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The Daily

Statistics Canada

Wednesday, July 7, 1999
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

OTHER RELEASES

MAJOR RELEASES

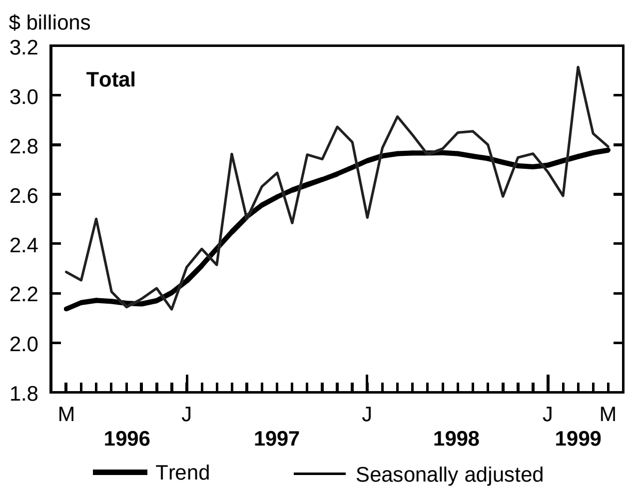
Building permits

May 1999

Construction intentions in the housing sector showed a significant gain in May but were more than offset by the second straight decline in the value of non-residential permits.

As a result, municipalities issued $2.8 billion of building permits, down 1.8% from April to mark a second consecutive monthly decline. This decline followed an 8.7% decrease from March to April.

Total value of permits is down 1.8% in May



Housing intentions in May rose 6.2% to $1.6 billion on the strength of advances in both single- and multi-family dwellings. On the other hand, industrial, commercial and institutional intentions were down 11.1% as builders took out $1.2 billion in permits. This was the non-residential sector's fourth decline in the first five months of this year.

From January to May, residential intentions increased 2.9% compared with the first five months of 1998, while non-residential intentions were up a marginal 0.2%.

Overall, between January and May this year, municipalities issued $14.0 billion in building permits, up 1.7% over the same five-month period in 1998. This was the best performance for the first five months in any year since 1990.

Note to readers

Unless otherwise stated, this release presents seasonally adjusted data, which ease comparisons by removing the effects of seasonal variations.

The Building and Demolitions Permits Monthly Survey covers 2,600 municipalities representing 94% of the population. It provides an early indication of building activity. The communities representing the other 6% of the population are very small and their levels of building activity have little impact on the total.

The value of planned construction activities shown in this release excludes engineering projects (e.g., waterworks, sewers, culverts, etc.) and land.

Data for the territory of Nunavut were introduced with the April 1999 figures. As a result, this affects the geographical coverage and data of the Northwest Territories.

Both components contributed to monthly increase in housing sector

Construction intentions in both housing components increased in May. Municipalities issued permits worth $460 million for multi-family housing, up 15.5% from April. At the same time, permits for single-family dwellings rose 3.0% to $1.2 billion, the highest level since December 1997.

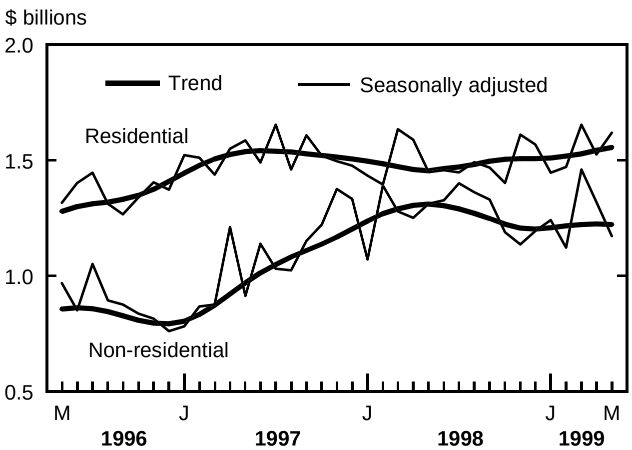
Housing affordability and consumer confidence resulting from low mortgage rates and stable economic growth point to a robust housing market for the future.

