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Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, March 13, 1998

OVERVIEW

- **Economy recovers**

  Gross domestic product at factor cost soared in December as demand for automobiles surged and two strike-bound industries returned to normal.

- **Current account deficit declines**

  The current account deficit declined in the fourth quarter of 1997, as residents continued to spend more abroad than they earned.

- **Construction down**

  Both residential and non-residential construction declined in January, due in part to ice storms in Eastern Canada.

- **Record private and public investment**

  Business and government plan to invest a record amount in plant and equipment in 1998.

- **Moderate growth in weekly earnings**

  Average weekly earnings continued to grow at a moderate pace in December. Earnings were also up over December 1996.

- **International travel account deficit grows**

  Canada's international travel account deficit grew for the second consecutive year in 1997.

- **Fraud down for fifth consecutive year**

  In 1996, the overall fraud rate fell for the fifth consecutive year and hit its lowest level in two decades.

Economy recovers

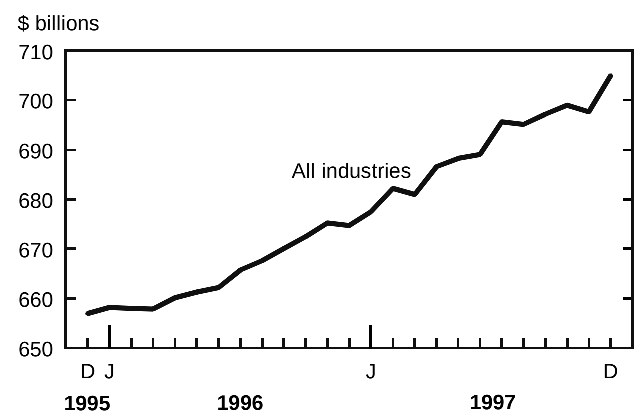
Gross domestic product (GDP) at factor cost rose 1.0% in December as demand for automobiles surged and two strike-bound industries returned to normal. The return to work of 126,000 striking Ontario schoolteachers and 45,000 Canada Post workers contributed significantly to the overall advance, accounting for almost one-third of the total increase.

Wholesale trade was up 2.4% in December after declining in November. Overall, wholesale sales were up 10.8% in 1997, which made it the most solid year of growth since 1985. Retail trade advanced 2.2% in December, driven by a surge in auto sales. Of the 18 retail trade groups, 16 enjoyed higher sales. If sales by auto dealers were excluded, retail trade would have posted a 1.4% increase.

Manufacturing output advanced 0.7%, following an increase in October and a pause in November. Gains were fairly widespread: 16 of the 22 major industry groups, accounting for almost 80% of the manufacturing sector, recorded increases. Motor vehicle manufacturers increased output for the second consecutive month, more than offsetting a string of declines in the previous four months.

(continued on page 2)

Gross domestic product at factor cost



Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

Canada

... Economy recovers

Output of primary metals strengthened in December, as producers of primary steel, other non-ferrous metals and rolled aluminum all reported increased activity. The electrical and electronic product industries were weak for the second consecutive month, as makers of telecommunications equipment curtailed output. The machinery industry also experienced a second consecutive monthly decline.

In the mining sector, output rose 1.6% in December, more than making up for November's decline. Construction activity grew more moderately (+0.1%), extending an almost uninterrupted upward progression that began in early 1996. Activity in the transportation industry was also up. Finance and insurance services rebounded, due to the increased activity of banks and mutual funds.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4677–4681.

*The December 1997 issue of **Gross domestic product by industry** (15-001-XPB, $15/$145) will be available shortly. For analytical information, contact Richard Evans (613-951-9145, evanric@statcan.ca); for information regarding the purchase of data, contact Kim Lauzon (613-951-9417; lauzonk@statcan.ca), Industry Measures and Analysis Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 7.)*

Note to readers

The gross domestic product (GDP) of an industry is the value added by labour and capital in transforming inputs purchased from other producers into outputs. Monthly GDP by industry is valued at 1992 prices. The estimates presented in this release are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

In December 1997, monthly GDP estimates by industry were released for the first time at 1992 prices and the data were made available from January 1992. Data are now available from January 1981. Data for the period from 1961 to 1980 will be released at a later date.

