



The Daily

Statistics Canada

Friday, March 19, 1999

For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Consumer Price Index, February 1999** 2
In February, consumers paid 0.7% more than a year ago for the goods and services contained in the Consumer Price Index basket. The all-items index excluding food and energy grew 0.8%, the first month since December 1997 that the annual movement in this index was below 1.0%.
 - **Wholesale trade, January 1999** 5
Wholesale sales rose 0.4% in January but the increase was not broadly based. Sales declined in seven of the eleven trade groups
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From January to February 1999, prices rose 0.5% in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the highest increase among provinces. The only decline among the provinces was in Alberta (-0.1%).

Provincial spotlight: Alberta and Prince Edward Island

In Alberta, prices for natural gas jumped 66.7% over the last 12 months compared with a 17.1% advance at the national level. The relatively large increase in Alberta's natural gas prices was primarily due to unusually low prices a year ago resulting from a rebate granted to natural gas users. Charges for rent rose 2.6% in Alberta over the past year while a 0.9% increase was posted for Canada as a whole. In addition, price increases for new houses and cablevision in Alberta exceeded the advances faced by Canadians in most other parts of the country.

Moreover, Albertans faced price increases for beef and women's clothing over the past year while declining prices were posted for these commodities nationally. On the other hand, residents of Alberta did see property taxes rise more slowly than did most other Canadians over the last 12 months. Also, prices for fresh fruit fell 5.7% in Alberta since February 1998 compared with a 7.6% advance for Canada as a whole.

Over the last year, residents of Prince Edward Island enjoyed sharp decreases in prices for gasoline

(-15.9%) and fuel oil (-18.5%). Most other Canadians, although experiencing lower prices for these goods, did not benefit to the same extent. Furthermore, prices for men's clothing and food purchased from restaurants fell over the past year while higher prices were posted for these commodities at the Canada level.

In contrast, consumers in Prince Edward Island faced price increases for new houses, new automotive vehicles, personal care services and cablevision that surpassed corresponding advances at the national level. Also, prices for women's blouses, sweaters and other tops rose 21.1% in the province since February 1998 compared with a 3.0% decrease nationally.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9970

Available at 7 a.m. on the Internet at www.statcan.ca.

The February 1999 issue of the *Consumer Price Index* (62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. See *How to order publications*.

The March 1999 Consumer Price Index will be released on April 21, 1999.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods, and data quality of this release, contact Prices Division (613-951-9606; 613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca). □

Consumer Price Index and major components 1992=100

	Feb. 1999	Jan. 1999	Feb. 1998	Jan. to Feb. 1999	Feb. 1998 to Feb. 1999
not seasonally adjusted					
				% change	
All-items	109.1	108.9	108.3	0.2	0.7
Food	110.5	111.1	108.9	-0.5	1.5
Shelter	104.5	104.5	103.2	0.0	1.3
Household operations and furnishings	108.5	107.9	108.7	0.6	-0.2
Clothing and footwear	104.4	103.7	103.9	0.7	0.5
Transportation	119.9	120.2	120.7	-0.2	-0.7
Health and personal care	109.2	109.0	107.1	0.2	2.0
Recreation, education and reading	116.8	115.5	116.0	1.1	0.7
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	93.7	93.7	92.0	0.0	1.8
Goods	106.2	106.2	106.0	0.0	0.2
Services	112.4	112.1	111.0	0.3	1.3
All-items excluding food and energy	109.4	109.1	108.5	0.3	0.8
Energy	102.3	103.1	104.8	-0.8	-2.4
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared to 1992	91.7	91.8	92.3		
All-items (1986=100)	139.8				

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

	Feb. 1999	Jan. 1999	Feb. 1998	Jan. to Feb. 1999	Feb. 1998 to Feb. 1999
not seasonally adjusted					
				% change	
Newfoundland	108.4	108.0	108.7	0.4	-0.3
Prince Edward Island	106.2	105.7	106.7	0.5	-0.5
Nova Scotia	108.7	108.2	108.5	0.5	0.2
New Brunswick	107.5	107.0	107.7	0.5	-0.2
Quebec	106.6	106.6	106.2	0.0	0.4
Ontario	109.4	109.3	108.7	0.1	0.6
Manitoba	113.9	113.8	111.8	0.1	1.9
Saskatchewan	112.9	112.9	111.1	0.0	1.6
Alberta	111.6	111.7	109.2	-0.1	2.2
British Columbia	110.1	109.9	109.5	0.2	0.5
Whitehorse	110.4	110.4	110.3	0.0	0.1
Yellowknife	107.9	108.2	107.4	-0.3	0.5

Wholesale trade

January 1999 (preliminary)

Wholesale sales rose 0.4% in January, but the increase was not broadly based with declines in seven of the eleven trade groups.

