



# The Daily

Statistics Canada

**Friday, December 18, 1998**

For release at 8:30 a.m.

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## MAJOR RELEASES

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- **Consumer Price Index, November 1998** 2  
 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 1.2% between November 1997 and November 1998.  
 Excluding the effect of food and energy prices, the CPI increased 1.5% from a year ago.
  
- **Wholesale trade, October 1998** 5  
 Wholesalers started the final quarter of 1998 posting strong sales in 8 of the 11 trade groups.

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## MAJOR RELEASES

### Consumer Price Index

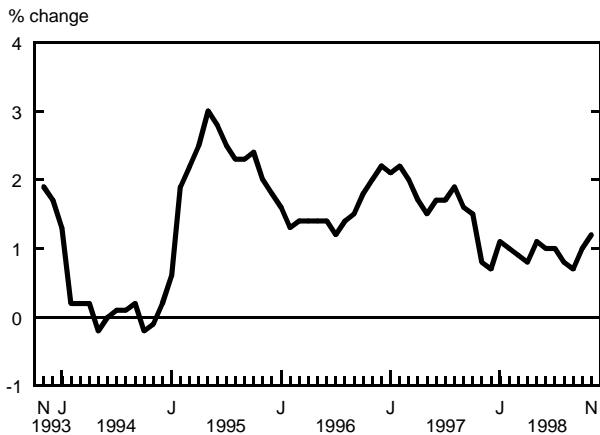
November 1998

In November 1998, Canadian consumers paid 1.2% more than they did in November 1997 for the goods and services contained in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket. So far this year, annual increases have ranged from 0.7% in September to 1.1% in January and May.

Major contributors to the rise in the All-items index over the last year were price increases for cablevision services, new automotive vehicles, university tuition fees, property taxes, travel tours, cigarettes and rent. Partly counterbalancing those increases were decreases in the prices of gasoline, computers and telephone services.

Consumers paid 17.5% more for cablevision services in November 1998 than they did twelve months earlier. In November 1997, several cablevision operators offered free trial periods for new channels. The termination of these special offers and rate increases for basic and specialty packages of cable services combined to drive up the index.

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



#### The CPI remained unchanged between October and November

The CPI recorded no change between October and November 1998. The upward pressure from rising prices for food purchased from stores and new

automotive vehicles was offset by the downward pressure from declines in the prices of traveller accommodation, clothing and footwear, and gasoline.

Average prices for food from stores went up 1.6% from October to November. Consumers paid on average 10.2% more for fresh vegetables, mostly due to seasonally higher prices for tomatoes (+24.0%) and lettuce (+10.6%). The index for fresh fruit went up 2.6%, mainly from higher prices for bananas (+9.9%) and other fresh fruit (+3.9%). The price increases for bananas and some other fresh fruit were the result of supply shortages caused by Hurricane Mitch. The average price increase of 11.9% for turkeys, due to returns to regular prices after Thanksgiving Day specials, also contributed to the overall increase in the food index.

Each November, price changes between the old and the new automotive vehicle models are introduced into the CPI. In November 1998, consumers paid, on average, 2.5% more to buy a new automotive vehicle. The elimination or reduction of rebates offered by dealers was responsible for this price increase, as list prices for the 1999 models were close to the equivalent 1998 models.

Prices for traveller accommodation fell 14.3% from October to November as many hotel and motel operators introduced winter rates. This price decrease continued the trend observed in the last four years. Since 1995, the cumulative price decreases recorded from August to December ranged from 21% to 26%.

The price index for clothing and footwear fell 1.5% since October, with decreases in most categories of clothing and footwear. While prices fell for all types of women's clothing, the decreases for coats and jackets (-6.1%), and dresses (-6.3%) were the main contributors to the overall decline. Unusually mild fall weather was a key factor encouraging retailers to mark down prices to move winter inventory.

