

The Daily

Statistics Canada

Friday, September 17, 1999
For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Consumer Price Index, August 1999**

In August, consumers spent 2.1% more than in August 1998 for the goods and services in the Consumer Price Index basket. August's rise follows annual increases of 1.6% in June and 1.8% in July. The accelerated growth in the index reflects the effect of rapidly rising gasoline prices and higher rates for natural gas.

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- **Wholesale trade, July 1999**

Wholesale sales rose 0.4% in July, spurred on by higher sales in computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery, as well as in motor vehicles, parts and accessories.

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- Railway carloadings, seven-day period ending August 21, 1999 8
- Construction Union Wage Rate Index, August 1999 8
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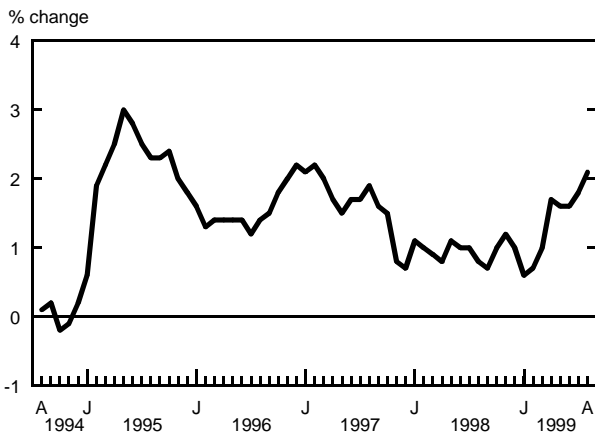
MAJOR RELEASES

Consumer Price Index

August 1999

In August, consumers spent 2.1% more than in August 1998 for the goods and services in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket. August's rise follows annual increases of 1.6% in June and 1.8% in July. The accelerated growth in the index reflects the effect of rapidly rising gasoline prices and higher rates for natural gas. Excluding energy, the growth in the index has ranged from 1.6% for June and July to 1.5% for August.

Percentage change in the Consumer Price Index from the same month of the previous year

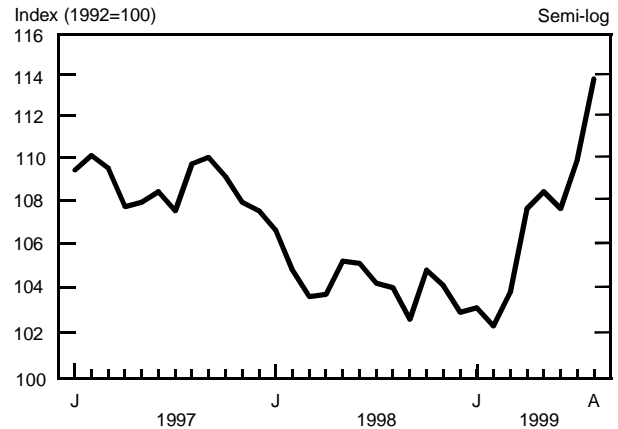


While nearly one third of the annual growth in the CPI is explained by higher energy prices, the increase in the prices of automotive vehicles in the last 12 months was also an important contributor to the higher CPI. The downward pressures on the CPI originated, once again, with lower prices for computer equipment and supplies, and telephone services.

Over the 12 months ending in August, the energy index rose 9.4%. This represents the highest annual increase since the start of the upward trend in the index in February 1999. February marked the end of a period of decreases that began in November 1997. This annual change in the energy index reflects a strong advance in gasoline prices, a rise in rates for natural gas and the first annual increase in fuel oil prices since October 1997. The climbing price of crude oil is the main reason for the increase in prices of gasoline and fuel oil. According to the Raw Materials Price Index,

crude oil prices jumped 45.3% between July 1998 and July 1999.

Energy Index



Monthly percentage change in the CPI is 0.3%

The basket of consumer goods and services cost 0.3% more in August than in July. This represents a monthly rate of increase identical to that of July.

