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Releases

Building permits, February 2008

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Construction intentions in Canada cooled for a fourth consecutive month in February, on the heels of a sharp decline in the value of building permits for non-residential construction in Ontario. Municipalities issued \$5.8 billion worth of building permits, down 1.0% from January.

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Canada diversified its portfolio in merchandise trade with the world even further last year, as exports to countries other than the United States advanced, largely on the strength of growing trade with the United Kingdom, Norway and China. The trade deficit with countries other than the United States narrowed to its lowest level since 2004.

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Releases

Building permits

February 2008

Construction intentions in Canada cooled for a fourth consecutive month in February, on the heels of a sharp decline in the value of building permits for non-residential construction in Ontario.

Municipalities issued \$5.8 billion worth of building permits, down 1.0% from January. Intentions peaked in May and June 2007 at \$7.0 billion.

February's decline resulted from much lower non-residential construction intentions in Ontario. If the province were excluded, the total value of building permits nationally would have increased 9.8%, instead of declining 1.0%.

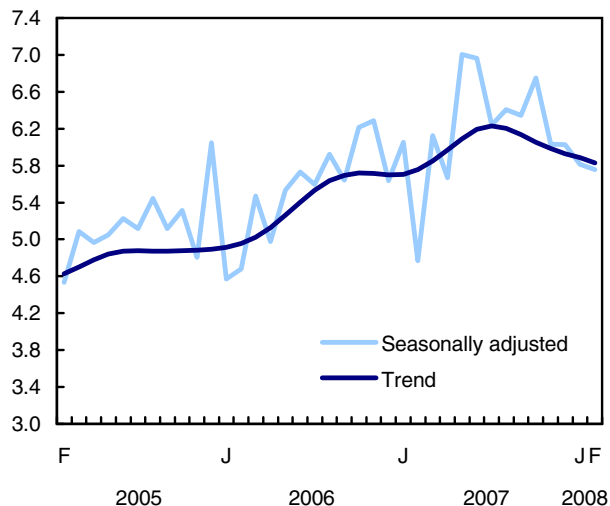
Nationally, a marked increase in residential intentions was not enough to offset a decline in intentions in the non-residential sector.

In the residential sector, the value of building permits increased 18.2% to \$3.9 billion. This was fuelled by jumps in values of both multi- and single-family permits.

The value of non-residential permits fell 25.6% to \$1.9 billion, the lowest level over the last 12 months. February's loss was due to double-digit decreases in permits for all three components: institutional, commercial and industrial.

Fourth consecutive monthly decline in total value of permits

\$ billions



Note to readers

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

The Building Permits Survey covers 2,400 municipalities representing 95% of the population. It provides an early indication of building activity. The communities representing the other 5% 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 or culverts) and land.

For the purpose of this release, the census metropolitan area of Ottawa-Gatineau is divided into two areas: Ottawa-Gatineau (Quebec part) and Ottawa-Gatineau (Ontario part).

These results could have an impact on building sites later in 2008, as building permits are a leading indicator for construction activity.

Substantial decline in Ontario

Gains in the total value of building permits in seven provinces and in all three territories were totally offset by a substantial decline in Ontario.

Overall construction intentions dropped 16.0% to \$2.0 billion in Ontario, the lowest value since April 2007. Falls in all three non-residential components in Ontario led the non-residential sector to a 44.9% decrease in February. However, this decline was partly offset by a strong rebound in the province's residential sector (+21.3%).

New Brunswick and Saskatchewan were the others provinces showing retreats, also the result of lower non-residential construction intentions.

The largest gains in dollar terms occurred in Alberta (+11.8% to \$1.3 billion) and British Columbia (+16.1% to \$945 million). In both, the demand for new dwellings largely drove the gain. Several large projects for multi-family dwellings were approved in Alberta, sending the value of multi-family permits to its second highest level on record.

All provinces and territories posted gains in the residential sector.

Non-residential: Significant decline in every component

The value of building permits declined substantially in all three non-residential components in February.

Following a 27.0% gain in January, the institutional component plunged 35.7% to \$452 million, the lowest level since April 2007.

The decline was spread across various types of buildings (schools, medical buildings, administrative buildings, nursing homes). Overall, seven provinces posted declines, with the largest in Ontario, Alberta and Quebec.

