



Infommat

A Weekly Review

Friday, May 4, 2001

OVERVIEW

◆ Economy slips following drop in electronic goods production

After January's 0.3% gain, gross domestic product slipped 0.1% in February, led by a sharp drop in the production of telecommunications equipment.

◆ Fourth straight decline in Composite Index

The leading indicator edged down 0.1% in March, its fourth straight monthly decline. The stock market and manufacturing sector remained the main sources of weakness.

◆ Prices of industrial products and raw materials post slower growth

The year-over-year increase in prices for both goods produced by manufacturers and raw materials continued to slow in March, as energy costs had much less of an impact.

◆ Canadians continue to diversify their holdings of foreign equities

In February, Canadian investors continued to diversify their foreign equity holdings. Meanwhile, foreign investors increased their holdings of Canadian stocks but sharply reduced their holdings of money market paper.

◆ Sales by large retailers on the rise

In January, sales by large retailers increased 5.4% from January 2000. All major commodity groups recorded year-over-year sales increases.

◆ Pace of year-over-year weekly earnings growth has weakened

In February, average weekly earnings were almost unchanged from January. Year-over-year weekly earnings increased by 1.9%. The pace of year-over-year growth has been slowing since December 2000, especially in the goods-producing sector.

Economy slips following drop in electronic goods production

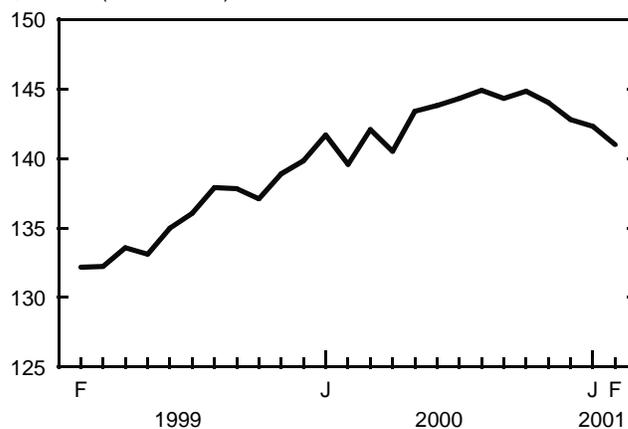
After January's 0.3% gain, gross domestic product slipped 0.1% in February, led by a sharp drop in the production of telecommunications equipment. The drop in the production of electronic products led to the fifth and largest decline in manufacturing output in six months.

Total manufacturing output fell 0.9% in February, descending to levels not seen since April 2000. Excluding the electrical and electronic products industry, output in the rest of manufacturing actually increased 0.3% in February. Strength in manufacturing came from makers of chemical, wood and fabricated metal products.

Production of electrical and electronic products plummeted 9.1% in February, the biggest monthly decline since gross domestic product for this industry was first compiled in 1961. Major customers, primarily from the United States, continued to curtail spending, sparking significant production cutbacks and layoffs by key Canadian producers. The weakness was most pronounced among makers of telecommunications equipment. Overall, production levels of electrical and electronic goods were 15.7% off the peak reached in October 2000.

Manufacturing output

\$ billions (1992 dollars)



(continued on page 2)



... Economy slips following drop in electronic goods production

Manufacturing of motor vehicles and parts was again cut back in February, by 0.1% and 0.3% respectively. However, these reductions are the smallest since major producers first began scaling back their operations in the second half of 2000. Exports and imports of completed automobiles continued to drop, while imports of parts rose for the first time in six months. The auto industry's attempts to eliminate excess inventory, paralleled by similar efforts in the United States, seemed to be bearing fruit.

Output of the primary metal products industry returned to December's low levels. Mills making primary steel curtailed production the most. Output of furniture fell 3.4%, the second decline in three months. The outsourcing of production by some producers to manufacturers outside Canada was a factor in the industry's weak performance.

A buoyant pharmaceuticals industry continued to shore up the chemical products sector, accounting for almost half of the sector's 3.6% advance. Spurred by strong residential construction, production of wood products grew 1.2%. Despite a 10-year low in lumber prices, gains were led by increased activity at sawmills.

