

Statistics Canada

Thursday, May 21, 1998

For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- Retail trade, March 1998
 With a marginal advance in March, retailers experienced the smallest quarterly increase in sales since the first quarter of 1996.
- Port activity, 1997
 Led by Vancouver, Canada's ports handled a record amount of international cargo in 1997. The growth in international cargo pushed the total tonnage handled by the ports to its highest level in nine years.

OTHER RELEASES

- Mineral wool including fibrous glass insulation, April 1998

 Annual Survey of Manufactures, 1996

 9
- PUBLICATIONS RELEASED 11

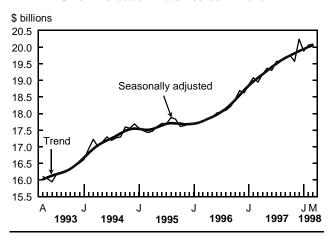
MAJOR RELEASES

Retail trade

March 1998

Retail sales in March advanced 0.2% to \$20.1 billion. This followed an upward-revised 0.9% increase in February. Sales in the first quarter of 1998 advanced 0.8% from the last quarter of 1997—the smallest quarterly increase since the first quarter of 1996.

Small increase in retail sales in March



The large upward revision to February sales was due to the receipt of revised data from a number of motor and recreational vehicle dealers in Quebec.

Although the ice storm dampened January sales in Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick, retailers in all of these provinces had first-quarter sales advances larger than the national average. Retailers in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia experienced declining sales in the first quarter of 1998.

Retailers have generally been experiencing rising sales since the spring of 1995, with a period of strong growth from the fall of 1996 to the summer of 1997. Since then, the growth has been slowing along with a loss of strength in the automotive sector. Despite the sagging auto sales, most sectors have continued to experience solid growth. Excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers, sales advanced 2.2% from the fourth quarter of 1997 to the first quarter of 1998.

The run-up in retail sales in the fall of 1996 coincided with significant growth in consumer credit. Despite rising interest rates over the past six months, consumer bankruptcies in February 1998 (the most

Note to readers

The retail trade data are being revised for the period from January 1991 to March 1998. The revisions will be released on June 25 together with the April 1998 preliminary figures.

recent month for which data are available) had fallen 24.5% from their peak in April 1997. However, employment has started to post steady gains, rising by 3.4% between February 1997 and March 1998.

Furniture stores led March sales

The furniture sector led the advance in retail sales in March. Other sectors posted more marginal changes in sales.

Sales in the furniture sector increased 1.0% in March, ending a strong first quarter (+3.2%). This strong advance continued the pattern of strong growth experienced by furniture retailers since the spring of 1996. The run-up in sales at the start of this period was due to household furniture and appliance stores. During the past two quarters, however, household furnishings stores have been posting stronger advances.

Rising sales in clothing stores in March (+0.5%) ended a strong first quarter. The 2.4% increase in sales in the first quarter of 1998 was the largest quarterly advance since the third quarter of 1994. Clothing store sales have generally been rising since the start of 1996, with sales accelerating in early 1998.

The automotive sector posted a marginal increase in March (+0.2%), not enough to offset the sales declines of automotive retailers in January and February. The first quarter's 1.9% retreat in sales was the first quarterly decline since the fourth quarter of 1994. Higher sales by automotive parts and accessories stores were overcome by the declining sales of motor and recreational vehicle dealers and gasoline service stations. Sales in the automotive sector, which had been rising since the spring of 1995, have been flat since the summer of 1997.

Drugstores posted March's largest sales decline. Despite March's 0.5% decline, drugstore sales in the first quarter of 1998 were 2.4% higher than in the previous quarter. Drugstores have been experiencing slow but steady growth since early 1995.

General merchandise stores also posted a sales decline in March (-0.3%). Advances in department stores (+1.2%) were not enough to offset a 2.5% decline in other general merchandise stores. Despite

March's decline, sales in the first quarter of 1998 gained a strong 2.9%, continuing a general pattern of strong growth since the summer of 1993.

