



Infommat

A Weekly Review

Friday, March 30, 2001

OVERVIEW

◆ CPI, excluding energy, makes strongest advance since 1995

In February, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 2.9% higher than it was a year earlier. Excluding energy, the CPI rose by 2.4%, its highest annual advance since October 1995.

◆ Shipments up slightly

Manufacturing shipments edged up 0.3% in January, led by the aerospace products and parts industry. Excluding that industry, shipments dropped 0.7% owing to sizable declines in the automotive and computer and electronic product industries.

◆ Slight increase in Composite Index

The leading indicator edged up by 0.1% in February. A firming in housing and in services outweighed continued losses in the stock market and in manufacturing.

◆ Retail sales up for third straight month

Retail sales advanced for a third consecutive month in January, up 0.6% from December. All sectors except food stores posted higher sales.

◆ Wholesale sales stable since mid-2000

Wholesale sales rose 0.8% in January as a result of strong gains in almost all sectors. Despite this growth, wholesale sales have been stable since mid-2000.

◆ Canadians invest record amount in outstanding foreign shares

Armed with a higher foreign content limit for their registered pension plans, Canadians invested massively in foreign securities in January. Meanwhile, foreign investors made sizable purchases of Canadian securities.

CPI, excluding energy, makes strongest advance since 1995

Canadians paid 2.9% more in February 2001 than they did in February 2000 for the goods and services included in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket. This annual inflation rate is lower than the 3.0% registered in January and the 3.2% in December. Higher prices for food and energy accounted for almost half the increase for February. Excluding energy, the all-items index rose 2.4%, its strongest year-over-year advance since October 1995.

More than half of the year-over-year rise of 4.5% in the food index can be attributed to fresh vegetables, beef and restaurant meals. Wholesale price increases in the food industry are due in part to higher energy costs, but their impact is hard to assess given the competitiveness of the retail food sector. Bad weather in southern growing regions contributed to a 21.6% increase in the prices of fresh vegetables. Tight supplies led to a 14.5% jump in the beef index, the biggest increase since February 1980.

Energy prices rose 6.4% in February, the smallest increase since July 1999. Natural gas prices climbed 35.0%, making this the eighth consecutive month in which annual increases in that index exceeded 20.0%. Gasoline prices advanced 7.9%, while fuel oil prices rose 3.1%. An 8.1% drop in the electricity index

Consumer Price Index, February 2001
% change, previous year, not seasonally adjusted

	All items	Food	Shelter	Transportation	Energy
Canada	2.9	4.5	3.2	2.3	6.4
Newfoundland	1.8	1.2	2.5	1.1	2.5
Prince Edward Island	3.7	3.9	5.7	3.0	12.9
Nova Scotia	2.3	2.9	2.2	2.2	1.9
New Brunswick	2.4	2.6	1.9	3.5	5.9
Quebec	2.6	5.2	2.3	2.1	3.5
Ontario	3.4	4.9	5.0	1.9	9.6
Manitoba	3.3	5.0	5.2	1.1	14.4
Saskatchewan	3.4	2.9	5.3	2.4	10.3
Alberta	3.6	4.7	5.6	3.7	15.6
British Columbia	1.1	3.6	-3.6	3.3	-8.4
Whitehorse	2.7	4.2	3.8	2.1	11.3
Yellowknife	2.1	2.5	1.9	4.3	6.3

(continued on page 2)



... CPI, excluding energy, makes strongest advance since 1995

moderated the rise in energy prices. This decrease was largely due to the \$200 rebate given to BC Hydro customers in February.

After declining 0.3% in January, the all-items CPI posted a month-over-month advance of 0.4% in February, largely because of higher prices for natural gas, travel tours and clothing. Natural gas prices increased 7.6%, following a 6.5% decline in January. The largest part of this rise came from an 89.1% advance in prices in Alberta, resulting from a rate increase. Manitoba too saw a sizable increase (+26.2%), while prices remained stable in Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. The only decrease (-2.8 %) was in Quebec.

The prices of travel tour packages rose in February, as they usually do at this time of the year. The 11.8% month-over-month advance was mainly the result of higher tourism demand for

southern destinations. Clothing prices increased 2.0%, owing to price increases and a return to regular prices following sale prices.