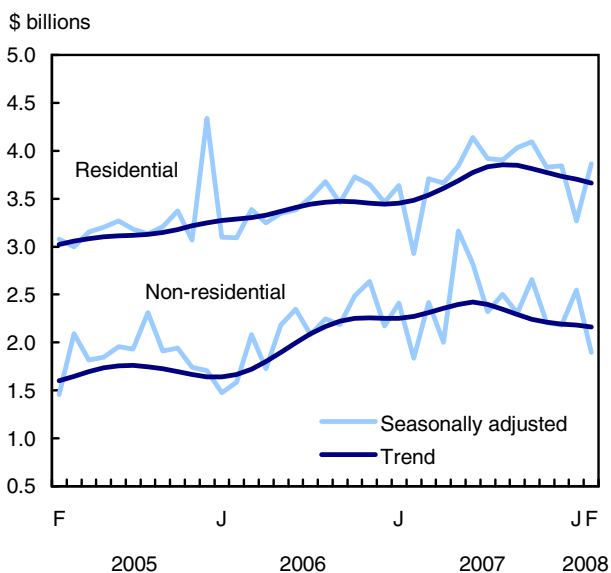
In the commercial component, the value of permits fell 16.2% to \$1.2 billion, largely the result of a significant decline in projects for office buildings and hotels. It was the second lowest level over the last 12 months. Again, Ontario recorded by far the largest share of this decrease, while intentions for retail space surged in Alberta.

On the industrial side, the value of permits plunged 39.4% to \$265 million, the lowest level since March 2006. This followed a 32.2% gain in January. Significant declines in projects for manufacturing buildings in Ontario and utility buildings in Alberta were behind these results. In Ontario, the value of industrial permits hit its lowest level since April 2005.

Overall, the value of non-residential permits has been on a downward trend since last July. Intentions peaked for this component in May and June last year.

Uncertainty related to the impact of a weakening US economy and the high dollar could have a negative impact on non-residential construction intentions. However, vigorous retail sales, low office vacancy rates, strong demand for health care facilities and large corporate profits are favourable factors for non-residential intentions.

Value of non-residential permits decreases sharply



Housing sector: Surge in demand for multi-family units

The value of permits for multi-family dwellings surged 31.0% in February to \$1.5 billion. This level was nearly 5.0% above the average monthly results in 2007.

Municipalities approved 9,767 multi-family units in February, up 20.9% from January.

The value of single-family permits rose 11.6% to \$2.4 billion, and municipalities approved 9,714 units, up 11.6%.

Despite the positive results in February, the number of residential units approved has been on a downward trend since the end of the summer 2007.

Price increases in the housing sector and signs of a weakening US economy may have contributed to a softening of demand. However, several factors could have a positive impact on the demand for housing, including steadiness in employment, growth in disposable income, strong immigration as well as low interest rates.

Metropolitan areas: Non-residential permits fell across Ontario

The total value of permits declined in 18 out of the 34 census metropolitan areas in February. The largest declines (in dollars) occurred in Toronto, Ottawa and London, as non-residential construction intentions fell in these three areas.

Among the 15 metropolitan areas in Ontario, only Hamilton and Barrie posted gains in the non-residential sector in February.

In contrast, the largest gain (in dollars) among metropolitan areas occurred in Calgary, the result of strong demand for new multi-family dwellings. Hamilton and Quebec followed, thanks to rises in both residential and non-residential sectors.

Available on CANSIM: tables 026-0001 to 026-0008 and 026-0010.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2802.

The February 2008 issue of *Building Permits* (64-001-XWE, free) will be available soon.

The March building permit estimate will be released on May 6.

To order data, contact Jasmine Gaudreault (613-951-6321; toll-free 1-800-579-8533; bdp_information@statcan.ca). For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Étienne Saint-Pierre (613-951-2025), Investment and Capital Stock Division.

