

Monday, March 22, 1999
For release at 8:30 a.m.

## MAJOR RELEASES

## - Retail trade, January 1999

Retail sales advanced $1.7 \%$ in January, following a $0.3 \%$ decline in December 1998. January's advance was broadly based, as sales increased in all sectors and provinces.

## OTHER RELEASES

## Area profiles series

1996 Census
The Area profiles series organizes the complete set of variables from the 1996 Census by geographic area. The following Profiles of census tracts are now available in print form:

St. John's (95-194-XPB); Halifax (95-195-XPB); Moncton and Saint John (95-196-XPB); ChicoutimiJonquière, Sherbrooke, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Trois-Rivières (95-197-XPB); Québec (95-198-XPB); Montréal (two volumes, 95-199-XPB); Ottawa-Hull (95-200-XPB); Brantford, Guelph, Kitchener and St. Catharines-Niagara (95-201-XPB); Hamilton (95-202-XPB); Barrie, Belleville, Kingston, Oshawa and Peterborough (95-203-XPB); London, Sarnia and Windsor (95-204-XPB); North Bay, Sault Ste-Marie, Sudbury and Thunder Bay (95-205-XPB); Toronto (two volumes, 95-206-XPB); Winnipeg (95-207-XPB); Regina and Saskatoon (95-208-XPB); Calgary (95-209-XPB); Edmonton (95-210-XPB); Lethbridge and Red Deer (95-211-XPB); Kamloops, Kelowna and Prince George (95-212-XPB); Abbotsford and Vancouver (95-213-XPB); Nanaimo and Victoria (95-214-XPB).

The data in these publications have previously been released in electronic format. Prices for publications range from $\$ 65$ (St. John's, Halifax) to $\$ 165$ (Toronto, Montréal).

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## MAJOR RELEASES

## Retail trade

## January 1999

Retail sales advanced $1.7 \%$ in January to $\$ 21.2$ billion following a 0.3\% decline in December 1998. January's advance was broadly based as sales increased in all sectors and provinces. Overall, retail sales have picked up slightly in the last few months after a period of flattening sales that started in the spring of 1998. Previously, sales had generally been increasing since early 1996.

The 5.1\% year-over-year increase in sales reflects both a strong January 1999 and a particularly weak January 1998. In January 1998, the ice storm in Central and Eastern Canada had an overall dampening effect on retail sales during that month. Furthermore, strong incentives offered to new motor vehicle buyers in December 1997 may have drawn some purchases from January 1998 into December 1997.


## All sectors cashed in on increased consumer spending in January

Sales were up in all retail sectors in January. General merchandise stores, drug stores, stores classified as "other retail" and clothing stores led sales advances.

Sales by general merchandise stores increased $4.8 \%$ in January following a 1.5\% gain in December. This was the first time since February 1998 in which sales grew for two consecutive months. Both department stores ( $+5.0 \%$ ) and other general
merchandise stores (+4.6\%) contributed to January's sales increase. December's gain was also equally distributed between department stores and other general merchandise stores.

Sales in department stores have been volatile for most of 1998 due to store closures and restructuring activities. In January 1999, there were 70 fewer department stores than in January 1998 (a reduction of about $9 \%$ of all department stores). The majority of store closures in 1998 occurred between March and August. After generally increasing since the spring of 1996, sales in department stores had been declining throughout the spring of 1998 but gained back the losses afterwards. On the other hand, sales in other general merchandise stores continued to show a pattern of general increases which began in the fall of 1995.

Sales in drug stores increased $3.0 \%$ in January after declining $1.0 \%$ in each of the previous two months. Drug stores experienced strong sales increases from July 1997 to July 1998 but have generally been falling since.

The late arrival of winter may have contributed to advancing sales in sporting goods stores, which pushed up sales in stores classified as "other retail". This group encompasses a wide variety of merchants (e.g. liquor, beer, sporting goods, hardware, books, jewellery and gift stores). January's increase (+2.7\%) in stores classified as "other retail" followed a $1.9 \%$ decline in December. Overall, sales in "other retail" stores have generally been increasing since the beginning of 1997.

