The Fiscal Balance in Canada



February 2000

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A majority of provinces and territories reported a surplus last year

- ✓ According to the most recent estimates, six provinces and one territory recorded surpluses in 1998-99.
- ✓ The aggregate provincial-territorial government deficit of \$1.9 billion in 1998-99 is mainly explained by the large deficit in Ontario, which is expected to be eliminated in 2000-01.

All provinces are projected to have healthy fiscal surpluses during the next five years

- ✓ According to a recent Royal Bank of Canada study, all provinces will have fiscal surpluses during the next five years.
- ✓ By 2004-05, eight provinces are projected to have fiscal surpluses that are similar as a share of GDP to the surpluses projected at the federal level.

The provincial debt burden is much smaller than the federal debt burden

- ✓ The provincial-territorial debt burden is much smaller than at the federal government level. Therefore, the federal government remains more vulnerable than the provinces to increases in interest rates.
- ✓ Because of its higher debt load, debt charges consume a much higher proportion of federal revenues than is the case with the provinces and territories.

The provinces and territories have diversified revenue bases

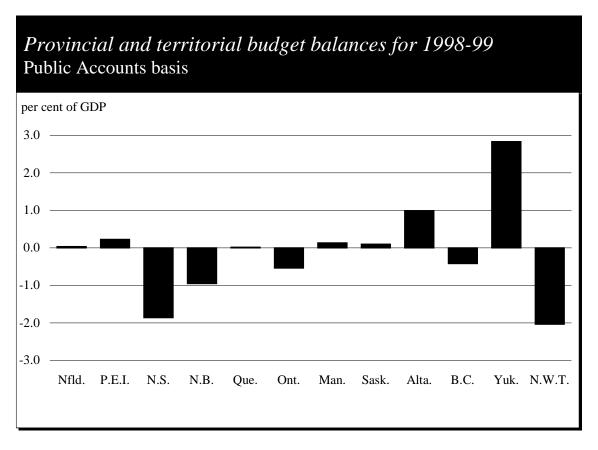
- ✓ Combined provincial-territorial revenues have exceeded federal revenues for almost 25 years since 1976.
- ✓ Historically, provincial-territorial revenues have kept pace with the growth in their program spending.
- ✓ The fact that provinces are choosing to reduce taxes suggests that they have the revenue base to meet their spending needs.
- ✓ The tax bases from which both the federal and the provincial governments derive revenues are essentially the same, providing the provinces with virtually the same diversity of revenue sources on which to draw, if deemed necessary, to meet their spending priorities. The option of moving to a tax-on-income system will provide the provinces and territories with even greater tax flexibility.
- ✓ Federal and provincial-territorial revenues have grown at essentially the same rate during the past 20 years. In fact, the provinces have unique access to fast growing

categories, such as gaming profits. In contrast, some uniquely federal revenue categories, such as import duties and employment insurance revenues, are not growing and are even declining.

Spending pressures from an aging population are not unique to the provinces and territories

- ✓ The spending pressures associated with an aging population will not become significant until 10 to 15 years from now.
- ✓ At that time, both levels of government will be affected: provincial-territorial governments will face higher spending pressures for health care, partially offset by lower spending for primary and secondary education, whereas the federal government will face increased old-age security spending pressures.
- ✓ For both levels of government, the cost pressures associated with an aging population should be manageable, particularly if governments continue to take action now to bring down debt loads, thus freeing up for other needs revenues now devoted to servicing the debt.

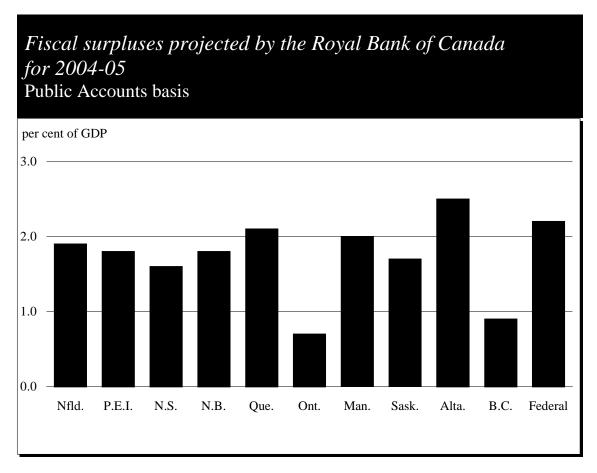
A majority of provinces and territories have achieved a surplus



Source: Public Accounts.