Higher energy prices were the main cause of the rise in the CPI in August. Consumers also faced higher prices for clothing and footwear, which are common at this time of the year. In contrast, they benefited from lower seasonal prices for food purchased from stores.

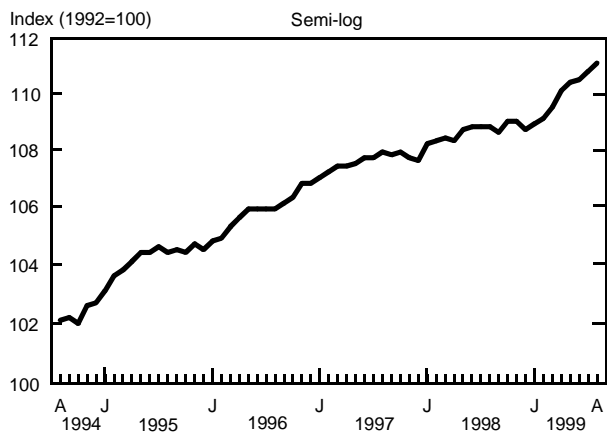
From July to August, the cost of energy increased 3.5% following a 2.1% rise in July and a slight drop of 0.7% in June. The higher energy prices in August are largely attributable to increases in gasoline prices and in fuel oil and natural gas rates. The price of gasoline surged 6.3% in August, while the rates for fuel oil rose 5.3%. From July to August, the natural gas index increased 1.9% after a slight rise of 0.3% from June to July. These price increases are explained by a short supply of natural gas in Western Canada and the prospect of a growing demand for natural gas in the United States over the coming winter.

After remaining unchanged from June to July, the price index for clothing and footwear increased 1.7% from July to August. The higher index was largely due to higher seasonal prices for women's clothing (+3.9%)

and for footwear (+2.3%) as prices returned to normal following the previous month's sales.

Prices for food purchased from stores dropped 1.3% from July to August. This decline is largely attributable to the seasonal decrease in the price of fresh vegetables (-12.9%) and fresh fruit (-2.8%). Good weather conditions and a larger supply of local crops in August meant significantly lower prices for various types of fresh fruit and vegetables.

**The Consumer Price Index
(not seasonally adjusted)**



Provincial highlights

Between August 1998 and August 1999, changes in the All-items indexes for the provinces ranged from a low of 1.3% in British Columbia to a high of 2.6% in Alberta.

From July to August 1999, changes in provincial CPI's varied from a drop of 0.2% in British Columbia to a rise of 0.9% in Nova Scotia.

Provincial spotlight: Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan

Over the 12-month period from August 1998 to August 1999, the CPI for Saskatchewan rose 2.0%, slightly less than the 2.1% increase registered for Canada. Over the same period, the CPI for Nova Scotia moved up by 2.3%, slightly above the average increase for Canada as a whole.

In Saskatchewan, close to three-quarters of the overall increase was explained by advances in transportation and shelter charges. Increases in gasoline prices and in automobile insurance premiums

were the principal factors in the rise of the index for transportation. Shelter charges were driven up mainly by higher rates for natural gas and higher replacement costs for homeowners. The annual increase was also bolstered by notable increases for university tuition fees and automotive vehicle prices.

Over the 12 months ending in August, residents of Saskatchewan faced a 5.5% increase in their automobile insurance premiums while premiums rose, on average, 0.7% for Canada as a whole. Consumers from Saskatchewan also faced increases of 13.4% for natural gas rates, while rates rose, on average, 7.1% in Canada overall. At the same time, the overall change in the CPI for Saskatchewan was dampened mainly by a drop in prices for pork, fresh milk and some types of fresh fruit. Consumers in Saskatchewan experienced overall price decreases of 1.6% for food purchased from stores, while they increased 1.1% for Canada as a whole.