Retailers in clothing stores reported higher sales in January (+2.0\%) after sluggish sales in December (-2.8\%). Rising sales in women's clothing stores and other clothing stores (which include family clothing stores) offset declines in men's clothing stores and shoe stores. Clothing stores have generally exhibited weakening sales since the spring of 1998 following a period of general increases that started at the beginning of 1996.

Sales in food stores advanced $1.2 \%$ in January but this increase was not enough to make up for the $1.7 \%$ decline in December. Within the food sector, supermarkets and grocery stores reported higher sales (+1.4\%) in January while sales in more specialized food stores declined ( $-1.4 \%$ ). Overall, sales in food stores have generally remained stagnant since June 1998 after increasing since the spring of 1996.

## Auto and furniture sectors - a third straight monthly gain

In January, retail sales in the automotive sector advanced $0.9 \%$, a third consecutive monthly increase. Sales advanced for the third month in a row for motor and recreational dealers ( $+1.2 \%$ ) and automotive parts, accessories and services stores ( $+1.1 \%$ ). In contrast, sales from gasoline service stations ( $-0.7 \%$ ) were down in January for a third consecutive month. Sales in the automotive sector seem to be gearing up after gyrating for most of 1998. Prior to the spring of 1998, sales had generally been increasing since mid-1996.

January's weak rise in sales (+0.2\%) represented a third monthly sales increase for the furniture sector. A significant drop in sales by household furnishing stores $(-2.5 \%)$ nearly wiped out the $0.9 \%$ rise in sales by household furniture and appliance stores in January. Retailers in the furniture sector have been the only ones to enjoy advancing sales since the spring of 1996.

## Advancing retail sales from east to west

Retailers in Atlantic Canada posted the strongest sales growth in Canada for January ( $+3.6 \%$ ). All four Atlantic provinces had sales increases greater than $3.0 \%$. With the auto sector and general merchandise stores leading the way, all sectors contributed to higher retail sales in this region. Retail sales in Atlantic Canada have generally been increasing since the spring of 1995. However, since the spring of 1998, diminishing sales in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have restrained sales increases in the region.

In January, consumers in Quebec and Ontario increased spending in stores by $2.0 \%$ in each province. Although sales were up in most sectors, general merchandise stores were mostly responsible for January's overall monthly increase. Retail sales
in Quebec have generally been increasing since the spring of 1996 with pauses in the summers of 1997 and 1998. Retailers in Ontario have shown continued growth since mid-1996.

Retail sales in the Prairie provinces were up $0.9 \%$ in January, due mostly to higher sales in general merchandise stores. Sales in the three Prairie provinces remained generally flat in 1998 after posting strong increases in 1996 and 1997.

British Columbia retailers reported a $0.7 \%$ rise in sales in January. After close to a year of general declines, retail sales in the province have been rising slowly in the last three months. As with other provinces, general merchandise stores led the January sales increase in British Columbia.

## Related indicators

Employment remained essentially unchanged ( $+0.1 \%$ ) in February after seven consecutive monthly increases. The sizable increase in full-time employment in February was offset by losses in part-time jobs. The number of housing starts increased 1.5\% in February.

## Available on CANSIM: matrices 2299, 2398-2417, 2419 and 2420.

The January 1999 issue of Retail trade (63-005-XPB, \$21/\$206) 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

