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

The Daily

Statistics Canada

Wednesday, February 10, 1999
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

OTHER RELEASES

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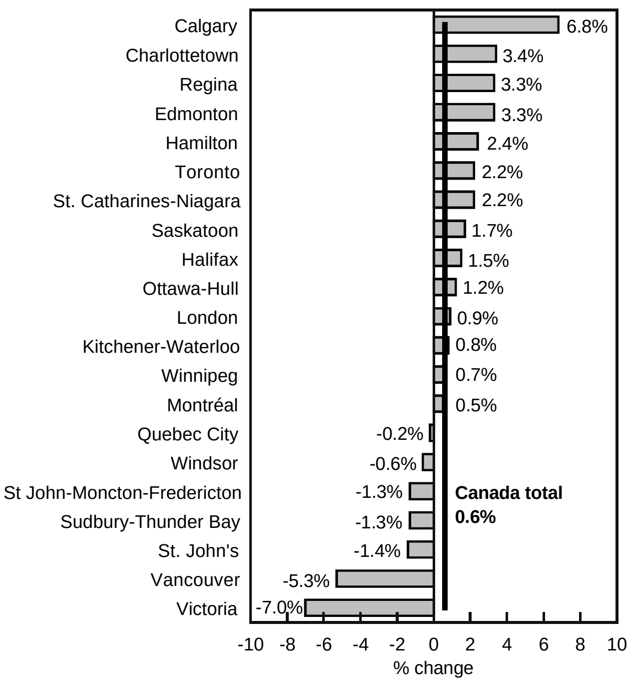
New Housing Price Index

December 1998

In December, the New Housing Price Index increased 0.6% compared with the level of December 1997. The index has registered an annual increase for 22 consecutive months following annual decreases of 31 consecutive months from July 1994 to January 1997.

New Housing Price Indexes (1992=100)
December 1997 to December 1998



Annual changes varied considerably among the cities surveyed. The active Calgary market had the largest annual increase (+6.8%). The largest annual decreases were noted in Victoria (-7.0%) and Vancouver (-5.3%), where market conditions continue to be depressed.

From November to December 1998, the index increased 0.1%. This continues the generally hesitant upward movement observed since November 1996.

The modest improvement in the new housing price index in 1998 is attributable to favourable mortgage interest rates, strong activity in the resale market as well as improved levels of consumer confidence in Ontario and the Prairies. Despite the general feeling of optimism, the competitive nature of housing markets has moderated increases or has contributed to decreases, especially in surveyed cities on the West Coast.

Although there are areas of activity in the British Columbia marketplace, conditions generally remain depressed. A combination of the general economic slowdown and concerns regarding economic conditions in Asia seem to have lowered levels of consumer confidence in the province. As a result, despite favourable interest rates and competitive pricing, consumers are reluctant to purchase major items such as new houses.

The outlook for new housing construction at the end of 1998 seems less optimistic than that expressed at the beginning of the year. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the total number of housing starts in 1998 are expected to be 6.6% less than those registered in 1997, which is lower than May's forecast of a 6.3% increase for 1998. Furthermore, annual housing construction intentions, as measured by Statistics Canada's data relating to the value of residential building permits, were down 2.2% for 1998 compared with those in 1997. In addition, the Canadian Real Estate Association reported that the resale market was down 4.6% in 1998 compared with the record year of 1997.

Market performance towards the end of 1998 generated some optimism. The value of residential building permits issued in the fourth quarter of 1998 was up 5.4% compared with the third quarter. CMHC indicated that starts of new housing were up 9.6% in December compared with November. In addition, the Canadian Real Estate Association reported that sales of existing homes were up 1.0% in December.

New Housing Price Indexes
(1992=100)

	Dec. 1997	Nov. 1998	Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997 to Dec. 1998	Nov. to Dec. 1998
				% change	
Canada total	**99.7**	**100.2**	**100.3**	**0.6**	**0.1**
House only	99.8	100.8	100.8	1.0	-
Land only	101.6	101.7	102.0	0.4	0.3
St.John's	96.8	95.8	95.4	-1.4	-0.4
Halifax	106.8	108.4	108.4	1.5	-
Charlottetown	101.2	105.0	104.6	3.4	-0.4
St John-Moncton-Fredericton	94.5	93.0	93.3	-1.3	0.3
Quebec City	98.7	98.5	98.5	-0.2	-
Montréal	102.0	102.5	102.5	0.5	-
Ottawa-Hull	97.1	98.7	98.3	1.2	-0.4
Toronto	100.7	103.0	102.9	2.2	-0.1
Hamilton	100.5	102.8	102.9	2.4	0.1
St. Catharines-Niagara	98.7	101.0	100.9	2.2	-0.1
Kitchener-Waterloo	99.7	100.5	100.5	0.8	-
London	97.5	98.4	98.4	0.9	-
Windsor	105.3	104.7	104.7	-0.6	-
Sudbury-Thunder Bay	101.5	100.2	100.2	-1.3	-
Winnipeg	111.6	112.4	112.4	0.7	-
Regina	121.5	125.5	125.5	3.3	-
Saskatoon	110.8	112.7	112.7	1.7	-
Calgary	118.4	125.1	126.4	6.8	1.0
Edmonton	105.3	108.8	108.8	3.3	-
Vancouver	90.5	85.9	85.7	-5.3	-0.2
Victoria	83.4	77.6	77.6	-7.0	-

- *Nil or zero.*

Available on CANSIM: matrix 9921.

