Catalogue 11-001E (Français 11-001F) ISSN 0827-0465

The Daily

Statistics Canada

Monday, November 15, 1999
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

OTHER RELEASES

MAJOR RELEASES

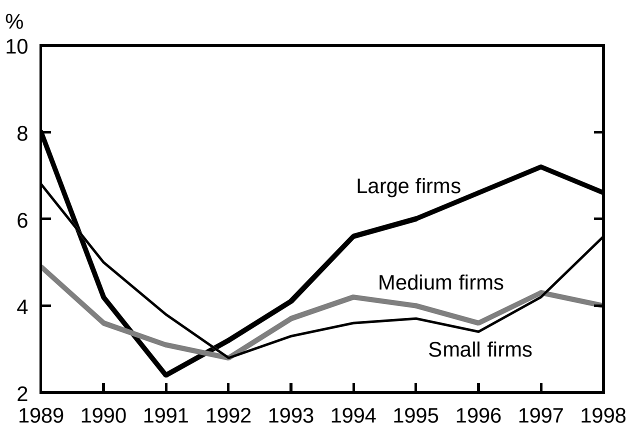
Financial performance indicators for Canadian business
1998

For the first time since 1991, large Canadian firms — those with annual revenues of more than $75 million — experienced a decline in profitability in 1998. However, they were still more profitable than medium and smaller enterprises, continuing a trend that began after the 1991 recession.

Large firms in non-financial industries earned an average return on assets of 6.6%, down from 7.2% in 1997. This coincided with slower economic growth in Canada during the last half of 1998 as well as lower commodity prices, particularly world oil prices.

At the same time, medium-sized firms in non-financial industries recorded an average return on assets of 4.0% in 1998, a small decline from 4.3% the previous year. The return for small firms was 5.6%, a healthy increase from 4.2%. Medium firms are those with revenue between $5 million and $75 million, and small firms are those with revenue between $50,000 and $5 million.

Return on assets – non-financial industries



The higher rates of return achieved by large firms reflect the many economic advantages that these firms may enjoy. Larger-scale operations help firms keep input, advertising, distribution and other operating costs down. They may also benefit from lower financing costs and be better able than smaller firms to take advantage of opportunities in foreign markets.

The return recorded by small firms was the best result since 1989, and it exceeded 5% for the first time since 1990. Small firms tend to focus mainly on domestic markets and may be more insulated from the foreign market factors affecting larger firms.

> ***Note to readers***
>
> *This release is based on the publication,* Financial performance indicators for Canadian business*, which contains information on the financial performance and balance sheets of Canadian businesses. These indicators were developed using the income tax returns of about 1,000,000 corporations, along with data from Statistics Canada's quarterly and annual programs of financial statistics for enterprises.*
>
> *The return on assets was used to compare the performance of large, medium and small firms, as this was the best measure of profitability available for all three size groups. The specific measure used was pre-tax profit to total assets, which measures how well management has employed the firm's assets to generate earnings.*
>
> *This same ratio was used to rank the most and least profitable industries for small firms. The measure used to rank the industries for large and medium firms was the return on capital employed, which indicates the number of cents returned (net earnings) for every dollar of capital.*

Large and medium firms: Manufacturing outperformed other sectors

Among medium and large firms, manufacturing continued to outperform the other major sectors of the economy. This sector recorded a return on capital employed of 9.3% in 1998, in line with an annual average return of 9.2% from 1996 to 1998.

Manufacturing was the only sector to record returns of 9% or more in each of the preceding three years. These results reflect the restructuring of the sector that followed the economic downturn of the early 1990s.

The transportation, storage, communications and utilities sector also turned in a solid performance, with an 8.8% return on capital employed in 1998 and an annual average of 9.0% over the past three years. Mining trailed all major sectors with returns of just 3.1% last year and an average of 5.1% over the three-year period.

Non-financial goods-producing industries: Logging most profitable

Among medium and large firms, the logging industry proved the most profitable goods-producing industry from 1996 to 1998, recording an annual average return on capital employed of 14.3%.

Logging was followed closely by the printing and publishing industry — excluding books and newspapers — with a return of 13.4%. Both the logging and printing and publishing industries posted good returns each year during this three-year period. In third place was the rubber products manufacturing industry, with an annual average return of 13.3%, mainly the result of a 21.0% return in 1998.

