence following the worrisome economic news in August may have contributed to stronger wholesale sales.

The increase in building permits and the improvement of consumer confidence could also have contributed to increased sales in metal, hardware and plumbing equipment (+1.6%). Sales in this trade group had been generally falling since the beginning of 1998.

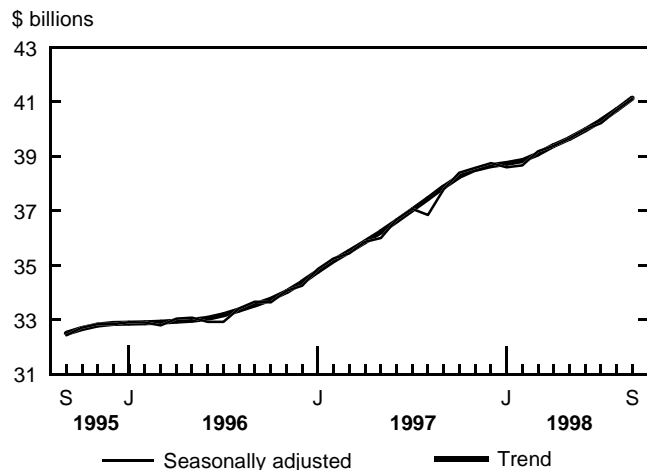
Higher sales of other products (+1.5%) may be a result of retailers preparing for the Christmas season. For example, included in this trade group are wholesalers of paper and paper products, stationery, toys and novelties, jewellery, and books. Sales of other products have also been falling since the beginning of 1998, following a period of general increases since early 1996.

Value of inventories continue to climb

Inventories held by wholesalers rose 1.0% from August. Total value of inventories held by wholesalers in September was \$41 billion. The value of inventories

held by wholesalers have been generally on the rise since mid-1996.

Value of inventories continue to increase



The inventories-to-sales ratio also increased from 1.47 in August to 1.48 in September. Ratios have been generally increasing since December 1997. Since large increases in ratios can be a result of sudden drops in sales, it is not surprising that farm machinery and equipment reported the highest ratio (3.63, up from 3.32 in August).

Available on CANSIM: matrices 59, 61, 648-649.

The September 1998 issue of *Wholesale trade* (63-008-XIB, \$14/\$140) is available today via the Internet only. See *How to order publications*.

For data or general information, contact the Client Services Unit (1 877 421-3067) or (613-951-7384) or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Alexander Hays (613-951-3552; haysale@statcan.ca), Wholesale Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division. □

Wholesale merchants' sales and inventories

	Sept. 1997	June 1998 ^r	July 1998 ^r	Aug. 1998 ^r	Sept. 1998 ^p	Aug. to Sept. 1998	Sept. 1997 to Sept. 1998
	seasonally adjusted						
	\$ millions					% change	
Sales, all trade groups	27,783	27,675	27,487	27,631	27,821	0.7	0.1
Food products	4,186	4,336	4,316	4,417	4,456	0.9	6.4
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,850	1,932	1,960	1,926	1,949	1.2	5.3
Apparel and dry goods	526	518	546	552	554	0.4	5.5
Household goods	780	834	818	810	803	-0.9	2.9
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,022	4,712	4,654	4,816	4,861	0.9	-3.2
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,862	1,920	1,887	1,913	1,945	1.6	4.4
Lumber and building materials	2,119	2,008	1,944	2,016	2,049	1.7	-3.3
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	782	732	857	698	650	-6.8	-16.8
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4,243	4,090	3,925	4,027	4,082	1.4	-3.8
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,506	2,621	2,719	2,711	2,671	-1.5	6.6
Other products	3,906	3,973	3,861	3,745	3,801	1.5	-2.7
Newfoundland	189	198	189	186	187	0.2	-1.0
Prince Edward Island	45	48	49	48	48	0.1	5.9
Nova Scotia	515	523	475	486	498	2.6	-3.3
New Brunswick	325	336	340	347	342	-1.6	5.0
Quebec	5,312	5,616	5,589	5,649	5,632	-0.3	6.0
Ontario	13,527	13,196	13,086	13,329	13,566	1.8	0.3
Manitoba	958	872	937	885	975	10.1	1.7
Saskatchewan	860	949	992	864	813	-5.9	-5.4
Alberta	2,833	2,765	2,715	2,692	2,573	-4.4	-9.2
British Columbia	3,189	3,142	3,091	3,119	3,161	1.3	-0.9
Yukon	13	13	10	10	10	-4.6	-24.5
Northwest Territories	16	17	15	15	17	8.5	5.8
Inventories, all trade groups	37,783	39,984	40,209	40,689	41,102	1.0	8.8
Food products	2,590	2,642	2,669	2,695	2,757	2.3	6.4
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,940	2,157	2,168	2,384	2,395	0.5	23.4
Apparel and dry goods	1,111	1,244	1,241	1,272	1,285	1.0	15.7
Household goods	1,516	1,612	1,578	1,563	1,557	-0.3	2.7
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,364	5,678	5,757	5,741	5,889	2.6	9.8
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,232	3,436	3,492	3,562	3,632	2.0	12.4
Lumber and building materials	3,393	3,583	3,620	3,653	3,637	-0.4	7.2
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,079	2,299	2,336	2,316	2,357	1.8	13.4
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	8,887	9,778	9,635	9,920	9,976	0.6	12.2
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,493	2,284	2,571	2,431	2,395	-1.5	-3.9
Other products	5,178	5,273	5,142	5,154	5,220	1.3	0.8