Provincially, the largest increases (in terms of dollars) in residential permits in May occurred in Alberta (+24.0% to $234 million), British Columbia (+12.1% to $214 million), Ontario (+3.0% to $785 million) and Quebec (+5.3% to $243 million). Both single- and multi-family intentions were responsible for these increases, except in British Columbia where only multi-family dwellings led the way.

The largest decreases in May occurred in Manitoba (-16.7% to $27 million), Newfoundland (-24.0% to $11 million) and Nova Scotia (-5.3% to $43 million). Declines in Manitoba and Nova Scotia came mostly from large drops in multi-residential construction plans. In contrast, Newfoundland's decrease resulted mainly from single-family dwellings.

From January to May this year, builders took out $7.7 billion of residential permits, up 2.9% over the same period in 1998. Single-family dwellings led this gain with a 3.1% increase, while multi-family permits rose 2.4%. Quebec, Ontario and Nova Scotia showed the most significant increases, reflecting gains mainly in single homes. British Columbia and Alberta showed the deepest losses, in both cases resulting from large decreases in single-family dwellings. British Columbia also had a large reduction in multi-unit dwellings.

Residential sector up in May



Non-residential construction intentions down for second straight month

Two straight monthly declines in non-residential intentions have largely offset a strong 30% gain in this sector in March.

In May, industrial intentions stabilized after a sharp decline the month before. But declines in both the commercial and institutional components led to the overall 11.1% decrease in the non-residential sector.

Commercial intentions declined 12.9% to $649 million in May, the largest drop since November 1998. The trade and services, hotel and restaurant groups were the largest contributors. However, during the first five months of 1999, commercial permits reached $3.3 billion, up 4.2% compared with the same period of 1998.

The value of institutional permits fell 16.1% in May to $272 million, the second straight monthly decline. This was largely the result of decreases in school projects. Permits for institutional construction during the first five months of 1999 were 4.7% lower than for the same period in 1998.

In the industrial component, intentions increased a moderate 0.8% to $251 million in May, stabilizing a pattern of volatility during preceding months. Gains in the mining and agriculture group were partially offset by declines in the factory and plant group. Industrial permits for the January-May period were down 3.3% from the same period last year.

At the provincial level, the most significant monthly decreases (in terms of dollars) were in Ontario (-15.0% to $495 million), Quebec (-31.0% to $171 million) and Saskatchewan (-69.2% to $18 million). All components contributed to these three declines.

The most significant increases were in Alberta (+30.2% to $169 million), British Columbia (+16.9% to $209 million) and Nova Scotia (+85.3% to $40 million). In Nova Scotia, institutional projects led the way (+208% to $21 million), the highest value since October 1991.

So far this year, non-residential building intentions have reached $6.3 billion, up 0.2% compared with the January-May period of 1998.

Higher permit values for commercial intentions (+4.2%) have been moderated by weaknesses in both institutional (-4.7%) and industrial projects (-3.3%). Quebec, Ontario and Nova Scotia registered the most significant gains. In Quebec, the industrial component led the way, while commercial intentions were the main driving force in the other two provinces. Alberta and Manitoba showed the deepest reductions, reflecting losses in their industrial and commercial components.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 80 (levels 3-7 and 33-48), 129, 137, 443, 989-992, 994, 995 and 4073.

The May 1999 issue of *Building permits* (64-001-XIB, $19/$186) will be available shortly. See *How to order publications*.

The June 1999 building permits estimates will be released on August 4.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Joanne Bureau (613-951-9689; *burejoa@statcan.ca*). For analytical information, contact Pierre Després (613-951-9691; *desppie@statcan.ca*), Investment and Capital Stock Division. □