The least profitable industry was pulp and paper manufacturing, with an average annual three-year return on capital employed of 1.2%. Firms engaged in mining, smelting and refining non-ferrous metals (+2.7%) and in non-ferrous ore mining (+2.8%) also posted poor returns. All three industries have performed poorly in recent years, reflecting the general weakness in commodity prices.

Medium and large firm industry ranking based on average rate of return on capital employed: Goods-producing industries
1996-1998

Industry	Top five ranking	Median return on capital employed
Logging	1	14.3
Other printing and publishing	2	13.4
Rubber products manufacturing (except tires and tubes)	3	13.3
Motor vehicle parts and accessories manufacturing	4	13.2
Motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts and accessories manufacturing	5	13.2

Industry	Bottom five ranking	Median return on capital employed
Pulp and paper manufacturing	77	1.2
Mining, smelting and refining of non-ferrous metals (except aluminum)	76	2.7
Non-ferrous ore mining (except uranium)	75	2.8
Services incidental to farming	74	3.5
Fish and other seafood processing, integrated operations	73	3.5

Non-financial service industries: Computer sales best performer

For larger firms in non-financial service industries, the computer and peripheral equipment sales and services industry recorded the highest average return on capital employed (+14.3%) from 1996 to 1998. It was propelled to the top by a strong return of 20.5% in 1998.

Firms providing services incidental to water transport, such as marine cargo handling, harbour operations and the piloting of ships, reported a three-year average annual return of 13.6%. They finished near the top of the rankings for the second consecutive year.

Medium and large firm industry ranking based on average rate of return on capital employed: Service industries
1996-1998

Industry	Top five ranking	Median return on capital employed
Computer and peripheral equipment sales and services	1	14.3
Services incidental to water transport	2	13.6
Other chemicals and chemical products wholesaling not elsewhere classified	3	12.7
Other general merchandise retailing and services	4	11.3
Health and social sciences	5	10.6

Industry	Bottom five ranking	Median return on capital employed
Books, magazines and periodicals wholesaling	60	0.1
Tobacco products wholesaling	59	3.0
Drugs, patent medicines and toiletries retailing	58	3.3
Other scientific and technical services	57	3.4
Textile and related products wholesaling	56	3.5

The worst performer was the books, magazines and periodicals wholesaling industry with a three-year average return on capital employed of 0.1%. This reflected a negative return (-2.9%) in 1998 and poor returns in the previous two years.

Small non-financial firms: Services sector topped the chart

Among the small non-financial firms, the most profitable of the major sectors in 1998 was the services sector, with a return on assets of 8.8%. Mining followed closely with returns of 8.7%.

For the three-year period from 1996 to 1998, these two sectors switched positions, with mining posting with an annual average return of 7.1% compared with 6.9% for services.

Retail trade lagged behind the group with returns of 3.5% last year and 2.7% over the three-year period. All sectors recorded year-over-year increases in returns for both 1997 and 1998.

Goods-producing small firms: wiring firms most profitable

For small goods-producing firms, businesses engaged in manufacturing non-current carrying wiring devices, such as junction boxes, switch boxes and wall plates, ranked as the most profitable from 1996 to 1998. This industry recorded a three-year annual average return on assets of 15.7%, leading the rankings for the second consecutive year.

Small firm industry ranking based on average rate of return on assets: Goods-producing industries
1996-1998

Industry	Top five ranking	Median return on assets
Non-current carrying wiring devices manufacturing	1	15.7
Paperboard manufacturing	2	13.5
Pre-engineered metal buildings (except portable) manufacturing	3	11.9
Honey and other apiary product farms	4	11.4
Millwright and rigging installation	5	11.1
Industry	**Bottom five ranking**	**Median return on assets**
Biscuit manufacturing	313	-0.7
Wool yarn and woven cloth spinning	312	-0.2
Gold mines	311	-0.1
Brewery products manufacturing	310	0.2
Frozen fruit and vegetable manufacturing	309	0.3

The paperboard manufacturing industry placed second with an average return of 13.5% over the three years, largely the result of a 19.7% return in 1998.

The least profitable industry during the three-year period was biscuit manufacturing (-0.7%). Wool yarn and woven cloth spinning (-0.2%) and gold mines (-0.1%) followed with negative three-year returns. However, all three of these industries posted positive returns in 1998 following negative returns in 1996 and 1997.