Lower prices for electricity, fuel oil and automotive insurance premiums moderated the month-over-month increase in the all-items index. The price of electricity fell 7.4% in February, primarily because of the 100.0% decrease in the British Columbia index. This decrease negated the impact of a 53.5% hike in the index for electricity in Alberta, due to a rate increase. Fuel oil prices fell 4.0%, owing to lower wholesale prices and lower crude oil prices. All provinces registered declines except Manitoba, which showed an increase of 0.3%.

The February 2001 issue of the Consumer Price Index (Internet: 62-001-XIB, \$8/\$77; paper: 62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. For more information, call the information officer (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 8.)

Shipments up slightly

Manufacturing shipments edged up 0.3% in January to \$45.0 billion. The aerospace products and parts industry jumped 43.4%, recovering from December's seven-month low. Excluding that industry, manufacturing shipments dropped 0.7% in January.

The chemical industry, partly driven by higher chemical prices, was up 4.7%. The non-metallic mineral product industry rose 17.7%, rebounding from a weak December.

These strong gains were largely offset by sizable declines in the computer and electronic product, motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts industries. In the computer and electronic product industry, shipments dropped by 11.2%, falling to their lowest level since April 2000.

Manufacturers' shipments, January 2001 Seasonally adjusted

	\$ millions	% change, previous month
Canada	44,980	0.3
Newfoundland	198	-11.4
Prince Edward Island	98	-2.0
Nova Scotia	731	0.3
New Brunswick	1,041	1.3
Quebec	10,953	1.0
Ontario	23,462	0.0
Manitoba	997	1.4
Saskatchewan	632	-0.9
Alberta	3,842	3.4
British Columbia	3,021	-3.7
Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut	4	5.4

Note to readers

Data collected from the Monthly Survey of Manufacturing are now classified according to the 1997 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). This system replaces the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). Reference year 2000 is the last year for which published data are based on the SIC. Data for years prior to 2001 have been recalculated to the new classification system back to 1992.

*The NAICS facilitates analysis and improves comparability of data between Canada, the United States and Mexico. For additional information on the NAICS, consult Statistics Canada's Web site at www.statcan.ca, under "Concepts, definitions and methods," then "Standard classifications (includes NAICS Canada and North American Product Classification System)." Alternatively, refer to **NAICS Canada 1997** (paper: 12-501-XPE, \$45).*

In the automotive sector, the slowdown continued in January, with lower shipments of motor vehicle parts (-8.6%) and motor vehicles (-3.5%). The motor vehicle parts industry shipped \$2.4 billion in goods, slightly higher than November's two-year low. Shipments of motor vehicles reached a 28-month low at \$5.3 billion.

Manufacturers' inventories rose 0.3% in January to \$64.9 billion, continuing an upward trend. January's upswing was largely concentrated in raw material inventories and was dominated by companies in the computer and electronic product industry. Inventories in that industry have been generally climbing since July 2000. However, inventories declined in the motor vehicle and railroad rolling stock industries, owing to significantly lower goods in process inventories. The inventory-to-shipment ratio remained steady for the third consecutive month at 1.44.

(continued on page 3)

... Shipments up slightly

Contract cancellations and market pessimism resulted in erosion of both unfilled orders and new orders in January. Unfilled orders declined 2.3% to \$48.6 billion, the fifth decrease in six months and the lowest level since June 2000. Orders fell by 7.3% in the aerospace product and parts industry and by 15.8% in the electrical equipment, appliance and component industry, its largest decrease in recent years. In contrast, the machine and fabricated metal product industries reported higher unfilled orders, up 2.3% and 4.7% respectively.

New orders fell 1.3% to \$43.8 billion in January, owing to significant decreases in the aerospace product and parts and computer and electronic product industries.

*The January 2001 issue of **Monthly Survey of Manufacturing** (Internet: 31-001-XIB, \$15/\$147) will be available soon. More detailed data by province may be available on request. For more information, contact Craig Kuntz (613-951-7092; kuncrai@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 8.)*

Slight increase in Composite Index

The leading indicator edged up by 0.1% in February, after declining 0.2% in January and 0.1% in December (revised data). In February, a firming in housing and in services outweighed continued losses in the stock market and in manufacturing. Half of the ten components rose, four fell and one was unchanged, the same distribution as in the previous two months.

