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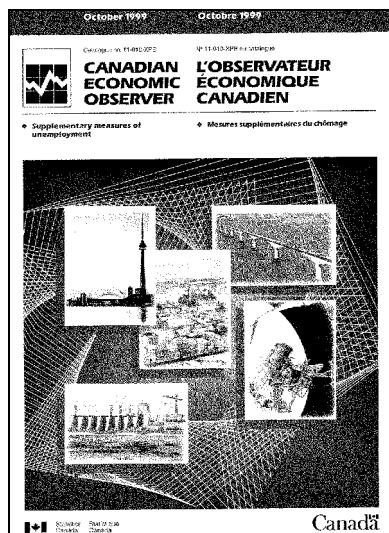
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Canadian economic observer October 1999

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

The October 1999 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. See *How to order publications*. For more information, contact Cyndi Bloskie (613-951-3634; ceo@statcan.ca), Current Economic Analysis Group.



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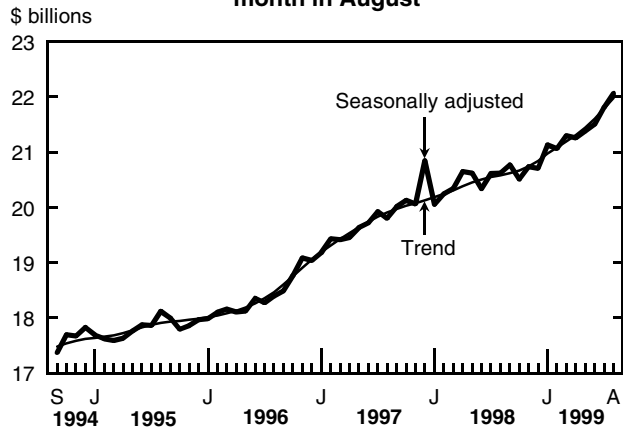
MAJOR RELEASES

Retail trade

August 1999

Retail sales advanced 1.2% in August to \$22.1 billion, following a 1.4% increase in July. August's increase was the fourth consecutive monthly gain, marking the longest period of sustained increases since the spring of 1997. Holding prices constant, retail sales increased 0.7% in August. Most of the increase in prices occurred in the automotive sector.

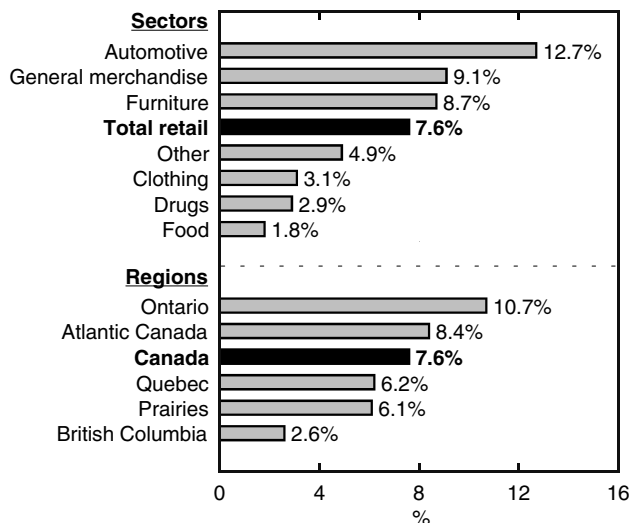
Retail sales advanced for a fourth consecutive month in August



Retailers have enjoyed strong sales gains since the last turning point in October 1998. Previously, sales had slowed in the spring and summer of 1998 after generally increasing from the start of 1996.

Retail sales in August were 7.6% higher than in October 1998. The automotive sector (+12.7%) posted the strongest gain over this period, followed by general merchandise stores (+9.1%) and furniture stores (+8.7%). Retailers in Ontario (+10.7%) and in Atlantic Canada (+8.4%) led the increases at the regional level.

Increases in retail sales since the last turning point
(October 1998 to August 1999)



The strength in retail sales observed since the fall of 1998 has been fuelled more by consumer credit than by higher personal income. From the third quarter of 1998 to the second quarter of 1999 (the most recent period for which data are available), consumer credit (+5.0%) advanced at nearly twice the rate of personal income (+2.6%) while total employment rose by 2.1%.

In August, retailers in the automotive sector (+2.6%) posted by far the most significant monthly gain, followed by general merchandise stores (+1.1%). Food stores (+0.4%) and retail stores classified as "other" (+0.4%) reported the only other sales increases. The "other" category includes stores such as liquor, sporting goods, hardware and book stores. In August, sales were down in clothing stores (-0.8%) and drug stores (-0.4%), while they remained unchanged in furniture stores.

