



# The Daily

Statistics Canada

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## Consumer Price Index

December 1998

From November to December 1998, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell 0.3%, largely due to a 4.3% decrease in gasoline prices. Over the last fifteen months, the gasoline index dropped 15.8%.

**The CPI rose 1.0% since December 1997**

In December 1998, consumers paid 1.0% more than they did a year ago for the goods and services contained in the CPI basket. December is the ninth month in 1998 for which the twelve-month increase in the CPI was less than 1.1%.

December's twelve-month increase was led by price advances for shelter, food, cablevision, new motor vehicles, and tuition fees. Price decreases for gasoline and computer equipment counterbalanced some of these increases.

The graph illustrates the percentage change in the labour force over a five-year period. The data shows a significant initial drop followed by a sharp recovery and subsequent fluctuations. The highest growth rate was observed in mid-1994, while the lowest was in early 1994.

Year	% change
1993	1.8
1994	-0.2
1995	3.0
1996	1.5
1997	1.8
1998	1.0

In the last twelve months, food prices increased, on average, by 1.7%. The biggest contributors to that rise were food purchased from table-service restaurants, fresh fruit and vegetables, and dairy products. Downward pressure was exerted on the index by lower prices for pork, ham and bacon, and bread, rolls and buns.

The annual average of the All-items CPI for Canada increased 0.9% for 1998. Increases in annual averages have ranged from 1.6% to 2.2% since 1995.

### Note to readers

*December's issue of The Consumer Price Index features an analytical article, "Evolution of the Price Index for Regulated Commodities in the 1990s".*

*This article traces the movement of the indexes of regulated and non-regulated prices over the last ten years. It shows, among other things, that the prices of regulated commodities generally rise faster than those of non-regulated commodities.*

*In this article, comparison of these two indexes excludes alcoholic beverages and tobacco products from the basket of regulated commodities. The article also illustrates some of the shortcomings of an aggregated index that tries to distinguish regulated prices from other prices.*

Comparable increases have not been reported since the early 1960s.

**From November to December, the CPI fell 0.3%**

The 0.3% drop in the CPI from November to December was mainly due to decreases in the prices for gasoline, women's and men's clothing and footwear, and traveller accommodation. These decreases were partly offset by advances in the prices of piped gas, air transportation and fresh vegetables.

Gasoline prices fell 4.3% from November to December, their strongest monthly decrease since July 1996. December's drop was in line with the most recent trend of falling prices that started in October 1997. The annual average of indexes for gasoline dropped 8.6% in 1998 compared with 1997. A decrease of this amplitude has not been seen since 1986 when prices fell 11.0% compared with 1985. During both periods, falling prices were attributed to an oversupply of crude oil combined with falling demand.

Prices of women's clothing decreased 2.2% since November while those of men's clothing declined 2.0%. Falling prices for footwear also contributed to the drop in the All-items CPI. These prices reflected the seasonal pattern of widespread discounts by retailers prior to Christmas.

For the fourth consecutive month, prices for traveller accommodation fell in response to the end of peak season and the introduction of winter rates. December's 4.8% rate decrease brings the price change since August to -24.9%, in line with the seasonal drops registered since 1995 over the same four months.

A 7.0% increase in the rates for piped gas was the most important factor offsetting the overall drop in the

CPI. This advance in the index for piped gas reflected the return to regular billing after a one-time rebate in Alberta last month, and rate increases in Ontario and Quebec.

Air transportation prices usually go up in December. In December 1998, the 4.2% rise in the index for airfares dampened the downward pressure on the overall monthly CPI. In 1998, the annual average of the CPI for air transportation increased 7.4%, considerably lower than the 13.4 % increase for 1997.

The index for fresh vegetables rose 1.9% in December, due mainly to higher prices for potatoes, tomatoes and other fresh vegetables. The index for lettuce dropped 10.5% over the same period.

### **Provincial highlights**

Since December 1997, overall prices in Prince Edward Island remained unchanged. The CPI's of all other provinces increased in the past 12 months, ranging from a low of 0.1% in Newfoundland to a high of 2.0% in Manitoba.

Although the CPI's of Manitoba and Alberta rose by only 0.2% in December compared with November, the remaining provinces enjoyed overall price declines ranging from -0.1% in Saskatchewan to -0.6% in Newfoundland.

### **Provincial spotlight: Quebec and Ontario**

Since December 1997, prices in Quebec rose, on average, by 1.3% compared with the 1.0% advance in the national All-items index. Prices in Ontario increased by 0.9% over the same time period.

