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The Daily

Statistics Canada

Tuesday, April 21, 1998
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

(continued on following page)

Work absence rates

1980 to 1997

Today, Statistics Canada releases *Work absence rates, 1980 to 1997*, which is about work absences for personal reasons. Absence rates vary considerably among groups of workers. Factors such as family circumstances, age, industry, occupation, work schedule and leave entitlements all play a role. This analytic report presents a series of tables on work absence rates for men and women by age, education, and presence of children; by detailed industry and occupation groups; by public versus private sector; by union coverage, workplace size, job tenure and job permanency; by province, region and census metropolitan area; and by job benefits (paid vacation, sick leave entitlements or flexitime work option).

This report focuses on work absence rates excluding maternity leave for full-time employees in 1997 using data from the redesigned Labour Force Survey. Rates for the 1980-to-1997 period, including maternity leave, are provided for comparison. Some data from the 1995 Survey of Work Arrangements are also included.

Work absence rates, 1980 to 1997 (71-535-MPB, no. 9, $50) is now on sale. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, contact Ernest B. Akyeampong (613-951-4624) or Jeannine Usalcas (613-951-4720), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.

OTHER RELEASES

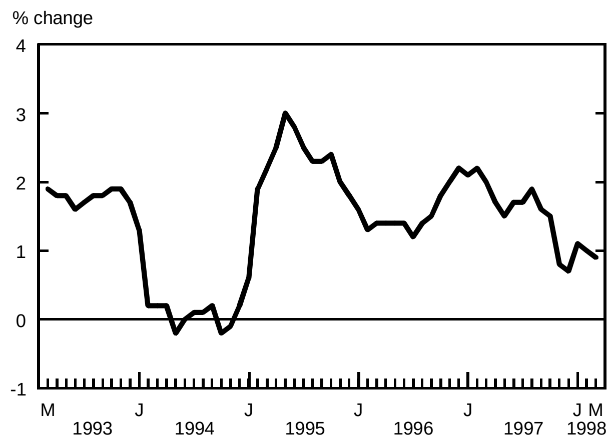
MAJOR RELEASES

Consumer Price Index

March 1998

Between March 1997 and March 1998, the Consumer Price Index's basket of goods and services rose an average 0.9% in price. This 12-month rate of change was slightly lower than in January (1.1%) and February (1.0%), but slightly higher than in November (0.8%) and December (0.7%).

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



Consumers paid more in March than they did a year earlier for food (especially fresh vegetables and restaurant meals), telephone services, tuition fees and tobacco products. Over the same period, Canadians paid less for gasoline, computers and mortgage interest charges.

CPI edged up 0.1% between February and March

The 0.1% growth in the CPI between February and March matched the small advance in the previous month. In March, higher vegetable prices and rising charges for cablevision, air travel, natural gas and travel tours more than offset price declines for gasoline, computer equipment and meat.

Fresh vegetable prices have been volatile in recent months thanks to El Nino. Fresh vegetable prices climbed 26.5% between December and January, fell 11.2% in February, and then advanced 7.8% in March. The latest increase was caused by temporary shortages. Plantings had been delayed due to incessant rain earlier in the year.

March's 6.5% increase in the price of cable was due to the ending of the free trial period for new specialty channels and to the introduction of higher rates for some service packages. (Note that when cable companies commenced the free trial period last November and subscribers received more service for the same payment, the CPI treated this as a price decline.)

Air fares rose 5.6% in March after declining in the previous two months. Airlines generally increase fares in March to take advantage of strong demand, in large part related to school holidays.

Natural gas rates climbed 3.8% in March, largely reflecting a return to regular prices in Alberta after a one-time rebate enjoyed in February.

Travel tour rates increased a further 2.6% in March on the heels of a 14.4% hike in February. The index for this service stood 12.0% over its year-earlier level, partly a result of the lower exchange rate and stronger demand.

Canadian drivers continued to be pleasantly surprised at the pumps as gasoline prices fell for the sixth consecutive month. In March, the price of crude oil on world markets fell to its lowest level in over nine years. By mid-March, prices of crude had dropped 31% since November's agreement by OPEC to boost production 10%.

The index for computer equipment and supplies fell 1.9% in March. The index has yet to show a monthly increase since its introduction in January 1995.