Higher gas prices continue to push up sales in gasoline service stations

Retail sales in the automotive sector advanced for a third consecutive month in August (+2.6%). This sector has posted sales advances greater than 2.0% in each of the last three months. In August, higher gas prices (+6.3%) than those in July were still pushing sales up in gasoline service stations (+4.1%). Due to a surge in gas prices, service stations have shown strong sales

increases since the start of the year. This follows a period of general declines which started in the spring of 1996.

Retailers of automotive parts, accessories and services (+2.7%) posted the second strongest gain of the auto sector, completely offsetting the loss in July (-2.4%). Sales by these retailers have remained generally flat since the end of 1998 after a year of increases.

For a third consecutive month, motor and recreational vehicle dealers reported increasing sales in August (+2.2%). Sales by these dealers have declined only twice since October 1998, rising 14.2% over the period. The declines occurred in April (-1.2%) and May (-2.5%). Sales by motor and recreational vehicle dealers have generally been increasing since the summer of 1996. The period of strong sales observed since the fall of 1998 is comparable to that in the second half of 1996.

Consumers increased spending in department stores

In August, consumers increased spending in department stores for a second consecutive month. August's 1.5% rise in sales followed an increase of 3.5% in July. Department store sales in August include those made by Eaton's before its bankruptcy and those made afterwards by its merchandise liquidator.

After a period of relatively flat sales in the spring and summer of 1998, sales in department stores have gained considerable strength since the fall of 1998. From October 1998 to August 1999, department stores posted an overall sales increase of 11.1%.

Retailers in Ontario led sales advances

Strong sales in the automotive and general merchandise sectors in August pushed up total retail sales in Ontario by 2.1%. Consumers in this province have increased spending in retail stores in every month this year. Overall, retail sales in Ontario have generally been on the rise since the summer of 1996.

Retailers in the Prairies posted a 1.5% gain in sales in August after experiencing a 1.7% increase in both July and June. All provinces in this region have shown sales advances in each of the last three months. The recent vigour in these sales follows a period of generally flat sales that started in early 1998.

Retail sales were up in all Atlantic provinces in August for an overall gain of 1.3%. Retailers in Atlantic Canada have enjoyed strong sales since the fall of 1998 following a period of generally flat sales that year. A number of major projects in this region related to the oil and gas industry stimulated retail sales, up 8.4% between October 1998 and August 1999.

Consumers in Quebec increased spending in retail stores for a second consecutive month. Sales advanced 0.6% in August following a 1.7% rise in July. Prior to these increases, retail sales in Quebec had remained relatively unchanged since the start of the year. Before 1999, retailers in Quebec reported sales increases in the second half of 1998 after having experienced volatile sales for the first part of the year.

After two months of increases, retail sales in British Columbia declined 0.8% in August. The overall sales advances in the province since the fall of 1998 have not yet recaptured the losses observed during the rest of that year.

Related indicators

Total employment advanced 0.4% in September. After a period of strong job creation in the second half of 1998, total employment remained essentially unchanged in the first half of 1999 but has since shown strength. The number of housing starts jumped 3.7% in September compared with August. Housing starts have generally been increasing since the middle of 1998 after declining that spring. According to the Consumer Price Index, gasoline prices continued their rise in September, increasing 2.1% from August. Sources in the automotive industry indicated higher sales of motor vehicles in September.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2299, 2397-2416 and 2418-2420.

The August 1999 issue of *Retail trade* (63-005-XPB, \$21/\$206; 63-005-XIB, \$16/\$155) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, contact the Client Services Unit (613-951-3549; 1 877 421-3067; retailinfo@statcan.ca). For analytical information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541; gratpau@statcan.ca), Retail Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division. □