Elsewhere in the economy, weaker demand for computer and automotive products pushed down wholesalers' activity by 0.8%, after gains in December and January. Retailing activity decreased 0.5%, as auto sales fell back to December levels after a spurt in January. Output in the transportation and storage industry fell 1.1%, reflecting lower production, distribution and international trade in goods. Sea-going freight was particularly affected. A drop in stock market volumes had a slowing influence on the finance industries, leading to a 0.4% drop in this group's output.

These declines were partly offset by a rebound in the demand for natural gas (+4.0%) and electricity (+2.9%), as temperatures

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 gross domestic product is valued at 1992 prices. The estimates presented here are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

The next annual revision of monthly GDP by industry estimates, scheduled for release on September 28, 2001, will include major classification and conceptual changes. The most important of these are: the replacement of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification with the 1997 North American Industrial Classification System; a change in valuation from factor cost to basic prices; the capitalization of computer software; and rebasing from 1992 to 1997 prices, i.e., updating the price structure used to derive constant dollar GDP.

turned cooler following a milder-than-normal January. Construction industry output was also up, by 0.5%, stimulated by residential and non-residential demand. This increase restored levels of activity to peaks reached in early 2000. Buoyed by increased use of long-distance and cellular services, the communications industry saw output rise 1.2%. Mining sector output rose 0.7%, largely due to robust activity in the oilpatch as high prices continued to support expanded production.

*The February 2001 issue of **Gross domestic product by industry** (Internet: 15-001-XIE, \$11/\$110; paper: 15-001-XPB, \$15/\$145) will be available in May. To purchase data, contact Yolande Chantigny (1 800 877-4623; imad@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Richard Evans (613-951-9145; evanric@statcan.ca), Industry Measures and Analysis Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 7.)*

Fourth straight decline in Composite Index

The leading indicator edged down 0.1% in March, its fourth straight monthly decline. Five components fell, while four rose and one was unchanged. This follows a revision of February's preliminary estimate from a 0.1% increase to a 0.1% decline.

While the steepening slide in stock prices alone was enough to push down the overall index, the manufacturing sector also weakened. The drop in the ratio of shipments to inventories (the fifth in six months) steepened, while new orders lost another percentage point as export demand tumbled for automobiles and capital goods.

After a robust start to the year, the housing index already has turned down. Housing starts were particularly weak in eastern Canada, which was blanketed by heavy snow in March. However, sales of existing homes remained near the four-year high posted in February, lending ongoing support to furniture and appliance sales, which had their best gain in years. Consumer spending held up for other durable goods and services.

The U.S. leading indicator retreated for the seventh consecutive month.

*For more information on the economy, the April 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 7.)*

Prices of industrial products and raw materials post slower growth

Manufacturers' prices, as measured by the Industrial Product Price Index (IPPI), grew 2.4% from March 2000 to March 2001, continuing the slowdown in price growth that started last December. This reduced momentum reflected in part the declining growth in petroleum product prices. For the first time since 1999, petroleum product prices slowed the annual increase in the IPPI, although they remained 2.3% above March 2000 levels. Without petroleum and coal products, the IPPI would have actually advanced 2.6%. Motor vehicle and paper and paper product prices provided the greatest upward price pressure on the IPPI in March.

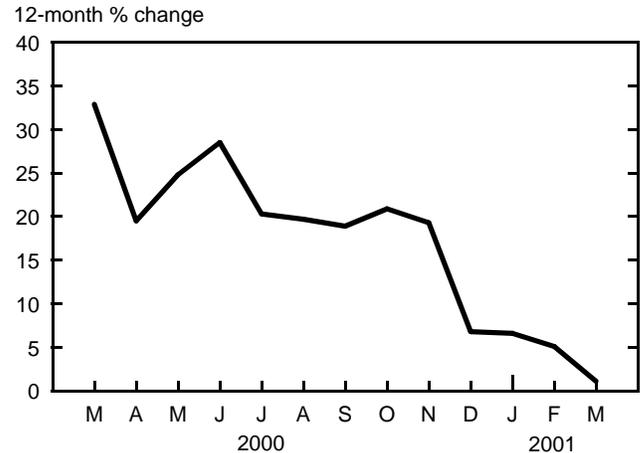
As with the IPPI, energy prices dampened the increase in the Raw Materials Price Index (RMPI). Manufacturers paid 1.1% more for their raw materials in March 2001 than in March 2000, down from February's year-over-year increase of 5.1%. For the first time in more than two years, crude oil prices dropped on a 12-month basis in March (-5.7%). If mineral fuels were excluded, the RMPI would have advanced 3.5%. Metal prices also pushed down the RMPI. These declines were more than offset by higher animal and vegetable product prices.