Sales have been increasing since the summer of 1998 following a period of weak sales which started earlier in the year. Prior to 1998, wholesale sales had been generally climbing. The share of exports into the vibrant United States economy by wholesalers may be contributing to this recent recovery.

Wholesale sales amounted to \$28.7 billion in January. The important increases seen in farm machinery, equipment and supplies (+25.0%), food products (+3.0%), and industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies (+2.0%), helped wholesalers begin 1999 on a positive note. Among the industries that declined, computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery reported a notable 2.3% fall in sales. As well, wholesalers of lumber and building materials continued to struggle with weaker sales (-0.9%) in January.

A good performance in the apparel and dry goods industry helped Quebec wholesalers report a 2.0% increase for January. Meanwhile, weak sales in computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery, and motor vehicles, parts and accessories, limited the rise on total sales for Ontario wholesalers to 0.4%

Note to readers

With the January release, wholesale sales estimates are now revised every year. The unadjusted monthly estimates have been revised for 1996, 1997, and 1998. The seasonally adjusted series for wholesale trade data was re-examined in January 1999 and improvements to the basis of the time series were introduced at that time. Seasonally adjusted estimates have been revised from 1991 onwards.

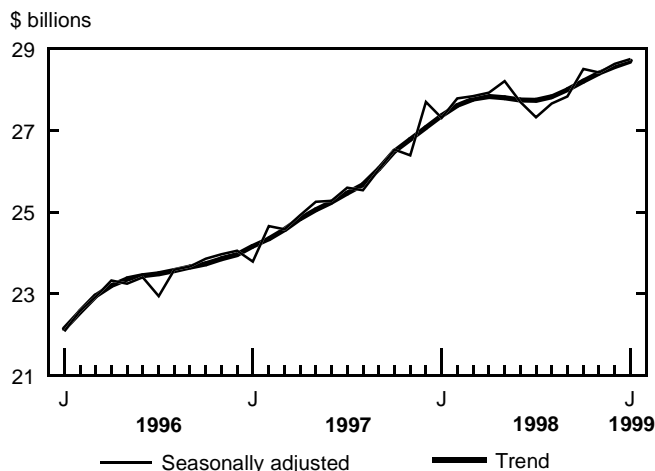
Factors which influence the need for revisions include the late receipt of respondent information, correction of information on data provided, the replacement of estimated figures with actual values (once available), and re-classification of companies into and out of the wholesale trade industry. Revised data can be obtained by consulting the appropriate CANSIM matrices, or upon request from Client Services Unit, Distributive Trades Division.

Adverse weather aids wholesalers of farm machinery, equipment and supplies

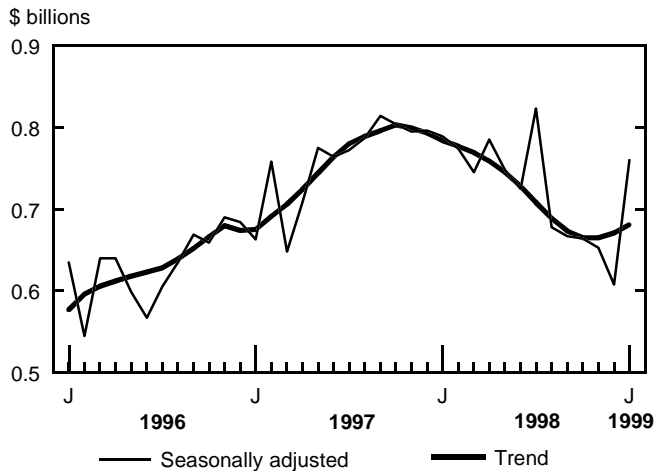
Sales of farm machinery, equipment and supplies rebounded 25.0% to \$760 million in January, after five months of declining sales. However, despite this month's increase, sales have not returned to the levels seen one year ago resulting in a year-over-year drop of 3.7%.