In Nova Scotia, the 12-month increase in the All-items index (+2.3%) also resulted, in large part, from advances in the transportation and shelter indexes. A large hike in the price of gasoline was the dominant factor in the sharp upward movement in the transportation index. Much of the advance in shelter prices resulted from higher prices for fuel oil, homeowners' maintenance and repairs and homeowners' replacement costs.

The index for shelter was up 2.2% in Nova Scotia, while it increased 1.3% for Canada as a whole. The CPI for Nova Scotia was also driven by a significant above-average rise in the price of clothing and footwear associated largely with women's wear. The increase in the food index for Nova Scotia matched the increase in the food index for Canada. Furniture prices, on average, were down 8.2% in Nova Scotia while they increased 3.1% for Canada.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 9940-9956.

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

The September 1999 *Consumer Price Index* will be released on October 15, 1999.

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

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

The Consumer Price Index and major components
1992=100

	August 1999	July 1999	August 1998	July to August 1999	August 1998 to August 1999
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
All-items	111.1	110.8	108.8	0.3	2.1
Food	110.4	111.3	109.2	-0.8	1.1
Shelter	105.0	104.8	103.7	0.2	1.3
Household operations and furnishings	109.1	109.2	107.9	-0.1	1.1
Clothing and footwear	106.3	104.5	104.7	1.7	1.5
Transportation	126.4	124.7	120.2	1.4	5.2
Health and personal care	110.5	110.5	108.4	0.0	1.9
Recreation, education and reading	121.7	121.6	119.3	0.1	2.0
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	94.6	94.7	93.0	-0.1	1.7
Goods	108.3	107.8	105.7	0.5	2.5
Services	114.4	114.3	112.4	0.1	1.8
All-items excluding food and energy	110.9	110.7	109.2	0.2	1.6
Energy	113.8	109.9	104.0	3.5	9.4
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared to 1992	90.0	90.3	91.9		
All-items (1986=100)	142.3				

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

	August 1999	July 1999	August 1998	July to August 1999	August 1998 to August 1999
not seasonally adjusted					
	% change				
Newfoundland	110.6	110.2	108.7	0.4	1.7
Prince Edward Island	107.2	107.0	105.5	0.2	1.6
Nova Scotia	111.1	110.1	108.6	0.9	2.3
New Brunswick	110.0	109.3	107.5	0.6	2.3
Quebec	108.4	108.3	106.5	0.1	1.8
Ontario	111.6	111.2	108.9	0.4	2.5
Manitoba	115.7	115.4	113.3	0.3	2.1
Saskatchewan	114.0	113.6	111.8	0.4	2.0
Alberta	114.3	113.6	111.4	0.6	2.6
British Columbia	111.8	112.0	110.4	-0.2	1.3
Whitehorse	113.0	112.9	111.6	0.1	1.3
Yellowknife	110.1	110.1	108.7	0.0	1.3

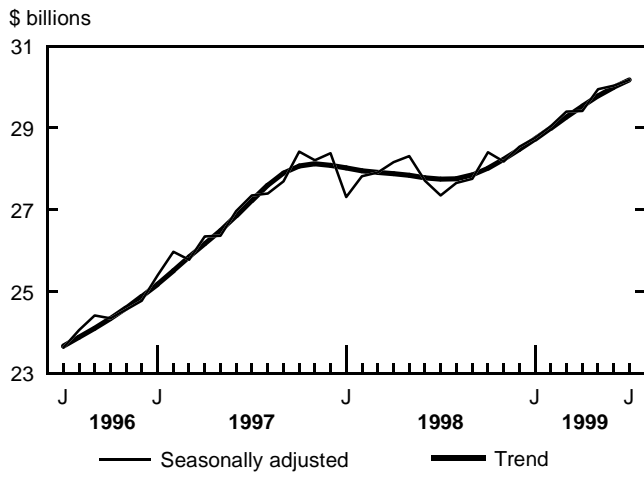
Wholesale trade

July 1999 (preliminary)

Wholesale sales rose 0.4% in July, spurred on by higher sales in computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery, as well as motor vehicles, parts and accessories. If not for the strong showing in these two sectors, wholesale sales would have fallen 0.7%.

