



# The Daily

Statistics Canada

Friday, February 19, 1999

For release at 8:30 a.m.

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## MAJOR RELEASES

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- **Canadian international merchandise trade, December 1998** 3  
In December, imports remained steady and exports declined slightly from November. Exports and imports ended the year on a high plateau, with 1998 exports increasing 7.4% over 1997 and imports rising 9.8%.
  
- **Wholesale trade, 1998 Annual and December 1998** 6  
Wholesale sales rose 1.3% in December, capping a slower but favorable year for Canadian wholesalers with a modest 3.6% annual increase over 1997.

(continued on following page)

### Employment patterns in the non-metro workforce

In collaboration with the Rural Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, Statistics Canada releases the second in its series of analysis bulletins that profiles trends in rural Canada.

*Employment patterns in the non-metro workforce* shows that patterns of employment growth and decline differ in the non-metro workforce compared with the metro workforce. Except for the Prairie provinces, unemployment rates are higher in non-metro than metro regions. Non-metro unemployment rates are less sensitive to economic fluctuations. In a recession, the rise in the unemployment rate is slower in non-metro areas. In economic expansions, the fall in the non-metro unemployment rate is slower. Also, employment rates (employment/population ratios) are lower in non-metro labour markets.

*Employment patterns in the non-metro workforce* (21-006-XIE) is now available free on the Internet at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca). See *How to order publications*.

For more information, contact Robert Mendelson (613-951-5385; 1-800-465-1991; fax: 613-951-2848; [mendrob@statcan.ca](mailto:mendrob@statcan.ca)), Agriculture Division.



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Export and import price indexes, December 1998	9
Plastic film and bags, fourth quarter 1998	9

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## **RELEASE DATES:** February 22 to February 26, 1999

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## MAJOR RELEASES

### Canadian international merchandise trade

December 1998

Following a robust October, exports remained relatively stable in November and December. The strong year-end results were reflected in a 5.5% fourth quarter increase. Imports followed the same monthly pattern with a fourth quarter increase of 6.1%.

In December, exports declined slightly (-0.7%) compared with November, prompted by decreases in energy, mineral and automotive products. Imports in December remained steady, with increases in used aircraft and agricultural equipment offset by a decline in imports of automotive parts, fuel oil and metal.

#### Note to readers

*Merchandise trade is one component of the current account of Canada's balance of payments, which also includes trade in services.*

The trade balance for 1998 fell to \$19 billion from \$24 billion in 1997. December's trade balance also fell, from a revised \$1.8 billion in November to \$1.6 billion.

#### Exports remained at high levels after a strong performance in October

Despite a slight decline in December, automotive exports increased 26.9% in the fourth quarter chiefly because of increases in October and November of car and truck exports.

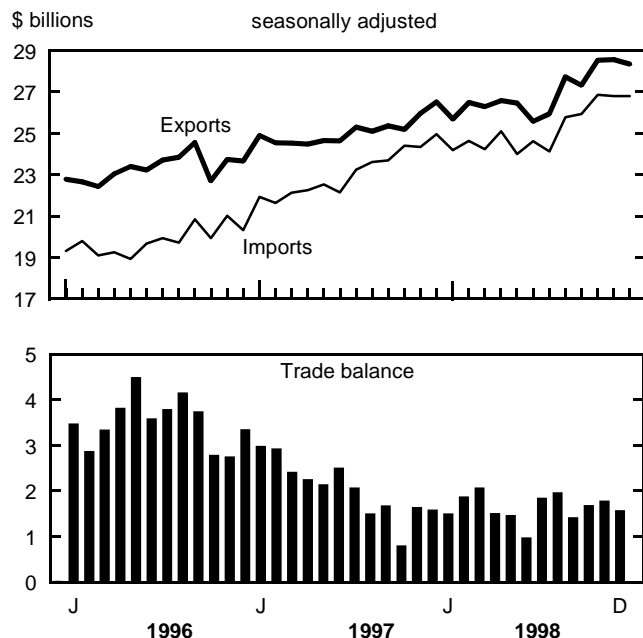
Forestry exports continued to rebound in December, resulting in a fourth quarter increase of 3.8%. Newsprint exports, principally to the United States and United Kingdom, reached their highest level since September 1995. This resulted from a rise in export volume, despite a worldwide excess supply driving down prices. The volume of lumber exports has remained relatively stable since March, despite the recovery of prices due to the strength of the American construction industry.