Current account deficit declines

In the fourth quarter of 1997, the seasonally adjusted current account deficit amounted to $6.2 billion, down somewhat from $6.6 billion in the previous quarter. Residents of Canada continued to spend more abroad than they earned in terms of goods, services, investment income and transfers. The recent quarterly deficit was characterized by two major types of transactions: a lower surplus on goods and a narrowing in the deficit on investment income.

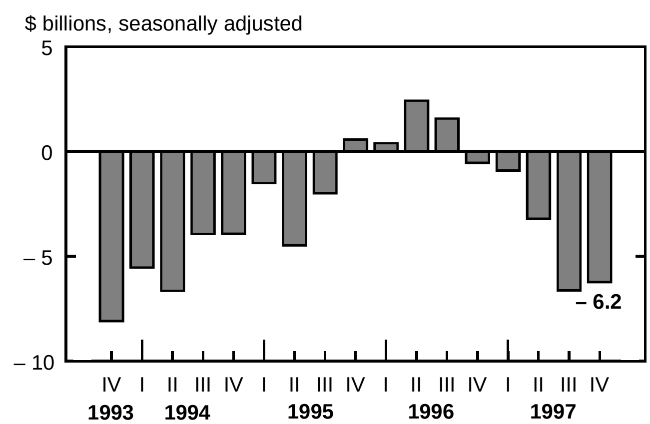
In the financial account (not seasonally adjusted), a record inflow was channelled into Canada through foreign deposits at Canadian banks. Non-resident portfolio investors sold Canadian bonds for the first time in three years, although they continued to buy Canadian stocks and money market paper. Canadian companies continued to make significant direct investments abroad, while Canadian reserve assets decreased for the third consecutive quarter.

The surplus on goods declined again, reaching $4.1 billion in the fourth quarter. Both exports and imports finished 1997 at record levels, but import growth continued to cut the surplus. On the imports side, widespread gains continued in industrial materials, auto products, most machinery and equipment and in consumer goods. Imports of aircraft engines/parts and office machinery both decreased. Exports of auto products, machinery and equipment, industrial materials and agricultural products accounted for most of Canada's goods sales abroad.

The deficit on investment income fell from $9.2 billion in the third quarter to $7.9 billion in the fourth quarter. The decline in profits was widespread, with major gains registered in the wood and paper sector only. The deficit on portfolio transactions showed a small increase to $6.7 billion.

A record net inflow of $23 billion flowed in through deposits at Canadian banks during the quarter, mainly from the United States. Most of the inflow was in foreign currencies, and came from both unaffiliated and affiliated foreign entities. Some of these funds went to finance investment in securities, including repurchase agreements, and additional direct investment in foreign operations.

Current account balance



After investing nearly $14 billion in Canadian portfolio securities in the third quarter, non-residents sharply reduced their net purchases of Canadian securities to a small $1.6 billion. They invested $7.7 billion, evenly split between Canadian equities and the money market. This was largely offset by a net foreign sell-off of $6.1 billion of Canadian bonds, mainly in federal government outstanding issues. These sales were partly offset by continued foreign buying of corporate new issues. The interest differential, which traditionally favoured Canadian investment, shifted in favour of U.S. paper over the course of 1997. Canadian long-term rates declined more than their U.S. counterparts.

Canadian companies injected a substantial $4.7 billion in direct investment abroad, up from $3.5 billion in the previous quarter. A substantial part of the investment went into the finance and insurance sector and was largely directed into non-OECD countries. This brought the total for the year to a record of just under $18 billion.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2325–2327, 2355 and 2360-2377.

For further information, contact Lucie Laliberté (613-951-9055), Balance of Payments and Financial Flows Division.

Construction down

Municipalities issued $2.6 billion in building permits in January, down 9.9% from December. Municipal services, including those for building permits, were severely curtailed by the ice storms that knocked out the power supply to millions of residents in Central Canada and parts of the Maritimes. Home building intentions fell 1.3% to $1.5 billion, while non-residential construction intentions declined 19.5% to $1.1 billion. However, the total value of building permits issued nationally was up 8.7% over January 1997.