Retail sales

	Aug. 1998	May 1999 ^r	June 1999 ^r	July 1999 ^r	Aug. 1999 ^p	July to Aug. 1999	Aug. 1998 to Aug. 1999
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions				% change		
Food	4,795	4,955	4,887	4,889	4,908	0.4	2.4
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,435	4,589	4,524	4,529	4,546	0.4	2.5
All other food stores	360	366	363	361	362	0.4	0.7
Drug and patent medicine stores	1,091	1,112	1,112	1,120	1,116	-0.4	2.3
Clothing	1,172	1,211	1,176	1,215	1,205	-0.8	2.8
Shoe stores	138	141	128	136	130	-4.5	-5.8
Men's clothing stores	134	127	123	129	133	2.7	-0.8
Women's clothing stores	365	376	368	375	380	1.2	4.1
Other clothing stores	535	567	557	574	562	-2.1	5.1
Furniture	1,068	1,126	1,157	1,155	1,155	0.0	8.2
Household furniture and appliance stores	864	916	955	940	941	0.2	9.0
Household furnishings stores	204	209	201	215	213	-0.8	4.6
Automotive	7,956	8,130	8,335	8,521	8,739	2.6	9.9
Motor and recreational vehicle dealers	5,463	5,485	5,689	5,867	5,994	2.2	9.7
Gasoline service stations	1,304	1,405	1,400	1,437	1,496	4.1	14.8
Automotive parts, accessories and services	1,189	1,239	1,246	1,217	1,249	2.7	5.0
General merchandise stores	2,318	2,493	2,487	2,537	2,564	1.1	10.6
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	2,216	2,358	2,354	2,368	2,378	0.4	7.3
Other semi-durable goods stores	680	713	712	725	733	1.1	7.8
Other durable goods stores	563	581	578	577	582	0.8	3.5
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	974	1,064	1,063	1,066	1,063	-0.3	9.1
Total, retail sales	20,616	21,384	21,507	21,805	22,065	1.2	7.0
Total excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers	15,153	15,899	15,818	15,938	16,071	0.8	6.1
Provinces and territories							
Newfoundland	317	347	348	342	344	0.5	8.2
Prince Edward Island	88	94	99	98	98	0.3	11.4
Nova Scotia	640	669	689	666	675	1.4	5.5
New Brunswick	497	544	536	544	555	1.9	11.6
Quebec	4,768	4,994	4,958	5,041	5,071	0.6	6.3
Ontario	7,788	8,194	8,255	8,395	8,570	2.1	10.0
Manitoba	730	731	741	746	767	2.8	5.0
Saskatchewan	639	636	637	642	649	1.0	1.5
Alberta	2,343	2,342	2,392	2,446	2,475	1.2	5.6
British Columbia	2,736	2,762	2,779	2,811	2,788	-0.8	1.9
Yukon	27	28	28	27	27	-0.3	1.1
Northwest Territories	..	30	31	32	33	1.7	..
Nunavut	..	14	15	14	14	0.9	..

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

.. Figures not available.

Retail sales

	Aug. 1998	July 1999 ^r	Aug. 1999 ^p	Aug. 1998 to Aug. 1999
	unadjusted			
	\$ millions			% change
Food	4,864	5,376	4,851	-0.3
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,505	4,991	4,492	-0.3
All other food stores	359	385	358	-0.2
Drug and patent medicine stores	1,063	1,103	1,091	2.6
Clothing	1,191	1,142	1,210	1.5
Shoe stores	148	130	133	-9.9
Men's clothing stores	112	116	110	-2.1
Women's clothing stores	349	371	362	3.8
Other clothing stores	583	525	605	3.8
Furniture	1,070	1,170	1,165	8.9
Household furniture and appliance stores	861	946	946	9.9
Household furnishings stores	209	224	220	5.1
Automotive	7,773	9,115	8,819	13.5
Motor and recreational vehicle dealers	5,206	6,204	5,968	14.6
Gasoline service stations	1,407	1,584	1,626	15.6
Automotive parts, accessories and services	1,160	1,328	1,225	5.6
General merchandise stores	2,254	2,411	2,479	10.0
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	2,347	2,622	2,470	5.2
Other semi-durable goods stores	701	759	753	7.4
Other durable goods stores	599	599	606	1.2
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	1,047	1,264	1,111	6.1
Total, retail sales	20,562	22,940	22,084	7.4
Total excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers	15,356	16,736	16,116	5.0
Provinces and territories				
Newfoundland	329	374	357	8.5
Prince Edward Island	99	119	112	13.3
Nova Scotia	656	719	690	5.2
New Brunswick	509	593	574	12.7
Quebec	4,747	5,377	5,079	7.0
Ontario	7,634	8,696	8,424	10.3
Manitoba	726	772	761	4.8
Saskatchewan	640	672	654	2.3
Alberta	2,351	2,535	2,487	5.8
British Columbia	2,797	3,000	2,867	2.5
Yukon	31	33	31	0.1
Northwest Territories	..	36	33	..
Nunavut	..	15	15	..

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

.. Figures not available.



OTHER RELEASES

Natural gas sales

August 1999 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 3 279 million cubic metres in August, down 9.8% from August 1998. All three sectors (residential, commercial and industrial) recorded lower sales. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) fell 11.7% because of less demand for gas by the electric utilities, particularly in British Columbia.

Year-to-date sales to the end of August were up 4.1% over the same period in 1998. Sales to the residential (+4.2%) and commercial (+9.8%) sectors increased largely due to the unseasonably cold weather in the first eight months of 1999. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) increased 2.8% over the same period last year.