□

Value of building permits, by census metropolitan area¹

	January 2008 ^r	February 2008 ^p	January to February 2008	January to February 2007	January to February 2008	January–February 2007 to January–February 2008
Seasonally adjusted						
	\$ millions		% change	\$ millions		% change
St. John's	25.2	50.1	99.0	48.0	75.3	56.9
Halifax	37.8	45.7	20.8	55.3	83.6	51.1
Moncton	22.3	8.0	-64.2	24.3	30.3	24.6
Saint John	12.4	15.3	22.7	33.6	27.7	-17.6
Saguenay	4.8	8.6	79.0	10.9	13.4	22.4
Québec	79.1	144.7	82.9	211.4	223.9	5.9
Sherbrooke	23.7	28.4	19.5	42.5	52.1	22.5
Trois-Rivières	23.8	15.5	-35.1	30.7	39.3	27.8
Montréal	516.3	497.6	-3.6	891.7	1,013.8	13.7
Ottawa–Gatineau, Ontario/Quebec	236.7	145.6	-38.5	385.6	382.3	-0.8
Ottawa–Gatineau (Que. part)	31.5	27.6	-12.3	74.9	59.1	-21.1
Ottawa–Gatineau (Ont. part)	205.2	118.0	-42.5	310.7	323.2	4.0
Kingston	6.0	8.2	36.5	19.9	14.2	-28.2
Peterborough	3.0	2.1	-31.6	9.1	5.1	-44.6
Oshawa	58.1	38.6	-33.6	129.4	96.7	-25.3
Toronto	1,277.7	881.8	-31.0	2,139.4	2,159.4	0.9
Hamilton	96.2	243.5	153.1	151.4	339.8	124.4
St. Catharines–Niagara	42.9	23.1	-46.1	55.4	66.0	19.1
Kitchener	60.6	43.2	-28.7	101.5	103.7	2.1
Brantford	12.9	7.6	-41.4	19.2	20.5	6.5
Guelph	25.2	33.1	31.8	45.2	58.3	28.8
London	151.1	100.7	-33.3	123.3	251.8	104.3
Windsor	14.7	9.7	-33.8	41.4	24.4	-41.0
Barrie	21.9	63.6	190.3	29.9	85.5	185.9
Greater Sudbury	26.4	11.9	-55.1	116.6	38.2	-67.2
Thunder Bay	5.6	1.8	-68.6	14.7	7.4	-49.8
Winnipeg	71.2	72.3	1.6	160.3	143.6	-10.4
Regina	21.2	29.7	40.1	47.2	50.8	7.6
Saskatoon	53.7	39.2	-26.9	83.1	92.9	11.8
Calgary	419.4	605.9	44.5	777.8	1,025.3	31.8
Edmonton	340.7	311.8	-8.5	635.0	652.5	2.8
Kelowna	74.9	83.7	11.8	79.8	158.7	98.7
Abbotsford	45.1	22.3	-50.6	77.1	67.5	-12.5
Vancouver	425.2	447.5	5.3	1,083.0	872.7	-19.4
Victoria	54.1	74.3	37.3	149.7	128.4	-14.3

^r revised

^p preliminary

1. Go online to view the census subdivisions that comprise the census metropolitan areas.

Note: Data may not add to totals as a result of rounding.