Ice storm failed to dampen Quebec's quarterly sales

Even though the ice storm contributed to the 5.6% decline in Quebec's retail sales in January, retail sales in Quebec advanced 1.2% for the first quarter of 1998. Declines in the furniture and the automotive sectors did not offset strong advances in other sectors. Prior to this strong quarterly advance, retail sales had levelled off in the second half of 1997, after posting impressive gains from the second half of 1996.

Retailers in Atlantic Canada saw the strongest increases in sales in the first quarter of 1998 (+2.3%). All the Atlantic provinces experienced broad-based advances in sales in the first quarter. Even with a pause in the last quarter of 1997, retail sales in Atlantic Canada have been rising since the spring of 1997.

Sales in Ontario continued to advance at a fast clip in the first quarter of 1998 (+1.8%). Sales in the first quarter were led by furniture and clothing stores. This continued the strong pattern of growth that has been observed in Ontario since the start of 1996.

Retailers in the Prairie provinces posted their first quarterly sales decline (-0.3%) since the fourth quarter of 1995. Weakness in the automotive sector affected an otherwise strong pattern of growth in these provinces. The weak first quarter followed strong

advances in sales in the Prairie provinces, particularly in Saskatchewan and Alberta, throughout most of 1996 and 1997.

British Columbia's retailers experienced a broadbased sales decline in the first quarter of 1998, down 2.1% from the last quarter of 1997. Apart from a break in the retail trade data series, due to implementation of the GST, this was the biggest quarterly drop in sales for British Columbian retailers since the second quarter of 1982.

Related indicators of April sales

Initial estimates indicate an increase in the number of new motor vehicles sold in April. The number of employees in retail trade rose 1.0% in April from the previous month. Total employment rose 0.5% in the same period. The number of housing starts in April declined 8.1% from March.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2299, 2398-2417 and 2420.

The March 1998 issue of *Retail trade* (63-005-XPB, \$21/\$206) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Chantal McIvor (613-951-3549; *logener@statcan.ca*). For analytical information, contact Greg Peterson (613-951-3592; *petegre@statcan.ca*), Retail Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division.

Retail sales

Trade group	March 1997	Dec. 1997 ^r	Jan. 1998 ^r	Feb. 1998 ^r	March 1998 ^p	Feb. 1998 to March 1998	March 1997 to March 1998
			seasona	lly adjusted			
	\$ millions				% change		
Food	4,664	4,746	4,757	4,762	4,772	0.2	2.3
Supermarkets and grocery stores All other food stores	4,319 346	4,401 345	4,419 338	4,419 343	4,432 340	0.3 -0.9	2.6 -1.7
Drug and patent medicine stores	1,044	1,076	1,078	1,107	1,102	-0.5	5.5
Clothing	1,079	1,117	1,105	1,151	1,156	0.5	7.1
Shoe stores Men's clothing stores Women's clothing stores Other clothing stores	129 133 351 465	140 133 356 488	142 135 342 486	148 136 364 503	142 135 376 502	-3.8 -0.3 3.4 -0.2	9.8 1.4 7.2 8.0
Furniture	951	1,043	1,026	1,046	1,056	1.0	11.0
Household furniture and appliance stores Household furnishings stores	737 214	800 243	785 241	804 243	812 244	1.1 0.6	10.1 14.0
Automotive	7,138	7,874	7,473	7,445	7,458	0.2	4.5
Motor vehicle and recreational vehicle dealers Gasoline service stations Automotive parts, accessories and services	4,635 1,376 1,128	5,414 1,321 1,139	4,990 1,290 1,193	4,967 1,286 1,192	4,973 1,294 1,190	0.1 0.7 -0.1	7.3 -5.9 5.6
General merchandise stores	2,109	2,240	2,271	2,309	2,303	-0.3	9.2
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	1,957	2,144	2,170	2,237	2,243	0.3	14.6
Other semi-durable goods stores Other durable goods stores All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	638 455 864	670 547 927	682 534 955	703 577 957	703 567 973	0.0 -1.7 1.6	10.2 24.6 12.6
Total, retail sales	18,944	20,240	19,879	20,058	20,090	0.2	6.0
Total, excluding motor vehicle and recreational vehicle dealers	14,309	14,826	14,889	15,090	15,116	0.2	5.6