Prices of beef and pork each fell by approximately 2% between February and March. Export demand has been adversely affected by the economic slowdown in Asia, resulting in larger supplies available for domestic markets.

In monthly terms, the index for all-items excluding food and energy advanced 0.2% in March, after rising 0.5% in each of the previous two months.

Provincial highlights

Since March 1997, the largest price increase among the provinces occurred in Quebec (+1.4%), where the advance was primarily attributable to tax increases. Quebec's sales tax rate increased from 6.5% to 7.5% in January, and cigarette taxes were increased in February. Prices in Whitehorse grew by

1.3%. Significantly higher price changes for gasoline, fuel oil, and meat compared with the corresponding national price movements were largely responsible for the strong overall price advance there.

At the other end of the scale, prices in Newfoundland fell an average 0.4% since March 1997. New automotive vehicles, food from restaurants, dairy products, women's clothing, fuel oil, household equipment, and cigarettes displayed price changes substantially lower than the corresponding national price movements.

From a monthly viewpoint, Newfoundland posted the largest price declines among provinces (-0.4%). Alberta claimed the largest price increases in March (+0.5%) after having registered the largest price declines in February (-0.7%). In March, natural gas rates were restored to regular levels in Alberta after a one-time rebate in February.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9956.

Available at 7 a.m. on the Internet at *http://www.statcan.ca*

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

The April 1998 Consumer Price Index will be released on May 14.

For further information on this release, contact Prices Division (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-2848; *infounit@statcan.ca* □

Consumer Price Index and its major components

(1992=100)

	March 1998	Feb. 1998	March 1997	Feb. 1998 to March 1998	March 1997 to March 1998
	unadjusted				
				% change	
All-items	**108.4**	**108.3**	**107.4**	**0.1**	**0.9**
Food	109.2	108.9	107.5	0.3	1.6
Shelter	103.4	103.2	103.5	0.2	-0.1
Household operations and furnishings	108.5	108.7	106.8	-0.2	1.6
Clothing and footwear	104.7	103.9	102.9	0.8	1.7
Transportation	120.3	120.7	121.5	-0.3	-1.0
Health and personal care	107.2	107.1	105.3	0.1	1.8
Recreation, education and reading	116.4	116.0	113.5	0.3	2.6
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	92.1	92.0	88.8	0.1	3.7
Goods	105.9	106.0	105.9	-0.1	0.0
Services	111.3	111.0	109.3	0.3	1.8
All-items excluding food and energy	108.7	108.5	107.3	0.2	1.3
Energy	103.6	104.8	109.5	-1.1	-5.4
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared with 1992	92.3	92.3	93.1		
All-items (1986=100)	138.8				

Consumer Price Index for the provinces, Whitehorse and Yellowknife

(1992=100)

	March 1998	Feb. 1998	March 1997	Feb. 1998 to March 1998	March 1997 to March 1998
	unadjusted				
				% change	
Newfoundland	108.3	108.7	108.7	-0.4	-0.4
Prince Edward Island	106.6	106.7	106.9	-0.1	-0.3
Nova Scotia	108.6	108.5	107.6	0.1	0.9
New Brunswick	107.7	107.7	106.9	0.0	0.7
Quebec	106.1	106.2	104.6	-0.1	1.4
Ontario	108.8	108.7	107.7	0.1	1.0
Manitoba	112.3	111.8	111.5	0.4	0.7
Saskatchewan	111.3	111.1	110.3	0.2	0.9
Alberta	109.8	109.2	109.4	0.5	0.4
British Columbia	109.8	109.5	109.7	0.3	0.1
Whitehorse	110.7	110.3	109.3	0.4	1.3
Yellowknife	107.7	107.4	107.7	0.3	0.0