Gasoline prices fell 1.0% in November after increasing 2.2% in October. The price reductions at the gas pump reflected the 2.6% drop in the world price of crude oil in October.

#### Provincial highlights

Since November 1997, residents of Prince Edward Island experienced average price decreases of 0.4%. Residents of all other provinces faced price increases ranging from 0.2% in British Columbia to 2.0% in Saskatchewan.

Between October and November, Saskatchewan experienced, on average, the highest price increases (+0.4%) among the provinces, while the largest average price decreases were posted in British Columbia (-0.2%).

**Provincial spotlight: New Brunswick and Manitoba**

Since November 1997, New Brunswick's price increases (+0.5%) were lower than the national average (+1.2%). Manitoba's rate of increase (+1.7%) was significantly higher. The Conference Board of Canada recently reported that price declines for farm products, oil and metals have undermined income growth and consumer confidence in Manitoba despite a booming manufacturing sector.

In New Brunswick, the price of fuel oil fell 17.4% over the last year whereas a decline of 11.9% was posted for Canada as a whole. Residents of New Brunswick also benefited from a 2.7% annual decline in clothing prices whereas most other Canadians faced increases. Moreover, since November 1997, charges for cablevision services in New Brunswick rose only 2.9%, significantly lower than the corresponding advance at the Canada level (+17.5%). On the other hand, residents of New Brunswick faced a 3.4% hike in electricity rates whereas a 0.9% increase was recorded nationally.

Since November 1997, residents of Manitoba faced a 24.6% rise in piped gas prices whereas the national rate was 4.4%. In addition, property taxes in Manitoba increased 5.0% over the last year compared with a 2.3% advance at the national level. Compared to November 1997, Manitobans paid more for telephone services while most other Canadians paid less. Also, Manitoba's declines in gasoline prices were less than the national average. By contrast, Manitobans benefited from reductions in meat prices that surpassed those experienced by Canadians in most other parts of the country.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9956.**

Available at 7 a.m. on the Internet at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

The November 1998 issue of the *Consumer price index* (62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is available. See *How to order publications*.

The December 1998 Consumer Price Index will be released on January 20, 1998.

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

**The Consumer price index and major components**  
1992=100

	Nov. 1998	Oct. 1998	Nov. 1997	Oct. to Nov. 1998	Nov. 1997 to Nov. 1998
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
<b>All-items</b>	<b>109.0</b>	<b>109.0</b>	<b>107.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Food	109.7	108.5	108.0	1.1	1.6
Shelter	104.2	104.2	103.2	0.0	1.0
Household operations and furnishings	107.9	108.0	106.5	-0.1	1.3
Clothing and footwear	104.5	106.1	103.1	-1.5	1.4
Transportation	121.1	120.5	121.6	0.5	-0.4
Health and personal care	108.9	108.7	106.5	0.2	2.3
Recreation, education and reading	117.2	119.1	114.9	-1.6	2.0
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	93.5	93.3	90.2	0.2	3.7
Goods	106.2	105.7	105.8	0.5	0.4
Services	112.3	112.7	110.1	-0.4	2.0
All-items excluding food and energy	109.3	109.5	107.7	-0.2	1.5
Energy	104.1	104.8	107.9	-0.7	-3.5
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared to 1992	91.7	91.7	92.9		
All-items (1986=100)	139.6				

**The Consumer price index by province, Whitehorse and Yellowknife**  
1992=100

	Nov. 1998	Oct. 1998	Nov. 1997	Oct. to Nov. 1998	Nov. 1997 to Nov. 1998
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
Newfoundland	108.7	108.8	108.4	-0.1	0.3
Prince Edward Island	106.4	106.1	106.8	0.3	-0.4
Nova Scotia	108.7	108.7	108.1	0.0	0.6
New Brunswick	107.8	107.9	107.3	-0.1	0.5
Québec	106.7	106.5	105.1	0.2	1.5
Ontario	109.3	109.4	108.0	-0.1	1.2
Manitoba	113.7	113.7	111.8	0.0	1.7
Saskatchewan	112.6	112.2	110.4	0.4	2.0
Alberta	111.2	111.1	109.7	0.1	1.4
British Columbia	109.9	110.1	109.7	-0.2	0.2
Whitehorse	110.8	111.2	110.5	-0.4	0.3
Yellowknife	108.3	108.7	107.6	-0.4	0.7