- ✓ According to the most recent provincial data, seven jurisdictions recorded surpluses in 1998-99.
- ✓ Three of the provinces have posted four or more consecutive surpluses.
- ✓ The aggregate provincial-territorial deficit is estimated at \$1.9 billion in 1998-99, mainly reflecting Ontario's \$2-billion deficit, which is expected to be eliminated next year.

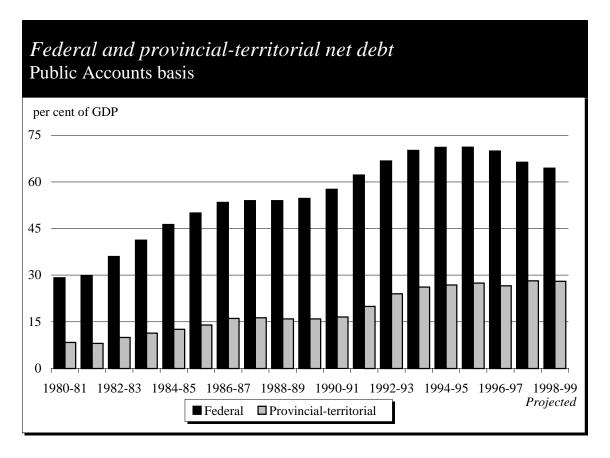
A majority of provinces are projected to have fiscal surpluses similar to those of the federal government



Source: Relative fiscal power: Ottawa versus the provinces, Royal Bank of Canada, September 1999. Note: See the annex for supporting data.

- ✓ According to projections made by the Royal Bank of Canada, the federal government's fiscal surplus could rise to about \$26 billion by 2004-05, compared to about \$16 billion at the provincial level.
- ✓ Eight provinces were estimated to have fiscal surpluses between 1.6 and 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2004-05, roughly similar to the 2.2-per-cent fiscal dividend at the federal level.
- ✓ British Columbia and Ontario were projected to have lower fiscal surpluses in 2004-05. This was explained by the fact that both provinces were still in deficit positions in 1998-99, reflecting the economic effects of the Asian Crisis in British Columbia and the tax cuts by the province of Ontario.

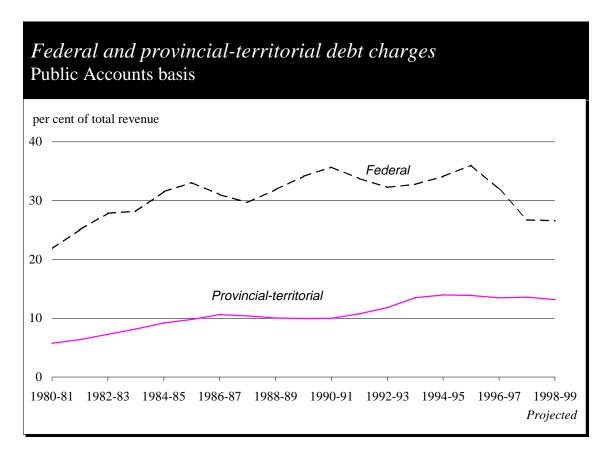
The federal debt burden is much larger than the provincial-territorial debt burden



Source: Public Accounts.

- ✓ The debt burden of both levels of government has increased substantially during the last 20 years.
- ✓ However, the federal government's debt burden is over twice as large as the aggregate provincial-territorial debt burden.
- ✓ Reducing the debt burden must continue to be a major priority for the federal government.