In the housing sector, the single-family component declined 7.7% to $1.1 billion, the first decrease in four months. This drop more than offset the strong performance in the multi-family component, where construction intentions rose 22.4% to $398 million. In Ontario, which led the decrease in the housing sector, the value of residential permits declined 8.6%. Permits were down for both the single and multi-family components. Alberta's 12.3% decline was due entirely to fewer single-family dwelling intentions. The largest increase, which was recorded in British Columbia, was due to a 96.1% jump in multi-family intentions. In Manitoba and Newfoundland, the single and multi-family components contributed to increases.

Despite the overall decline in non-residential permits in January, the total value was 36.5% higher than a year earlier. Permits for both commercial (–39.8% to $507 million) and industrial construction (–4.2% to $263 million) declined. On the other hand, the value of institutional permits soared 31.6% to $331 million, which was a 71.5% increase over January 1997. This gain was due to proposed new school construction.

Quebec reported a 40.6% decline in the value of non-residential permits in January, due mostly to a slowdown in industrial intentions. In British Columbia, non-residential permits fell 33.3%, due to a drop in commercial projects. Also notable was the monthly loss in non-residential construction intentions in Saskatchewan (–78.0%), where all components recorded decreases.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 80 (levels 3–7, 16–22, 24–32), 129, 137, 443, 987, 990, 992 and 4073.

*The January 1998 issue of **Building permits** (Internet: 64-001-XIB, $19; microfiche: 64-001-XMB, $25/$135; paper version: 64-001-XPB, $25/$248) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Joanne Bureau (613-951-9689; Internet: burejoa@statcan.ca); for analytical information, contact Alain Paquet (613-951-2025; Internet: paquala@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division.*

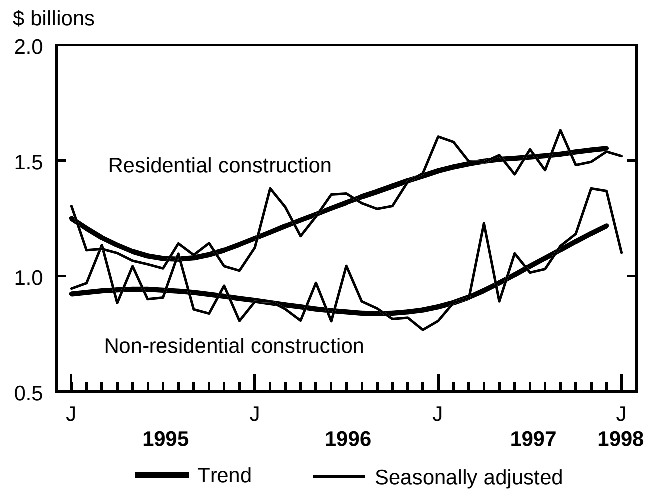
Note to readers

The monthly Building and Demolitions Permits Survey covers 2,600 municipalities representing 94% of the population. It provides an early indication of building activity. The communities representing the other 6% of the population are very small, and their levels of building activity have little impact on the total.

The value of planned construction activities excludes engineering projects (such as waterworks, sewers and culverts) and the cost of land.

Unless otherwise stated, the data are seasonally adjusted. The annual rate is a monthly figure that has been seasonally adjusted and multiplied by 12 to reflect annual levels.