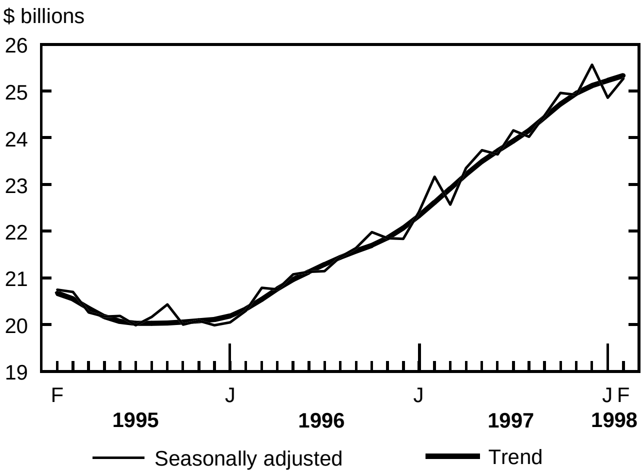
■

Wholesale trade

February 1998 (preliminary)

Wholesale trade bounced back in February (+1.7%) after a strong decline in January (-2.8%). After a period of slowing activity throughout 1995, wholesale sales have generally been increasing for the last two years. (January's preliminary estimate has been revised downward as a result of late returns of questionnaires from major wholesalers.)

Two years of strong sales for wholesalers

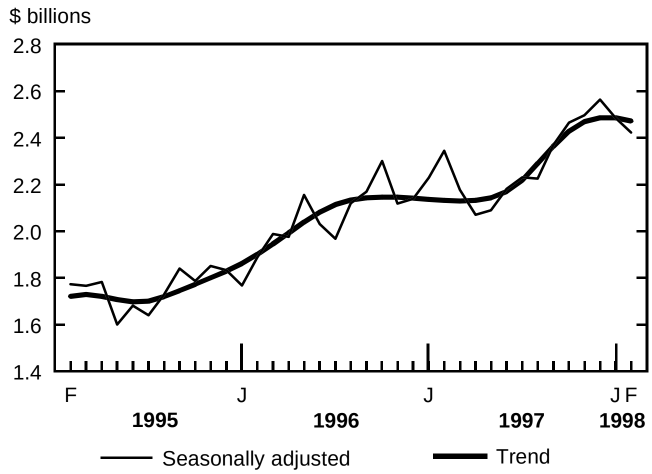


Wholesalers sold $25.3 billion worth of goods and services in February, up from $24.9 billion in January. Sales rose in all trade groups except computers and electronic equipment (-2.5%) and food products (-1.7%). The largest increases in percentage terms were reported by wholesalers of household goods (+10.3%), metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment (+5.6%), and motor vehicles and parts (+5.0%). However, these gains followed declines of comparable size in January.

Sales of computers have weakened for two months

Sales of computers and electronic equipment declined for the second consecutive month in February. After sales started to weaken around mid-1996, computer makers reduced prices drastically in 1997 in order to stimulate demand. However, computers sales, which had been increasing in the second half of 1997, seem to be slowing again. Lower sales in January and February may be due to a more pronounced seasonal post-Christmas slowdown and to a lack of new products on the market.

Sales of computers are slowing down again



Wholesalers continue to accumulate inventories

Wholesale inventories reached a record $36.0 billion in February, up 0.3% from January. Except for a 0.2% decline in March 1997, inventories have been continuously increasing since August 1996. During the first half of 1996, wholesalers reduced their inventories in order to be more cost efficient. They had not anticipated the drop in demand during 1995 and kept accumulating inventories.

The inventories-to-sales ratio declined from 1.44 in January to 1.42 in February. Since January 1997, wholesalers have been building inventories at about the same rate as sales growth, keeping the inventories-to-sales ratio around the 1.42 level. Previously, the ratio had been following a downward trend since the early 1980s, except for a few sharp upward spikes during periods of declining sales. Large ratios mean higher storage costs and increasing risks of having to liquidate products if demand changes.

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

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

For further information on this release, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541; *gratpau@statcan.ca*) or

Nathalie Bisson (613-951-7378), Wholesale Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division.