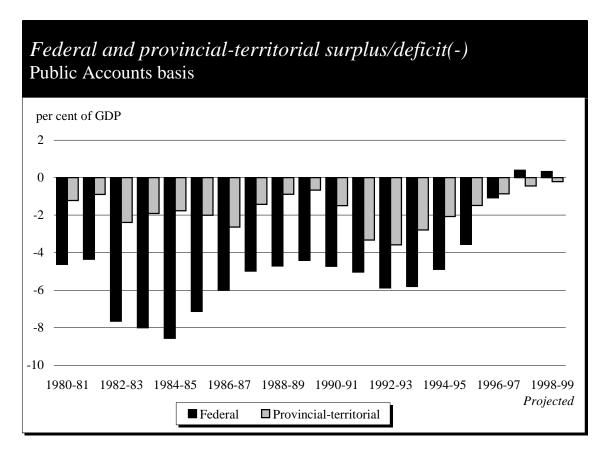
Debt charges are significantly higher at the federal level



Source: Public Accounts.

- ✓ Because of its higher debt load, the federal government has consistently faced a higher debt service burden than the provinces and territories.
- ✓ In 1995-96, the federal government spent 36 per cent of its revenues on debt charges. Although significant progress in moderating this burden has been made, federal debt charges still consume more than a quarter of all federal revenues, compared to about 13 per cent at the provincial-territorial level.
- ✓ Because its debt charges are so large, the federal government has considerably less fiscal room-to-manoeuvre than the provinces and is more vulnerable to volatility in global interest rates.
- ✓ A further reduction in the federal debt burden is critical to reduce the share of revenues going to servicing the debt, and thereby free more funds to reduce taxes and invest in key priorities.

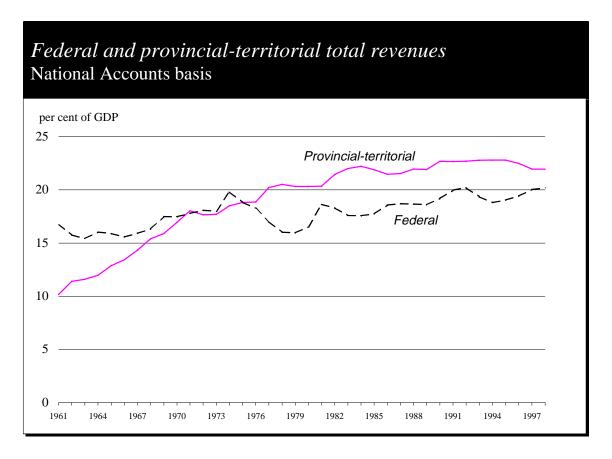
The federal government needs to maintain a prudent fiscal approach



Source: Public Accounts.

- ✓ Historically, the federal government has incurred significantly larger deficits, as a per cent of GDP, than the provinces and territories.
- ✓ After years of fiscal discipline and favourable economic conditions, the federal government achieved surpluses in both 1997-98 and 1998-99.
- ✓ Continued fiscal prudence is vital for the restoration of fiscal room-to-manoeuvre in the future.

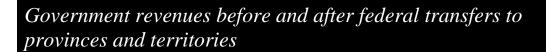
Provincial-territorial revenues have been larger than federal revenues for the past two decades

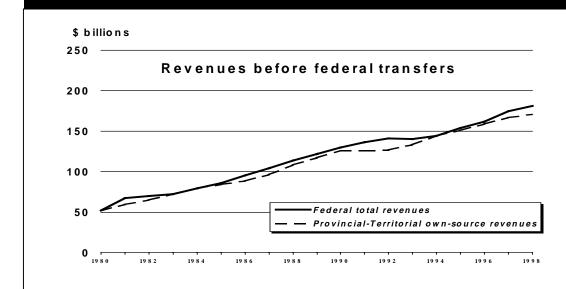


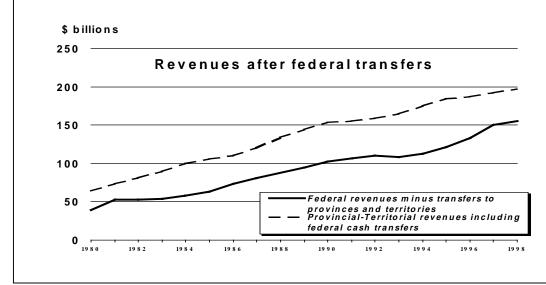
Source: National Accounts.