Building permits



Building permits,[1] January 1998
Seasonally adjusted

	Total		Residential		Non-residential	
	$ millions	% change, previous month	$ millions	% change, previous month	$ millions	% change, previous month
Canada	**2,621**	**– 9.9**	**1,520**	**– 1.3**	**1,102**	**– 19.5**
Newfoundland	24	74.2	16	77.7	8	67.4
Prince Edward Island	6	– 30.9	3	– 51.6	3	22.6
Nova Scotia	31	– 23.5	23	– 13.0	8	– 44.2
New Brunswick	34	15.4	19	14.6	15	16.5
Quebec	346	– 21.0	218	– 2.1	128	– 40.6
Ontario	1,221	– 6.0	607	– 8.6	614	– 3.2
Manitoba	89	52.4	71	109.4	19	– 25.1
Saskatchewan	31	– 63.3	19	– 34.1	12	– 78.0
Alberta	383	– 13.5	260	– 12.3	123	– 15.8
British Columbia	455	– 7.3	283	21.6	172	– 33.3
Yukon	2	– 57.6	1	– 57.2	0	– 60.0
Northwest Territories	1	– 9.4	0	– 30.3	1	2.9

1. Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Record private and public investment

Business and government investment spending in plant and equipment is expected to reach a record high $120.1 billion in 1998, up 5.5% over 1997. Investment plans show growth coming from investments in machinery and equipment and in non-residential construction. Service-producing industries are expected to account for 55% of the total increase; goods-producing industries, the remainder.

Investment in machinery and equipment is expected to be higher across many industries, with chemical companies, railways, electric power, and banking leading the way. Investment plans for building and engineering assets show the strongest year-over-year increase in four years. After three years of strong increases, housing investment is expected to top $41.1 billion in 1998, 41% above the 1995 level.

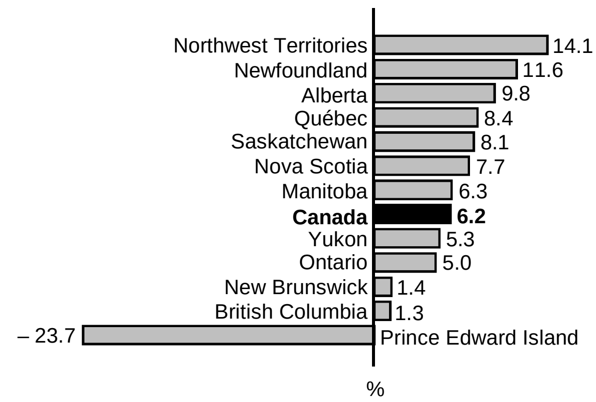
Transportation companies plan to invest $6 billion in 1998, up $1 million over the previous year. Railway companies, which are undertaking major investments to improve their competitive position in North America, account for more than half of this increase. Airports are also planning major capital expenditures. Capital expenditures on oil and gas pipelines are expected to rise 12.2%.

Investment in utilities is expected to pick up in 1998, with electric power companies spending an additional $1.1 billion. The petroleum industry's investment plans show a 6.3% increase, following last year's 25% jump. In manufacturing, investment growth is expected to slow to 1%. Spending in the chemical industry should keep growing, reaching $2.6 billion in 1998. In the residential housing sector, investment is expected to increase 8%, reflecting low mortgage rates and stronger demand for new housing.

The Northwest Territories and Newfoundland are expected to outpace all other provinces and territories in 1998, with investment spending rising by 14.1% and 11.6% respectively. Prince Edward Island is the only exception to the positive trend. With the completion of the Confederation Bridge, spending in this province is expected to decline by 23.7%.

> ***Note to readers***
>
> *Investment intentions are based on a sample survey of 23,000 businesses, governments and institutions. The survey was conducted between October 1997 and January 1998. Amounts are in current dollars.*

Expected investment growth, 1998



Available on CANSIM: matrices 3101–3132, 3134 and 3135.

Private and public investment in Canada, intentions 1998 *(61-205-XPB, $47) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Gilbert Paquette (613-951-9818; 1 800 571-0494; Internet: gilbert@statcan.ca); for analytical information, contact Susan Horsley (613-951-9815, ext. 122; 1 800 345-2294; Internet: horsley@statcan.ca) or Irfan Hashmi (613-951-9815, ext. 120; 1 800 345-2294; Internet: hashirf@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division.*

Moderate growth in weekly earnings

Average weekly earnings for employees on company payrolls continued to grow moderately in December, rising 0.2% to $601.79. Compared with one year earlier, average earnings were up 1.0%. There were significant variations in earnings growth between industries in 1997. Average earnings declined for employees working in education, health and social services, and public administration, reflecting ongoing public sector budget restraints. Employees working in mining, wholesale trade, and finance, insurance and real estate saw increases of more than 3%.