Machinery and equipment exports returned to October levels, following a drop in November. A sharp rise in exports of new aircraft, helicopters and metal-working equipment to the United States and Europe was largely responsible for this growth.

Energy exports fell in December for the fourth consecutive month. With the exception of electricity, all components of the sector declined. Natural gas registered the sharpest drop with a price decrease of more than 12% in December.

Industrial goods and material exports declined for the second consecutive month in December, chiefly due to sluggish ore exports, especially nickel, zinc, and metals. Global overproduction in these sectors led to a significant drop in export volume, and, to a lesser extent, in prices. There was also a marked decrease in copper exports, especially to Southeast Asia, reflecting a persistent weakness in the Japanese construction industry.

Exports, imports and trade balance



For 1998, exports increased 7.4% to \$320 billion compared with 1997. This is comparable to annual increases for the previous two years, but lower than the 1992-1995 period when growth fluctuated between 16% and 20%. The annual 9.8% growth in imports was close to the average for the 1995-1998 period, although lower than the exceptional growth of 16.4% in 1997.

### Imports remained steady in December despite strong sector fluctuations

Machinery and equipment imports continued their upward trend in December, based mainly on strong imports of used aircraft, generators and engines from Europe and the United States. Used aircraft imports reached their highest level since May 1997, largely due to fleet replacement by the country's major airlines. This contributed to a quarterly growth of 2.6%.

Following three consecutive monthly increases, automotive imports showed a sharp drop in December, mostly because of lower imports of parts. However, strong performance in October resulted in a 20.2% increase in total automotive imports in the fourth quarter.

Following a record high in October, imports of industrial goods fell for the second straight month in December. Sharp decreases for iron and steel imports, especially gas pipelines and precious metals and aluminum, were largely responsible for the decline.

For the fourth month in a row, energy imports fell in December. Although all sectors declined, imports of petroleum and coal by-products, especially fuel oil, showed the greatest decrease due to a marked decrease in import volume.

### Revisions

In general, merchandise trade data are revised on an ongoing basis for each month of the current year.

Factors influencing revisions include late receipt of import and export documentation, incorrect information on customs forms, replacement of estimates with actual figures (once available), changes in classification of merchandise based on more current information, and seasonal adjustments. Consult the appropriate CANSIM matrices for revised data.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 3618, 3619, 3651, 3685-3713, 3718-3720, 3887-3913, 8430-8435 and 8438-8447.**

This release contains a summary of the merchandise trade data to be published shortly in *Canadian international merchandise trade* (65-001-XPB, \$19/\$188; 65-001-XIB, \$14/\$141). The publication will include tables by commodity and country on a customs basis. Current account data (which incorporate merchandise trade statistics, service transactions, investment income and transfers) are available quarterly in *Canada's balance of international payments* (67-001-XPB, \$38/\$124). See *How to order publications*.

For faster updates, readers may obtain merchandise trade data by fax on the morning of release.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods, and data quality of this release, contact Jocelyne Elibani (613-951-9647; 1-800-294-5583), Marketing and Client Services Section, International Trade Division. □