300

84

583

434

4,477

6,880

695

619

2,114

2,691

25

42

310

607

486

4,697

7,479

722

684

2,317

2,779

26

45

89

309

597

481

4,434

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718 695

2,316

2,751

27

45

88

310

90

615

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4,812

7,453

709

641

2,218

2,665

25

45

308

88

605

489

4,775

7,491

719

656

26

46

2,207

2,681

-0.5

-1.8

-1.5

2.4

-0.8

0.5

1.4

2.4

-0.5

0.6

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2.1

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3.8

12.5

6.7

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3.4

5.9

4.4

-0.4

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8.4

r	Revised	figures.
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Preliminary figures.

Provinces and territories Newfoundland

Nova Scotia

Quebec

Ontario

Alberta

Yukon

Manitoba

New Brunswick

Saskatchewan

British Columbia

Northwest Territories

Prince Edward Island

Retail sales

Trade group	March	Feb.	March	March
	1997	1998 ^r	1998 ^p	1997 to
				March
				1998
		unadjusted	l	
				%
		\$ millions		change
Food	4,518	4,248	4,479	-0.9
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,182	3,948	4,168	-0.3
All other food stores	336	300	311	-7.4
Drug and patent medicine stores	1,006	1,011	1,058	5.2
Clothing	877	748	939	7.1
Shoe stores	101	87	107	6.2
Men's clothing stores	99	85	100	0.4
Women's clothing stores	283	243	305	7.9
Other clothing stores	394	333	427	8.4
Furniture	838	812	952	13.7
Household furniture and appliance stores	650	626	733	12.7
Household furnishings stores	188	187	219	17.0
Automotive	6,607	6,034	7,377	11.7
Motor vehicle and recreational vehicle dealers	4,366	3,984	5,104	16.9
Gasoline service stations	1,292	1,131	1,225	-5.1
Automotive parts, accessories and services	949	919	1,047	10.4
General merchandise stores	1,803	1,629	1,932	7.2
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	1,597	1,630	1,771	10.9
Other semi-durable goods stores	492	502	535	8.8
Other durable goods stores	357	398	434	21.6
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	749	730	802	7.2
Total, retail sales	17,245	16,112	18,508	7.3
Total, excluding motor vehicle and recreational vehicle				
dealers	12,879	12,128	13,404	4.1
Provinces and territories				
Newfoundland	271	239	279	3.1
Prince Edward Island	72	67	75	5.2
Nova Scotia	530	489	550	3.8
New Brunswick	385	366	434	12.8
Quebec	4,087	3,832	4,396	7.6
Ontario	6,151	5,975	6,852	11.4
Manitoba	632	566	666	5.4
Saskatchewan	570	513	588	3.1
Alberta	1,957	1,789	2,048	4.6
British Columbia	2,527	2,221	2,553	1.0
Yukon	21	18	22	3.3
Northwest Territories	41	38	44	9.1

Revised figures
Preliminary figures

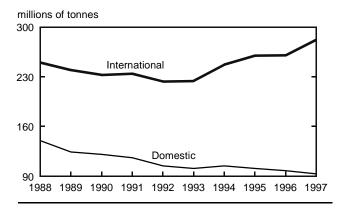
Port activity

1997

Led by Vancouver, Canada's ports handled a record amount of international cargo in 1997. The growth in international cargo pushed the total tonnage handled by the ports to its highest level in nine years. Shipments of four bulk commodities—crude oil, coal, iron ore, and wheat—were responsible for the increase in international marine cargo.

Total international cargo reached 282.3 million tonnes, an 8.5% increase from 1996 and an all-time high. Despite a decline in domestic marine cargo, the total cargo handled reached 375.5 million tonnes in 1997, up 5.0% over 1996.