Housing posted the largest gain of any component, as single-family starts increased again and sales hit their highest level in four years. This upturn gave a boost to furniture and appliances in February. Housing at the end of 2000 was stunted by poor weather.

Business spending was mixed. Employment in business services continued to expand, led by Alberta, where demand remains

vigorous. With the worsening of the stock market retreat, capital goods joined autos in pulling down new orders for durable manufactured goods. Manufacturing employment fell sharply in January and February.

Stock markets continued to be a source of weakness in the overall index, reflecting heavy losses in both the Canadian and American indices. The bear market returned in February, and drops continued into March.

*For more information on the economy, the March 2001 issue of **Canadian economic observer** (paper: 11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. For more information, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627), Current Economic Analysis Group. (See also "Current trends" on page 8.)*

Retail sales up for third straight month

Retail sales advanced for a third consecutive month in January to \$23.8 billion, up 0.6% from December. The sales strength since December followed a flat period that began in July 2000. In constant dollars, retail sales rose 1.1%. Lower prices were reported for motor vehicles, gasoline and clothing.

Several factors may explain the continuing growth in retail sales. Total employment remained strong in January, and tax cuts were implemented. In addition, the Bank of Canada cut the discount rate for the first time since May 1999, from 6.0% to 5.75%, and housing starts reached their highest level since June 1994, rising 17.8%.

After seeing a mild slowdown in the last three months of 2000, retailers in the furniture sector posted a 6.1% sales increase in January. This was their largest monthly gain in the last 10 years. Furniture and household appliances account for approximately 40% of all sales in the furniture sector, and home electronics and computers for another 30%.

Retail sales, January 2001
Seasonally adjusted

	\$ millions	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	23,754	0.6	5.4
Newfoundland	382	1.0	4.8
Prince Edward Island	107	0.9	7.4
Nova Scotia	728	-0.8	8.1
New Brunswick	595	2.3	5.0
Quebec	5,351	-0.8	2.1
Ontario	9,170	1.4	6.5
Manitoba	810	2.3	5.3
Saskatchewan	694	3.3	4.2
Alberta	2,776	1.5	7.5
British Columbia	3,064	-1.0	5.6
Yukon	27	-10.3	-3.0
Northwest Territories	34	-5.9	6.6
Nunavut	15	0.7	3.9

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... Retail sales up for third straight month

Sales in the clothing sector rose 4.0% in January, after slackening from October to December. Men's (+9.2%), women's (+5.5%) and other clothing stores (+3.3%) reported significant gains. This was the strongest increase since February 1991 for men's clothing stores and since May 1996 for women's clothing stores.

Stores in the general merchandise sector reported a 1.6% increase in sales in January, following a 2.5% gain in December. These rises were led by department stores, which posted sales gains of 3.5% in January and 4.1% in December. The opening of several new stores in late November may have helped stimulate overall sales by department stores. Department store sales slowed down in the second half of 2000, after rising in the first part of that year.

Sales in the automotive sector grew by 0.6% in January, led by motor and recreational vehicle dealers (+2.2%). These dealers sell not only new cars, but also used cars, motor homes and

snowmobiles. In contrast, automotive parts and services stores posted a 3.5% decline in sales, while lower prices of gasoline at the pump pushed service station sales down 1.5%.

Only food stores posted lower sales in January (-2.9%), after an increase of 2.0% in December. About one-quarter of all food store sales come from non-food items. Food store sales advanced rapidly in 2000.

All provinces posted retail sales increases of at least 0.9% in January except British Columbia, Quebec and Nova Scotia. Those three provinces had posted healthy gains in December, whereas most provinces with rising retail sales in January had showed either lower sales or weak gains in December.