Average weekly hours for employees paid by the hour fell 0.7% to 31.0 hours in December, virtually unchanged from December 1996 levels. Overtime hours fell more sharply (–25%) compared with a year earlier, as businesses increased employment levels.

The total number of employees on business payrolls rose by an estimated 50,000 in December, mostly due to Canada Post employees returning to work. In other industries, employers in

Average weekly earnings, December 1997
Seasonally adjusted

	Industrial aggregate	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
	$		
Canada	**601,79**	**0.2**	**1.0**
Newfoundland	526,76	1.4	– 2.4
Prince Edward Island	483,31	4.9	– 0.9
Nova Scotia	503,77	1.0	1.0
New Brunswick	520,02	0.4	0.8
Quebec	569,82	0.3	1.3
Ontario	644,01	0.2	1.3
Manitoba	527,37	0.4	1.4
Saskatchewan	529,29	0.3	1.1
Alberta	607,57	0.6	2.3
British Columbia	615,44	0.8	– 0.7
Yukon	712,24	– 0.1	1.4
Northwest Territories	744,42	1.6	2.0

(continued on page 5)

... Moderate growth in weekly earnings

durable goods manufacturing and mining, quarrying and oil wells also added to company payrolls. There were slight reductions in forestry, retail, finance, and public administration.

For 1997, payroll employment increased steadily through the year as employers added an estimated 429,000 employees. Increases were widespread across most industries with the exception of construction, education, and public administration. The strongest gains were in manufacturing industries and wholesale and retail trade, and were coincident with increases in shipments and sales.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4285–4466, 9438–9452, 9639–9664 and 9899–9911.

Detailed industry data and other labour market indicators are available in the monthly publication ***Employment, earnings and hours*** *(72-002-XPB, $32/$320), the historical publication* ***Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours, 1984–1996*** *(diskette: 72F0002XDE, $120) and by custom tabulations. For further information, contact Robert Frindt (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; Internet: labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.*

International travel account deficit grows

In 1997, the international travel account deficit reached $3.2 billion, up 6.7% from 1996. Spending by Canadians abroad and receipts from foreign visitors reached unprecedented levels in 1997. Canadians spent $15.6 billion during their international trips (+3.2%), while foreigners travelling to Canada injected $12.4 billion into the country's economy (+2.3%).

After recording a surplus the previous two years, the travel account balance between Canada and overseas countries (countries other than the United States) showed a deficit of $134 million in 1997. The strengthening of the Canadian dollar compared with most European currencies and the Japanese yen was an important factor in the deterioration of Canada's travel account balance with overseas countries.

Overseas residents made fewer trips of one night or more to Canada in 1997 (–3.4%). They spent $5.5 billion, down 1.6% from 1996. Meanwhile, Canadians spent 7.3% more during their trips in overseas countries, bringing the total to $5.6 billion—the highest on record.

In 1997, Americans made more trips to Canada and spent more money while they were here (+5.6% to $6.9 billion). Canadians travelling to the United States also spent more (+1.0% to $10.0 billion). The net result was a decrease in the travel account deficit between Canada and the United States, which reached $3.1 billion.

In the fourth quarter of 1997, a record $1.7 billion in receipts from American travellers and lower spending by Canadians in the United States contributed to a 13.8% drop in the travel account between Canada and the United States. This deficit of $672 million was the smallest since the first quarter of 1995. The travel account with countries other than the United States showed a $142 million deficit.

Spending by Canadians in overseas countries reached a new high of $1.5 billion in the fourth quarter of 1997. At the same time, spending by residents of overseas countries was at its lowest level ($193 million) since the fourth quarter of 1995. Overall, the international travel account deficit declined 4.7% to $815 million.