Value of building permits

	April 1999[r]	May 1999[p]	April to May 1999	May 1998 to May 1999
	seasonally adjusted			
	$ millions		% change	
Canada	**2,844.6**	**2,793.3**	**-1.8**	**1.2**
Residential	1,525.2	1,620.4	6.2	11.8
Non-residential	1,319.3	1,172.9	-11.1	-10.6
Newfoundland	25.2	16.4	-35.0	7.8
Residential	15.0	11.4	-24.0	15.5
Non-residential	10.2	5.0	-51.2	-6.6
Prince Edward Island	12.9	11.4	-11.5	43.9
Residential	6.5	7.3	12.2	69.9
Non-Residential	6.4	4.1	-35.6	13.2
Nova Scotia	67.4	83.4	23.8	32.2
Residential	45.8	43.3	-5.3	16.9
Non-residential	21.6	40.0	85.3	54.0
New Brunswick	47.8	42.1	-11.9	25.2
Residential	24.6	26.9	9.6	47.2
Non-Residential	23.2	15.1	-34.7	-1.2
Quebec	478.2	413.8	-13.5	-1.1
Residential	230.8	243.1	5.3	18.0
Non-residential	247.4	170.7	-31.0	-19.7
Ontario	1,343.7	1,279.3	-4.8	23.7
Residential	761.9	784.6	3.0	21.2
Non-Residential	581.8	494.7	-15.0	27.9
Manitoba	88.8	64.7	-27.1	-63.5
Residential	32.6	27.2	-16.7	7.1
Non-residential	56.2	37.5	-33.2	-75.3
Saskatchewan	80.6	42.0	-47.9	-44.7
Residential	23.2	24.3	4.8	1.2
Non-Residential	57.4	17.7	-69.2	-65.9
Alberta	318.4	402.9	26.5	-20.2
Residential	188.4	233.6	24.0	1.8
Non-residential	130.0	169.3	30.2	-38.6
British Columbia	369.4	422.6	14.4	3.4
Residential	191.0	214.0	12.1	-11.1
Non-Residential	178.4	208.6	16.9	24.3
Yukon	6.8	2.5	-62.8	-53.2
Residential	1.2	1.4	22.1	4.5
Non-residential	5.7	1.1	-79.9	-72.2
Northwest Territories	0.6	1.8	213.6	-88.9
Residential	0.1	0.3	393.8	-94.5
Non-Residential	0.5	1.5	191.2	-85.9
Nunavut	4.7	10.4	122.1	...
Residential	4.2	2.8	-33.4	...
Non-residential	0.5	7.6	1,586.0	...

p *Preliminary Data*
r *Revised Data*
... *Figures not appropriate or not applicable.*
Note: *Data may not add to totals due to rounding.*

■

OTHER RELEASES

Help-wanted Index
June 1999

In June, the Help-wanted Index rose 1.3% from May to 159 (1996=100). Increases were observed in eight provinces while Alberta remained unchanged and Saskatchewan registered a 1.5% decrease.

Help-wanted Index
(1996=100)

	June 1998	May 1999	June 1999	June 1998 to June 1999	May to June 1999
	seasonally adjusted and smoothed				
				% change	
Canada	**143**	**157**	**159**	**11.2**	**1.3**
Newfoundland	139	146	156	12.2	6.8
Prince Edward Island	144	162	166	15.3	2.5
Nova Scotia	141	159	164	16.3	3.1
New Brunswick	152	176	179	17.8	1.7
Quebec	140	158	160	14.3	1.3
Ontario	149	170	173	16.1	1.8
Manitoba	160	180	181	13.1	0.6
Saskatchewan	136	131	129	-5.1	-1.5
Alberta	150	128	128	-14.7	0.0
British Columbia	121	121	125	3.0	3.3

Note: The Help-wanted Index is compiled from the number of help-wanted ads published in 22 newspapers in 20 major metropolitan areas. The index is a measure of companies' intentions to hire new workers. These indexes have been seasonally adjusted and smoothed to ease month-to-month comparisons.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 105 (levels 8, 9 and 10)

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality of this release, contact Gilles Groleau (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; *labour@statcan.ca*), Labour Statistics Division. ■

Industrial chemicals and synthetic resins
May 1999

Chemical firms produced 212 619 tonnes of polyethylene synthetic resins in May, a 6.5% increase from 199 629 tonnes in May 1998.

From January to May 1999, production totalled 1 015 778 tonnes, up 4.6% from 970 671 tonnes produced during the same period in 1998.

Data are also available on the production of 3 other types of synthetic resins and 24 industrial chemicals.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 951.