Nonetheless, overall wholesale sales have generally been climbing since mid-1998. From the end of 1997 to mid-1998, wholesalers experienced a period of stagnant sales following generally rising sales in previous years.

Despite declines in some sectors, overall wholesale sales advance



Wholesalers sold \$30.2 billion worth of goods and services in July. Advances were led by computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery (+4.6%) and motor vehicles, parts and accessories (+2.7%). The only other gains were reported in industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies (+0.9%) and household goods (+0.5%). Lumber and building materials remained unchanged from June. Noteworthy declines were reported in apparel and dry goods (-4.4%) and in farm machinery, equipment and supplies (-3.7%). Sales in this last group have declined in five of the last six months.

Newfoundland a beacon among the provinces

Among the provinces, Newfoundland wholesalers reported another month of healthy wholesale sales, up a further 1.5% from last month. With wholesalers

Note to readers

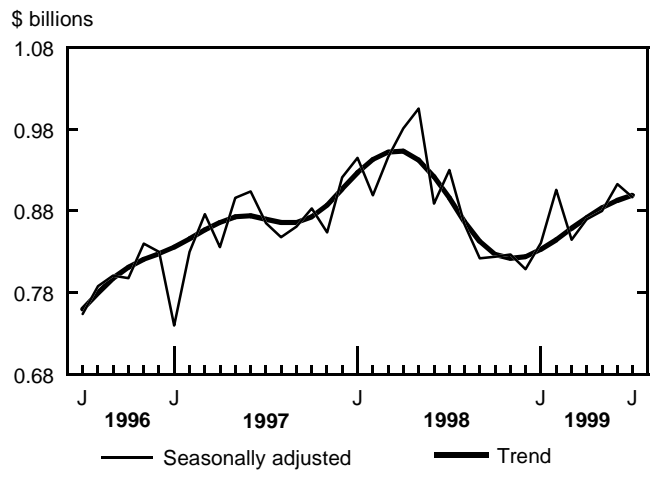
Some unadjusted monthly sales estimates have been revised for 1996 and 1997. As a consequence, seasonally adjusted estimates have been revised from 1996 onwards. The new data can be obtained by consulting the appropriate CANSIM matrices, or upon request from Client Services Unit, Distributive Trades Division.

continuing to report large contracts, Newfoundland has had a full year of consecutive monthly increases. Sales have been climbing since mid-1998.

Increases were also reported in Ontario (+1.3%), British Columbia (+0.5%) and Manitoba (+0.1%). Wholesale sales declined in all other provinces.

Interestingly, Saskatchewan wholesalers have been able to make small gains since the start of this year despite July's 1.8% decline and the overall gloomy agricultural picture on the Prairies. Although overall wholesale sales in the province have been generally on the rise since the start of 1999, they have not recaptured all of the losses in 1998.

Saskatchewan wholesalers are making advances despite the agricultural situation



Sales in electronics still strong

Wholesale sales of computers, packaged software, and other electronic machinery climbed a strong 4.6% in July. Aside from a brief pause in early 1998, sales have been generally climbing over the last few years, fuelled by continued strong demand for computers and software. The interest of Canadians in Internet access was noted as a factor contributing to the strong sales. Wholesalers also reported robust sales in wireless

communication devices (cellular phones and electronic security products).