- ✓ Since 1976, total provincial and territorial revenues have exceeded federal revenues. In 1998, provincial-territorial revenues exceeded federal revenues by \$16 billion, or 1.8 per cent of GDP.
- ✓ This rise in revenues testifies to the ongoing capacity of provincial-territorial administrations to use their revenue bases to finance their spending.

Contribution of Federal Transfers to Provincial Revenues



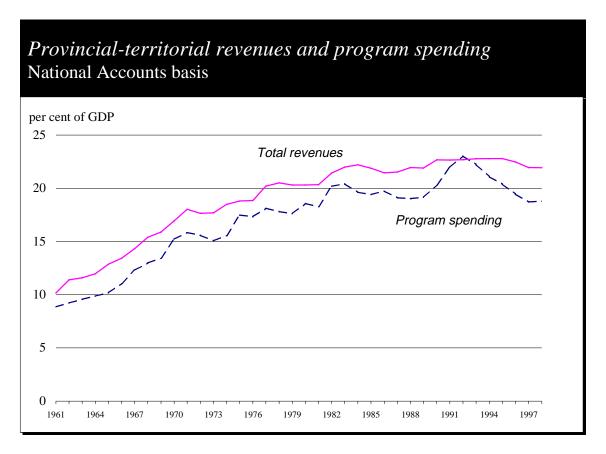




Source: National Accounts.

- ✓ In 1998, the federal government transferred \$26 billion cash to provinces and territories.
- ✓ This amount is a \$26 billion expenditure out of federal revenues.
- ✓ In 1998, the effect of transfers is to increase provincial revenues from \$171 billion to \$197 billion.

Provincial-territorial revenues have kept pace with program spending



Source: National Accounts.

- ✓ Over the last four decades, provincial-territorial program spending as a share of GDP has more than doubled, rising by 9.9 percentage points. This reflects the creation of new social programs and increased spending under existing programs.
- ✓ At the same time, total provincial-territorial revenues as a share of GDP increased even faster, rising by 11.8 percentage points.
- ✓ Thus, the increase in provincial spending has not led to a fundamental imbalance in provincial finances.

Provincial tax cuts suggest that current and future spending pressures are manageable

Tax cuts announced in recent budgets¹

	Personal income tax	Corporate income tax	Retail sales tax	Payroll tax
Newfoundland	Post-1999 budget		1996 budget ²	1999 budget 1998 budget
Prince Edward Island	1999 budget			
Nova Scotia	1998 budget 1996 budget		1996 budget ²	
New Brunswick	1997 to 1999 budgets	1999 budget 1995 budget	1996 budget ²	
Quebec	1999 budget 1997 budget			1998 budget
Ontario	1996 to 1999 budgets	1998 budget		1998 budget 1996 budget
Manitoba	1999 budget 1998 budget	1999 budget		1998 budget 1997 budget
Saskatchewan	1998 budget	1995 budget	1999 budget 1997 budget	
Alberta	1999 budget 1998 budget			
British Columbia	1999, 1998 & 1996 budgets	1999, 1998 & 1996 budgets		

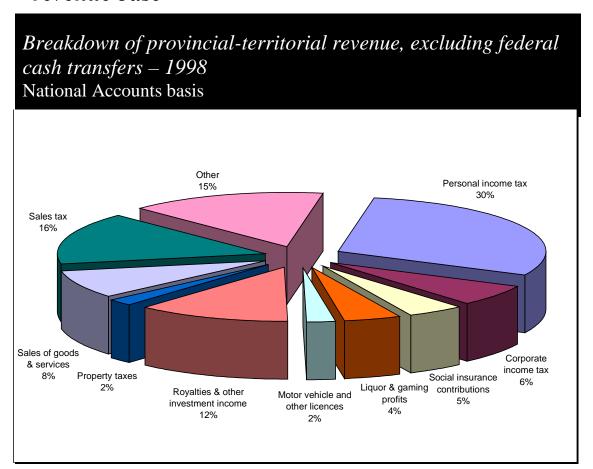
^{1.} Tax cuts include changes in personal income tax rates, individual surtaxes, corporate income tax rates, payroll tax rates and sales tax rates.