The May 1999 issue of *Industrial chemicals and synthetic resins* (46-002-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 Randall Sheldrick (613-951-7199; *shelran@statcan.ca*), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy division. ■

Short-term Expectations Survey

The results of the Short-term Expectations Survey show that, except for trade, the performance of the economy is expected to change little from the June to August period compared with May. Forecasts for international trade show an increase in the surplus in May to $2.6 billion from the April figure of $2.4 billion. The average surplus is then expected to drop to $2.5 billion in June and $2.2 billion in July as the forecast for exports drops while imports are expected to rise.

The month-over-month mean forecast for gross domestic product in April was 0.2% compared with the actual growth of 0.3%. Analysts expect a slight decrease in May and June, with a mean monthly growth of 0.2% for both months.

Forecasters are expecting an increase in the Consumer Price Index over the June to August period. Actual inflation has been higher than expected; the average forecast for May was 1.5% compared with the actual rate of 1.6%.

The actual seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to 8.1% in May, with a lower participation rate than expected (65.7%). Forecasters are anticipating a stable unemployment rate from June through August (8.1% for each month). Slight increases in the participation rate are expected, with rates of 65.9% in June, 66.0% in July and 66.0% in August.

The next release will be on August 4, 1999.

For more information, for a set of tables or to enquire about the concepts, methods, and data quality of this release, contact Jenny Grenier (613-951-1020; fax: 613-951-1572; *grenjen@statcan.ca*), Small Business and Special Surveys Division.

Short-term Expectations Survey

	Average forecasts					Actual figures	
	April	May	June	July	August	April	May
	seasonally adjusted month/month %, constant $1992						
Gross domestic product							
Initial forecast	0.3	0.2	0.2	..	..	0.3	..
First revision	0.3	0.2	..	..	..		
Second revision	0.2	..	..	..	..		
	$ billion						
Exports							
Initial forecast	29.0	28.8	29.0	28.9	..	28.7	..
First revision	28.8	28.9	28.9	..	..		
Second revision	28.5	29.0	..	..	..		
Imports							
Initial forecast	26.5	26.2	26.6	26.7	..	26.3	..
First revision	26.3	26.5	26.4	..	..		
Second revision	26.5	26.4	..	..	..		
Balance							
Initial forecast	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.2	..	2.4	..
First revision	2.5	2.4	2.5	..	..		
Second revision	2.0	2.6	..	..	..		
	year/year % change						
Consumer Price Index							
Initial forecast	0.9	0.8	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.6
First revision	0.8	0.9	1.5	1.5	..		
Second revision	1.1	1.5	1.5	..	..		
	seasonally adjusted %						
Unemployment rate							
Initial forecast	7.9	7.8	7.7	8.0	8.1	8.3	8.1
First revision	7.8	7.8	8.0	8.1	..		
Second revision	7.8	8.1	8.1	..	..		
Labour force participation rate							
Initial forecast	65.7	65.9	65.8	65.9	66.0	66.0	65.7
First revision	65.9	65.8	65.9	66.0	..		
Second revision	65.7	65.9	65.9	..	..		

.. *Not available.*

■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Industrial chemicals and synthetic resins, May 1999
Catalogue number 46-002-XIB
(Canada: $5/$47).

Aviation service bulletin, aviation statistics centre, vol. 31, no. 6
Catalogue number 51-004-XIB
(Canada: $8/$82).

Canada's balance of international payments, First quarter 1999
Catalogue number 67-001-XPB
(Canada: $38/$124; outside Canada: US$38/US$124).

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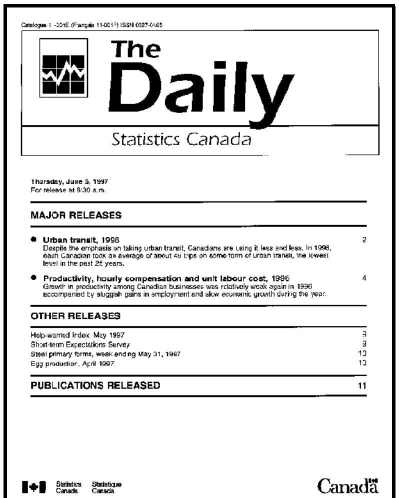
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Thursday, June 5, 1997
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MAJOR RELEASES

- **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

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