## Wholesale trade

October 1998 (preliminary)

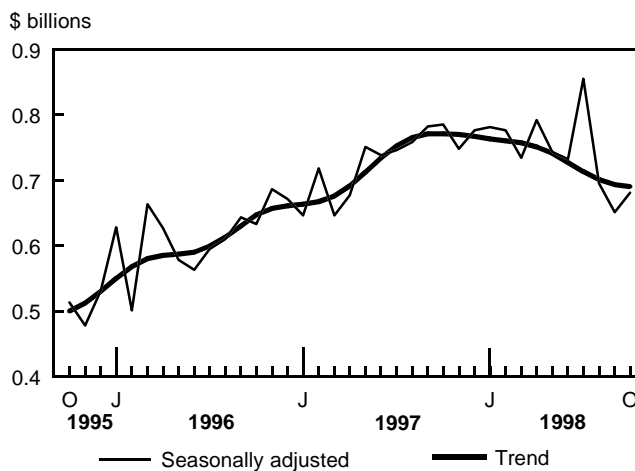
Wholesalers started the final quarter of 1998 posting strong sales in 8 of the 11 trade groups, with sales rising 3.1% in October. Sales have steadily increased since July, following a period of general declines that started at the end of 1997. Gains in sales since July are now reminiscent of the period of strong growth reported by wholesalers in early 1997.

Wholesalers reported sales valued at \$28.8 billion in October, spurred by important increases in motor vehicles, parts and accessories (+9.5%), and computer, packaged software and other electronic machinery (+9.0%). With the exception of household goods (-2.2%), apparel and dry goods (-1.3%), and other products (0.0%), all sectors reported higher sales. The 5.7% advance in Ontario was concentrated in the computer, packaged software and other electronic machinery sector, as well as motor vehicles, parts and accessories. Elsewhere, British Columbia continued its slow recovery with a third consecutive monthly increase in October (+0.4%).

### Sales of farm machinery, equipment and supplies remain sluggish despite October gain

Following the heavy decline in August (-18.7%) and September (-6.3%), wholesalers of farm machinery, equipment and supplies reported sales of \$681 million in October (+4.5%). Incentives offered by major suppliers of farm machinery may have contributed to this increase. However, sales remain well below the \$855 million reported in July. In fact, sales of farm machinery, equipment and supplies are at or about April 1997 levels. Limited global markets, low commodity prices, and the rumbling of trade sanctions by the United States continued to affect this sector. Following a period of general increases, sales of farm machinery, equipment and supplies began to level off in mid-1997 and have been falling since the start of 1998.

Sales of farm machinery, equipment and supplies falling



### Rebound in sales of motor vehicles, parts and accessories

Sales of motor vehicles, parts and accessories were one of the driving forces behind wholesalers' strong sales in October. Sales increased 9.5% from September. Sales had been generally falling since the beginning of the year following two years of increases. However, sales appear to be rebounding since August. October's strong showing by wholesalers of motor vehicles, parts and accessories may be due to the general increase in North American car production in the latter half of 1998, the anticipation of brisk demand for more profitable, big-ticket vehicles such as sport-utility vehicles and mid-size cars, and a growing export market of Canadian-made parts to Japanese companies.

### Food products remain steady

Wholesalers of food products, and beverage, drug and tobacco products both reported increased sales of 0.5% in October. Wholesale sales of food products have been generally climbing for the last three years, although a levelling off occurred during 1997. Beverages, drugs and tobacco sales had been generally climbing until the latter half of 1997, but have since levelled off.