*The January 2001 issue of **Retail trade** (Internet: 63-005-XIB, \$16/\$155; paper: 63-005-XPB, \$21/\$206) is now available. For data or more information, contact Client Services (1 877 421-3067; 613-951-3549; retailinfo@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541; gratpau@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.*

Wholesale sales stable since mid-2000

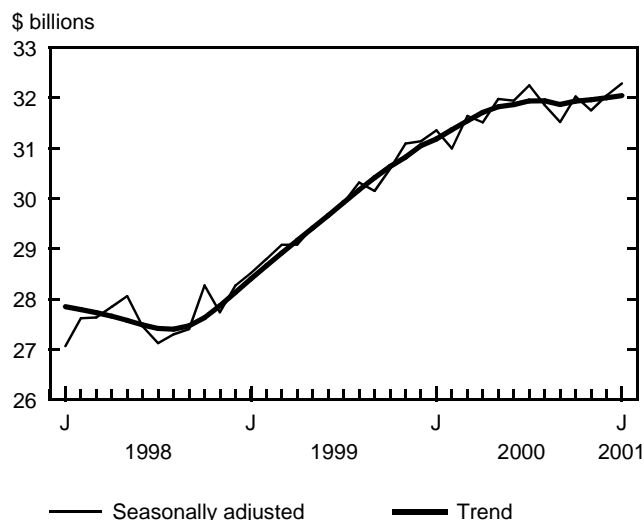
Wholesale sales rose 0.8% in January to \$32.3 billion, boosted by major gains for 8 of the 11 trade groups. January's growth follows a 0.9% increase in December. Despite January's growth, wholesale sales have been stable since mid-2000, after being on the rise since mid-1998.

Following two consecutive months of declines, wholesale sales of motor vehicles, parts and accessories turned around in January, rising 2.7% to \$5.9 billion. Weaker sales in the United States and restructuring in the industry have affected this sector over the last few months. January, however, saw an increase in the export of passenger cars and trucks.

Wholesale trade, January 2001 Seasonally adjusted

	\$ millions	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	32,285	0.8	3.0
Newfoundland	234	1.6	4.8
Prince Edward Island	53	2.7	4.9
Nova Scotia	575	-2.2	8.8
New Brunswick	375	-3.1	-7.2
Quebec	6,745	0.3	5.9
Ontario	16,010	0.5	2.8
Manitoba	956	1.6	6.6
Saskatchewan	971	4.5	5.7
Alberta	3,155	1.5	5.5
British Columbia	3,179	1.7	-5.6
Yukon	10	9.0	6.0
Northwest Territories	16	9.0	29.8
Nunavut	3	12.2	4.8

Wholesale sales



Wholesale sales in the computer and electronics sector continued to progress, rising 2.2% in January. Many wholesalers in this sector reported strong sales. Sales have generally been following an upward trend since the fall of 2000.

Among the other trade groups reporting strong sales gains were apparel and dry goods (+3.2%), the other products category and industrial, household and agricultural chemicals (+2.7%). In contrast, sizable drops in sales were reported in food products (-2.8%) and beverage, drug and tobacco products (-2.7%).

Most provinces reported rising sales in January. In Saskatchewan, wholesalers reported a notable rise in sales that was broadly based among all the trade groups. Ontario and Quebec reported more modest increases. In both these provinces, weaker

(continued on page 5)

... Wholesale sales stable since mid-2000

wholesale sales in the food products sector and in the beverage, drug and tobacco products sector dampened overall growth.

In New Brunswick, wholesale sales declined for the sixth time in six months. Sales also fell in Nova Scotia, with the declines broadly based among all the trade groups. Despite the drop in January, wholesale sales have been generally rising since the fall of 1999 in Nova Scotia.

Inventories held by wholesalers rose 0.3% in January to \$44.1 billion, the sixth straight monthly increase. The inventory-to-sales ratio remained unchanged at 1.37. The ratio has been generally rising since mid-2000.

*The January 2001 issue of **Wholesale trade** (Internet: 63-008-XIB, \$14/\$140) is now available. For data or general information, contact Client Services (1 877 421-3067; 613-951-3549; wholesaleinfo@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Alexander Hays (613-951-3552; haysale@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.*

Canadians invest record amount in outstanding foreign shares

Canadians invested \$8.9 billion in foreign securities in January. This massive investment went mostly to foreign stocks but also included a significant amount of foreign bonds. Thus Canadians purchased a record \$6.7 billion worth of outstanding foreign shares. Just over half went to U.S. shares and the remainder went to overseas stocks. A major contributing factor was the increase to 30% (from 25%) in the foreign content limit for registered pension plans that took effect January 1. There was no acquisition of new foreign shares issued as part of foreign acquisitions of Canadian companies.

Canadian investors substantially increased their holdings of foreign bonds, up \$2.2 billion, after two months of reductions. The investment in January went entirely to U.S. government bonds.