On a month-to-month basis, industrial prices gained 0.5% in March, matching February's rate. Motor vehicle and paper and paper product prices were the main factors in the monthly rise of the IPPI. A 2.7% drop in petroleum and coal product prices was not sufficient to offset these increases.

Industrial product and raw materials price indexes, March 2001

	Index (1992=100)	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Industrial Product Price Index (IPPI)	130.1	0.5	2.4
IPPI excluding petroleum and coal products	128.0	0.9	2.6
Intermediate goods	130.8	0.5	1.8
Finished goods	129.1	0.7	3.5
Raw Materials Price Index (RMPI)	144.0	-2.1	1.1
RMPI excluding mineral fuels	127.6	1.7	3.5
Mineral fuels (crude oil)	179.9	-7.4	-2.3
Vegetable products	120.1	0.7	7.1
Animals and animal products	131.0	4.5	9.8
Wood	142.1	0.0	0.3
Ferrous materials	111.7	2.1	-8.4
Non-ferrous metals	115.3	-0.9	-3.2
Non-metallic minerals	123.6	0.7	2.7

Raw Materials Price Index



In the case of raw materials, declining mineral fuel prices were the driving force behind a 2.1% drop in the RMPI from February to March. Crude oil prices fell 8.0% during this period on expectations that U.S. inventories would be adequate to satisfy the demand stemming from the slowing U.S. economy.

The U.S. dollar continued to gain value in March, pushing up prices of commodities quoted in U.S. dollars, notably automobiles, lumber, pulp and newsprint. If the effect of the exchange rate were removed, the IPPI would have remained unchanged between February and March and would have advanced only 0.7% from March 2000 to March 2001.

In March, motor vehicle prices were central to gains for both annual and monthly finished goods prices. Along with paper and electrical products, motor vehicles contributed to a 0.7% increase in finished goods prices from February. On a year-over-year basis, motor vehicles, in combination with meat, paper and tobacco products, brought about a 3.5% rise in finished goods prices.

Prices of intermediate goods rose 0.5% compared with February, led by higher prices for paper, lumber and chemical products. Compared with March 2000, intermediate goods prices were up 1.8%.

*The March 2001 issue of **Industry price indexes** (paper: 62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available in May. For more information, contact Jennifer Withington (613-951-9603; fax: 613-951-1539; withjen@statcan.ca), Prices Division.*

Canadians continue to diversify their holdings of foreign equities

Canadians continued to diversify their investments in foreign equities, purchasing \$3.8 billion worth of foreign stocks in February. Two-thirds of this amount was spent on U.S. shares and one-third on overseas shares. This is a shift from the 50-50 split that prevailed in the prior 13 months.

By contrast, they reduced their holdings of foreign bonds by \$2.4 billion, reversing January's investment of \$2.2 billion. So far in 2001, this activity has been concentrated in U.S. government bonds.

Foreign investors increased their holdings of Canadian equities by \$2.8 billion, bringing the two-month total to \$5.4 billion. Contrary to the investment in January, February's investment came solely from the issuance of new treasury shares by a Canadian

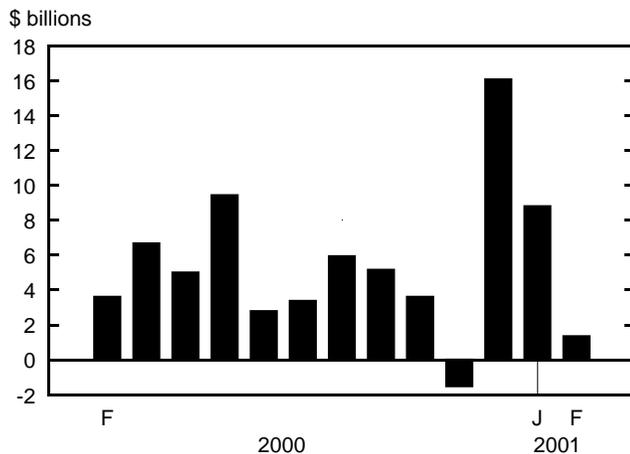
Related market information

In February, a quarter-point drop in both Canadian and U.S. short-term interest rates kept them at parity for the second consecutive month. The differential in long-term interest rates rose from 18 to 32 basis points, favouring investment in Canada for the third consecutive month.