### Inventories rise

Inventories held by wholesalers rose 0.5% to \$41.3 billion in October. The value of inventories had been

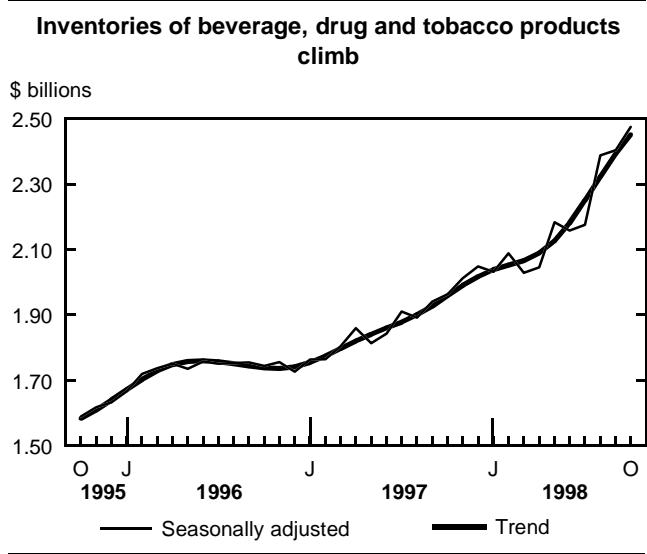
generally rising since mid-1996, except for a pause during the last quarter of 1997. Notably, inventory values for beverage, drug and tobacco products increased a further 3.0% from September. Following a slight downward turn in 1996, the value of inventories for this sector has been rising since December 1996, with a sharp increase starting in May 1998. This sharp gain coincides with the May 1998 flattening of sales in beverage, drug and tobacco products.

The inventories-to-sales ratio fell from 1.47 in September to 1.43 in October. Ratios had been generally increasing since mid-1997, reaching a peak during August and September, 1998.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 59, 61, 648 and 649**

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

For data or general information, contact the Client Services Unit (613-951-3549; 1 877-421-3067). To enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Alexander Hays (613-951-3552; [haysale@statcan.ca](mailto:haysale@statcan.ca)), Wholesale Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division. □



**Wholesale merchants' sales and inventories**

	Oct. 1997	July 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Aug. 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Sept. 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Oct. 1998 <sup>p</sup>	Sept. 1998 to Oct. 1998	Oct. 1997 to Oct. 1998
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions					% change	
<b>Sales, all trade groups</b>	<b>28,862</b>	<b>27,553</b>	<b>27,747</b>	<b>27,966</b>	<b>28,822</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>-0.1</b>
Food products	4,281	4,320	4,432	4,483	4,505	0.5	5.2
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,888	1,952	1,919	1,885	1,894	0.5	0.3
Apparel and dry goods	562	545	552	557	549	-1.3	-2.2
Household goods	811	808	797	780	763	-2.2	-5.9
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,613	4,700	4,847	4,877	5,340	9.5	-4.9
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,880	1,888	1,921	1,960	1,983	1.2	5.5
Lumber and building materials	2,105	1,944	2,032	2,106	2,138	1.5	1.6
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	785	855	695	651	681	4.5	-13.3
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4,260	3,930	4,042	4,093	4,149	1.4	-2.6
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,592	2,747	2,751	2,763	3,011	9.0	16.2
Other products	4,087	3,862	3,759	3,810	3,809	0.0	-6.8
Newfoundland	186	190	187	188	191	1.3	2.2
Prince Edward Island	44	49	47	47	46	-2.4	3.8
Nova Scotia	519	475	484	497	479	-3.6	-7.6
New Brunswick	332	339	346	338	329	-2.7	-0.9
Quebec	5,575	5,587	5,652	5,613	5,682	1.2	1.9
Ontario	14,147	13,154	13,436	13,720	14,508	5.7	2.6
Manitoba	976	933	894	978	927	-5.2	-5.0
Saskatchewan	911	992	863	829	836	0.8	-8.3
Alberta	2,880	2,713	2,687	2,541	2,598	2.2	-9.8
British Columbia	3,262	3,097	3,126	3,187	3,199	0.4	-1.9
Yukon	12	10	10	11	11	-0.5	-9.4
Northwest Territories	17	15	15	16	16	1.8	-7.7
<b>Inventories, all trade groups</b>	<b>38,394</b>	<b>40,217</b>	<b>40,663</b>	<b>41,068</b>	<b>41,284</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>7.5</b>
Food products	2,640	2,677	2,703	2,791	2,818	1.0	6.8
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,963	2,175	2,387	2,403	2,474	3.0	26.0
Apparel and dry goods	1,119	1,243	1,274	1,291	1,301	0.7	16.3
Household goods	1,527	1,578	1,560	1,534	1,562	1.9	2.3
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,530	5,757	5,706	5,789	5,878	1.5	6.3
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,278	3,490	3,552	3,618	3,597	-0.6	9.7
Lumber and building materials	3,400	3,630	3,661	3,691	3,718	0.7	9.4
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,110	2,335	2,310	2,354	2,329	-1.0	10.4
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	9,078	9,622	9,907	9,903	9,833	-0.7	8.3
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,505	2,570	2,474	2,517	2,604	3.4	3.9
Other products	5,246	5,140	5,129	5,177	5,171	-0.1	-1.4