International cargo continues to grow while domestic cargo levels decline



Port Hawkesbury: centre for trans-shipments of crude oil

Canada's ports handled 38.5 million tonnes of crude oil in 1997, almost 25% more than in the previous year. This increase was due almost entirely to transshipments of crude oil from Norway and the United Kingdom to the eastern seaboard of the United States. The oil was transported in very large carriers to Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, where it was stored and then loaded onto smaller tankers that comply with the U.S. Oil Pollution Act of 1990. These oil trans-shipments led to a 7.6 million tonne increase in international cargo through the port in 1997. With this increase, Port Hawkesbury became the number six port in terms of cargo tonnage in 1997, up from 11th position in 1996. Almost all of the crude oil handled in 1997 was shipped internationally.

Note to readers

Data on international cargo shipments come from Revenue Canada's customs documents. Data on domestic shipments are provided by the shipping companies. The information in this release covers about 200 ports in Canada.

Trans-shipments are foreign cargoes handled at Canadian ports en route to or from a third country.

Containerized cargo is high-value freight carried in a box that is designed to be sent from door to door without the contents being handled. Containers can easily be transferred from ships to trucks or trains for inland distribution. Transporting containerized cargo is labour intensive and requires skilled crane operators, as well as considerable sales and logistics expertise.

Bulk cargo is cargo that conforms to the shape of the vessel in which it is carried; it is normally transported in high volumes. These commodities are usually low-valued.

These data are being released in advance of National Transportation Week.

Heavy traffic in coal and wheat

Canada's ports handled 52.0 million tonnes of coal and 34.2 million tonnes of wheat in 1997, increases of 8% and 25% respectively over 1996. Almost all of the coal and 60% of the wheat were shipped internationally.

Strong demand for Canadian coal and wheat in Asia boosted the throughput of these cargoes at West Coast ports. Vancouver loaded 28.3 million tonnes of coal and 8.3 million tonnes of wheat in 1997, increases of 3% and 7% over the previous year. Prince Rupert loaded 6.6 million tonnes of coal, 1.5 million tonnes more than in 1996, and 4.0 million tonnes of wheat, 1.4 million tonnes more than in 1996. All of the coal and wheat handled at these ports was exported overseas.

Canada's maritime coal trade is bi-directional: most exports of Canadian coal occur on the West Coast, while most imports are handled at Great Lakes ports. Great Lakes ports received 13.2 million tonnes of coal from U.S. ports on the Great Lakes, 17% more than in 1996. Most of this increase in inbound coal was unloaded at the ports of Courtright and Nanticoke, Ontario, where it was used for thermal generation of electricity and for making steel.

Over two-thirds of the increase in wheat handled by the ports was due to increased domestic shipments. These domestic movements occurred mainly in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence regions. The port of Thunder Bay handled 53% more wheat, with 8.1 million tonnes of wheat loaded onto ships, most of which were bound for ports on the lower St. Lawrence. Most of this wheat was then loaded onto ocean-going ships bound for ports overseas. These wheat shipments were a welcome addition to traffic on the Seaway, as Canadian

wheat has increasingly been exported through West Coast ports.

International shipments of iron ore rose almost 10% to 40.9 million tonnes due to increased exports from Sept-Îles/Pointe-Noire to Europe, particularly the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The increase in international shipments of iron ore from Sept-Îles/Pointe-Noire more than offset a decline in domestic shipments. Consequently the port's overall traffic was up 8.4% from 1996, to 24.5 million tonnes in 1997. This performance was enough to make Sept-Îles/Pointe-Noire the number two Canadian port in terms of tonnage.

Vancouver—Canada's busiest port

Vancouver, by far the busiest port in Canada, handled a record 71.8 million tonnes of cargo in 1997. That represented almost one-fifth of the total cargo handled at Canadian ports. Vancouver handles a diverse mix of bulk and containerized cargo. In 1997, it was the number one port in Canada for coal, wheat and sulphur and the number two port for container traffic. International shipments accounted for 99% of the port's total traffic in 1997. Ninety-two percent of these shipments were outbound to foreign ports.

Record levels of containerized cargo

The country's three major container ports—Montréal, Vancouver and Halifax—handled record levels of containerized cargo in 1997, despite strong competition from U.S. ports. These three ports handled 93% of the containerized cargo handled at Canadian ports.