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

OTHER RELEASES

Natural gas sales

September 1998 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 3 725 million cubic metres in September, down 3.9% from September 1997. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) decreased 1.2%. Residential and commercial sectors declined from September 1997, falling 12.8% and 13.6% respectively.

Natural gas sales

	Sept. 1998 ^P	Sept. 1997	Sept. 1997 to Sept. 1998 %
	thousands of cubic metres		change
Natural gas sales	3,724,988	3,875,038	-3.9
Residential	419,544	481,251	-12.8
Commercial	325,738	376,836	-13.6
Industrial	1,731,415	1,869,688	-1.2
Direct	1,248,291	1,147,263	

	Year-to-date		
	1998 ^P	1997	1997 to 1998 %
	thousands of cubic metres		change
Natural gas sales	45,848,606	48,938,810	-6.3
Residential	9,796,313	11,966,492	-18.1
Commercial	6,591,284	8,525,326	-22.7
Industrial	16,190,210	18,068,857	-3.6
Direct	13,270,799	10,378,135	

^P Preliminary figures.

Year-to-date sales to the end of September declined 6.3% from the same period in 1997. Sales decreased to the residential (-18.1%) and commercial (-22.7%) sectors because of milder weather during the 1998 heating season. Year-to-date sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) registered steady growth, posting a 3.6% increase from the same period last year.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 1052-1055.

The September 1998 issue of *Gas utilities* (55-002-XPB, \$17/\$165) will be available in December. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Gary Smalldridge (613-951-3567; smalgar@statcan.ca) or Tom Lewis (613-951-3596; talewis@statcan.ca), Energy Section, Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Steel primary forms

Week ending November 14, 1998 (preliminary)

Steel primary forms production for the week ending November 14, 1998, totalled 272 189 metric tonnes, up 8.5% from the week-earlier 250 796 tonnes and down 0.9% from the year-earlier 274 641 tonnes. The cumulative total at the end of the week was 13 915 025 tonnes, a 3.5% increase compared with 13 449 320 tonnes for the same period in 1997.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Greg Milsom (613-951-7093; milsomg@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Crushing statistics

October 1998

Oilseed processors crushed 325 303 tonnes of canola in October. Oil production totalled 134 961 tonnes while meal production amounted to 206 025 tonnes.

In the first three months of the 1997/98 crop year, the canola crush volume increased 9.4% from the August-October 1997 crush quantity of 773 599 metric tonnes.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 5687.

The October 1998 issue of *Cereals and oilseeds review* (22-007-XPB, \$15/\$149) will be released in early January. 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; burrric@statcan.ca) or Les Macartney (613-951-8714; macales@statcan.ca), Grain Marketing Unit, Agriculture Division. ■

Stocks of frozen poultry meat

November 1, 1998 (preliminary)

Data for stocks of frozen poultry meat in cold storage are now available for November 1, 1998.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 5675-5677.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Sandra Gielfeldt (613-951-2505), Livestock and Animal Products Section, Agriculture Division. ■

Traveller accommodation statistics

1996/97

Data for 1996/97 from the Annual Survey of Traveller Accommodation Service Industries are now available.