<sup>r</sup> Revised figures.

<sup>p</sup> Preliminary figures.

## OTHER RELEASES

### Natural gas sales

October 1998 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 4 352 million cubic metres in October, down 13.8% from October 1997. Warmer than normal weather conditions throughout Canada resulted in sharply lower sales to the residential (-28.2%) and commercial (-20.6%) sectors. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) fell 8.2% due to reduced demand for natural gas by electric utilities.

Year-to-date sales to the end of October declined 5.7% from the same period in 1997. Sales decreased to the residential (-16.8%) and commercial (-20.9%) sectors due to the continuing warm weather in 1998. Year-to-date sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) registered steady growth, posting a 3.2% increase from the same period last year.

### Natural gas sales

	Oct. 1998 <sup>P</sup>	Oct. 1997	Oct. 1997 to Oct. 1998
	'000 of cubic metres		% change
<b>Natural gas sales</b>	<b>4,352,033</b>	<b>5,051,125</b>	<b>-13.8</b>
Residential	706,459	984,194	-28.2
Commercial	565,389	711,967	-20.6
Industrial	1,718,430	2,062,447	-8.2
Direct	1,361,755	1,292,517	

	Year-to-date		
	1998 <sup>P</sup>	1997	1997 to 1998
	'000 of cubic metres		% change
<b>Natural gas sales</b>	<b>50,890,327</b>	<b>53,989,935</b>	<b>-5.7</b>
Residential	10,780,507	12,950,686	-16.8
Commercial	7,302,516	9,237,293	-20.9
Industrial	18,253,287	20,131,304	3.2
Direct	14,554,017	11,670,652	

<sup>P</sup> Preliminary figures.

### Available on CANSIM: matrices 1052-1055.

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

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

### Construction Union Wage Rate Index

November 1998

The Construction Union Wage Rate Index (including supplements) for Canada increased 0.09% from October's level to 112.0 in November (1992=100). On a year-over-year basis, the index increased 0.8% compared with November 1997.

Union wage rates are published for 16 trades in 20 metropolitan areas for both the basic rates and rates including selected supplementary payments. Indexes on a 1992=100 time base are calculated for the same metropolitan areas and are published for those where a majority of trades are covered by current collective agreements.

### Available on CANSIM: matrices 956, 958 and 9922-9927.

The fourth quarter 1998 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79) will be available in March 1999. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and quality of data for this release, contact Louise Chaîné (613-951-3350; [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca), fax: 613-951-3519), Client Services Unit, Prices Division. ■

### Selected financial indexes

November 1998

Figures are now available for selected financial indexes on a 1992=100 time base.