Note: Budgets presented in bold italics indicate that the tax reduction initiatives were announced prior to the balancing of the budget.

- ✓ All provinces have announced tax cuts over the last five years.
- ✓ The fact that provinces are choosing to implement tax reductions strongly suggests that their spending pressures are manageable and that they are able to respond to them with existing resources.

^{2.} Harmonized sales tax.

The provinces and territories have a very diversified revenue base



Source: National Accounts.

- ✓ In Canada, provinces and territories can draw their revenues from a very wide variety of sources. With the exception of import duties and taxes on non-residents, which are exclusive to the federal jurisdiction, provinces have access to the same revenue sources as the federal government.
- ✓ In addition, provinces benefit from some revenue sources that fall under their exclusive jurisdiction, such as natural resource royalties, liquor and gaming profits, property taxes and specific licenses and permits.
- ✓ Beginning in the 2001 taxation year, the provinces and territories will have the freedom to adopt a tax-on-income system for personal income taxes, without having to create separate income tax forms. Provincial and territorial income taxes will no longer have to be calculated as a percentage of Basic Federal Tax. This will provide provincial and territorial governments with increased flexibility to design their tax systems according to their policy objectives and financial needs.

Federal and provincial-territorial revenue growth have been virtually identical over the past 20 years

Growth in revenues and revenue sources from 1978 to 1998 and shares of revenue sources as of 1998

	Federal revenues	Provincial- territorial revenues (excluding federal cash transfers)	Direct taxes from persons	Direct taxes from corporations	Contributions to social insurance plans	s Total indirect taxes
(per cent)						
Average annual growth in	revenues and	revenue source	es from 1978 t	о 1998		
	7.9	8.0	8.5	7.6	8.3	8.0
Shares of revenue sources a	ns of 1998					
Federal share			61	64	74	36
Provincial-territorial share			39	36	26	64

- ✓ During the past 20 years, both federal and provincial-territorial revenues grew by some 8 per cent per year, on average.
- ✓ Provinces have access to essentially the same tax bases as the federal government.
- ✓ For personal and corporate income taxes, provinces have the ability to set their own tax rates.
- ✓ Some components of federal revenue, such as custom import duties, employment insurance and tobacco receipts are not growing, and are even declining.
- ✓ Provinces have unique access to fast growing categories such as gaming profits.

Both levels of government will face increased future spending pressures as a result of population aging

- ✓ Canada's population is aging. The number of older persons will increase dramatically because the baby boom generation is growing older and Canadians are living longer because of lifestyle changes and medical advances.
- ✓ These changes will start having a significant impact on expenditures in approximately 10 to 15 years, when the eldest of the baby boomers will have reached the age of 65.
- ✓ At that time, the provinces and territories will face increased spending pressures, particularly in the health care sector. The federal government will also face increased spending pressures, especially for old-age security.
- ✓ Population aging should also reduce some spending pressures for the provinces. As the number of younger people declines relative to the total population, less spending will be required for education and some social services.
- ✓ For both the federal and provincial governments, the cost pressures associated with an aging population should be manageable, particularly if all governments continue to take action now to increase their fiscal manoeuvring room by reducing the debt burden. This will reduce the proportion of revenues that go to debt servicing, thereby freeing up revenues to meet Canadians' needs for public services.

Annex

Provincial and territorial budget balances for 1998-99 Public Accounts basis						
Provinces/territories	Surplus/deficit(-) (\$ millions)	GDP (\$ millions)	Surplus/deficit(-) (per cent of GDP)			
Newfoundland	4	11,308	0.03			
Prince Edward Island	6	2,872	0.23			
Nova Scotia	-385	20,689	-1.86			
New Brunswick	-164	17,231	-0.95			
Quebec	25	193,243	0.01			
Ontario	-2,002	371,874	-0.54			
Manitoba	40	29,915	0.13			
Saskatchewan	28	28,790	0.10			
Alberta	1,026	104,982	0.98			
British Columbia	-466	110,948	-0.42			
Yukon	30	1,073	2.83			
Northwest Territories	-51	2,527	-2.03			