For their part, foreign investors made sizable purchases of Canadian securities in January. They increased their holdings of Canadian equities by \$2.6 billion. They bought \$1.7 billion worth of existing shares and \$0.9 billion worth of new shares, mainly treasury shares issued by Canadian companies that bought foreign firms in January.

Foreign investors acquired \$2.0 billion worth of Canadian bonds in January, the first such investment of any size since April 2000. For the fifth consecutive month, foreign investors bought Canadian bonds in the secondary market. While retirements continued to outpace new issues, the gap narrowed in January, leading to a net acquisition of Canadian bonds. The foreign buying was concentrated in purchases of federal and provincial government bonds by investors from the United States and Europe.

However, foreign investors sold some of their holdings of Canadian money market paper in January. Those holdings fell by \$0.8 billion, after increasing in December. The divestment was concentrated in corporate paper. January's decline continued the seesaw pattern of foreign investment in Canadian money market paper observed in 2000.

*The January 2001 issue of **Canada's international transactions in securities** (Internet: 67-002-XIB, \$14/\$132; paper: 67-002-XPB, \$18/\$176) will be available in March. For more information, contact Donald Granger (613-951-1864), Balance of Payments and Financial Flows Division.*

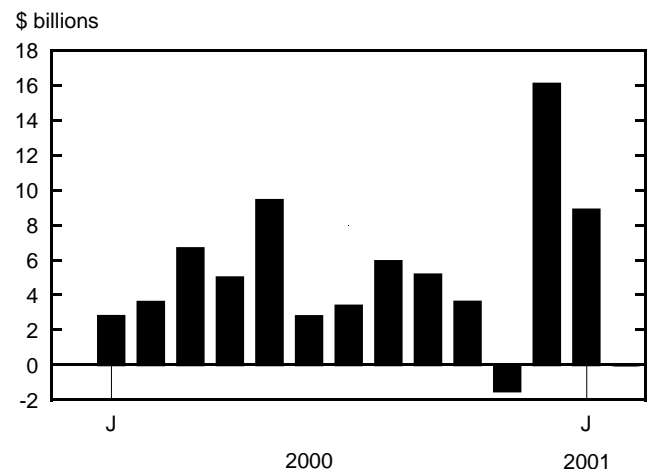
Supplementary information on financial markets

In January, Canadian and U.S. long-term interest rates both declined and converged, as the differential between those rates disappeared. The differential, which had favoured investment in the United States for most of 2000, has been declining since November. Both Canadian and U.S. long-term rates advanced somewhat. The differential between those rates favoured investment in Canada for a second straight month (by 18 basis points).

After declining for three of the last four months of 2000, the TSE 300 Composite Index rebounded for a second consecutive month, with a gain of 4.3% in January following a 1.3% rise in December. The Standard & Poor's 500 Index rose similarly over December and January, with a slightly lower two-month gain of 3.9%.

The Canadian dollar was virtually unchanged against the American dollar in January, closing at just under 67 cents U.S.

Canadian investment in foreign securities¹



¹ Includes bonds and stocks.

New from Statistics Canada



Canadian economic observer March 2001

The March issue of Statistics Canada's flagship publication for economic statistics, *Canadian economic observer*, analyses current economic conditions, summarizes the major economic events that occurred in February and presents two feature articles on demography and the labour market, and expenditure on gross domestic product and the business cycle.

A separate statistical summary contains a wide range of tables and graphs on the principal economic indicators for Canada, the provinces and the major industrial nations.

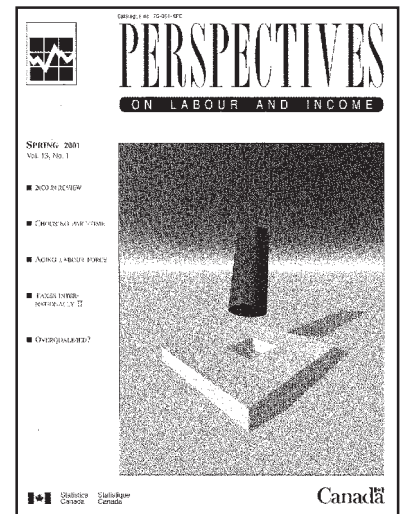
The March 2001 issue of Canadian economic observer (paper: 11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. For more information, contact Cyndi Bloskie (613-951-3634; ceo@statcan.ca), Current Economic Analysis Group.