### Available on CANSIM: matrix 9928.

The fourth quarter 1998 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79), will be available in March 1999. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and quality of data for this



release, contact Louise Chaîné (613-951-3350; [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca), fax: 613 951-3519) Client Services Unit, Prices Division. ■

## **Dimensions series**

### 1996 Census

This series from the 1996 Census demonstrates the analytical potential of census information.

Tables in the Dimensions series are organized into 26 themes, each dealing with a specific topic or population group. Released today are three themes: *Unpaid work profile* (94F0025XDB, \$60); *Workplace*

*location* (94F0029XDB, \$60); *Mode of transportation* (94F0030XDB, \$60).

As themes in the Dimensions series are progressively released, they will be collected by subject area and distributed on seven CD-ROMs. Each CD-ROM costs \$60.

The series is packaged with the software Beyond 20/20™. With many powerful features, the browser allows you to quickly and easily search and sort data, and to copy tables and charts to other Windows applications.

For further information, contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre. ■

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**Catalogue number 11-002-XIE**  
 (Canada: \$3/\$109; outside Canada: US\$3/US\$109).

**Infomat - A weekly review**  
**Catalogue number 11-002-XPE**  
 (Canada: \$4/\$145; outside Canada: US\$4/US\$145).

**Railway carloadings, Vol. 75, no. 10**  
**Catalogue number 52-001-XPB**  
 (Canada: \$11/\$103; outside Canada: US\$11/US\$103).

**Employment, earnings and hours, September 1998**  
**Catalogue number 72-002-XPB**  
 (Canada: \$32/\$320; outside Canada: US\$32/US\$320).

**All prices exclude sales tax.**

Catalogue numbers with an -XIB or an -XIE extension are Internet versions; those with -XMB or -XME are microfiche; and -XPB or -XPE denote a paper version.

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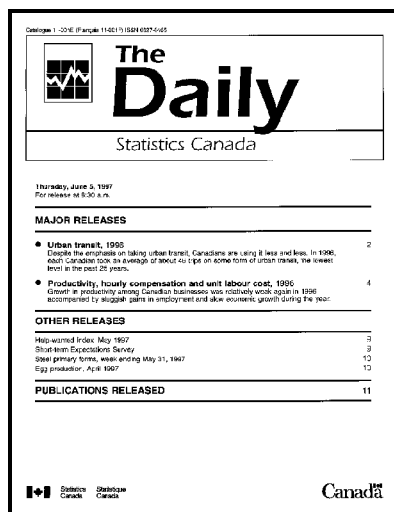
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Local calls: (403) 292-6717  
Toll free: 1-800-263-1136  
Fax: 1-403-292-4958

**Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories**

Advisory Services  
Statistics Canada  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Park Square  
10001 Bellamy Hill  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 3B6

Local calls: (403) 495-3027  
Toll free: 1-800-263-1136  
Fax: 1-403-495-5318

**British Columbia and the Yukon**

Advisory Services  
Statistics Canada  
Library Square Tower, Suite 600  
300 West Georgia Street  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6B 6C7

Local calls: (604) 666-3691  
Toll free: 1-800-263-1136  
Fax: 1-604-666-4863

**Telecommunications Device for the Hearing Impaired**

Toll free: 1-800-363-7629

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## RELEASE DATES

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**December 21 to December 24, 1998**  
(Release dates are subject to change.)

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<b>Release date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference period</b>
21	<b>Retail trade</b>	October 1998
21	<b>Quarterly Retail Commodity Survey</b>	1997 and first and second quarters of 1998
21	<b>Employment insurance</b>	October 1998
22	<b>Canada's international transactions in securities</b>	October 1998
22	<b>Survey of Household Spending</b>	1997
23	<b>Employment , earnings and hours</b>	October 1998
24	<b>Real gross domestic product at factor cost by industry</b>	October 1998

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