The stronger than normal sales in January may be attributed to abnormally high snowfall in southwestern Ontario and British Columbia. Wholesalers of farm machinery, equipment and supplies reported strong sales for snow removal equipment. In addition, despite the adverse weather in some provinces, some wholesalers of farm machinery, equipment and supplies have reported an early start to their spring season. Prior to January's sharp increase, sales had been falling since the fall of 1997, following a period of general increases.

Wholesale trade continued to grow



Farm machinery sales rebounded in January



Global economic activities continue to affect wholesale trade

January was a poor month for sales of computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery with sales falling 2.3% from December. Wholesale sales in this sector have been weakening since the third quarter of 1998; sales had been generally climbing for the last three years. Poor sales in foreign markets and price wars closer to home are severely affecting the industry.

Wholesale sales of lumber and building materials fell 0.9% in January. Despite this decline, sales in the lumber and building materials industry have been improving since mid-1998. Increased exports, especially to the United States where demand is strong, may be contributing to the overall recovery.

Prior to the summer of 1998, sales had been generally falling since the spring of 1997. January's stumble could be attributed to low levels of both domestic housing construction intentions and December building permits, which could have had an adverse affect on the sale of lumber and building materials.

Inventories remain unchanged

Inventories held by wholesalers remained unchanged in January at \$40.9 billion, the second straight month with no change. Inventory values had been rising for the last three years. However, early 1998 saw a loss of momentum and inventories began to flatten by year end.

The inventories-to-sales ratio fell to 1.42 from 1.43 in December. After having been on the rise since late 1997, the ratio levelled off during the summer of 1998 and began to fall during the last quarter.

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

The January 1999 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). To enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Alexander Hays (613-951-3552; haysale@statcan.ca), Wholesale Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division. □

Wholesale merchants' sales and inventories

	Jan. 1998	Oct. 1998 ^r	Nov. 1998 ^r	Dec. 1998 ^r	Jan. 1999 ^p	Dec. 1998 to Jan. 1999	Jan. 1998 to Jan. 1999
	seasonally adjusted						
	\$ millions					% change	
Sales, all trade groups	27,300	28,495	28,411	28,621	28,738	0.4	5.3
Food products	4,122	4,410	4,444	4,487	4,622	3.0	12.1
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,858	1,886	1,872	1,898	1,922	1.3	3.5
Apparel and dry goods	536	545	535	555	545	-1.8	1.6
Household goods	792	761	800	796	784	-1.5	-1.0
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	4,773	5,206	5,178	5,310	5,230	-1.5	9.6
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,878	1,902	1,926	1,862	1,835	-1.4	-2.3
Lumber and building materials	2,052	2,105	2,084	2,126	2,107	-0.9	2.7
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	789	664	653	608	760	25.0	-3.7
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4,052	4,186	4,170	4,186	4,272	2.0	5.4
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,524	2,970	2,924	2,927	2,858	-2.3	13.2
Other products	3,924	3,859	3,826	3,866	3,803	-1.6	-3.1
Sales by province and territory							
Newfoundland	187	190	195	197	205	3.9	9.6
Prince Edward Island	42	48	50	50	50	-0.4	17.9
Nova Scotia	484	498	519	572	556	-2.8	14.8
New Brunswick	325	330	333	331	340	2.7	4.6
Quebec	5,317	5,646	5,792	5,808	5,922	2.0	11.4
Ontario	13,126	14,352	14,065	14,173	14,235	0.4	8.4
Manitoba	945	901	906	924	919	-0.5	-2.8
Saskatchewan	931	816	820	800	854	6.8	-8.2
Alberta	2,780	2,560	2,568	2,588	2,569	-0.8	-7.6
British Columbia	3,140	3,129	3,137	3,148	3,059	-2.8	-2.6
Yukon	9	10	10	11	13	15.3	33.1
Northwest Territories	14	15	15	18	16	-10.3	17.1
Inventories, all trade groups	38,475	40,733	40,923	40,928	40,936	0.0	6.4
Food products	2,582	2,703	2,717	2,698	2,677	-0.8	3.7
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	2,089	2,161	2,213	2,264	2,245	-0.9	7.5
Apparel and dry goods	1,176	1,282	1,308	1,230	1,251	1.7	6.4
Household goods	1,546	1,530	1,537	1,533	1,535	0.1	-0.7
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,311	5,653	5,751	5,868	5,884	0.3	10.8
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,338	3,548	3,523	3,492	3,458	-1.0	3.6
Lumber and building materials	3,381	3,710	3,658	3,694	3,753	1.6	11.0
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,234	2,347	2,314	2,316	2,307	-0.4	3.3
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	9,320	9,884	9,820	9,831	9,854	0.2	5.7
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,404	2,667	2,730	2,668	2,639	-1.1	9.7
Other products	5,094	5,249	5,351	5,334	5,333	0.0	4.7

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.