Public Accounts bas											Cumulative 2000-01 to
		00-01		1-02		02-03		3-04		4-05	2004-05
Provinces	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	<u>%</u>	\$
Newfoundland	0.1	(0.7)	0.1	(1.0)	0.2	(1.3)	0.2	(1.6)	0.3	(1.9)	0.8
Prince Edward Island	0.0	(0.7)	0.0	(1.0)	0.0	(1.3)	0.1	(1.6)	0.1	(1.8)	0.2
Nova Scotia	0.1	(0.6)	0.2	(0.9)	0.3	(1.1)	0.3	(1.4)	0.4	(1.6)	1.4
New Brunswick	0.1	(0.7)	0.2	(1.0)	0.3	(1.3)	0.3	(1.6)	0.4	(1.8)	1.3
Quebec	1.5	(0.7)	2.3	(1.1)	3.2	(1.4)	4.1	(1.8)	5.1	(2.1)	16.3
Ontario	-1.4	(-0.3)	-0.3	(-0.1)	0.9	(0.2)	2.1	(0.5)	3.4	(0.7)	4.7
Manitoba	0.4	(1.1)	0.4	(1.3)	0.5	(1.5)	0.6	(1.8)	0.7	(2.0)	2.7
Saskatchewan	0.2	(0.6)	0.3	(0.9)	0.4	(1.2)	0.5	(1.4)	0.6	(1.7)	1.9
Alberta	1.7	(1.6)	2.1	(1.8)	2.5	(2.0)	2.9	(2.2)	3.3	(2.5)	12.6
British Columbia	0.8	(0.6)	0.7	(0.6)	0.5	(0.4)	0.9	(0.7)	1.3	(0.9)	4.3
All provinces	3.6	(0.4)	6.1	(0.6)	8.8	(0.8)	12.1	(1.1)	15.6	(1.4)	46.2
Federal government	9.1	(0.9)	12.9	(1.3)	17.0	(1.6)	21.4	(1.9)	25.9	(2.2)	86.4

Source: *Relative fiscal power: Ottawa versus the provinces*, Royal Bank of Canada, September 1999. Available on the Internet at http://www.royalbank.com/economics/market/pdf/power.pdf.

	and provincial-ter	ritorial n	et debt	
Year	Provinces/territories (\$ millio	Federal ons)	Provinces/territories (per cent o	Federal f GDP)
1980-81	26,300	91,948	8.3	29.2
1981-82	29,126	107,622	8.1	29.9
1982-83	37,816	136,671	10.0	36.0
1983-84	46,704	169,549	11.4	41.2
1984-85	56,553	207,986	12.6	46.3
1985-86	67,832	242,581	14.0	50.0
1986-87	82,223	273,323	16.1	53.4
1987-88	91,120	301,117	16.3	54.0
1988-89	97,301	329,890	15.9	53.9
1989-90	104,422	358,820	15.9	54.7
1990-91	112,372	390,820	16.6	57.6
1991-92	136,169	425,177	19.9	62.2
1992-93	167,794	466,198	24.0	66.7
1993-94	189,879	508,210	26.2	70.1
1994-95	205,968	545,672	26.8	71.1
1995-96	221,354	574,289	27.4	71.2
1996-97	221,770	583,186	26.6	69.9
1997-98	246,531	579,708	28.2	66.3
1998-99	-	576,824	-	64.4