Perspectives on labour and income March online edition and Spring 2001

The March online edition of *Perspectives on labour and income* presents the analytical article titled "Experiencing low income for several years", which examines how individuals lived in families with low income for the years 1993 to 1998.

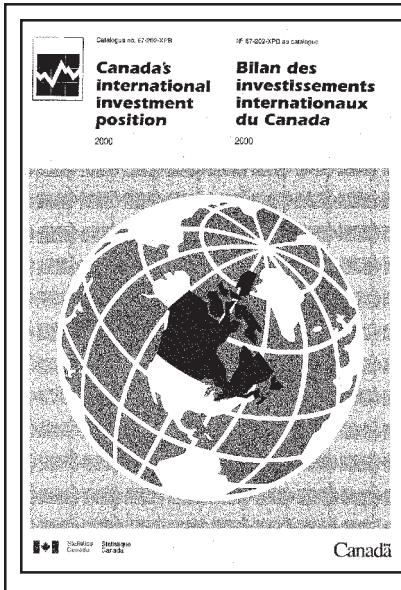
The lead article in the Spring 2001 issue of *Perspectives on labour and income* titled "The labour market: Year-end review" analyses changes and trends in the labour market in 2000. Other articles examine individuals who work part-time by choice; the coming wave of retirement among baby boomers and its impact on the labour market; changes between 1980 and 1997 in various taxes in the G-7 and the nations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; and the percentage of recent Canadian graduates with more post-secondary education than their main job requires.

The March 2001 online edition of Perspectives on labour and income, online edition, Vol. 2, no. 3 (Internet: 75-001-XIE, \$5/\$48) is now available. The Spring 2001 issue of Perspectives on labour and income (paper: 75-001-XPE, \$18/\$58) is also available. For more information, contact Henry Pold (613-951-4608; poldhen@statcan.ca), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.