Value of building permits, by province and territory

	January 2008 ^r	February 2008 ^p	January to February 2008	January to February 2007	January to February 2008	January-February 2007 to January-February 2008
Seasonally adjusted						
	\$ millions		% change	\$ millions		% change
Canada	5,815.2	5,759.0	-1.0	10,818.0	11,574.3	7.0
Residential	3,268.6	3,863.8	18.2	6,565.2	7,132.4	8.6
Non-residential	2,546.6	1,895.2	-25.6	4,252.9	4,441.8	4.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	44.5	66.0	48.3	81.8	110.5	35.2
Residential	38.1	60.5	58.7	58.6	98.6	68.2
Non-residential	6.4	5.6	-13.2	23.2	12.0	-48.3
Prince Edward Island	8.5	10.5	23.6	21.3	19.0	-10.8
Residential	4.9	7.2	46.0	16.3	12.1	-25.7
Non-residential	3.6	3.3	-7.5	4.9	6.8	38.2
Nova Scotia	77.1	90.3	17.2	136.2	167.4	22.9
Residential	66.8	77.7	16.3	104.2	144.5	38.7
Non-residential	10.3	12.6	23.2	32.0	22.9	-28.4
New Brunswick	65.1	57.0	-12.4	109.1	122.2	12.0
Residential	38.8	39.0	0.5	69.8	77.9	11.5
Non-residential	26.3	18.0	-31.6	39.3	44.3	12.8
Quebec	981.2	999.3	1.8	1,777.0	1,980.5	11.5
Residential	677.0	720.9	6.5	1,186.7	1,398.0	17.8
Non-residential	304.1	278.3	-8.5	590.2	582.5	-1.3
Ontario	2,422.0	2,034.0	-16.0	4,176.1	4,456.0	6.7
Residential	1,055.9	1,280.9	21.3	2,266.3	2,336.8	3.1
Non-residential	1,366.1	753.1	-44.9	1,909.8	2,119.2	11.0
Manitoba	111.5	127.8	14.6	252.7	239.2	-5.3
Residential	87.6	88.0	0.4	160.0	175.7	9.8
Non-residential	23.8	39.7	66.8	92.7	63.5	-31.5
Saskatchewan	115.9	109.6	-5.5	191.6	225.5	17.7
Residential	79.1	83.8	6.0	117.9	162.9	38.2
Non-residential	36.8	25.8	-30.1	73.8	62.6	-15.1
Alberta	1,173.3	1,311.4	11.8	2,168.2	2,484.7	14.6
Residential	566.7	747.7	31.9	1,357.0	1,314.4	-3.1
Non-residential	606.6	563.7	-7.1	811.2	1,170.3	44.3
British Columbia	814.1	944.9	16.1	1,874.0	1,759.0	-6.1
Residential	652.1	750.7	15.1	1,218.1	1,402.8	15.2
Non-residential	162.0	194.2	19.9	655.9	356.2	-45.7
Yukon	1.9	7.2	272.4	21.6	9.2	-57.5
Residential	1.4	6.5	361.8	6.4	7.9	23.5
Non-residential	0.5	0.7	34.5	15.2	1.2	-91.8
Northwest Territories	0.2	0.9	292.8	5.0	1.1	-78.4
Residential	0.1	0.8	735.2	0.4	0.9	137.0
Non-residential	0.1	0.1	-16.9	4.7	0.2	-94.9
Nunavut	0.0	0.0	12.5	3.5	0.1	-98.1
Residential	0.0	0.0	12.5	3.5	0.1	-98.1
Non-residential	0.0	0.0	...	0.0	0.0	...

^r revised

^p preliminary

... figures not applicable

Note: Data may not add to totals as a result of rounding.



International merchandise trade: Annual review 2007

Canada diversified its portfolio in merchandise trade with the world even further last year, as exports to countries other than the United States advanced, largely on the strength of growing trade with the United Kingdom, Norway and China.

A new analysis of international trade patterns shows that exports to countries other than the United States have grown considerably over the past five years, up 17.4% in 2007 alone. As a result, these countries as a group represented more than one-fifth of Canada's export market in 2007.

Exports to China were responsible for nearly one-fifth of the total growth in Canada's exports in 2007. This most recent surge elevated China to the position of Canada's third largest export market, replacing Japan. Wood pulp, metals, and organic chemicals were among the leading exports to China.

Companies in Canada dramatically increased shipments to Europe as well, bringing exports to \$41.7 billion. These increases were primarily due to large gains in exports to United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands. Increased exports of nickel were spread across the three countries, while the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were the leading European destinations for Canadian inorganic chemicals.

The United States remained the largest export destination, followed by the United Kingdom.

Imports from countries other than the United States as a group have also been on the rise. They represented over 45% of Canada's total imports last year, the result of growth in shipments from China and Mexico. High-tech products such as computers and telecommunication and related equipment dominated imports from China. Imports from Mexico were powered by increasing levels of telecommunications equipment and motor vehicle parts.

Trade surplus falls to lowest value in eight years

In total, Canada's merchandise imports and exports reached record highs in 2007 in the wake of the rapid appreciation of the dollar, the housing slowdown in the United States, and rising energy prices spurred by the soaring price of crude oil. Merchandise exports increased 2.1% to \$465.2 billion, while imports rose 2.8% to \$415.8 billion.

As a result, Canada's annual merchandise trade surplus with the world fell to \$49.5 billion, its lowest level since 1999.

The energy sector made the largest contribution to the overall trade surplus. In fact, if this sector's influence were removed, Canada would be in a trade deficit position with the world. This held true in 2006 as well.

By contrast, automotive products slipped into a trade deficit position for the first time since 1987, amid widespread declines in exports of all three automotive subgroups, while imports remained virtually unchanged.

Exports of forestry, automotive products decline

The 2.1% increase in total merchandise exports reflected increases in both volumes (+1.1%) and prices (+1.0%).

Most sectors contributed to the increase, with industrial goods leading the way. Rising exports in this sector were boosted by the continued strength of metal ores and alloys, largely due to increased prices.