Federal and provincial-territorial debt charges Public Accounts basis							
	Debt charges (\$ millions) Provinces/		Total rev (\$ mill Provinces/		(per cent of a Provinces/	Debt charges (per cent of revenues) Provinces/	
Year	territories	Federal	territories	Federal	territories	Federal	
1980-81	3,125	10,658	54,498	48,867	5.7	21.8	
1981-82	4,101	15,114	64,314	60,307	6.4	25.1	
1982-83	5,035	16,903	69,294	60,662	7.3	27.9	
1983-84	6,231	18,077	76,369	64,168	8.2	28.2	
1984-85	7,522	22,393	81,924	71,056	9.2	31.5	
1985-86	8,584	25,422	87,688	76,933	9.8	33.0	
1986-87	9,508	26,668	89,720	85,931	10.6	31.0	
1987-88	10,529	28,953	101,318	97,612	10.4	29.7	
1988-89	11,182	33,152	111,292	104,067	10.0	31.9	
1989-90	11,974	38,789	120,228	113,707	10.0	34.1	
1990-91	12,693	42,588	126,928	119,353	10.0	35.7	
1991-92	13,521	41,174	126,055	122,032	10.7	33.7	
1992-93	15,414	38,825	130,589	120,380	11.8	32.3	
1993-94	18,460	37,982	136,766	115,984	13.5	32.7	
1994-95	20,063	42,046	143,668	123,323	14.0	34.1	
1995-96	20,694	46,905	149,153	130,301	13.9	36.0	
1996-97	20,187	44,973	150,039	140,896	13.5	31.9	
1997-98	21,576	40,931	158,764	153,162	13.6	26.7	
1998-99	21,915	41,394	166,642	155,671	13.2	26.6	

Federal and Public Accou	*	erritorial	surplus/deficit(-)	
Year	Provinces/ territories (\$ mill	Federal ions)	Provinces/ territories (per cent of	Federal GDP)
1980-81	-3,841	-14,556	-1.2	-4.6
1981-82	-3,236	-15,674	-0.9	-4.3
1982-83	-9,081	-29,049	-2.4	-7.6
1983-84	-7,835	-32,877	-1.9	-8.0
1984-85	-7,931	-38,437	-1.8	-8.6
1985-86	-9,710	-34,595	-2.0	-7.1
1986-87	-13,483	-30,742	-2.6	-6.0
1987-88	-7,949	-27,794	-1.4	-5.0
1988-89	-5,453	-28,773	-0.9	-4.7
1989-90	-4,335	-28,930	-0.7	-4.4
1990-91	-10,087	-32,000	-1.5	-4.7
1991-92	-22,696	-34,357	-3.3	-5.0
1992-93	-25,000	-41,021	-3.6	-5.9
1993-94	-20,222	-42,012	-2.8	-5.8
1994-95	-15,928	-37,462	-2.1	-4.9
1995-96	-11,924	-28,617	-1.5	-3.5
1996-97	-7,217	-8,897	-0.9	-1.1
1997-98	-3,870	3,478	-0.4	0.4
1998-99	-1,909	2,884	-0.2	0.3

			ritorial rev	enues		
	Accounts		,	5 1 1		, .
Year	Federal		/territories	Federal		es/territories
	Total	Own-source	Federal cash	Total		Federal cash
	revenue	revenue	transfers	revenue	revenue	transfers
10.61	6.020	(\$ millions)	1.047	` <u>*</u>	er cent of GDP)	2.0
1961	6,929	2,948	1,247	16.8	7.1	3.0
1962	7,055	3,730	1,377	15.8	8.3	3.1
1963	7,410	4,131	1,443	15.4	8.6	3.0
1964	8,437	4,826	1,472	16.0	9.2	2.8
1965	9,226	5,766	1,705	15.9	9.9	2.9
1966	10,113	6,705	2,019	15.6	10.3	3.1
1967	11,108	7,723	2,287	15.9	11.1	3.3
1968	12,445	9,040	2,703	16.3	11.9	3.5
1969	14,691	10,417	2,936	17.5	12.4	3.5
1970	15,781	11,681	3,632	17.5	12.9	4.0
1971	17,553	13,094	4,678	17.8	13.3	4.7
1972	19,894	14,790	4,661	18.1	13.4	4.2
1973	23,244	17,927	4,950	18.0	13.9	3.8
1974	30,569	22,196	6,340	19.8	14.4	4.1
1975	32,724	24,732	7,977	18.8	14.2	4.6
1976	36,584	28,862	8,881	18.3	14.4	4.4
1977	37,652	34,460	10,249	17.0	15.6	4.6
1978	39,296	39,101	11,262	16.0	15.9	4.6
1979	44,703	44,840	12,065	15.9	16.0	4.3
1980	52,106	50,786	13,250	16.5	16.1	4.2
1981	67,180	58,832	14,485	18.6	16.3	4.0
1982	69,517	64,999	16,425	18.3	17.1	4.3
1983	72,276	72,263	18,189	17.6	17.6	4.4
1984	78,930	78,980	20,740	17.6	17.6	4.6
1985	86,100	83,580	22,656	17.7	17.2	4.7
1986	95,002	87,773	22,051	18.6	17.1	4.3
1987	104,312	96,446	23,676	18.7	17.3	4.2
1988	114,182	108,466	25,884	18.7	17.7	4.2
1989	122,039	117,080	26,645	18.6	17.8	4.1
1990	130,091	125,767	28,007	19.2	18.5	4.1
1991	136,388	125,825	29,004	20.0	18.4	4.2
1992	141,150	127,431	31,087	20.2	18.2	4.5
1993	140,324	133,228	31,950	19.4	18.4	4.4
1994	144,202	144,013	30,948	18.8	18.8	4.0
1995	153,731	150,906	33,051	19.0	18.7	4.1
1996	161,836	159,074	28,382	19.4	19.1	3.4
1997	175,050	167,065	24,828	20.0	19.1	2.8
1998	180,728	170,721	25,838	20.2	19.1	2.9