Montréal handled 8.2 million tonnes of containerized cargo in 1997. Its location, 1,600 kilometres inland and close to markets in the U.S. Midwest, is a strategic advantage, given that water transport costs one-fifth to one-third that of land transport.

Vancouver handled almost 6.0 million tonnes of containerized cargo in 1997, a 16% increase over 1996. In 1997, the port opened "the Deltaport", a new multi-million dollar state of the art facility capable of accommodating the largest container ships in service. This new facility appears to have attracted new container lines to the port.

Halifax handled 4.7 million tonnes of containerized cargo, up 17% from 1996. The port has benefited from the opening of a rail tunnel at Sarnia, which has enabled double-stacked container service through to the U.S. Midwest. Halifax is also the closest major container port to Europe, and it is the port with the deepest water on the Atlantic coast of North America—two features that together make it an obvious last or first port-of-call for large container ships on the Atlantic.

Marine transport—a significant employer

Canada's marine sector not only facilitates the nation's overseas trade, it is also a significant employer. Approximately 29,500 Canadians work for organizations engaged in water transport or in incidental service industries, such as marine cargo handlers, shipping agents and marine pilots.

These industries pay annual wages and salaries of about \$1.3 billion, according to Statistics Canada's Survey of Employment, Payroll and Hours. However, this does not represent the total employment in marine activity, since some firms in industries such as petroleum and forest products transport or handle their own products via marine transport.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 145 and 146.

For information on this release and on Canadian ports, contact Bob Larocque (613-951-2486; fax: 613-951-0579; *laroque@statcan.ca*), Transportation Division.

Canada's top 10 ports*

Port	Domestic			International			Total		
	1996	1997	1996 to 1997	1996	1997	1996 to 1997	1996	1997	1996 to 1997
	'000 tonr	ies	% change	'000 tor	nnes	% change	'000 to	nnes	% change
Vancouver	1 989	999	-49.8	69 416	70 791	2.0	71 405	71 789	0.5
Sept-Îles/Pointe-Noire	4 217	3 546	-15.9	18 367	20 925	13.9	22 584	24 471	8.4
Port-Cartier	5 132	5 364	4.5	16 597	15 513	-6.5	21 729	20 877	-3.9
Saint John	1 951	1 998	2.4	18 624	18 612	-0.1	20 575	20 610	0.2
Montréal/Contrecoeur	5 261	5 606	6.6	13 947	15 003	7.6	19 208	20 609	7.3
Port Hawkesbury	33	35	5.1	7 852	15 430	96.5	7 885	15 465	96.1
Québec/Lévis	3 681	2 577	-30.0	13 306	12 376	-7.0	16 987	14 953	-12.0
Halifax	2 699	2 588	-4.1	10 884	12 255	12.6	13 583	14 842	9.3
Thunder Bay	6 565	8 342	27.1	3 536	4 507	27.4	10 101	12 849	27.2
Prince Rupert	14	25	87.2	9 438	12 512	32.6	9 452	12 538	32.7
Sub-total	31 542	31 080	-1.5	181 967	197 923	8.8	213 509	229 003	7.3
Other ports	66 107	62 199	-5.9	78 118	84 328	7.9	144 225	146 528	1.6
Total	97 649	93 280	-4.5	260 085	282 252	8.5	357 734	375 531	5.0

^{*} Ranked by total tonnage handled in 1997.

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OTHER RELEASES

Mineral wool including fibrous glass insulation

April 1998

Manufacturers shipped 1 943 573 square metres of R12 factor (RSI 2.1) mineral wool batts in April, down 8.9% from 2 133 207 (revised) square metres a year earlier and a 47.5% drop from 3 700 263 square metres a month earlier.

Year-to-date shipments to the end of April 1998 totalled 10 810 831 square metres, a 57.5% increase from the same period in 1997.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 40 and 122 (series 32-33).

The April 1998 issue of *Mineral wool including* fibrous glass insulation (44-004-XPB, \$7/\$62) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For further information on this release, contact Roland Joubert (613-951-3527; rjouber@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division.