Wholesale merchants' sales and inventories

	Feb. 1997	Nov. 1997[r]	Dec. 1997[r]	Jan. 1998[r]	Feb. 1998[p]	Jan. 1998 to Feb. 1998	Feb. 1997 to Feb. 1998
	seasonally adjusted						
	$ millions					% change	
Sales, all trade groups	**23,162**	**24,919**	**25,560**	**24,856**	**25,270**	**1.7**	**9.1**
Food products	3,877	4,162	4,251	4,172	4,102	-1.7	5.8
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,382	1,582	1,653	1,667	1,723	3.4	24.7
Apparel and dry goods	483	539	530	529	544	3.0	12.7
Household goods	724	773	860	763	842	10.3	16.3
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	2,670	3,033	2,868	2,702	2,836	5.0	6.2
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,677	1,793	1,848	1,781	1,881	5.6	12.2
Lumber and building materials	2,046	2,159	2,306	2,213	2,265	2.3	10.7
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	775	774	778	815	828	1.6	6.7
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	3,446	3,778	3,995	3,837	3,891	1.4	12.9
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,345	2,496	2,563	2,484	2,423	-2.5	3.3
Other products	3,736	3,830	3,908	3,892	3,934	1.1	5.3
Newfoundland	183	192	203	199	199	-0.1	8.6
Prince Edward Island	47	43	44	42	45	6.8	-6.2
Nova Scotia	513	525	505	493	485	-1.5	-5.4
New Brunswick	298	327	333	328	342	4.2	14.9
Quebec	4,859	5,060	5,087	5,030	5,146	2.3	5.9
Ontario	10,075	11,155	11,442	11,092	11,441	3.2	13.6
Manitoba	862	1,100	1,054	1,103	1,051	-4.7	22.0
Saskatchewan	812	840	927	944	945	0.1	16.4
Alberta	2,411	2,687	2,963	2,710	2,640	-2.6	9.5
British Columbia	3,079	2,964	2,972	2,892	2,951	2.0	-4.1
Yukon	10	12	11	10	10	-6.9	-8.2
Northwest Territories	14	15	16	14	15	11.4	8.3
Inventories, all trade groups	**32,906**	**35,576**	**35,826**	**35,883**	**35,989**	**0.3**	**9.4**
Food products	2,521	2,577	2,570	2,534	2,526	-0.3	0.2
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,732	1,906	1,934	1,947	2,015	3.5	16.4
Apparel and dry goods	1,078	1,149	1,171	1,184	1,211	2.3	12.4
Household goods	1,394	1,550	1,566	1,552	1,550	-0.1	11.1
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	3,849	4,291	4,194	4,151	4,137	-0.3	7.5
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	2,957	3,155	3,204	3,225	3,213	-0.4	8.6
Lumber and building materials	3,035	3,410	3,422	3,398	3,426	0.8	12.9
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	1,771	2,065	2,105	2,166	2,252	4.0	27.2
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	7,367	8,168	8,334	8,417	8,481	0.8	15.1
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,135	2,271	2,258	2,294	2,189	-4.6	2.5
Other products	5,068	5,033	5,069	5,017	4,989	-0.6	-1.6

[r] *Revised figures.*
[p] *Preliminary figures.*

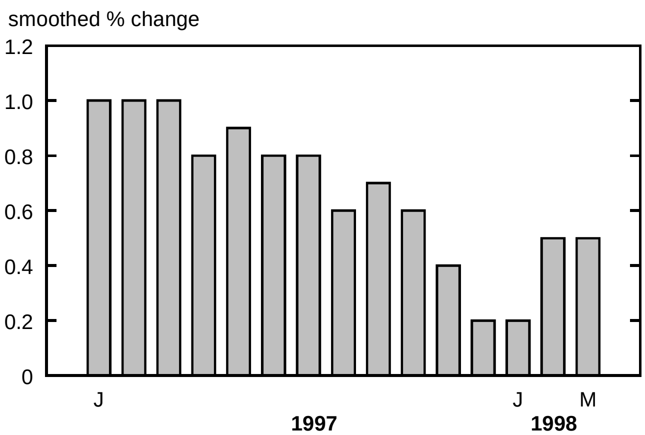
■

Composite Index

March 1998

The leading index grew by 0.5% in March just as it did in February, after the ice storm limited growth to only 0.2% in January. The pickup in growth in February and March was largely due to the recent surge in financial markets. These gains have been tempered by a slowdown in the auto sector.

Composite Index



Business spending remained vigorous, while the financial market indicators rose markedly. Excluding these components, the growth of the overall index in the last two months would have been unchanged at 0.2%. The stock market soared in March to new record highs. Meanwhile, the money supply in January and February posted its best ever two months of cumulative growth.