The fourth quarter 1998 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB,$24/$79) will be available in March 1999. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods, and data quality of this release, contact Louise Chaîné (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; *infounit@statcan.ca*), Client Services Unit, Prices Division. ■

OTHER RELEASES

Monthly Survey of Large Retailers
November 1998

November sales for the group of large retailers hit $6.3 billion, a 6.4% increase compared with November 1997. Over the same period, sales for total retail trade, excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers, increased 2.5%.

Since late spring 1998, total retail sales have weakened but the group of large retailers have continued to outperform the total retail sector. Sales for the first 11 months of 1998 for the group were 8.1% higher than for the same period in 1997. In contrast, the year-to-date annual increase of total retail trade, excluding motor and recreational vehicles, was 4.3%. (All data in this report are unadjusted for seasonality.)

With the exception of food and beverages, all major product lines sold by the group of large retailers in November experienced healthy year-over-year sales increases. In keeping with the pattern observed since the summer of 1998, sales of housewares, and health and personal care products continued to outpace sales of the other goods.

Housewares (+15.7%) had the highest year-over-year percentage sales increase. All of its components experienced strong growth. Household cleaning supplies and paper products, which accounted for over 40% of all the housewares sold by the group of large retailers, grew by 14.1%. This may be partly explained by a substantial increase in the price of detergent and soap (+5.9%) and other household chemical products (+3.5%). Tableware, which represented a third of all housewares sold, grew by 13.9%. The sale of other non-electric household supplies (including laundry equipment, brooms, garbage cans, etc.) increased 21.9% relative to the same month last year.

Health and personal care products recorded the second largest year-over-year increase (+13.0). Sales of prescription and over-the-counter drugs were up almost 20% from last November. Drugs accounted for 40% of all the health and personal care products sold by the group of large retailers. Sales of personal care products (cosmetics and other toiletries), which accounted for the majority of the category, rose 9.1%.

The sporting and leisure goods category recorded a healthy year-over-year increase of 10.7% in November. Sporting goods alone rose 16.3%, books, newspapers and magazines were up 13.6% and toys increased 7.9%. Toys represented 44% of this category.

Sales by commodity for the group of large retailers

	Nov. 1997	Nov. 1998	Nov. 1997 to Nov. 1998
	unadjusted		
	$ 000,000		% change
Commodities			
Food and beverages	1,952	1,972	1.0
Health and personal care products	377	426	13.0
Housewares	251	290	15.7
Footwear, clothing and accessories	1,353	1,443	6.7
Home furnishings and electronics	918	1,008	9.8
Hardware and lawn and garden products	172	192	11.5
Sporting and leisure goods	351	388	10.7
All other goods and services	592	626	5.7
Total	**5,966**	**6,345**	**6.4**

For data or general information, contact the Client Services Unit (1-877-421-3067; *retailinfo@statcan.ca*). For data analysis information or to enquire about the concepts, methods and quality of the data of this release, contact Veronica Utovac (613-951-0669) Retail Commodity Section, Distributive Trades Division. ■

Industrial monitor on CD-ROM
February 1999

The *Industrial monitor on CD-ROM* offers up-to-date data on more than 150 manufacturing industries and 33 other industries covering construction, wholesale trade and retail trade. This information is offered for 25 sectors and can be purchased by individual sector or as a complete package.

For each industry, up to 50 variables are organized in the Table Viewer according to five table types: supply, demand, price, labour/employment, and investment/capital stock. The underlying database is also available via the Series Browser for more extensive time-series analysis and inter-industry comparisons.

The *Industrial monitor on CD-ROM* is linked to the Standard Industrial Classification manual, provides pop-up textual descriptions for every series and embodies consistent data conventions - features designed to make analysis easy and accurate. State-of-the-art functions offer searching, graphing, viewing, exporting and transforming capabilities, providing you the information quickly and easily.

The February 1999 issue of the *Industrial monitor on CD-ROM* is now available. An annual subscription (one CD-ROM per month) to the full package (15F0015XCB) costs $995, a savings of more than 80% off the annual subscription price of $258 per individual sector.

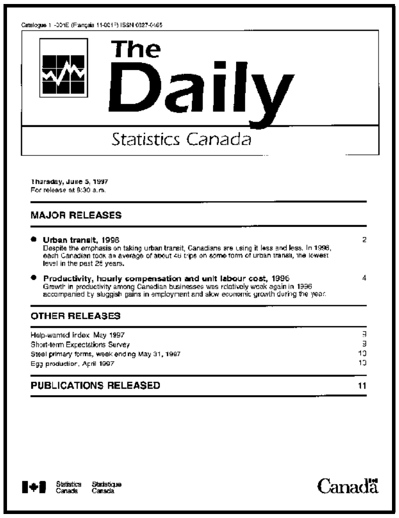
For further information, or to request a free demonstration CD-ROM, contact Kim Lauzon (1-800-887-4623; 613-951-9417; fax: 613-951-3688; *imad@statcan.ca*), Industry Measures and Analysis Division, or contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre. ■

Passenger bus industry data

1997 (preliminary)

Preliminary data for the bus passenger industry are now available. The publication *Passenger bus and urban transit statistics* (53-215-XIB, $30) will be available at a later date.

For more 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*), Transportation Division. ■



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.

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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.

To access *The Daily* on the Internet, visit our site at *http://www.statcan.ca*. To receive *The Daily* each morning by E-mail, send an E-mail message to listproc@statcan.ca. Leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type "subscribe daily firstname lastname".

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