## Merchandise trade of Canada

	Oct. 1998	Nov. 1998	Dec. 1998	Oct. to Nov. 1998	Nov. to Dec. 1998	Jan. to Dec. 1997	Jan. to Dec. 1998	Jan.-Dec. 1997 to Jan.-Dec. 1998	Dec. 1997 to Dec. 1998
seasonally adjusted, \$ current									
	\$ millions			% change		\$ millions		% change	
<b>Principal trading partners</b>									
<b>Exports</b>									
United States	24,040	24,308	24,145	1.1	-0.7	243,362	270,562	11.2	10.5
Japan	761	853	831	12.1	-2.6	12,052	9,636	-20.0	-6.8
European Union	1,607	1,352	1,461	-15.9	8.1	16,677	17,838	7.0	1.4
Other OECD countries <sup>1</sup>	647	634	623	-2.0	-1.7	7,911	7,487	-5.4	7.4
All other countries	1,460	1,400	1,279	-4.1	-8.6	21,099	17,881	-15.3	-26.9
Total	28,516	28,547	28,338	0.1	-0.7	301,100	323,400	7.4	6.9
<b>Imports</b>									
United States	20,869	20,845	20,876	-0.1	0.1	210,802	234,178	11.1	9.7
Japan	784	751	765	-4.2	1.9	8,702	9,657	11.0	-5.9
European Union	2,185	2,113	2,277	-3.3	7.8	24,153	25,425	5.3	6.3
Other OECD countries <sup>1</sup>	1,042	974	956	-6.5	-1.8	11,338	11,379	0.4	-3.6
All other countries	1,971	2,102	1,914	6.6	-8.9	21,848	23,349	6.9	-2.9
Total	26,850	26,785	26,788	-0.2	0.0	276,846	303,984	9.8	7.3
<b>Balance</b>									
United States	3,171	3,463	3,269	...	...	32,560	36,384	...	...
Japan	-23	102	66	...	...	3,350	-21	...	...
European Union	-578	-761	-816	...	...	-7,476	-7,587	...	...
Other OECD countries <sup>1</sup>	-395	-340	-333	...	...	-3,427	-3,892	...	...
All other countries	-511	-702	-635	...	...	-749	-5,468	...	...
Total	1,666	1,762	1,550	...	...	24,254	19,416	...	...
<b>Principal commodity groupings</b>									
<b>Exports</b>									
Agricultural and fishing products	2,206	2,149	2,153	-2.6	0.2	24,704	25,190	2.0	-1.9
Energy products	1,957	1,734	1,615	-11.4	-6.9	26,819	23,388	-12.8	-20.9
Forestry products	3,036	3,042	3,100	0.2	1.9	34,887	35,465	1.7	6.8
Industrial goods and materials	4,727	4,721	4,611	-0.1	-2.3	55,602	57,356	3.2	-4.1
Machinery and equipment	6,708	6,678	6,703	-0.4	0.4	67,982	78,771	15.9	11.2
Automotive products	7,715	8,027	7,984	4.0	-0.5	70,057	79,246	13.1	19.3
Other consumer goods	1,087	1,107	1,095	1.8	-1.1	10,649	12,484	17.2	17.5
Special transactions trade <sup>2</sup>	544	568	572	4.4	0.7	4,075	5,365	31.7	62.0
Other BOP adjustments	537	522	506	-2.8	-3.1	6,326	6,136	-3.0	-10.3
<b>Imports</b>									
Agricultural and fishing products	1,479	1,500	1,493	1.4	-0.5	15,578	17,263	10.8	8.1
Energy products	702	683	645	-2.7	-5.6	10,603	8,713	-17.8	-34.8
Forestry products	214	217	226	1.4	4.1	2,374	2,497	5.2	10.8
Industrial goods and materials	5,243	5,195	5,140	-0.9	-1.1	54,369	60,296	10.9	1.6
Machinery and equipment	8,916	8,725	9,042	-2.1	3.6	91,203	101,601	11.4	12.0
Automotive products	6,290	6,308	6,167	0.3	-2.2	60,630	66,753	10.1	14.0
Other consumer goods	2,972	3,133	3,140	5.4	0.2	29,591	34,553	16.8	15.8
Special transactions trade <sup>2</sup>	501	485	391	-3.2	-19.4	6,891	6,176	-10.4	-36.1
Other BOP adjustments	535	539	544	0.7	0.9	5,609	6,137	9.4	6.3

... Figures not appropriate or not applicable.

<sup>1</sup> Includes Australia, Iceland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, Poland, South Korea, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

<sup>2</sup> These are mainly low valued transactions, value of repairs to equipment, and goods returned to country of origin.