Service-producing small firms: Health care field at top

The health care field again dominated the list of the most profitable service industries. These businesses typically report low assets, since the key asset, human capital, does not appear on the balance sheet.

Social services practitioners, excluding psychologists and social workers, recorded a three-year average return on assets of 25.3%, topping the rankings for the second year in a row. Other health practitioners, such as acupuncturists, followed with average returns of 24.1%.

Small firm industry ranking based on average rate of return on assets: Service industries
1996-1998

Industry	Top five ranking	Median return on assets
Offices of other social service practitioners	1	25.3
Offices of other health practitioners	2	24.1
Offices of physicians and surgeons, specialists	3	23.2
Offices of physicians, general practice	4	23.1
Health care research agencies	5	21.2
Industry	**Bottom five ranking**	**Median return on assets**
Other race tracks	363	-0.8
Coin-operated amusement services	362	-0.6
Skiing facilities	361	-0.6
Horse race tracks	360	-0.4
Distributors and/or agents for dry cleaners	359	0.1

Many of the worst performers from 1996 to 1998 were in the amusement and recreation services industries. Faring the worst were race tracks, such as those for cars, motorcycles and snowmobiles (-0.8%).

Coin-operated amusement services (-0.6%), skiing facilities (-0.6%) and horse race tracks (-0.4%) also recorded negative returns.

Financial services industries: Most experienced lower profitability

Most financial services industries experienced lower profitability in 1998. Schedule A chartered banks recorded the best overall profitability of these industries in 1998 with a 10.8% return on capital employed, down from 11.5% in 1997.

However, from 1996 to 1998, independent investment dealers topped the list with an annual average return of 13.7%. This performance occurred largely on the strength of a 26.5% return in 1996. In 1998, independent investment dealers recorded a 4.1% return on capital employed, down from 10.4% the previous year.

The next most profitable financial service industry during the three-year period was investment dealers that were subsidiaries of banks, with an annual average return of 13.2%. The worst performers over the three years were consumer and business finance companies (+5.5%) and Schedule B banks (+5.9%).

Ranking of financial institutions industry based on average rate of return on capital employed
1996-1998

Industry	Top five ranking	Median return on capital employed
Investment dealers	1	13.7
Investment dealers - subsidiaries of banks	2	13.2
Banks - schedule A	3	11.7
Property and casualty insurers	4	8.6
Trust and mortgage companies - subsidiaries of banks	5	7.5

Industry	Bottom five ranking	Median return on capital employed
Consumer and business finance companies	10	5.5
Banks - schedule B	9	5.9
Finance leasing companies	8	6.0
Trust and mortgage companies	7	7.0
Life insurers	6	7.2

Financial performance indicators for Canadian business (61F0058XCB, vol. 1, $170; 61F0059XCB, vol. 2, $190; 61F0060XCB, vol. 3, $210; 10-3010XKB, vols. 1-3 and selected provinces/regions, $695) is now available on CD-ROM.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Ed Hamilton (613-951-4310), Industrial Organization and Finance Division. To order the publication, contact Jeannine D'Angelo (613-951-2604), Industrial Organization and Finance Division, a Statistics Canada regional office or the national enquiries line (1 800 263-1136). ■

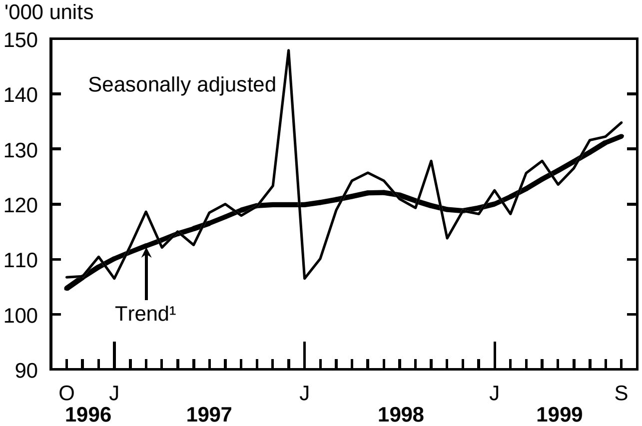
New motor vehicle sales

September 1999

Trucks were mainly responsible for the 2.0% increase in the number of new motor vehicles sold in September. Manufacturers reported sales of 134,773 new motor vehicles, an increase of 2,608 units from August. Trucks accounted for more than three-quarters (78.0%) of this advance (all figures are seasonally adjusted unless otherwise indicated).