Over the last year, residents of Quebec faced a 19.8% jump in fresh fruit prices while the national level advanced 10.1%. The price of fresh vegetables rose by 12.7% in Quebec compared with a 6.1% increase

nationally. Moreover, the residents of Quebec saw electricity rates rise by 2.6%, motor vehicle insurance premiums increase by 4.0%, and cigarette prices jump by 9.0% while most other Canadians experienced smaller increases for these commodities. In contrast, prices for gasoline plunged by 12.1% in Quebec, exceeding the 9.7% drop registered for Canada as a whole. Residents of Quebec also faced smaller price advances for cablevision and travel tours and a lower increase in property taxes compared with those for the corresponding commodities at the national level.

In Ontario, consumers benefited from an 8.4% plunge in the price of telephone services over the last 12 months while, nationally, Canadians enjoyed a smaller price decline (-1.7%) for these services. Since December 1997, Ontario residents also experienced price increases for motor vehicles and homeowners' maintenance and repairs that were lower than those faced by most other Canadians. In contrast, price increases for piped gas and new homes in Ontario, as well as higher rates for travel tours, property taxes and tuition fees exceeded those for corresponding commodities at the national level.

### **Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9970.**

Available at 7 a.m. on the Internet at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca), under "Daily News".

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

The January 1999 *Consumer Price Index* will be released on February 18, 1999.

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](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca)), Prices Division. □

## The Consumer Price Index and major components 1992=100

	Dec. 1998	Nov. 1998	Dec. 1997	Nov. to Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997 to Dec. 1998
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
<b>All-items</b>	<b>108.7</b>	<b>109.0</b>	<b>107.6</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Food	109.7	109.7	107.9	0.0	1.7
Shelter	104.4	104.2	103.3	0.2	1.1
Household operations and furnishings	107.8	107.9	106.9	-0.1	0.8
Clothing and footwear	102.6	104.5	101.7	-1.8	0.9
Transportation	120.3	121.1	121.3	-0.7	-0.8
Health and personal care	108.8	108.9	106.7	-0.1	2.0
Recreation, education and reading	116.5	117.2	114.2	-0.6	2.0
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	93.4	93.5	90.1	-0.1	3.7
Goods	105.6	106.2	105.5	-0.6	0.1
Services	112.2	112.3	110.1	-0.1	1.9
All-items excluding food and energy	109.1	109.3	107.5	-0.2	1.5
Energy	102.9	104.1	107.5	-1.2	-4.3
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared to 1992	92.0	91.7	92.9		
All-items (1986=100)	139.2				

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

	Dec. 1998	Nov. 1998	Dec. 1997	Nov. to Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997 to Dec. 1998
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
Newfoundland	108.0	108.7	107.9	-0.6	0.1
Prince Edward Island	106.1	106.4	106.1	-0.3	0.0
Nova Scotia	108.4	108.7	108.0	-0.3	0.4
New Brunswick	107.4	107.8	107.2	-0.4	0.2
Quebec	106.3	106.7	104.9	-0.4	1.3
Ontario	108.9	109.3	107.9	-0.4	0.9
Manitoba	113.9	113.7	111.7	0.2	2.0
Saskatchewan	112.5	112.6	110.4	-0.1	1.9
Alberta	111.4	111.2	109.7	0.2	1.5
British Columbia	109.7	109.9	109.4	-0.2	0.3
Whitehorse	110.6	110.8	110.4	-0.2	0.2
Yellowknife	108.2	108.3	107.6	-0.1	0.6

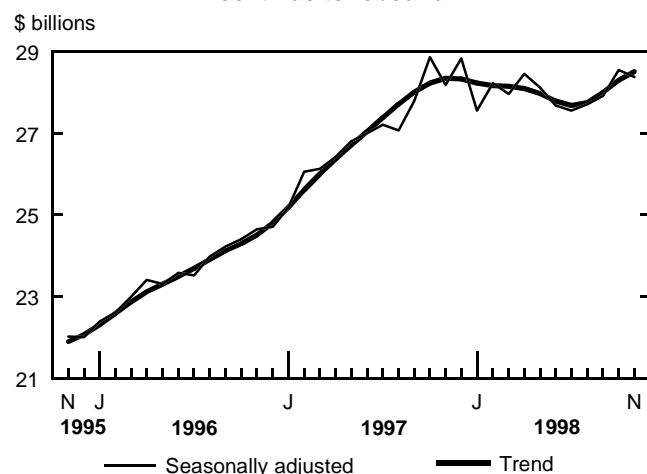
## Wholesale trade

November 1998 (preliminary)

Wholesale sales declined 0.6% in November, after posting strong gains in October (+2.3%). While some sectors reported strong increases, a sharp decline in motor vehicles, parts and accessories was the leading cause for November's stumble. Excluding motor vehicles, parts and accessories, wholesale sales would have posted a modest increase of 0.4%.