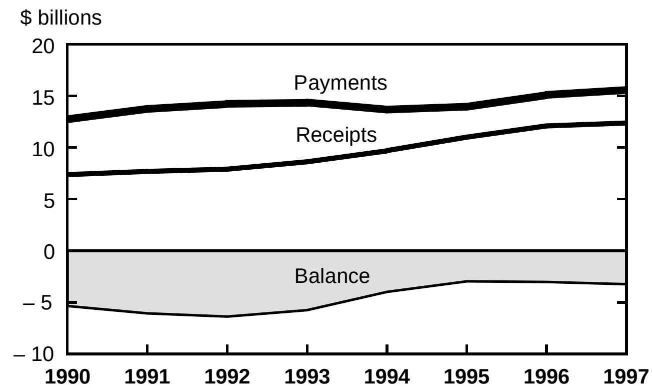
For further information, contact Luc Dubois (613-951-1674; fax: 613-951-2909, Internet: duboluc@statcan.ca), Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics.

Note to readers

Unless otherwise specified, quarterly data are seasonally adjusted. Amounts are in Canadian dollars and are not adjusted for inflation.

Receipts represent spending by foreigners travelling in Canada, including education- and medical-related spending. Payments represent spending by Canadians travelling abroad, including education- and medical-related spending.

International travel account deficit



Fraud down for fifth consecutive year

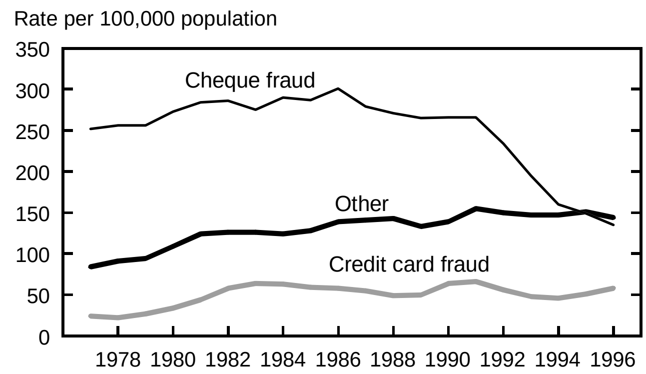
In 1996, the overall fraud rate fell for the fifth consecutive year and hit its lowest level in two decades, mainly due to a significant reduction in cheque frauds. Police reported just over 101,000 frauds in 1996, or 337 offences for every 100,000 population.

Cheque frauds accounted for 40% of fraud incidents in 1996, down from 70% in 1977. While credit card fraud represented only 7% of all fraud about 20 years ago, that proportion more than doubled to 17% in 1996. Frauds falling into the "other" category (telemarketing fraud, unauthorized use of computers, fraudulent manipulation of the stock market and personal identity scams, for example) represented 43% of all frauds in 1996.

Saskatchewan reported the highest fraud rate of any province or territory for the fifth consecutive year. The rates in Quebec, Newfoundland, Ontario and the Northwest Territories were below the national average in 1996. Only Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick have recorded increases in overall fraud rates over the last 10 years.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada estimates that 10% to 15% of automobile, household and commercial claims are fraudulently fabricated or inflated. Figures from the Canadian Bankers Association show that in 1996, credit card fraud cost the industry $83 million, one-third of which stemmed from counterfeiting. This was a significant increase from the $72.6 million lost in 1995.

Trends in fraud rates



Among those charged with fraud, males accounted for 71% of offenders; females, 29%. The median age of fraud offenders was 29 years old, compared with 21 for those accused of other property crimes. About 6 in 10 fraud offences were solved by police, while only 2 in 10 property crime cases were cracked.

***Juristat: The changing nature of fraud in Canada**, Vol. 18, no. 4 (Internet: 85-002-XIE, $7; paper: 85-002-XPE, $10/$93) is now available. For further information, contact Information and Client Services (613-951-9023 or 1 800 387-2231) or Derek Janhevich (613-951-0038), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.*

New from Statistics Canada

StatCan: CANSIM directory disc
March 1998

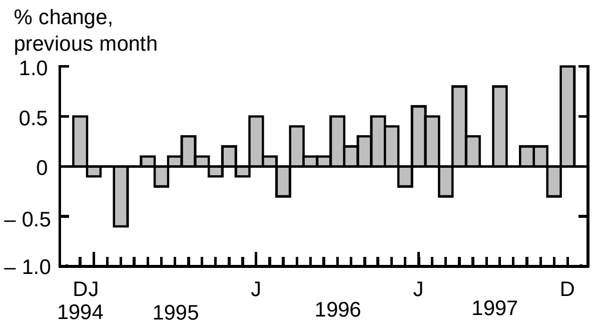
The *StatCan: CANSIM directory* disc serves as a guide to the data contained in the *CANSIM time series database*. Online access to this database is available worldwide through a number of distributors.