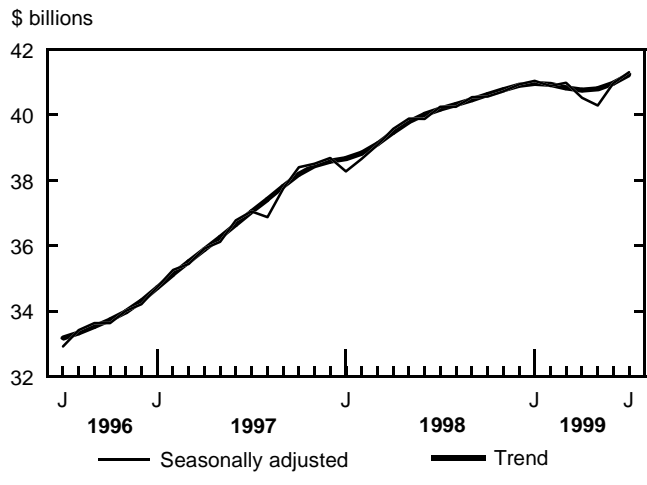
Wholesale sales of motor vehicles, parts and accessories jumped 2.7% in July. Sales of these products have been generally rising since a decline from the end of 1997 until the fall of 1998. Although July is traditionally a slower month for wholesale sales of motor vehicles, parts and accessories, sales this month were higher than in past years. This translated into stronger seasonally adjusted estimates. Canadian demand for overseas-built vehicles was also strong in July.

Inventories increase in July

Wholesalers reported a 0.8% increase in inventories, bringing the value to \$41.3 billion in July. Inventory values have started to rise following a brief decline at the start of this year. Prior to this decline, inventories had been generally increasing.

The inventories-to-sales ratio rose from 1.36 in June to 1.37 in July. However, since mid-1998, the ratio has been generally falling. The ratio is now at levels last seen at the end of 1997.

Inventories increase in July



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

The July 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 at (613-951-3549; wholesaleinfo@statcan.ca) or dial toll free 1-877-421-3067. For more information, or 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

	July 1998 ^r	April 1999 ^r	May 1999 ^r	June 1999 ^r	July 1999 ^p	June to July 1999	July 1998 to July 1999
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions					% change	
Sales, all trade groups	27,347	29,413	29,944	30,033	30,167	0.4	10.3
Food products	4,303	4,570	4,602	4,647	4,562	-1.8	6.0
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,916	1,922	1,901	1,923	1,917	-0.3	0.1
Apparel and dry goods	554	531	546	522	499	-4.4	-9.9
Household goods	800	804	826	832	836	0.5	4.5
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	4,478	5,354	5,591	5,580	5,730	2.7	28.0
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,892	1,945	2,011	1,991	1,932	-3.0	2.1
Lumber and building materials	1,969	2,289	2,355	2,372	2,371	0.0	20.4
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	849	655	627	630	607	-3.7	-28.5
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	3,990	4,281	4,268	4,337	4,377	0.9	9.7
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,736	3,070	3,186	3,144	3,287	4.6	20.2
Other products	3,859	3,991	4,032	4,056	4,050	-0.1	5.0
Sales by province and territory							
Newfoundland	169	210	223	226	229	1.5	35.5
Prince Edward Island	51	49	48	48	48	-0.7	-6.8
Nova Scotia	493	613	601	587	572	-2.6	16.1
New Brunswick	345	361	377	365	363	-0.6	5.0
Quebec	5,585	6,080	6,173	6,094	6,063	-0.5	8.6
Ontario	13,065	14,514	14,870	14,920	15,114	1.3	15.7
Manitoba	911	955	924	945	947	0.1	4.0
Saskatchewan	930	870	880	913	897	-1.8	-3.5
Alberta	2,670	2,629	2,627	2,676	2,660	-0.6	-0.4
British Columbia	3,103	3,107	3,196	3,236	3,251	0.5	4.8
Yukon	11	9	10	9	9	-4.3	-19.3
Northwest Territories	..	13	12	13	12	-1.8	..
Nunavut	..	2	2	2	2	12.4	..
Inventories, all trade groups	40,249	40,526	40,285	40,974	41,304	0.8	2.6
Food products	2,619	2,674	2,809	2,789	2,797	0.3	6.8
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	2,147	2,269	2,275	2,334	2,362	1.2	10.0
Apparel and dry goods	1,235	1,240	1,214	1,221	1,239	1.5	0.4
Household goods	1,562	1,550	1,561	1,567	1,521	-2.9	-2.6
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,766	5,914	5,707	5,881	6,088	3.5	5.6
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,476	3,512	3,531	3,528	3,519	-0.3	1.3
Lumber and building materials	3,618	3,613	3,546	3,682	3,685	0.1	1.8
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,304	2,183	2,164	2,161	2,152	-0.4	-6.6
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	9,783	9,932	9,859	10,152	10,122	-0.3	3.5
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,597	2,393	2,518	2,581	2,568	-0.5	-1.1
Other products	5,143	5,246	5,101	5,077	5,251	3.4	2.1

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

.. Figures not available.