|  | Jan. 1998 | Oct.1998 ${ }^{\text {r }}$ | Nov.1998 ${ }^{\text {r }}$ | Dec.1998 ${ }^{\text {r }}$ | Jan.1999 ${ }^{\text {p }}$ | $\begin{array}{r} \text { Dec. } \\ 1998 \\ \text { to } \\ \text { Jan. } \\ 1999 \\ \hline \end{array}$ | $\begin{array}{r} \hline \text { Jan. } \\ 1998 \\ \text { to } \\ \text { Jan. } \\ 1999 \\ \hline \end{array}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | seasonally adjusted |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | \$ millions |  |  |  |  | \% change |  |
| Food | 4,766 | 4,841 | 4,904 | 4,822 | 4,880 | 1.2 | 2.4 |
| Supermarkets and grocery stores | 4,402 | 4,469 | 4,541 | 4,459 | 4,522 | 1.4 | 2.7 |
| All other food stores | 364 | 373 | 363 | 363 | 358 | -1.4 | -1.7 |
| Drug and patent medicine stores | 1,062 | 1,091 | 1,082 | 1,071 | 1,104 | 3.0 | 4.0 |
| Clothing | 1,136 | 1,169 | 1,182 | 1,149 | 1,172 | 2.0 | 3.1 |
| Shoe stores | 140 | 135 | 134 | 140 | 139 | -0.7 | -0.5 |
| Men's clothing stores | 132 | 130 | 132 | 128 | 125 | -2.3 | -4.9 |
| Women's clothing stores | 367 | 364 | 380 | 364 | 380 | 4.5 | 3.6 |
| Other clothing stores | 498 | 540 | 536 | 517 | 527 | 2.0 | 6.0 |
| Furniture | 1,000 | 1,063 | 1,078 | 1,093 | 1,095 | 0.2 | 9.5 |
| Household furniture and appliance stores | 799 | 858 | 869 | 884 | 891 | 0.9 | 11.5 |
| Household furnishings stores | 201 | 205 | 209 | 209 | 204 | -2.5 | 1.2 |
| Automotive | 7,671 | 7,794 | 7,975 | 8,034 | 8,106 | 0.9 | 5.7 |
| Motor and recreational vehicle dealers | 5,187 | 5,309 | 5,502 | 5,556 | 5,623 | 1.2 | 8.4 |
| Gasoline service stations | 1,296 | 1,260 | 1,246 | 1,237 | 1,228 | -0.7 | -5.3 |
| Automotive parts, accessories and services | 1,188 | 1,225 | 1,227 | 1,242 | 1,255 | 1.1 | 5.6 |
| General merchandise stores | 2,299 | 2,348 | 2,338 | 2,374 | 2,488 | 4.8 | 8.2 |
| Retail stores not elsewhere classified | 2,203 | 2,274 | 2,296 | 2,252 | 2,313 | 2.7 | 5.0 |
| Other semi-durable goods stores | 699 | 712 | 726 | 696 | 698 | 0.3 | 0.0 |
| Other durable goods stores | 542 | 578 | 573 | 569 | 607 | 6.5 | 11.8 |
| All other retail stores not elsewhere classified | 962 | 985 | 997 | 986 | 1,009 | 2.2 | 4.8 |
| Total, retail sales | 20,137 | 20,581 | 20,855 | 20,795 | 21,159 | 1.7 | 5.1 |
| Total excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers | 14,950 | 15,273 | 15,353 | 15,239 | 15,535 | 1.9 | 3.9 |
| Provinces and territories |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Newfoundland | 316 | 325 | 328 | 316 | 328 | 3.8 | 3.7 |
| Prince Edward Island | 86 | 86 | 85 | 85 | 88 | 4.3 | 2.7 |
| Nova Scotia | 621 | 639 | 645 | 646 | 668 | 3.3 | 7.6 |
| New Brunswick | 490 | 481 | 491 | 490 | 509 | 3.8 | 3.9 |
| Quebec | 4,324 | 4,764 | 4,840 | 4,848 | 4,946 | 2.0 | 14.4 |
| Ontario | 7,563 | 7,822 | 7,932 | 7,865 | 8,020 | 2.0 | 6.0 |
| Manitoba | 743 | 728 | 735 | 739 | 744 | 0.8 | 0.2 |
| Saskatchewan | 671 | 625 | 632 | 632 | 638 | 0.9 | -5.0 |
| Alberta | 2,408 | 2,306 | 2,355 | 2,350 | 2,374 | 1.0 | -1.4 |
| British Columbia | 2,846 | 2,737 | 2,741 | 2,754 | 2,773 | 0.7 | -2.6 |
| Yukon | 27 | 26 | 26 | 26 | 26 | -0.7 | -3.7 |
| Northwest Territories | 44 | 43 | 44 | 44 | 45 | 2.7 | -3.6 |