Exports of energy products increased 5.6% in 2007, reaching \$91.6 billion. Although the United States was still the biggest consumer of Canada's energy products, new demand for crude oil from China and Singapore boosted Canada's energy exports to Asia.

Forestry and automotive products were the only sectors that recorded declines. The largest drop in terms of value was in automotive products, as declining demand for passenger autos and trucks in the United States dampened exports to this destination.

Forestry exports have been on the decline for the past few years, particularly lumber and sawmill products. The sector faced numerous challenges in 2007, including the strong Canadian dollar, a depressed United States housing market and the adjustment to the new Softwood Lumber Agreement.

Widespread gains in all import sectors

Imports recorded widespread gains across all sectors. Record import volumes drove the growth in value as import prices fell.

Consumer goods led the gain in imports in terms of value, reflecting strong demand for items such as pharmaceutical products, toys, clothing and house furnishings.

Energy products gained ground for the fifth straight year, reaching \$36.6 billion. The price of crude petroleum soared throughout 2007, hitting a record \$99 per barrel in November. Crude petroleum continued to flow into refineries across Canada, with imports hitting a record high of \$23.7 billion.

Agricultural and fishing products reached a record high, while greater demand for energy products and machinery and equipment boosted imports in these sectors.

Available on CANSIM: tables 228-0001 to 228-0003, 228-0033, 228-0034, 228-0041 to 228-0043 and 228-0047 to 228-0055.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers, including related surveys, 2201, 2202 and 2203.

The publication *International Merchandise Trade Annual Review*, 2007 (65-208-XWE, free) is now

available online from the *Publications* module of our website.

For more information on products and services, contact Sharon Nevins (toll-free 1-800-294-5583; 613-951-9798). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Deborah Sussman (613-951-0284), International Trade Division. ■

Farm product prices

February 2008

Prices received by farmers in February for grains, oilseeds, specialty crops, potatoes, cattle, hogs, poultry, eggs and dairy products are now available.

The Quebec grain corn price in February was \$182.00 per metric tonne, up 2% from January and up 5% from February 2007 when the price was \$174.00.

The February feeder calves price in Manitoba was \$91.62 per hundredweight, up 3% from January but down 16% from the February 2007 price of \$108.71.

Farm commodity prices are now available on CANSIM. Over 35 commodities are available by province, some series going back 20 years.

Available on CANSIM: table 002-0043.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3436.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Nickeisha Patterson (613-951-3249; fax: 613-951-3868; nickeisha.patterson@statcan.ca), Agriculture Division. ■

Food services and drinking places

January 2008 (preliminary)

The total seasonally adjusted sales for the food services and drinking places industry was estimated at \$3.9 billion in January, up 2.0% compared with the previous month.

The four sectors of the industry showed mixed results in January relative to December. Sales for full-service restaurants increased 2.1% and sales for limited-service eating places increased 3.0%. These

two sectors accounted for over 87% of the sales for the industry in January. Sales in the special food services, which include food service contractors, caterers and mobile food services, decreased 0.9%, while those for drinking places declined 1.4%.

All provinces except Saskatchewan and Alberta saw sales increase between December and January. After showing one of the largest decreases in December, Nova Scotia bounced back with the largest sales increase in January (+14.0%). Large advances were also seen in Newfoundland and Labrador (+5.8%), British Columbia (+5.2%) and New Brunswick (+3.9%). Sales fell in Saskatchewan (-1.5%) and Alberta (-0.7%).

Note: Data prior to September 2007 from the new Monthly Survey of Food Services and Drinking Places were backcast to January 1998 using the old Monthly Survey of Restaurants, Caterers and Taverns. While every measure was taken to account for changes in survey concepts and design, some caution should be taken when comparing current estimates to those prior to September 2007. Likewise, caution should also be exercised when using the seasonally adjusted estimates, as the seasonal adjustment factors are calculated using data from both the new survey as well as the backcast data.

Available on CANSIM: table 355-0006.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2419.