The *StatCan: CANSIM directory* disc makes finding data easy. You can search the directory by keyword or by topic. The disc also contains the Statistical Data Documentation System (a database of information about the surveys and statistical programs used at Statistics Canada), a thesaurus of terms used by Statistics Canada, and an instructional module called "About Statistics Canada data" (which contains additional information on the data and services available).

*The March 1998 edition of the **StatCan CANSIM directory** (10F0005XCB) is now available on CD-ROM. An annual subscription, which includes four quarterly issues, is priced at $103 in Canada and US$103 in other countries. For further information, contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.*

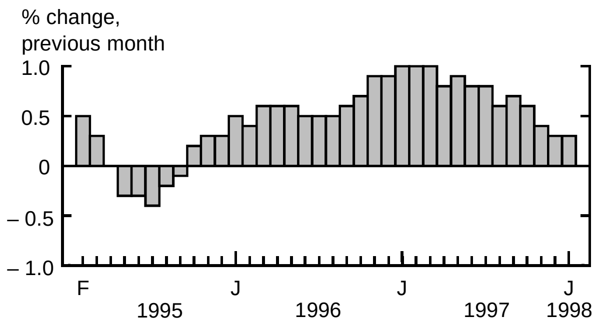
Current trends

Gross domestic product



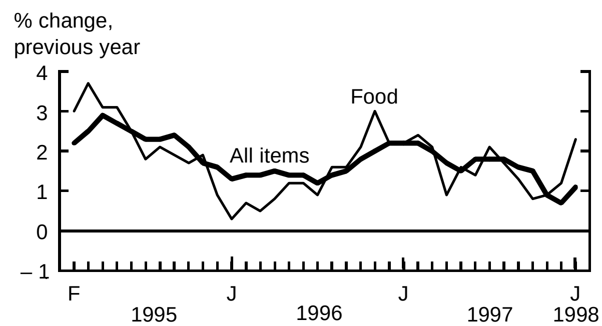
Real gross domestic product at factor cost soared 1.0% in December.

Composite Index



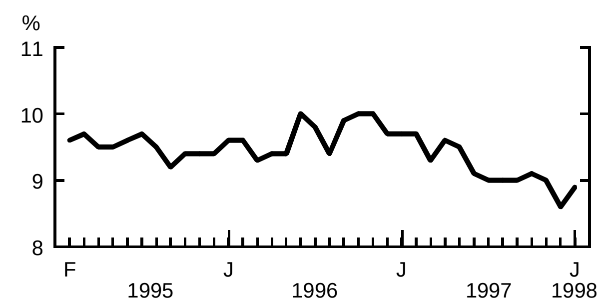
The Composite Index grew by 0.3% in January.

Consumer Price Index



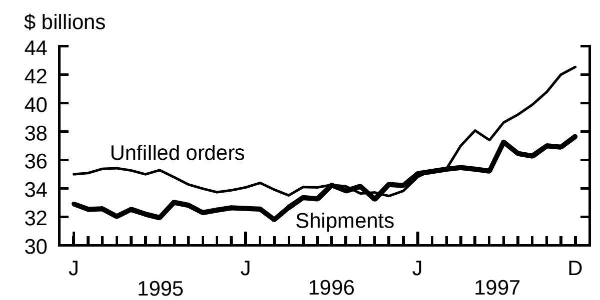
Consumers paid 1.1% more for goods and services in January 1998 than the year before. Food prices rose by 2.3%.