[^0]
## Retail sales

|  | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { Jan. } \\ 1998 \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \hline \text { Dec. } \\ & 1998^{r} \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { Jan. } \\ \text { 1999p } \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{array}{r} \text { Jan. } \\ 1998 \\ \text { to } \\ \text { Jan. } \\ 1999 \\ \hline \end{array}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | unadjusted |  |  |  |
|  | \$ millions |  |  | change |
| Food | 4,857 | 5,189 | 4,826 | -0.6 |
| Supermarkets and grocery stores | 4,533 | 4,741 | 4,505 | -0.6 |
| All other food stores | 323 | 448 | 321 | -0.7 |
| Drug and patent medicine stores | 1,036 | 1,347 | 1,067 | 3.0 |
| Clothing | 861 | 1,920 | 872 | 1.3 |
| Shoe stores | 109 | 177 | 108 | -0.7 |
| Men's clothing stores | 109 | 262 | 98 | -9.9 |
| Women's clothing stores | 268 | 590 | 278 | 3.6 |
| Other clothing stores | 375 | 891 | 388 | 3.5 |
| Furniture | 846 | 1,581 | 901 | 6.5 |
| Household furniture and appliance stores | 687 | 1,313 | 742 | 8.1 |
| Household furnishings stores | 159 | 269 | 159 | -0.3 |
| Automotive | 6,296 | 7,431 | 6,418 | 1.9 |
| Motor and recreational vehicle dealers | 4,065 | 4,850 | 4,250 | 4.5 |
| Gasoline service stations | 1,224 | 1,232 | 1,134 | -7.3 |
| Automotive parts, accessories and services | 1,007 | 1,349 | 1,034 | 2.7 |
| General merchandise stores | 1,679 | 3,959 | 1,803 | 7.4 |
| Retail stores not elsewhere classified | 1,704 | 3,520 | 1,787 | 4.8 |
| Other semi-durable goods stores | 521 | 1,079 | 513 | -1.6 |
| Other durable goods stores | 409 | 1,074 | 473 | 15.7 |
| All other retail stores not elsewhere classified | 775 | 1,366 | 801 | 3.4 |
| Total, retail sales | 17,279 | 24,946 | 17,674 | 2.3 |
| Total excluding motor and recreational vehicle dealers | 13,214 | 20,096 | 13,425 | 1.6 |
| Provinces and territories |  |  |  |  |
| Newfoundland | 256 | 389 | 257 | 0.2 |
| Prince Edward Island | 69 | 102 | 69 | -0.5 |
| Nova Scotia | 529 | 786 | 551 | 4.2 |
| New Brunswick | 399 | 589 | 404 | 1.2 |
| Quebec | 3,642 | 5,420 | 4,034 | 10.8 |
| Ontario | 6,489 | 9,745 | 6,701 | 3.3 |
| Manitoba | 644 | 902 | 631 | -2.0 |
| Saskatchewan | 587 | 761 | 550 | -6.3 |
| Alberta | 2,095 | 2,874 | 2,011 | -4.0 |
| British Columbia | 2,511 | 3,298 | 2,407 | -4.1 |
| Yukon | 22 | 28 | 20 | -6.5 |
| Northwest Territories | 37 | 51 | 39 | 3.7 |

[^1]
## OTHER RELEASES

Natural gas sales
January 1999 (preliminary)
Natural gas sales totalled 8612 million cubic metres in January, up 4.7\% from January 1998. All three sectors (residential, commercial and industrial) recorded higher sales. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) rose $6.6 \%$ from January 1998, due to higher demand for natural gas by electric utilities.

Natural gas sales

|  | $\begin{gathered} \text { Jan. } \\ 1999^{p} \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { Jan. } \\ 1998 \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{array}{r} \text { Jan. } \\ 1998 \\ \text { to } \\ \text { Jan. } \\ 1999 \\ \hline \end{array}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | '000 of cubic metres |  | change |
| Natural gas sales | 8611924 | 8228287 | 4.7 |
| Residential | 2635910 | 2564873 | 2.8 |
| Commercial | 1727809 | 1676833 | 3.0 |
| Industrial | 2212371 | 2144659 |  |
| Direct | 2035834 | 1841922 |  |

[^2]Available on CANSIM: matrices 1052-1055.
The January 1999 issue of Gas utilities (55-002-XPB, \$17/\$165) will be available in April. See How to order publications.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Gary Smalldridge (613-951-3567; smalgar@statcan.ca) or Tom Lewis (613-951-3596; talewis@statcan.ca), Energy Section, Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division.

## PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Monthly Survey of Manufacturing, January 1999
Catalogue number 31-001-XPB
(Canada: \$20/\$196; outside Canada: US\$20/US\$196).
Particleboard, oriented strandboard and
fibreboard, January 1999
Catalogue number 36-003-XPB
(Canada: \$7/\$62; outside Canada: US\$7/US\$62).
Oil pipeline transport, December 1998
Catalogue number 55-001-XPB
(Canada: \$12/\$114; outside Canada: US\$12/US\$114).
Building permits, January 1999
Catalogue number 64-001-XIB
(Canada: \$19/\$186; outside Canada: US\$19/US\$186).
Profile of census tracts in St. John's, 1996 Census Catalogue number 95-194-XPB
(Canada: \$65; outside Canada: US\$65).
Profile of census tracts in Halifax, 1996 Census Catalogue number 95-195-XPB
(Canada: \$65; outside Canada: US\$65).
Profile of census tracts in Moncton and Saint John, 1996 Census
Catalogue number 95-196-XPB
(Canada: \$70; outside Canada: US\$70).
Profile of census tracts in Chicoutimi-Jonquière, Sherbrooke, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Trois-Rivières, 1996 Census
Catalogue number 95-197-XPB
(Canada: \$90; outside Canada: US\$90).
Profile of census tracts in Québec, 1996 Census Catalogue number 95-198-XPB
(Canada: \$80; outside Canada: US\$80).
Profile of census tracts in Montréal, 1996 Census, vol. 1, 2
Catalogue number 95-199-XPB
(Canada: \$165; outside Canada: US\$165).
Profile of census tracts in Ottawa-Hull, 1996
Census
Catalogue number 95-200-XPB
(Canada: \$90; outside Canada: US\$90).

Profile of census tracts in Brantford, Guelph, Kitchener and St. Catharines-Niagara, 1996 Census
Catalogue number 95-201-XPB
(Canada: \$95; outside Canada: US\$95).
Profile of census tracts in Hamilton, 1996 Census Catalogue number 95-202-XPB
(Canada: \$75; outside Canada: US\$75).
Profile of census tracts in Barrie, Belleville, Kingston, Oshawa and Peterborough, 1996 Census
Catalogue number 95-203-XPB
(Canada: \$100; outside Canada: US\$100).
Profile of census tracts in London, Sarnia and
Windsor, 1996 Census
Catalogue number 95-204-XPB
(Canada: \$90; outside Canada: US\$90).
Profile of census tracts in North Bay, Sault Ste.
Marie, Sudbury and Thunder Bay, 1996 Census Catalogue number 95-205-XPB
(Canada: \$90; outside Canada: US\$90).
Profile of census tracts in Toronto, 1996 Census, vol. 1, 2
Catalogue number 95-206-XPB
(Canada: \$165; outside Canada: US\$165).
Profile of census tracts in Winnipeg, 1996 Census Catalogue number 95-207-XPB
(Canada: \$75; outside Canada: US\$75).
Profile of census tracts in Regina and Saskatoon, 1996 Census
Catalogue number 95-208-XPB
(Canada: \$75; outside Canada: US\$75).
Profile of census tracts in Calgary, 1996 Census
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Profile of census tracts in Edmonton, 1996 Census Catalogue number 95-210-XPB
(Canada: \$90; outside Canada: US\$90).
Profile of census tracts in Lethbridge and Red
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Catalogue number 95-211-XPB
(Canada: \$65; outside Canada: US\$65).

Profile of census tracts in Kamloops, Kelowna and
Prince George, 1996 Census
Catalogue number 95-212-XPB
(Canada: \$80; outside Canada: US\$80).
Profile of census tracts in Abbotsford and
Vancouver, 1996 Census
Catalogue number 95-213-XPB
(Canada: \$105; outside Canada: US\$105).

## Profile of census tracts in Nanaimo and Victoria, 1996 Census <br> Catalogue number 95-214-XPB

(Canada: \$75; outside Canada: US\$75).

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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 0 T6.
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Editor: Dan Smythe (613-951-1103, smytdan@statcan.ca)
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[^0]:    ${ }_{p}$ Revised figures.
    p Preliminary figures.

[^1]:    ${ }^{r}$ Revised figures.
    $p$ Preliminary figures.

[^2]:    $p$ Preliminary figures.