Annual Survey of Manufactures 1996

The Annual Survey of Manufactures provides information on more than 200 different industries. Principal statistics for each industry are released on CANSIM as they become available. Data for the industries listed in the following table are now available. Data for 212 industries have now been released.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 5382, 5391, 5418, 5430, 5446, 5447, 5479, 5489, 5499, 5517, 5518, 6888 and 6890.

Data for the industries listed in the table appear in Food industries (32-250-XPB, \$40), Rubber and plastic products industries (33-250-XPB, \$40), Textile products industries (34-251-XPB, \$40), Clothing industries (34-252-XPB, \$40), Paper and allied products industries (36-250-XPB, \$40), Printing, publishing and allied industries (36-251-XPB, \$40), Fabricated metal products industries (41-251-XPB, \$40), Manufacturing industries of Canada, national and provincial areas (31-203-XPB, \$68) and Products shipped by Canadian manufacturers (31-211-XPB, \$67). The 1995 issues of most of these publications are now available. See How to order publications.

For further information on this release, look under contacts in the following table (fax: 613-951-9499; pentlii@statcan.ca).

Value of shipments

	1995	1996	1995 to 1996	Publication catalogue number	Contact	
	\$ millio	ins	% change			
Industry (Standard Industry Classification)						
Fish products (1021)	2,974.3	2,888.6	-2.9	32-250-XPB	P. Zylstra	613-951-3511
Biscuits (1071)	678.6	760.3	12.0	32-250-XPB	P. Zylstra	613-951-3511
Other plastic products, not elsewhere classified (1699)	4,734.3	5,528.0	16.8	33-250-XPB	N. Charron	613-951-3510
Natural fibres processing and felt products (1911)	289.3	284.4	-1.7	34-251-XPB	L. Vincent	613-951-3523
Women's sportswear (2442)	1,383.7	1,439.9	4.1	34-252-XPB	R. Kowaluk	613-951-0600
Women's dress (2443)	314.5	328.9	4.6	34-252-XPB	R. Kowaluk	613-951-0600
Bed spring and mattress (2691)	424.3	446.3	5.2	35-251-XPB	E. Saint-Pierre	613-951-9837
Folding carton and set-up box (2731)	1,224.6	1,313.1	7.2	36-250-XPB	G. Simard	613-951-3516
Platemaking, typesetting and bindery (2821)	1,112.7	1,151.6	3.5	36-251-XPB	S. Boyer	613-951-5669
Metal tanks, heavy gauge (3021)	503.6	536.1	6.5	41-251-XPB	E. Saint-Pierre	613-951-9837
Plate work (3022)	244.7	283.9	16.0	41-251-XPB	E. Saint-Pierre	613-951-9837
Jewellery and silverware (3921)	434.2	474.2	9.2	47-250-XPB	S. Boyer	613-951-5669
Sporting goods (3931)	1,064.0	1,130.3	6.2	47-250-XPB	S. Boyer	613-951-5669

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Canadian economic observer, May 1998 Catalogue number 11-010-XPB

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

Footwear statistics, quarter ended March 1998 Catalogue number 33-002-XPB

(Canada: \$8/\$25; outside Canada: US\$ 8/US\$25).

Construction type plywood, March 1998 Catalogue number 35-001-XPB

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

Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard, March 1998 Catalogue number 36-003-XPB

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

Electric lamps (light bulbs and tubes), March 1998 Catalogue number 43-009-XPB

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

Industrial chemicals and synthetic resins, March 1998

Catalogue number 46-002-XPB

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

Shipments of plastic film and bags manufactured from resin , quarter ended March 31, 1998 Catalogue number 47-007-XPB

(Canada: \$10/\$33; outside Canada: US\$ 10/US\$33).

Employment earnings and hours, February 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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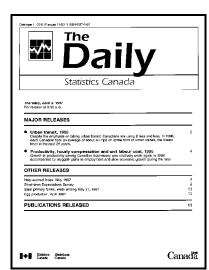
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