Despite November's decline, wholesale sales have been rising since July 1998 and have generally recovered to the fall 1997 levels when the most recent period of decline began. Prior to then, sales had been steadily rising.

**Despite a decline in November, wholesale sales continue to rebound**



Wholesalers reported sales valued at \$28.4 billion in November. Major declines were observed in motor vehicles, parts and accessories (-5.2%), and apparel and dry goods (-1.3%). Other sectors to decline were computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery, which posted its first drop since March 1998 (-1.0%), other products (-1.0%), food products (-0.4%), and beverage, drug and tobacco products (-0.4%). In contrast, strong increases were reported for household goods (+7.8%), farm machinery, equipment and supplies (+4.0%), and metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies (+2.5%). Modest increases were also posted in industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies (+1.1%), and lumber and building materials (+0.9%).

Notable declines in Ontario (-2.1%), Saskatchewan (-1.3%), British Columbia (-0.6%), and Manitoba

(-0.5%) could be largely attributed to lower sales in one or more of three sectors: motor vehicle, parts and accessories, apparel and dry goods, and farm machinery, equipment and supplies.

### Sales in the automotive industry bring down total wholesale sales

Wholesale sales for motor vehicles, parts and accessories fell 5.2% in November to \$4.9 billion. This is the largest decline since January 1998 when sales in this sector generally began their deterioration after two years of increases. Sales had been appearing to improve since August, but now seem to be stagnant.

Declines were broadly based throughout the industry, affecting not only personal motor vehicles and parts, but trucks, buses, and other motorized vehicles as well. The decline may be due to continuing weak consumer confidence. Consequently, wholesale inventories rose slightly in November by 0.9%. Interestingly, manufacturing inventories also rose sharply despite increases in manufacturing output in this sector.

### Computers and packaged software sales falter

November sales for computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery fell slightly from \$2.99 billion to \$2.96 billion (-1.0%). Despite this decrease, sales have been generally climbing since the spring of 1998. In fact, discounting a short period of decline between December 1997 and March 1998, sales have more or less increased for the last three years. Manufacturers also reported a drop in shipments in November.

### Cautious rebound continues in farming sector

Wholesale sales of farm machinery, equipment and supplies rose 4.0% in November, increasing to \$691 million. The industry has returned to sales levels last reported in August when the sector had its greatest decline since February 1996. Low commodity prices and threats of trade sanctions continued to affect wholesale sales for this sector in the three Prairie provinces. The present sluggish sector performance is the result of falling, or idle, sales since mid-1997. Prior to this period, sales of farm machinery, equipment and supplies had been generally on the rise.

### No change in inventories

The value of inventories held by wholesalers remained constant at \$41.1 billion in November.

Inventory values appear to be flattening since September, mirroring the last quarter of 1997. Despite these pauses, the value of inventories held by wholesalers has been generally rising since mid-1996.

Inventories-to-sales ratio rose from 1.44 in October to 1.45 in November. After having been on the rise since mid-1997, the inventory-to-sales ratio began to level off during the summer of 1998.

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

The November 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 (1-877-421-3067 or 613-951-3549; [wholesaleinfo@statcan.ca](mailto:wholesaleinfo@statcan.ca)). 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