Natural gas sales

	Aug. 1999 ^P	Aug. 1998	Aug. 1998 to Aug. 1999
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Natural gas sales	3,278,713	3,634,049	-9.8
Residential	355,517	356,577	-0.3
Commercial	276,086	278,181	-0.8
Industrial	1,460,334	1,753,093	-11.7
Direct	1,186,776	1,246,198	
	Year-to-date		1998 to 1999
	1999 ^P	1998	
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Natural gas sales	43,871,709	42,127,218	4.1
Residential	9,766,019	9,376,769	4.2
Commercial	6,880,189	6,265,546	9.8
Industrial	13,418,904	14,459,425	2.8
Direct	13,806,597	12,025,478	

^P Preliminary figures.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 1052-1055.

The August 1999 issue of *Natural gas transportation and distribution* (55-002-XPB, \$17/\$165) will be available in November. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this

release, contact Denis Ouellette (613-951-5452; ouelden@statcan.ca) or Tom Lewis (613-951-3596; talewis@statcan.ca), Energy Section, Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Steel primary forms

Week ending October 16, 1999 (preliminary)

Steel primary forms production for the week ending October 16, 1999, totalled 314 508 tonnes, up 16.5% from the week-earlier 269 891 tonnes and up 28.9% from the year-earlier 244 039 tonnes. The cumulative total at the end of the week was 12 774 825 tonnes, a 0.4% decrease compared with 12 831 454 tonnes for the same period in 1998.

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

Railway carloadings

Nine-day period ending September 30, 1999

Non-intermodal traffic loaded during the nine-day period ending September 30, 1999, decreased 5.1% to 6.0 million tonnes compared with the same period last year. The number of cars loaded decreased 4.0%.

Intermodal traffic tonnage totalled 524 000 tonnes, a 5.2% increase from the same period last year. The year-to-date figures increased 13.7%.

Total traffic decreased 4.3% during the period. This brought the year-to-date total to 189.1 million tonnes, down 1.6% from the previous year.

All year-to-date figures have been revised.

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

Construction-type plywood

August 1999

Canadian firms produced 152 875 cubic metres of construction-type plywood during August, up 7.3%

from the 142 452 cubic metres produced during August 1998.

Year-to-date production totalled 1 288 763 cubic metres, an increase of 11.5% from the 1 155 621 cubic metres produced during the same period in 1998.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 122 (level 1).

The August 1999 issue of *Construction-type plywood* (35-001-XIB, \$5/\$47) is now available. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Gilles Simard (613-951-3516; simales@statcan.ca) Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Crushing statistics

September 1999

Oilseed processors crushed 284 507 metric tonnes of canola in September. Oil production totalled 119 667 tonnes while meal production reached 177,531 tonnes.

The cumulative 1999-2000 crush quantity was 452 055 metric tonnes compared with 520 784 metric tonnes in 1998-99.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 5687.

The September 1999 issue of *Cereals and oilseeds review* (22-007-XPB, \$15/\$149) will be released in early December. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Susan Anderson, (613-951-3859; sue.anderson@statcan.ca) Grain Marketing Unit, Agriculture Division. ■

Deliveries of major grains

September 1999

Data on September grain deliveries are now available.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 976-981.

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

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Susan Anderson (613-951-3859; sue.anderson@statcan.ca), Grain Marketing Unit, Agriculture Division. ■

The changing face of heart disease and stroke

The changing face of heart disease and stroke in Canada, released today, provides a snapshot of cardiovascular disease in Canada — data on death, risk factors, treatment and the cost of health care collected from varying sources across Canada. A new addition to the report focuses on Canadian youth. The report draws primarily on results from the National Population Health Survey, the Mortality Database and the Hospital Morbidity Database.

The changing face of heart disease and stroke in Canada (82F0076XIE) is now available free on Statistics Canada's Web site (www.statcan.ca). The menu path is *Products and services*, then *Downloadable publications (free)* followed by *Health*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality for this release, contact Wayne Millar (613-951-1631), Health Division or Barbara Steele (613-569-4361, ext. 318; bsteeler@hsf.ca), Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. Print copies of this report are available by phoning 1 888 473-4636. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

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Construction-type plywood, August 1999
Catalogue number 35-001-XIB
(Canada: \$5/\$47).

All prices exclude sales tax.

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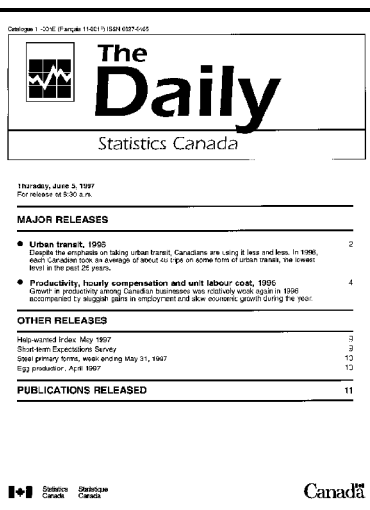
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