For more information, to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality, or to obtain more information about the redesign of the Monthly Survey of Food Services and Drinking Places, contact Marc Racette (613-951-2924; fax: 613-951-6696; marc.racette@statcan.ca) or Pierre Felx (613-951-0075; pierre.felx@statcan.ca), Service Industries Division. □

Food services and drinking places

	January 2007	November 2007 ^r	December 2007 ^r	January 2008 ^p	December 2007 to January 2008
Seasonally adjusted					
	\$ thousands				% change
Total, food services sales	3,803,487	3,852,236	3,829,451	3,907,003	2.0
Full-service restaurants	1,759,729	1,768,904	1,783,161	1,819,764	2.1
Limited-service eating places	1,555,643	1,577,991	1,542,652	1,589,273	3.0
Special food services	285,501	315,618	314,885	311,913	-0.9
Drinking places	202,614	189,723	188,753	186,053	-1.4
Provinces and territories					
Newfoundland and Labrador	45,630	43,431	41,572	43,978	5.8
Prince Edward Island	14,162	11,976	12,097	12,149	0.4
Nova Scotia	94,046	96,492	93,774	106,943	14.0
New Brunswick	70,059	67,245	66,093	68,677	3.9
Quebec	775,599	762,251	768,919	768,937	0.0
Ontario	1,417,716	1,456,037	1,476,244	1,507,854	2.1
Manitoba	111,869	107,416	107,909	110,062	2.0
Saskatchewan	96,338	104,227	103,685	102,138	-1.5
Alberta	533,392	545,573	543,213	539,143	-0.7
British Columbia	634,493	646,302	604,088	635,240	5.2
Yukon	3,494	3,578	3,594	3,816	6.2
Northwest Territories	6,096	7,060	7,515	7,260	-3.4
Nunavut	593	648	748	806	7.8

^r revised

^p preliminary

Note: Figures may not add up to totals due to rounding.

Food services and drinking places

	January 2007	November 2007 ^r	December 2007 ^r	January 2008 ^p	January 2007 to January 2008
Not seasonally adjusted					
	\$ thousands				% change
Total, food services sales	3,349,525	3,784,713	3,892,990	3,470,667	3.6
Full-service restaurants	1,523,446	1,701,610	1,802,842	1,606,472	5.4
Limited-service eating places	1,380,424	1,554,346	1,549,794	1,422,823	3.1
Special Food Services	263,217	336,321	343,227	273,300	3.8
Drinking places	182,438	192,435	197,128	168,073	-7.9
Provinces and territories					
Newfoundland and Labrador	38,539	43,622	45,118	37,451	-2.8
Prince Edward Island	11,100	10,662	10,686	9,253	-16.6
Nova Scotia	74,852	93,125	94,105	85,176	13.8
New Brunswick	59,197	67,669	67,609	59,131	-0.1
Quebec	679,133	739,010	771,077	677,743	-0.2
Ontario	1,240,455	1,461,165	1,499,715	1,350,748	8.9
Manitoba	98,057	108,016	113,213	98,566	0.5
Saskatchewan	84,913	102,063	104,278	91,920	8.3
Alberta	491,922	546,812	558,076	493,138	0.2
British Columbia	562,855	602,217	618,503	557,708	-0.9
Yukon	2,616	3,007	3,158	2,833	8.3
Northwest Territories	5,503	6,752	6,793	6,457	17.3
Nunavut	383	594	659	543	41.8

^r revised

^p preliminary

Note: Figures may not add up to totals due to rounding.

Farm operating revenues and expenses

2006

Data for farm operating revenues and expenses for 2006 are now available (final estimates).

The survey was conducted to produce estimates for agricultural expenses and was based on taxation records.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3447.

For more information, custom data requests, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Client Services (toll-free 1-800-465-1991; agriculture@statcan.ca), Agriculture Division. ■

School board revenues and expenditures

2004

Data are now available for school board revenues and expenditures up to 2004.

Available on CANSIM: tables 478-0010 to 478-0012.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3119.

For more information, order data, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Client Services (toll-free 1-800-307-3382; 613-951-7608; fax: 613-951-9040; educationstats@statcan.ca), Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics. ■

Natural gas liquids and liquefied petroleum gases

October and November 2007

Data on the supply and demand for natural gas liquids and liquefied petroleum gases are now available for October and November.

Available on CANSIM: table 132-0001.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 7524.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Marketing and Dissemination Section (613-951-9497; toll-free 1-866-873-8789; energ@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

New products

International Merchandise Trade Annual Review, 2007
Catalogue number 65-208-XWE
 (free).

All prices are in Canadian dollars and exclude sales tax. Additional shipping charges apply for delivery outside Canada.

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