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DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND COMMERCE

FAMILY LIVING EXPENDITURES IN CANADA

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Some interesting data concerning wage-earner family living standards have recently been obtained from a Vancouver survey of urban family living expenditures. This survey was authorized at the last session of Parliament, which provided for an investigation by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics into nutrition and family living expenditures in representative Canadian cities. In October and November accordingly, surveys were made under the direction of Hon. W. D. Euler, Minister of Trade and Commerce, in twelve cities representing all the provinces of the Dominion. Summary results from these surveys are now available separately for each city, and will be supplemented by reports presenting a complete record of findings. The present statement concerning the City of Vancouver, B.C., is similar to other statements to be released for Charlottetown, Halifax, Saint John, Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, London, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton.

Records in Vancouver were collected for the year ending September, 1938, from families of British origin, with both parents and from one to five children present in the home; in some cases one lodger also lived with the family. The earnings of families in the sample ranged from \$450 to \$2,500 per year. Within these limits, families were selected at random so as to present as nearly as possible an accurate picture of typical levels of living. The 168 families selected in Vancouver averaged 4.4 persons of which 2.3 were children. This compares with an average of 3.4 persons and 1.3 children per household shown by the 1931 census.

Records from these 168 typical wage-earner families show that 61 per cent of total living expenditure was devoted to goods usually classed as necessities. Approximately 28 per cent was spent on foods, 18 per cent upon shelter, 5 per cent for fuel and light, and 10 per cent upon clothing. Another 8.6 per cent was devoted to the maintenance of the home, and 5.5 per cent to health and personal care. Slightly less than 6 per cent was spent on recreation and the combined expenditures upon education, community welfare and gifts outside of the family circle amounted to 4.2 per cent. Only 52 of the families owned motor cars, and the average amount spent per family on current operating costs and the purchase of cars was just 3.9 per cent of total family expenditure, while another 2.7 per cent was taken by other forms of transportation. Average family savings (including life insurance premiums, and re-payment of obligations incurred in years preceding) amounted to \$135, or 8.6 per cent of the expenditure total. Balanced

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against this amount was an average of \$71 per family owing on accounts contracted during the survey year.

Arrangement of records according to progressive income per person groups revealed some noteworthy differences in the composition of families and in their economic circumstances. The average age of the father was close to 42 years in all income groups but the number of children per family dropped steadily from 3.7 in the group with income of from \$100 to \$199 per person to 1.4 children for families with income from \$500 to \$599 per person. The corresponding averages of annual income per family increased from \$1,015 to \$1,800 in these respective groups, and the number of rooms per person mounted from 0.9 to 1.3. There was a sharp drop in the percentage of expenditure upon foods from 42.7 to 21.6 corresponding with the rise in income per person from \$100-199 to \$500-599. Clothing percentages showed moderate decreases in the higher income groups but the expenditure pattern for other budget groups at successive income per person levels did not appear closely related to the amount of income.

Distribution of Annual Living Expenditures for 168 Vancouver Wage-Earner Families
(Year ending September 30, 1938)

Budget Group	\$	Percentage of Total Expenditure
Food	440	28.3
Housing	278	17.9
Fuel and Light	76	4.9
Clothing	150	9.6
Household Operation and Furnishings	134	8.6
Health and Personal Care	87	5.5
Education, Welfare, Gifts	66	4.2
Recreation	90	5.8
Savings *	135	8.6
Motor Car	60	3.9
Other Transportation	42	2.7
TOTAL	\$1,558	100.0

* Includes life insurance premiums and re-payment of obligations incurred prior to the survey year; amounts still owing on current accounts averaged \$71 per family, and a small portion of expenditures was also financed by reducing bank balances and the sale of property.



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In thousands of dollars	1977	1978
Total	100	100
Federal	85	85
Provincial	10	10
Municipal	5	5
Other	0	0
Total	100	100
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Provincial	10	10
Municipal	5	5
Other	0	0
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