## Wholesale trade

1998 Annual and December 1998 (preliminary)

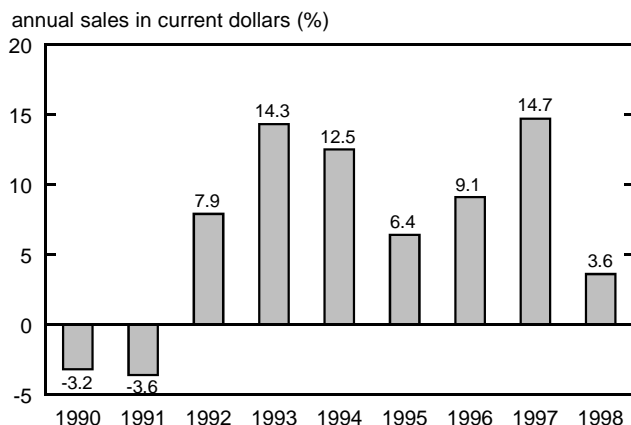
Wholesale sales rose 1.3% in December, capping a slower but favorable year for Canadian wholesalers with a modest 3.6% annual increase over 1997.

In December, eight of the eleven trade groups reported an increase in sales, led by strong sales in apparel and dry goods (+6.3%), and beverages, drug, and tobacco products (+4.3%). Notable movers were motor vehicles, parts and accessories, which rallied from last month's decline to post a 3.4% rise in sales; farm machinery, equipment and supplies which fell for the fourth time in the last five months (-9.4%); and computers, packaged software, equipment and supplies which reported a decline for a second consecutive month (-1.4%). Total sales in December were valued at \$28.8 billion.

Wholesale sales have been generally increasing since the summer of 1998, following a period of decline which started at the beginning of the year. Prior to this, sales were moving upward.

The value of inventories held grew slightly in December, up 0.2% from November to \$41.1 billion. Inventories-to-sales ratio fell from 1.44 in November to 1.43 in December.

**Lowest annual growth rate since the 1990-1991 recession**



### 1998 a slow but favorable year

For 1998, wholesale sales increased a modest 3.6% over 1997 to \$337.3 billion. Despite improved gains in sales during the latter half of 1998, weakening sales which began early in the year and continued until the summer produced the lowest annual increase since the 1990-1991 recession. Wholesale sales had posted

a 6.4% annual increase in 1995, rising 9.1% in 1996 and 14.7% in 1997.

### Annual variation in wholesale sales

	1996 to 1997	1997 to 1998
	% change	
<b>Sales, all trade groups</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>3.6</b>
Food products	8.5	4.0
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	11.9	8.6
Apparel and dry goods	15.5	5.6
Household goods	16.2	6.6
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	18.1	4.6
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	12.4	7.3
Lumber and building materials	15.4	-3.7
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	18.5	-1.0
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	18.0	1.9
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	15.7	9.9
Other products	14.7	0.1

### Resource reliant industries hardest hit in 1998

Canada's resource based industries were hit hard by world events in 1998. Consequently, three trade groups with links to the primary resource industries reported negative or low 1998 sales: lumber and building materials (-3.7%); farm machinery, equipment and supplies (-1.0%); and other products (+0.1%), which includes groups such as other forest products, agricultural feeds, agricultural chemicals, and other farm products.

Sales for lumber and building materials declined 3.7% in 1998. Despite improvements during the latter half of 1998, heavier losses earlier in the year dragged down this sector. Fourth quarter results increased 5.4%, in contrast to the negative results of the first (-3.5%), second (-4.1%), and third (-0.1%) quarters. The industry was hardest hit by the Asian economic crisis, notably in Japan which is a key export market. Resulting low commodity prices and the continued trade disputes with the United States on lumber imports may have hampered the industry.

World economic crises, low commodity prices, and trade disputes also contributed to the 1.0% decline of farm machinery, equipment and supplies in 1998. Wholesale sales in this sector have been declining since mid-1997 following a period of generally increasing sales. Each consecutive quarter of 1998 has had an ever increasing drop, culminating with the last quarter decline of 12.9%.