The data will be released in *Traveller accommodation statistics, 1996/97* (63-204-XPB, \$28), which will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Michael Lynch (613-951-2201) or Lise Beaulieu-Caron (613-951-0430), Accommodation and Food Services Section, Services Division. ■

Health and literacy among seniors

1994

The health of many seniors may be at risk simply because they are not able to read crucial information accompanying prescription drugs, according to a research paper released today.

Using Canadian data from the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), this paper compares the health-related characteristics of seniors with their literacy skills and practices. The findings support the view that literacy skills and practices may serve as "barriers" for seniors in their attainment of good health.

According to the data, seniors are a particularly vulnerable group. For all three dimensions of literacy identified by the IALS (prose, document and quantitative) literacy skills were higher among younger age groups and lower among the elderly.

For example, about 67% of people aged 16 to 24 had literacy abilities ranked in the three highest levels, compared with only 21% of those aged 65 and over. In other words, 8 in 10 seniors had literacy skills at the two lowest levels, making them especially at risk in medical situations that may demand high literacy ability.

The potential for errors in medication is enormous among seniors unable to properly understand written directions on prescription drugs, or among those who are unable to decipher a written text. Elderly patients will experience this problem to a much greater degree, since they are more likely to use medication and take several prescription drugs simultaneously.

A significant finding of the paper was that a large number of older Canadians at the lowest literacy level required help dealing with information from government agencies, businesses and other institutions. Just over half of seniors (58%) with low literacy did not need assistance, and did not need help to fill out forms such as applications and bank deposit slips.

This suggests that many seniors cannot easily understand much of the material from these sources. Thus, information about health care or medical issues may miss a large number of the people most at risk because it is not targeted to their reading skills.

At risk: *A socio-economic analysis of health and literacy among seniors* (89-552-MPE, no. 5, \$10; Internet version 89-552-MIE, no. 5, Free), the fifth in a series of monographs using data from the International Adult Literacy Survey, is now available. See *How to order publications*. A highlights paper is also available (89F0104XIE).

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Nancy Darcovich (613-951-4585; darcovi@statcan.ca), Special Surveys Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Canadian economic observer, November 1998

Catalogue number 11-010-XPB

(Canada: \$23/\$227; outside Canada: US\$23/US\$227).

The sugar situation, third quarter 1998

Catalogue number 32-013QXPB

(Canada: \$13/\$41; outside Canada: US\$13/US\$41).

Primary iron and steel, September 1998

Catalogue number 41-001-XPB

(Canada: \$7/\$62; outside Canada: US\$7/US\$62).

Refined petroleum products, August 1998

Catalogue number 45-004-XPB

(Canada: \$21/\$206; outside Canada: US\$21/US\$206).

Oil pipeline transport, August 1998

Catalogue number 55-001-XPB

(Canada: \$12/\$114; outside Canada: US\$12/US\$114).

Consumer Price Index, October 1998

Catalogue number 62-001-XPB

(Canada: \$11/\$103; outside Canada: US\$11/US\$103).

Wholesale trade, September 1998

Catalogue number 63-008-XIB

(Canada: \$12/\$14; outside Canada: US\$12/US\$140).

Employment, earnings and hours, August 1998

Catalogue number 72-002-XPB

(Canada: \$32/\$320; outside Canada: US\$32/US\$320).

At risk: A socio-economic analysis of health and literacy among seniors, 1994

Catalogue number 89-552-MIE

(Canada: \$0; outside Canada: US\$0).

At risk: A socio-economic analysis of health and literacy among seniors, 1994

Catalogue number 89-552-MPE

(Canada: \$10; outside Canada: US\$10).

All prices exclude sales tax.

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Catalogue 11-001E (PDF) 11-001E (11-001E) 11-001E (11-001E)	
	
Statistics Canada	
Thursday, June 9, 1997	
For release at 9:30 a.m.	
MAJOR RELEASES	
• Urban transit, 1995	2
Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1996, each Canadian took an average of about 40 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.	
• Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1996	4
Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was notably weak again in 1996 accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow nominal growth during the year.	
OTHER RELEASES	
Help-wanted index, May 1997	3
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Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

Catalogue 11-001E.

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