Unemployment rate



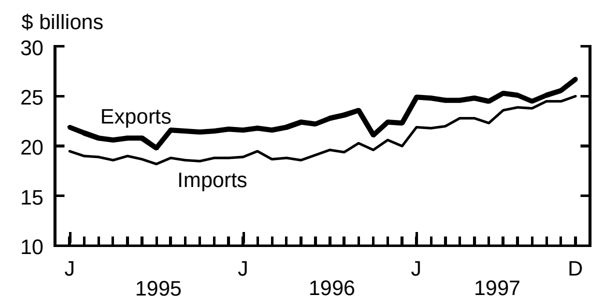
In January, the unemployment rate rose 0.3 percentage points to 8.9%.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments increased 2.0% in December to $37.6 billion. The level of unfilled orders declined 0.4% to $42.5 billion.

Merchandise trade



In December, the value of merchandise exports jumped 3.9% from November to $26.7 billion. Imports rose 2.2% to $25.0 billion.

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

Latest monthly statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
GENERAL				
Gross domestic product ($ billion, 1992)	December*	704.9	1.0%	4.5%
Composite Index (1981=100)	January	202.8	0.3%	8.4%
Operating profits of enterprises ($ billion)	Q4 1997	29.2	3.1%	16.0%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q3 1997	86.2	1.2†	2.9†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade ($ billion)	December	20.1	2.7%	8.2%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	December	144.6	14.6%	32.8%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	January	14.1	0.0%	2.5%
Unemployment rate (%)	January	8.9	0.3†	– 0.8†
Participation rate (%)	January	64.9	0.1†	0.2†
Labour income ($ billion)	October	37.48	0.2%	3.8%
Average weekly earnings ($)	December*	601.79	0.2%	1.0%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports ($ billion)	December	26.7	3.9%	12.3%
Merchandise imports ($ billion)	December	25.0	2.2%	20.0%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in $ billion)	December	1.7	0.5	– 1.2
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments ($ billion)	December	37.6	2.0%	8.1%
New orders ($ billion)	December	37.5	– 1.7%	6.9%
Unfilled orders ($ billion)	December	42.5	– 0.4%	24.2%
Inventory/shipments ratio	December	1.27	– 0.03	– 0.04
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	January	107.0	0.6%	1.1%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	January	119.8	0.0%	0.8%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	January	114.7	– 3.1%	– 13.7%
New Housing Price Index (1986=100)	December	133.6	0.1%	1.3%

Note: *All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.*
* *new this week*
† *percentage point*

Infomat
A weekly review

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Publications released from March 6 to 12, 1998

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription Canada (C$)	Outside Canada (US$)
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE STATISTICS				
Juristat—Breaking and entering in Canada:	1996			
Internet		85-002-XIE	7	7
paper		85-002-XPE	10/93	10/93
DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES				
Retail trade	December 1997	63-005-XPB	21/206	21/206
Wholesale trade	December 1997	63-008-XPB	19/186	19/186
HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS				
Survey methodology	December 1997	12-001-XPB	47	47
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Exports by commodity:	December 1997			
microfiche		65-004-XMB	37/361	37/361
paper		65-004-XPB	78/773	78/773
INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL STOCK				
Private and public investment in Canada, intentions:	1998			
Internet		61-205-XIB	37	37
microfiche		61-205-XMB	37	37
paper		61-205-XPB	47	47
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY				
Cement	January 1998	44-001-XPB	7/62	7/62
Clothing industry	1995	34-252-XPB	40	40
Coal and coke statistics	December 1997	45-002-XPB	12/114	12/114
Electric power statistics	December 1997	57-001-XPB	12/114	12/114
Fabricated metal products industries	1995	41-251-XPB	40	40
Production and shipments of steel pipe and tubing	January 1998	41-011-XPB	7/62	7/62
PRICES				
Average prices of selected farm inputs	January 1998	62-012-XPB	11/50	11/50
Farm Input Price Index	Q4 1997	62-004-XPB	25/83	25/83
TRANSPORTATION				
Shipping in Canada	1996	54-205-XPB	52	52

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