### **Cars and computers continue to perform despite slowdown**

Even after posting a second consecutive monthly decline of 1.4% in December, wholesalers of computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery were able to achieve a 9.9% increase in sales in 1998, the highest amongst all wholesale trade groups. Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery sales have generally been increasing for the last three years.

The 1998 General Motors strike in the United States probably contributed to lower wholesale sales of motor vehicles, parts and accessories (+4.6%) relative to 1997 (+18.1%). Following two years of increases, sales began to decline early in 1998 then began to turn around during the summer. Sales for this trade group during the fourth quarter were up substantially (+9.3%).

### **Impact of creation of new territory felt**

Provinces which are more heavily reliant on the primary resource industries reported declines in 1998. Not surprisingly, wholesale sales in British Columbia fell 1.8% compared with 1997, followed by Alberta (-1.5%). These two provinces, heavily reliant on the forestry,

mining, and agricultural resources, were hit hard by the economic and trade crises.

On the other hand, 1998 was a good year for wholesalers in the Northwest Territories. The annual sales increase of 11.8% was the strongest amongst the provinces and territories. The economic growth associated with the creation of Nunavut, the new territory which comes into existence in April 1999, may be a reason for this strong showing. As well, important diamond discoveries in the western part of the Northwest Territories could also have had an effect.

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

The December 1998 issue of *Wholesale trade* (63-008-XIB, \$14/\$140) will be available shortly. 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 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

	Dec. 1997	Sept. 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Oct. 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Nov. 1998 <sup>r</sup>	Dec. 1998 <sup>p</sup>	Nov. to Dec. 1998 <sup>p</sup>	Dec. 1997 to Dec. 1998 <sup>p</sup>
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions					% change	
<b>Sales, all trade groups</b>	<b>28,828</b>	<b>28,025</b>	<b>28,746</b>	<b>28,463</b>	<b>28,833</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Food products	4,352	4,444	4,494	4,478	4,544	1.5	4.4
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,962	1,895	1,883	1,834	1,913	4.3	-2.5
Apparel and dry goods	544	555	550	528	561	6.3	3.1
Household goods	835	795	765	802	807	0.7	-3.4
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,003	5,078	5,308	5,249	5,425	3.4	8.4
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,934	1,907	1,949	1,939	1,874	-3.4	-3.1
Lumber and building materials	2,301	2,043	2,082	2,091	2,161	3.3	-6.1
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	776	658	657	663	600	-9.4	-22.7
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4,346	4,096	4,164	4,188	4,217	0.7	-3.0
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,669	2,720	3,018	2,879	2,839	-1.4	6.4
Other products	4,106	3,835	3,875	3,812	3,892	2.1	-5.2
Newfoundland	197	188	191	193	194	0.1	-1.6
Prince Edward Island	44	49	49	50	51	1.7	16.5
Nova Scotia	502	505	496	520	549	5.6	9.4
New Brunswick	338	338	331	334	332	-0.7	-1.7
Quebec	5,526	5,669	5,728	5,837	5,828	-0.1	5.5
Ontario	13,859	13,785	14,446	14,076	14,336	1.8	3.4
Manitoba	988	962	908	909	938	3.2	-5.1
Saskatchewan	933	812	808	801	785	-2.1	-15.8
Alberta	3,113	2,512	2,574	2,579	2,616	1.4	-16.0
British Columbia	3,300	3,178	3,188	3,137	3,176	1.2	-3.8
Yukon	13	10	10	10	11	6.8	-14.8
Northwest Territories	16	16	16	16	18	15.8	11.8
<b>Inventories, all trade groups</b>	<b>38,748</b>	<b>40,687</b>	<b>40,834</b>	<b>41,045</b>	<b>41,125</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>6.1</b>
Food products	2,693	2,766	2,787	2,805	2,800	-0.2	4.0
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	2,048	2,157	2,191	2,214	2,274	2.7	11.0
Apparel and dry goods	1,140	1,279	1,286	1,322	1,247	-5.7	9.4
Household goods	1,545	1,538	1,532	1,542	1,547	0.4	0.1
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,545	5,677	5,680	5,812	5,909	1.7	6.6
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,327	3,612	3,564	3,532	3,508	-0.7	5.4
Lumber and building materials	3,438	3,620	3,649	3,641	3,671	0.8	6.8
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,146	2,385	2,349	2,316	2,324	0.3	8.3
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	9,199	9,941	9,932	9,900	9,978	0.8	8.5
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,440	2,542	2,661	2,711	2,655	-2.1	8.8
Other products	5,225	5,168	5,205	5,250	5,212	-0.7	-0.2

<sup>p</sup> Preliminary figures.