	Provincial-territorial revenues and program spending National Accounts basis					
Year	Total revenues	Program expenditures	Total revenues	Program expenditures		
		millions)		ent of GDP)		
1961	4,195	3,656	10.2	8.9		
1962	5,107	4,131	11.4	9.2		
1963	5,574	4,598	11.6	9.6		
1964	6,298	5,202	12.0	9.9		
1965	7,471	5,907	12.9	10.2		
1966	8,724	7,172	13.4	11.0		
1967	10,010	8,591	14.3	12.3		
1968	11,743	9,903	15.4	13.0		
1969	13,353	11,282	15.9	13.4		
1970	15,313	13,745	16.9	15.2		
1971	17,772	15,630	18.0	15.8		
1972	19,451	17,171	17.7	15.6		
1973	22,877	19,475	17.7	15.1		
1974	28,536	24,012	18.5	15.6		
1975	32,709	30,402	18.8	17.5		
1976	37,743	34,722	18.8	17.3		
1977	44,709	40,131	20.2	18.1		
1978	50,363	43,753	20.5	17.8		
1979	56,905	49,365	20.3	17.6		
1980	64,036	58,576	20.3	18.6		
1981	73,317	65,902	20.3	18.3		
1982	81,424	76,668	21.4	20.2		
1983	90,452	84,065	22.0	20.4		
1984	99,720	88,159	22.2	19.6		
1985	106,236	94,132	21.9	19.4		
1986	109,824	101,096	21.5	19.8		
1987	120,122	106,688	21.5	19.1		
1988	134,350	116,466	22.0	19.0		
1989	143,725	125,718	21.9	19.2		
1990	153,774	137,687	22.7	20.3		
1991	154,829	150,110	22.7	22.0		
1992	158,518	160,955	22.7	23.0		
1993	165,178	161,316	22.8	22.3		
1994	174,961	161,988	22.8	21.1		
1995	183,957	164,731	22.8	20.4		
1996	187,456	162,370	22.5	19.5		
1997	191,893	163,589	22.0	18.7		
1998	196,559	168,249	21.9	18.8		

Breakdown of provincial-territorial revenue, excluding federal cash transfers – 1998

National Accounts basis

Revenue Category	\$ millions	Per cent of total revenues, excluding federal cash transfers
Personal income tax	50,260	30
Corporate income tax	10,813	6
Social insurance contributions	7,742	5
Liquor and gaming profits	7,314	4
Motor vehicle and other licenses	3,764	2
Royalties and other investment income	20,698	12
Property taxes	2,959	2
Sales of goods and services	14,450	8
Sales tax	26,755	16
Other	25,966	15
Revenue, excluding federal cash transfers	170,721	100