New motor vehicle sales have been robust since the fall of 1998. Before that, sales during the rest of 1998 had been relatively stable, punctuated by some large monthly fluctuations.

New motor vehicle sales continue to rise since the autumn of 1998



[1] The short-term trend represents a moving average of the data.

Trucks lead monthly advance in new vehicle sales

Truck sales rose 3.2% in September to 66,155 vehicles following a 1.0% decrease in August. Truck sales have been generally rising since the start of 1999, following a period of declining sales during most of 1998.

A total of 68,617 new passenger cars were sold in September, up 0.8% from August and the fourth consecutive monthly gain. New passenger car sales have been moving upward since the fall of 1998, after a period of relative stability that started in the second half of 1997.

Sales of overseas-built passenger cars increased sharply (+9.0%) in September compared with August. In contrast, North American-built cars registered a 1.5% decline.

Note to readers

Passenger cars include those used for personal and commercial purposes (such as taxis or rental cars). Trucks include minivans, sport-utility vehicles, light and heavy trucks, vans, coaches and buses.

North American-built new motor vehicles include vehicles manufactured or assembled in Canada, the United States or Mexico. All other new motor vehicles are considered imports (manufactured overseas).

For reasons of confidentiality, data for Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have been included with British Columbia.

Trucks propelled quarterly sales

New motor vehicle sales rose 5.5% in the third quarter of 1999 over the second quarter. Trucks registered twice the increase posted for passenger cars — new truck sales advanced 7.4% in the third quarter, while new passenger car sales rose 3.7%.

The third quarter increase in new motor vehicle sales follows advances of 3.1% in the second quarter and 4.4% in the first quarter of 1999. Both trucks and passenger cars have contributed to these quarterly increases.

Sales up in most provinces

Unadjusted for seasonality, 7.4% more new motor vehicles were sold in September compared with September 1998. Sales advanced in all provinces except the three Prairie provinces.

Compared with September 1998, Newfoundland (+18.9%), Nova Scotia (+17.2%), New Brunswick (+16.0%) and Ontario (+12.5%) posted the strongest increases in new motor vehicle sales. There were also significant increases in Prince Edward Island (+9.0%), the region formed by British Columbia, Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (+8.5%), and Quebec (+5.9%).

Sales declines in the three Prairie provinces — Saskatchewan (-15.6%), Manitoba (-7.2%) and Alberta (-3.3%) — were due to slow truck sales.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 64.

The September 1999 issue of *New motor vehicle sales* (63-007-XIB, $13/$124) will be available at a later date. See *How to order publications*.

For data or general information, contact the Client Services Unit (613-951-3549; 1 877 421-3067; *retailinfo@statcan.ca*), Retail Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division. To enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Clérance Kimanyi (613-951-6363; *kimacle@statcan.ca*).

New motor vehicle sales

	Sept. 1998	Aug. 1999[r]	Sept. 1999[p]	Sept. 1998 to Sept. 1999	Aug. to Sept. 1999
	seasonally adjusted				
				% change	
New motor vehicles	**127,808**	**132,165**	**134,773**	**5.4**	**2.0**
Passenger cars	63,293	68,047	68,617	8.4	0.8
North American[1]	50,723	52,855	52,060	2.6	-1.5
Overseas	12,570	15,192	16,557	31.7	9.0
Trucks, vans and buses	64,516	64,117	66,155	2.5	3.2

	Sept. 1998	Sept. 1999[p]	Sept. 1998 to Sept. 1999	Market share Sept. 1998	Market share Sept. 1999
	unadjusted				
			% change	%	
New motor vehicles	**126,952**	**136,298**	**7.4**		
Passenger cars	63,903	69,515	8.8		
North American[1]	50,794	52,318	3.0	79.5	75.3
Overseas	13,109	17,197	31.2	20.5	24.7
Trucks, vans and buses	63,049	66,783	5.9		
North American[1]	56,616	60,440	6.8	89.8	90.5
Overseas	6,433	6,343	-1.4	10.2	9.5

[r] *Revised figures.*
[p] *Preliminary figures.*
[1] *Manufactured or assembled in Canada, the United States or Mexico.*

■

OTHER RELEASES

Shipments of solid fuel-burning heating products

Third quarter 1999

Shipments of solid fuel-burning heating products totalled $32.6 million for the third quarter of 1999, up 43.4% from the $22.7 million shipped during the third quarter of 1998.