<sup>r</sup> Revised figures.



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## OTHER RELEASES

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### Export and import price indexes

December 1998

Current- and fixed-weighted export and import price indexes (1992=100) on a balance-of-payments basis are now available. Price indexes are listed from January 1992 to December 1998 for the five commodity sections and the major commodity groups (62 exports and 61 imports).

Current- and fixed-weighted U.S. price indexes (1992=100) are also available on a customs basis. Price indexes are listed from January 1992 to December 1998. Included with the U.S. commodity indexes are the 10 all-countries and U.S.-only standard international trade classification (SITC) section indexes.

Indexes for the five commodity sections and the major commodity groups are also now available on a customs basis.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 3618, 3619, 3651 and 3685.**

The December 1998 issue of *Canadian international merchandise trade* (65-001-XPB, \$19/

\$188 or 65-001-XIB, \$14/\$141) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods, and data of this release, contact Jocelyne Elibani (613-951-9647; 1-800-294-5583), Marketing and Client Services Section, International Trade Division. ■

### Plastic film and bags

Fourth quarter 1998

Data are now available on shipments of plastic film and bags for the fourth quarter of 1998.

The publication *Shipments of plastic film and bags manufactured from resin* (47-007-XPB, \$10/\$33) 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 Randall Sheldrick (613-951-7199; [shelran@statcan.ca](mailto:shelran@statcan.ca)), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

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## PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

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**Infomat - A weekly review**

**Catalogue number 11-002-XIE**

(Canada: \$3/\$109; outside Canada: US\$3/US\$109).

**Infomat - A weekly review**

**Catalogue number 11-002-XPE**

(Canada: \$4/\$145; outside Canada: US\$4/US\$145).

**Environmental protection expenditures in the business sector**, 1996 preliminary data  
**Catalogue number 16F0006PIE**

(Free).

**Rural and small town Canada, analysis bulletin: Employment patterns in the non-metro workforce**, vol. 1, no. 2

**Catalogue number 21-006-XIE**

(Free).

**Monthly Survey of Manufacturing**, December 1998

**Catalogue number 31-001-XPB**

(Canada: \$20/\$196; outside Canada: US\$20/US\$196).

**Air carrier traffic at Canadian airports**, 1997

**Catalogue number 51-203-XIB**

(Canada: \$31; outside Canada: US\$31).

**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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Statistics Canada	
Thursday, June 3, 1999	
For release at 8:30 a.m.	
<b>MAJOR RELEASES</b>	
• <b>Urban transit, 1995</b> Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1995, each Canadian took an average of about 40 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.	2
• <b>Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1995</b> Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was notably weak again in 1995 accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow modest growth during the year.	4
<b>OTHER RELEASES</b>	
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### Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

Catalogue 11-001E.

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## RELEASE DATES

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**February 22 to February 26, 1999**

(Release dates are subject to change.)

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Release date	Title	Reference period
22	Domestic travel	Third quarter 1998
22	Retail trade	December 1998
22	Livestock statistics	January 1999
23	Canada's international transactions in securities	December 1998
23	Private and public investment in Canada (intentions)	1999
23	Employment insurance	December 1998
24	Hospital utilisation	1996-1997
24	Farm cash receipts	Oct.-Dec. 1998
25	Industrial product price index	January 1999
25	Raw materials price index	January 1999
25	Composite Index	January 1999
25	Employment, earnings and hours	December 1998
26	Quarterly financial statistics for enterprises	Oct.-Dec. 1998
26	International travel account	Oct.-Dec. 1998
26	Characteristics of international travellers	July-Sept. 1998

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