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New from Statistics Canada

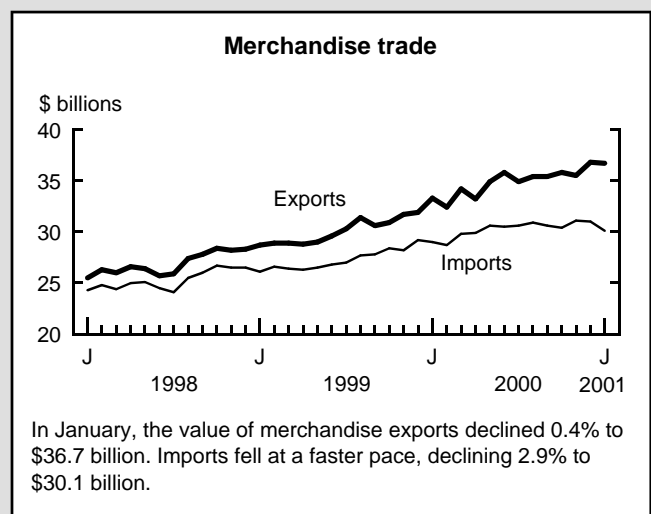
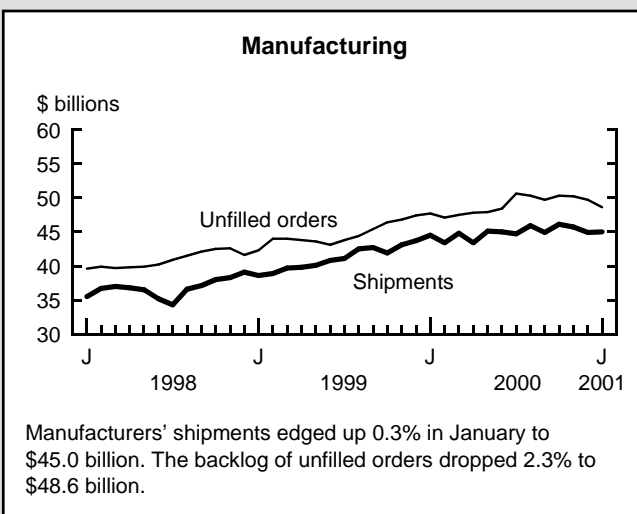
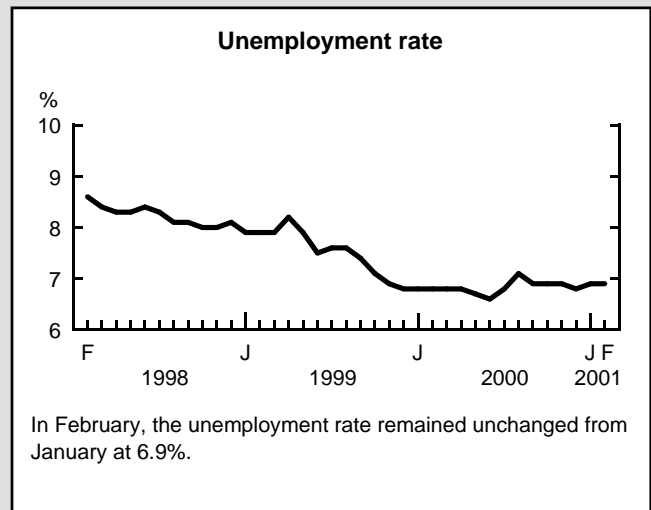
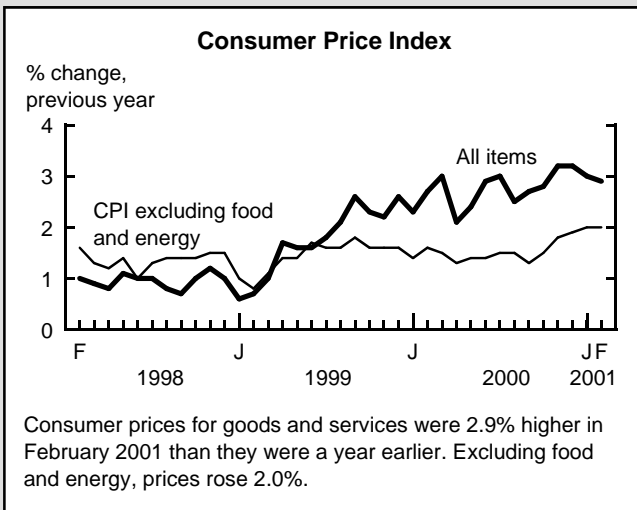
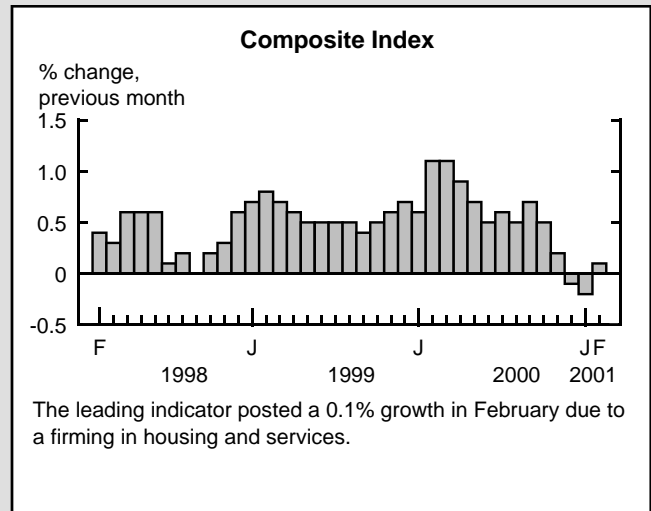
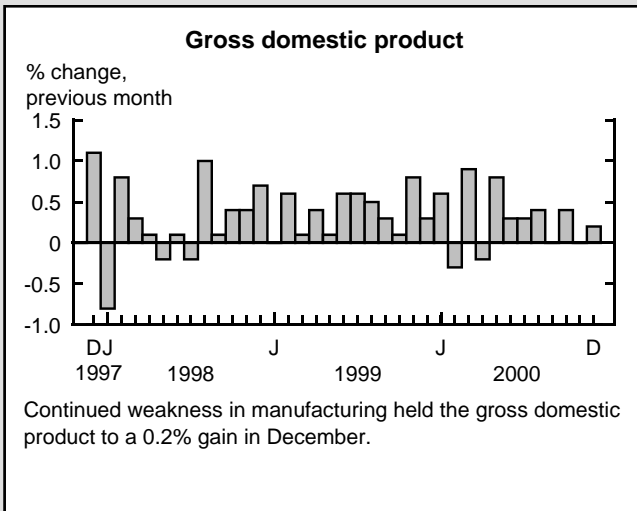


Canada's international investment position 2000

International investment, both in Canada and abroad, forms one of the cornerstones of Canada's economy. *Canada's international investment position* gives a detailed account of Canada's assets and liabilities abroad. This publication will help you understand today's economy and how it has evolved. Useful geographical comparisons, such as Canada's position in relation to European Union countries, are also featured.