Among the indicators of household demand, only housing saw any net improvement, returning to more normal levels after being depressed by the ice storm. The housing index rose for the first time in 11 months, led by a rebound in starts of multiple units. Outlays for durable goods slowed due to a drop in auto sales.

The auto sector also was behind a slowdown in manufacturing, resulting in the first drop in new orders in 15 months. Auto sales retreated both here and in the United States. The ratio of shipments to inventories of finished goods levelled off, as the weakness in autos also affected feeder industries. The average workweek fell for the sixth month in a row.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 191.

For further information, the April 1998 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, $23/$227) will be released later this week. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627), Current Economic Analysis Group. □

Composite Index

	Oct. 1997	Nov. 1997	Dec. 1997	Jan. 1998	Feb. 1998	March 1998	Last month of data available
							% change
Composite leading indicator (1981=100)	**200.7**	**201.6**	**202.1**	**202.5**	**203.6**	**204.6**	**0.5**
Housing index (1981=100)[1]	130.0	129.4	128.7	127.2	126.6	126.8	0.2
Business and personal services employment ('000)	2,147	2,161	2,172	2,187	2,204	2,220	0.7
TSE 300 stock price index (1975=1,000)	6,730	6,770	6,784	6,781	6,821	6,943	1.8
Money supply, M1 ($ millions, 1981)[2]	37,680	37,861	37,967	38,199	38,676	39,231	1.4
U.S. composite leading indicator (1967=100)[3]	222.7	223.0	223.2	223.5	223.6	223.9	0.1
Manufacturing							
Average workweek (hours)	39.6	39.5	39.3	39.1	39.0	38.8	-0.5
New orders, durables ($ millions, 1981)[4]	14,793	15,024	15,274	15,472	15,529	15,499	-0.2
Shipments/inventories of finished goods[4]	1.69	1.69	1.69	1.69	1.69	1.69	0.00[5]
Retail trade							
Furniture and appliance sales ($ millions, 1981)[4]	1,278.2	1,288.4	1,295.6	1,303.5	1,313.8	1,322.3	0.6
Other durable goods sales ($ millions, 1981)[4]	4,340.6	4,361.4	4,382.2	4,400.5	4,453.2	4,483.7	0.7
Unsmoothed composite	202.3	202.0	201.6	203.4	208.1	207.0	-0.5

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 preceding months.*
5 *Difference from previous month.*

■

OTHER RELEASES

Education Price Index
1996

Prices for goods and services in elementary and secondary education increased less than overall inflation in 1996. The Education Price Index (EPI) increased 0.5%, compared with 1.6% for the Consumer Price Index (CPI). From 1987 to 1991, growth in the EPI mirrored the CPI. Education prices subsequently rose more quickly than overall inflation until 1996, when the gap narrowed.

Teachers' salaries account for more than 70% of school boards' operating expenses and are the major component of the EPI. Tightening education budgets in most provinces have kept growth in teachers' salaries to less than 2% since 1993. Other salaries in the education sector have also seen only modest increases in recent years.

In 1996, for the third year in a row, the non-salary component of the EPI remained unchanged. Non-salary items include school facilities, supplies and services. These have a much smaller influence on the overall index because they represent about 20% of the total operating budgets of school boards.

Note: The Education Price Index was established in the 1970s to determine whether increases in the operating expenditures of elementary and secondary education were attributable to inflation alone or to variations in the quantity and quality of goods purchased by schools (including teaching services). The EPI is used mainly to indicate price changes in elementary and secondary education and to express its expenditures in constant dollar amounts.

These data are now available of the years 1971 to 1996 on CANSIM.

Available on CANSIM: T00590304.