OTHER RELEASES

Railway carloadings

Seven-day period ending August 21, 1999

Non-intermodal traffic loaded during the seven-day period ending August 21, 1999 decreased 4.5% to 4.4 million tonnes compared with the same period of 1998. The number of cars loaded decreased 0.8%.

Intermodal traffic tonnage totalled 382 000 tonnes, a 14.3% increase from the same period of 1998. The year-to-date figures increased 12.4%.

Total traffic decreased 3.2% during the period. This brought the year-to-date total to 160.6 million tonnes, a decrease of 1.7% from the previous year.

All year-to-date figures have been revised.

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. ■

Construction Union Wage Rate Index

August 1999

The Construction Union Wage Rate Index (including supplements) for Canada remained unchanged from July at 113.6 (1992=100). The composite index increased 1.4% compared with August 1998.

Union wage rates are published for 16 trades in 20 metropolitan areas for both the basic rates and rates including selected supplementary payments. Indexes on a 1992=100 time base are calculated for the same metropolitan areas and are published for those where a majority of trades are covered by current collective agreements.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 956, 958 and 9922-9927.

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

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality for this release, contact Louise Chaîné (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca) Client Services Unit, Prices Division. ■

Selected financial indexes

August 1999

August figures are now available for selected financial indexes, which include conventional mortgage rates, prime business lending rates, provincial bond yield averages and exchange rates on 1992=100 time base.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 9928.

These indexes will appear in the third quarter 1999 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79), available in December. See *How to order publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality for this release, contact Louise Chaîné (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca), Client Services Unit, Prices Division. ■

Statistical report on the health of Canadians

1999

A new report containing detailed statistics on more than 80 topics related to the health status of Canadians and the major determinants of health is available today. The *Statistical report on the health of Canadians* draws primarily on results from the National Population Health Survey, as well as other sources such as the National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth.

A section on health determinants explores social, economic and physical environments, health services, personal resources and coping, health knowledge and lifestyle behaviours. A section on health status examines individual well-being, general health and function, injuries, conditions and diseases, and death.

Statistical report on the health of Canadians, 1999 (82-570-XIE) is now available free on Statistics Canada's Web site (www.statcan.ca). The menu path is *Products and services*, then *Downloadable publications (free)* followed by *Health*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods and data quality for this release, contact Larry Swain (613-951-8569; larry.swain@statcan.ca), Health Statistics Division. Print copies of this report are available by phoning 613-954-5995. ■

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Infomat - A weekly review, September 17, 1999
Catalogue number 11-002-XIE
(Canada: \$3/\$109).

Infomat - A weekly review, September 17, 1999
Catalogue number 11-002-XPE
(Canada: \$4/\$145; outside Canada: US\$4/US\$145).

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

Statistical report on the health of Canadians, 1999
Catalogue number 82-570-XIE
(Free).

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Thursday, June 3, 1997
For release at 8:30 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 65 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 notably weak again in 1996, accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow nominal growth during the year.

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- **Short-term Expectations Survey** 2
- **Steel primary forms, week ending May 31, 1997** 13
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Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

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RELEASE DATES: SEPTEMBER 20 TO 24

September 20 to 24
(Release dates are subject to change.)

Release date	Title	Reference period
21	Canadian international merchandise trade	July 1999
22	Retail trade	July 1999
22	Composite Index	August 1999
23	Canada's international transactions in securities	July 1999