	Nov. 1997	Aug. 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Sept. 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Oct. 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Nov. 1998 <sup>p</sup>	Oct. to Nov. 1998 <sup>pr</sup>	Nov. 1997 to Nov. 1998 <sup>p</sup>
	seasonally adjusted						
	\$ millions					% change	
<b>Sales, all trade groups</b>	<b>28,176</b>	<b>27,706</b>	<b>27,908</b>	<b>28,543</b>	<b>28,371</b>	<b>-0.6</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Food products	4,217	4,427	4,476	4,513	4,494	-0.4	6.6
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,923	1,915	1,881	1,898	1,891	-0.4	-1.7
Apparel and dry goods	533	550	554	542	535	-1.3	0.3
Household goods	799	807	794	769	829	7.8	3.7
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,187	4,845	4,854	5,173	4,905	-5.2	-5.4
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,876	1,917	1,956	1,961	2,011	2.5	7.2
Lumber and building materials	2,100	2,023	2,096	2,082	2,101	0.9	0.0
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	748	692	655	665	691	4.0	-7.5
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4,203	4,032	4,080	4,105	4,149	1.1	-1.3
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,612	2,746	2,757	2,993	2,962	-1.0	13.4
Other products	3,977	3,752	3,805	3,842	3,804	-1.0	-4.3
Newfoundland	181	188	189	191	194	1.5	7.2
Prince Edward Island	43	48	48	49	51	4.1	19.2
Nova Scotia	517	486	501	488	508	4.2	-1.7
New Brunswick	333	345	338	330	331	0.4	-0.4
Quebec	5,463	5,662	5,632	5,704	5,813	1.9	6.4
Ontario	13,693	13,390	13,641	14,246	13,944	-2.1	1.8
Manitoba	1,018	892	980	922	917	-0.5	-9.9
Saskatchewan	825	861	826	817	806	-1.3	-2.3
Alberta	2,834	2,686	2,543	2,588	2,616	1.1	-7.7
British Columbia	3,242	3,122	3,183	3,183	3,165	-0.6	-2.4
Yukon	13	10	11	10	10	0.6	-23.2
Northwest Territories	15	15	16	16	16	0.3	4.4
<b>Inventories, all trade groups</b>	<b>38,571</b>	<b>40,632</b>	<b>41,010</b>	<b>41,068</b>	<b>41,088</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>
Food products	2,637	2,704	2,788	2,796	2,807	0.4	6.4
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	2,012	2,376	2,378	2,478	2,247	-9.3	11.7
Apparel and dry goods	1,130	1,275	1,293	1,302	1,331	2.2	17.8
Household goods	1,556	1,562	1,538	1,536	1,585	3.2	1.8
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,526	5,683	5,766	5,733	5,783	0.9	4.6
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,304	3,547	3,619	3,558	3,564	0.1	7.9
Lumber and building materials	3,405	3,652	3,672	3,643	3,608	-0.9	6.0
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,068	2,309	2,349	2,323	2,314	-0.4	11.9
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	9,198	9,908	9,895	9,853	9,857	0.0	7.2
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,524	2,480	2,525	2,648	2,714	2.5	7.5
Other products	5,210	5,137	5,188	5,198	5,279	1.6	1.3

<sup>r</sup> Revised figures.

<sup>p</sup> Preliminary figures.

## OTHER RELEASES

### Natural gas sales

November 1998 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 5 840 million cubic metres in November, down 6.5% from November 1997. Warmer than normal weather conditions throughout most of the country resulted in sharply lower sales to the residential (-10.7%) and commercial (-8.8%) sectors compared with November 1997. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) declined 3.9% from the same period last year.

Year-to-date sales to the end of November fell 5.8% from the same period in 1997. Sales decreased to the residential (-16.1%) and commercial (-19.7%) 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 2.5% increase from the same period last year.

### Natural gas sales

	Nov. 1998 <sup>P</sup>	Nov. 1997	Nov. 1997 to Nov. 1998
	'000 of cubic metres		% change
<b>Natural gas sales</b>	<b>5,840,413</b>	<b>6,243,926</b>	<b>-6.5</b>
Residential	1,418,187	1,587,725	-10.7
Commercial	992,779	1,088,982	-8.8
Industrial	1,772,594	2,045,003	-3.9
Direct	1,656,853	1,522,216	
	Year-to-date		
	1998 <sup>P</sup>	1997	1997 to 1998
	'000 of cubic metres		% change
<b>Natural gas sales</b>	<b>56,730,740</b>	<b>60,233,861</b>	<b>-5.8</b>
Residential	12,198,694	14,538,411	-16.1
Commercial	8,295,295	10,326,275	-19.7
Industrial	20,025,881	22,176,307	2.5
Direct	16,210,870	13,192,868	

<sup>P</sup> Preliminary figures.

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

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

For further information, or to inquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Gary Smalldridge (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. ■

### Oil pipeline transport

October 1998

Net receipts of crude oil and equivalent hydrocarbons totalled 12 996 484 cubic metres in October, down 1.8% from October 1997. Year-to-date receipts to the end of October 1998 (129 169 263 cubic metres) rose 3.6% over the same period in 1997. Net receipts of liquefied petroleum gases and refined petroleum products in October (6 921 997 cubic metres) increased 3.5% from October 1997. Year-to-date receipts increased 2.6% to 64 844 462 cubic metres.

Pipeline exports of crude oil (5 964 015 cubic metres) increased 3.8% from October 1997, and pipeline imports (1 650 332 cubic metres) increased 16.1%. Year-to-date exports (60 562 978 cubic metres) were up 6.8% from 1997. Year-to-date imports (15 625 887 cubic metres) rose 14.1 %. Canadian crude oil has found a ready market in the United States, where indigenous production has been declining in recent years.