For further information on this release, contact Claudio Pagliarello (613-951-1508; fax: 613-951-9040; *paglcla@statcan.ca*), Elementary and Secondary Section, Centre for Education Statistics, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6. □

Level and annual growth rate of the Education Price Index and its major components compared with the CPI
(1986=100)

	Relative importance of the EPI's components	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
	%					
Education Price Index	**100.0**	**130.7**	**133.1**	**134.3**	**137.5**	**138.2**
% change from previous year		**3.5**	**1.8**	**0.9**	**2.4**	**0.5**
Salaries and wages	80.1	130.6	133.0	133.5	133.2	133.6
%		3.7	1.8	0.4	-0.2	0.3
Teachers' salaries	71.9	131.6	133.9	134.5	134.2	134.7
%		4.0	1.7	0.4	-0.2	0.4
Non-teaching salaries	8.2	122.7	124.9	124.9	124.9	124.9
%		1.3	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Non-salary	19.9	130.7	133.8	137.9	158.5	160.1
%		2.4	2.4	3.1	14.9	1.0
Instructional supplies	7.5	122.3	124.1	134.0	200.3	190.1
%		-6.4	1.5	8.0	49.5	-5.1
School facilities, supplies and services	4.1	115.4	116.7	117.4	115.5	117.9
%		2.2	1.1	0.6	-1.6	2.1
Fees and contractual services	8.3	147.7	153.1	155.5	159.3	168.8
%		8.5	3.7	1.6	2.5	6.0
Consumer Price Index		128.1	130.4	130.7	133.5	135.6
%		1.5	1.8	0.2	2.1	1.6

r *Revised figures.*
Note: *Growth rates may differ slightly due to rounding.*

■

Pulpwood and wood residue
February 1998

Pulpwood receipts in February totalled 4 618 738 cubic metres, up 2.5% from 4 504 972 cubic metres in February 1997. Wood residue receipts totalled 5 726 290 cubic metres, a 6.6% decrease from 6 128 366 cubic metres in February 1997. Consumption of pulpwood and wood residue totalled 8 229 467 cubic metres, a drop of 10.5% from 9 190 910 cubic metres in February 1997.

February's closing inventory of pulpwood and wood residue decreased 2.9% to 15 118 446 cubic metres, down from 15 576 699 cubic metres in February 1997. The 1998 year-to-date consumption of pulpwood and wood residue (17 183 204 cubic metres) decreased 8.5% from 18 772 914 cubic metres a year earlier. The 1997 figures have been revised.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 54.

The February 1998 issue of *Pulpwood and wood residue statistics* (25-001-XPB, $8/$73) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Gilles Simard (613-951-3516; *simales@statcan.ca*), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Stocks of frozen poultry meat
April 1, 1998 (preliminary)

Preliminary data on the stocks of frozen poultry meat in cold storage as of April 1, 1998 are now available.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 5675-5677.

For further information on this release, contact Sandra Gielfeldt (613-951-2505), Livestock and Animal Products Section, Agriculture Division. ■

Deliveries of major grains
March 1998

Data on grain deliveries are now available for March 1998.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 976-981.

The delivery data are contained in the March 1998 issue of *Cereals and oilseeds review* (22-007-XPB, $15/$149), which will be available in June. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Rick Burroughs (613-951-2890) or Elizabeth Abraham (613-951-3859), Grain Marketing Unit, Agriculture Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Refined petroleum products, January 1998
Catalogue number 45-004-XPB
(Canada: $21/$206; outside Canada: US$21/US$206).

Work absence rates, no. 9, 1980 to 1997
Catalogue number 71-535-MPB
(Canada: $50; outside Canada: US$50).

All prices exclude sales tax.

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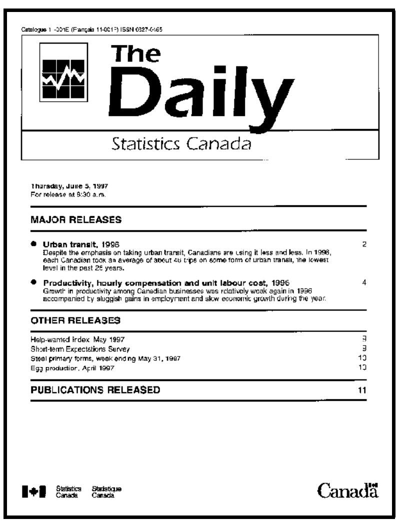
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The Daily
Statistics Canada

Thursday, June 5, 1997
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Urban transit, 1996** 2
  Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1996, each Canadian took an average of about 46 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 relatively weak again in 1996 accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth during the year.

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PUBLICATIONS RELEASED 11

Statistics Canada Statistique Canada
Canada

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