OTHER RELEASES

Department store sales and stocks

January 1999

Department store sales rose 4.8% in January to \$1,505.0 million (seasonally adjusted) from \$1,435.8 million in December 1998. Sales were 7.4% higher in January compared with January last year. Since the spring of 1998, monthly department store sales have been relatively volatile, but overall sales have been declining. Department store sales experienced a period of strong advances from the summer of 1996 to the spring of 1998, following a period of gradual advances from mid-1993.

Unadjusted for seasonality, department store sales increased in most provinces in January compared with January 1998. The largest increases were in Quebec (+12.2%), Newfoundland and P.E.I (+10.0%) and Ontario (+8.9%). Department store sales in British Columbia remained unchanged.

Department store sales including concessions

	Jan. 1998	Jan. 1999	Jan. 1998 to Jan. 1999
unadjusted			
	\$ millions		% change
Canada	922.0	991.0	7.4
Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island ¹	15.9	17.5	10.0
Nova Scotia	26.1	28.2	8.3
New Brunswick	19.6	20.2	3.4
Quebec	166.1	186.3	12.2
Ontario	388.1	422.6	8.9
Manitoba	39.4	40.4	2.6
Saskatchewan	31.0	33.4	7.8
Alberta	110.3	116.4	5.5
British Columbia, Yukon, North- west Territories ¹	125.6	125.6	0.0

¹ For reasons of confidentiality, data for Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, and for British Columbia, the Yukon and Northwest Territories are combined.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 111-113.

Accounts receivable data for department stores are available through the Client Services Unit, Distributive Trades Division.

For data or general 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 Greg Peterson (613-951-3592; petegre@statcan.ca), Retail Trade Section, Distributive Trades Division. ■

Real estate rental and leasing and property management services 1996

Data for the real estate rental and leasing industry and for the property management services industry for 1996 are now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality for this release, contact Irene Ross (613-951-6305; puccire@statcan.ca), Services Division. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

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).

Steel wire and specified wire products,

January 1999

Catalogue number 41-006-XIB

(Canada: \$5/\$47; outside Canada: US\$5/US\$47).

Asphalt roofing, January 1999**Catalogue number 45-001-XPB**

(Canada: \$7/\$62; outside Canada: US\$7/US\$62).

Telephone statistics, December 1998**Catalogue number 56-002-XIB**

(Canada: \$8/\$70; outside Canada: US\$8/US\$70).

Consumer Price Index, February 1999**Catalogue number 62-001-XPB**

(Canada: \$11/\$103; outside Canada: US\$11/US\$103).

Canada's balance of international payments,

Fourth quarter 1998

Catalogue number 67-001-XIB

(Canada: \$29/\$93; outside Canada: US\$29/US\$93).

Canada's balance of international payments,

Fourth quarter 1998

Catalogue number 67-001-XPB

(Canada: \$38/\$124; outside Canada: US\$38/US\$124).

Canada's international transactions in securities,

December 1998

Catalogue number 67-002-XPB

(Canada: \$18/\$176; outside Canada: US\$18/US\$176).

All prices exclude sales tax.

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
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 The Daily	
Statistics Canada	
Thursday, June 9, 1997	
For release at 9:30 a.m.	
MAJOR RELEASES	
• Urban transit, 1995	2
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.	
• Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1995	4
Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was notably weak again in 1995, accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow nominal growth during the year.	
OTHER RELEASES	
• Help-wanted index, May 1997	3
• Short-term Expectations Survey	2
• Steel primary forms, week ending May 31, 1997	12
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RELEASE DATES

March 22 to 26, 1999

(Release dates are subject to change.)

Release date	Title	Reference period
22	Retail trade	January 1999
24	Canada's international transactions in securities	January 1999
24	Composite Index	February 1999
24	Employment Insurance	January 1999
25	Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics: encountering low income	1993-1996
25	Employment, earnings and hours	January 1999
26	Industrial Product Price Index	February 1999
26	Raw Materials Price Index	February 1999