October deliveries of crude oil by pipeline to Canadian refineries totalled 5 995 031 cubic metres, a 0.3% increase from 1997. October deliveries of liquefied petroleum gases and refined petroleum products increased 11.1% to 634 619 cubic metres. Year-to-date deliveries of crude oil to refineries at the end of October 1998 totalled 56 960 464 cubic metres, up 1.3% from the same period in 1997.

### Available on CANSIM: matrices 181, and 591-595.

The October 1998 issue of *Oil pipeline transport* (55-001-XPB, \$12/\$114) will be available the third week of January. See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Eleonore Harding (613-951-5708; [hardele@statcan.ca](mailto:hardele@statcan.ca)), Energy Section, Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■



## Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard

November 1998

Oriented strandboard production in November totalled 545 858 cubic metres, a 12.7% increase from 484 167 (revised) cubic metres in November 1997. Particleboard production reached 194 175 cubic metres, an increase of 5.3% from 184 329 (revised) cubic metres in November 1997. Fibreboard production in November was 69 353 cubic metres, up 38.5% from 50 070 cubic metres in November 1997.

For January to November 1998, year-to-date oriented strandboard production totalled 5 755 172 cubic metres, an 11.2% increase from 5 174 818 (revised) cubic metres for the same period last year. Particleboard production rose to 2 167 965 cubic metres, up 4.2% from 2 080 908 (revised) cubic metres in 1997. Year-to-date fibreboard production reached 749 559 cubic metres, up 28.3% from 584 428 cubic metres during the same period in 1997.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 31 (series 2, 3, 5) and 122 (series 8).**

The November 1998 issue of *Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard* (36-003-XPB, \$7/\$62), 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 Don Grant (613-951-5998; [grantdo@statcan.ca](mailto:grantdo@statcan.ca)), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division ■

## Civil aviation operating statistics

November 1998

In November 1998, Air Canada reported a drop in both domestic and international passenger-kilometres flown (seasonally adjusted data). Domestic operations

fell by 6% while international operations dropped by 4%. Canadian Airlines International Ltd. reported slight decreases in these two sectors in November.

**Available on CANSIM: matrix 385 (series 1 to 6).**

The November 1998 data on civil aviation (operational data) for Air Canada and Canadian Airlines International Ltd. will appear in the February issue of *Aviation: service bulletin* (51-004-XIB, \$8/\$82), published monthly on the Internet ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). A print-on-demand service is also available at a different price. It can be ordered directly from the Internet or by calling 1-800-267-6677.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Robert Lund (613-951-0125) or Lisa Di Piéto (613-951-0146), Aviation Statistics Centre, Transportation Division. ■

## Annual Survey of Canadian-domiciled Marine Carriers

1996

For-hire marine carriers in Canada reported an operating profit for the fourth straight year in 1996. One hundred and forty commercial carriers reported a before-tax profit of \$76 million on revenues of \$1.97 billion. The Annual Survey of Canadian-domiciled Marine Carriers was revised to include a balance sheet for 1996.

Preliminary statistics for 1996 will be published in the *Surface and marine transport service bulletin*, vol. 15, no. 2 (50-002-XIB, \$10/\$62). See *How to order publications*.

For further information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods, and data quality of this release, contact Robert Larocque (613-951-2486; fax: 613-951-0009; [laroque@statcan.ca](mailto:laroque@statcan.ca)), Transportation Division. ■

## PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

**New motor vehicle sales**, October 1998  
**Catalogue number 63-007-XIB**  
(Canada: \$13/\$124; outside Canada: US\$13/US\$124).

**Building permits**, November 1998  
**Catalogue number 64-001-XIB**  
(Canada: \$19/\$186; outside Canada: US\$19/US\$186).

**Quarterly estimates of trustee pension funds**,  
second quarter 1998  
**Catalogue number 74-001-XPB**  
(Canada: \$19/\$62; outside Canada: US\$19/US\$62).

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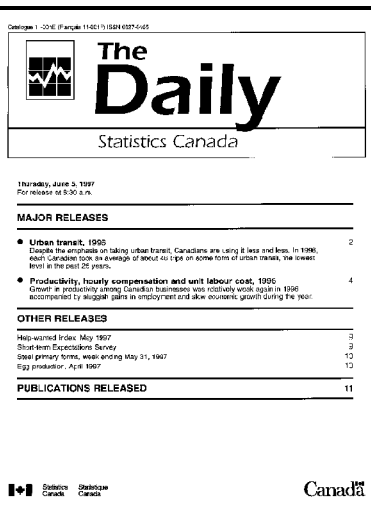
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