The quantities for these shipments are also available.

The 1999 third quarter issue of *Shipments of solid fuel-burning heating products* (25-002-XIB, $6/$19) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Étienne Saint-Pierre (613-951-9837; *saineti@statcan.ca*), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Oils and fats

September 1999

Production of all types of deodorized oils in September totalled 110 511 tonnes, up 24.9% from 88 469 tonnes in August. Year-to date production reached 820 894 tonnes, down 10.7% compared with 919 380 tonnes for the same period in 1998.

Domestic sales of deodorized margarine oil totalled 10 718 tonnes in September. Sales of deodorized shortening oil were 31 346 tonnes and those of deodorized salad oil were 34 428 tonnes.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 185.

The September 1999 issue of *Oils and fats* (32-006-XIB, $5/$47) is now available. See *How to order publications.*

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Peter Zylstra (613-951-3511; *zylspet@statcan.ca*), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard

September 1999

Oriented strandboard production in September totalled 652 191 cubic metres, an increase of 17.8% from 553 543 (revised) cubic metres in September 1998. Particleboard production reached 213 869 cubic metres, an advance of 5.6% from 202 533 (revised) cubic metres in September 1998. Fibreboard production was 98 058 cubic metres, up 54.6% from 63 419 cubic metres in September 1998.

Year-to-date oriented strandboard production totalled 5 772 330 cubic metres, a 24.6% increase from 4 634 052 (revised) cubic metres for the same period last year. Particleboard production reached 1 822 557 cubic metres, up 4.6% from 1 742 808 (revised) cubic metres in 1998. Year-to-date fibreboard production reached 767 532 cubic metres, up 24.7% from 615 498 cubic metres during the same period in 1998.

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

The September 1999 issue of *Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard* (36-003-XIB, $5/$47), is now available. See *How to order publications*.

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

Steel pipe and tubing

September 1999

Steel pipe and tubing production for September totalled 225 922 tonnes, up 13.1% compared with 199 745 tonnes produced in the same month a year earlier.

Year-to-date production to the end of September totalled 1 790 497 tonnes, down 2.9% from 1 843 481 tonnes during the same period in 1998.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 35.

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

Dairy statistics
September and October 1999 (preliminary)

Dairy statistics for September and October are now available.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 3428, 5632-5638, 5650-5661, 5664-5667 and 5673.

These data will be included in the third quarter issue of *The dairy review* (23-001-XPB, $36/$119; 23-001-XIB, $27/$89), which will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality for this release, contact Anna Michalowska (613-951-2442; 1 800 465-1991; fax: 613-951-3868), Agriculture Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Oils and fats, September 1999
Catalogue number 32-006-XIB
(Canada: $5/$47).

Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard, September 1999
Catalogue number 36-003-XIB
(Canada: $5/$47).

Employment, earnings and hours, August 1999
Catalogue number 72-002-XPB
(Canada: $32/$320; outside Canada: US$32/US$320).

Canadian crime statistics, 1998
Catalogue number 85-205-XIE
(Canada: $32).

Canadian crime statistics, 1998
Catalogue number 85-205-XPE
(Canada: $42; outside Canada: US$42).

All prices exclude sales tax.

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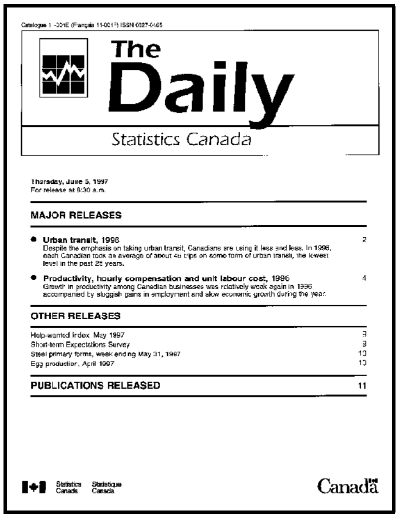

Catalogue 11-001E (Français 11-001F) ISSN 0827-0465

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.

OTHER RELEASES

Help-wanted Index, May 1997	9
Short-term Expectations Survey	9
Steel primary forms, week ending May 31, 1997	10
Egg production, April 1997	10

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED 11

Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

Canada

Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

Catalogue 11-001E.

Published each working day by the Communications Division, Statistics Canada, 10-H, R.H. Coats Bldg., Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6.

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