*The publication **Canada's international investment position, 2000** (Internet: 67-202-XIB, \$39; paper: 67-202-XPB, \$52) is now available. For more information, contact Christian Lajule (613-951-2062), Balance of Payments and Financial Flows Division.*

Current trends



Note: All series are seasonally adjusted except the Consumer Price Index.

Latest statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
GENERAL				
Gross domestic product (\$ billions, 1992)	December	796.2	0.2%	3.3%
Composite Index (1992=100)	February	167.1	0.1%	5.5%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billions)	Q4 2000	54.0	2.2%	13.9%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q4 2000	85.4	-0.2†	0.7†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	January	23.8	0.6%	5.4%
Department store sales (\$ billions)	January	1.63	3.6%	6.6%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	January	130.5	-0.4%	-1.7%
Wholesale trade (\$ billion)	January	32.3	0.8%	3.0%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	February	15.04	-0.2%	1.5%
Unemployment rate (%)	February	6.9	0.0†	0.1†
Participation rate (%)	February	66.0	-0.1†	0.2†
Average weekly earnings (\$)¹	January*	659.46	0.1%	1.9%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	February	171	-3.4%	0.6%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billions)	January	36.7	-0.4%	10.3%
Merchandise imports (\$ billions)	January	30.1	-2.9%	4.0%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billions)	January	6.6	0.7	2.3
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billions)¹	January*	45.0	0.3%	1.2%
New orders (\$ billions)¹	January*	43.8	-1.3%	-2.0%
Unfilled orders (\$ billions)¹	January*	48.6	-2.3%	1.9%
Inventory/shipments ratio¹	January*	1.44	0.00	0.11
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	February	115.2	0.4%	2.9%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	February*	129.3	0.5%	2.6%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	February*	146.5	1.5%	4.7%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	January	104.6	0.2%	2.5%

Note: All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.

* new this week

† percentage point

¹ These estimates are now based on the North American Industry Classification (NAICS). They are not comparable to the previously published estimates based on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) of 1980.

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A weekly review

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Published by the Official Release Unit, Communications Division,
Statistics Canada, 10th floor, R.H. Coats Bldg., Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6.

Price per issue: paper, \$4; online at www.statcan.ca, \$3. Annual subscription:
paper, \$145; online, \$109. All prices are in Canadian dollars and exclude
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Products released from March 22 to 28, 2001

SUBJECT AREA Title of product	Period	Catalogue number	Price (\$) (issue/subscription)
AGRICULTURE			
People, products and services, Agriculture Division	2001	21F0003GIE	no charge
Stocks of frozen meat products	March 2001	23-009-XIE	no charge
BALANCE OF PAYMENTS AND FINANCIAL FLOWS			
Canada's balance of international payments	Q4 2000	67-001-XIB	29/93
Canada's balance of international payments	Q4 2000	67-001-XPB	38/124
Canada's international investment position	2000	67-202-XIB	39
Canada's international investment position	2000	67-202-XPB	52
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE STATISTICS			
Juristat: Canada's shelters for abused women	1999/2000	85-002-XIE	8/70
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9	10	11 New Housing Price Index, February 2001	12	13
16	17 New motor vehicle sales, February 2001 Services indicators*, Q4 2000	18 Canadian international merchandise trade, February 2001 Travel between Canada and other countries, February 2001	19 Monthly Survey of Manufacturing, February 2001	20 Consumer Price Index, March 2001 Wholesale trade, February 2001
23	24 Retail trade, February 2001 Intentions of principal field crop areas, March 2001	25 Composite Index, March 2001 Canada's international transactions in securities, February 2001	26 Employment Insurance, February 2001	27 Employment, earnings and hours, February 2001
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