Canadian stock prices took a sharp downward turn, declining 13.3% in February, causing the TSE 300 composite index to fall to its lowest level since November 1999. U.S. stock prices, as measured by the Standard & Poor's 500 index, declined 9.2%, returning to a level not seen since February 1999.

The Canadian dollar fell 1.62 cents U.S. against the American dollar in February, closing the month at just over 65 cents U.S. This represents the lowest closing since the historical low set in August 1998.

Canadian investment in foreign securities¹



¹ Includes bonds and stocks.

company as payment for the acquisition of production assets from a foreign company. After increasing their holdings of existing shares in December and January by \$4.3 billion, foreign investors sold a small amount in February.

Foreign investors also divested themselves of Canadian money market paper, reducing their holdings by \$3.1 billion in February. This was the largest reduction since January 1999. The foreign divestment was spread over all sectors and came from American and European investors.

In February, new Canadian bonds sold in foreign markets exceeded retirements for only the second time since February 2000, as seen in foreign investment of \$2.3 billion in the primary market. However, this investment was almost completely negated by the foreign selling of \$2.1 billion of mainly federal bonds in the secondary market. American investors purchased \$2.9 billion of Canadian bonds while Asian and European investors divested a similar amount.

The February 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 May. For more information, contact Donald Granger (613-951-1864), Balance of Payments and Financial Flows Division.

Sales by large retailers on the rise

Sales by large retailers totalled \$5.4 billion in January, up 5.4% from January 2000. All major commodity groups recorded year-over-year sales increases. Health and personal care products, other goods and services, and home furnishings and electronics posted the largest gains. (All data are unadjusted for seasonality.)

January sales of health and personal care products were up 11.1% from January 2000. Drug sales, which include prescription and over-the-counter drugs, climbed 13.0%; sales of personal care products, which include cosmetics and other toiletries, were up 8.9%.

The all other goods and services category continued a strong advance, posting a 10.5% increase over January 2000. This gain is largely attributable to fuel prices, which continued to be much

Large retailers' sales

Not seasonally adjusted

	January 2000	January 2001	January 2000 to January 2001
	\$ millions		% change
All commodities	5,100	5,374	5.4
Food and beverages	1,970	1,989	1.0
Clothing, footwear and accessories	800	834	4.2
Home furnishings and electronics	754	833	10.4
Health and personal care products	433	481	11.1
Housewares	261	281	7.6
Sporting and leisure goods	199	213	7.3
Hardware, lawn and garden products	138	142	2.3
All other goods and services	545	602	10.5

(continued on page 5)

... Sales by large retailers on the rise

higher than one year earlier. Sales of automotive fuels, oils and additives were up 20.5%.

After a moderate cooling-off period that started in July 2000, sales of home furnishings and electronics were reinvigorated in January. The 10.4% year-over-year sales rise was back to a level similar to those posted in the latter half of 1999 and the first half of 2000. In this category, furniture sales were up 12.2%. For

electronics, sales were specially strong for computer software (+44.6%), telephones and home office electronics (+25.8%), and televisions and audio/visual equipment (+15.9%). However, for the third month in a row, sales of computers, components and related equipment were weak (+1.7%).

To order data, or for general information, contact Client Services (1 877 421-3067; 613-951-3549; retailinfo@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Elton Cryderman (613-951-0669; elton.cryderman@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.

Pace of year-over-year weekly earnings growth has weakened

Average weekly earnings for all employees stood at \$660.22 in February, almost unchanged from January. Year-over-year average weekly earnings increased by 1.9%, down slightly from the 2.0% growth in January.

The pace of year-over-year earnings growth has been slowing since December 2000, especially in the goods-producing sector, where it stood at only 0.5% in February. Notably, average weekly earnings declined in the forestry, mining, construction and manufacturing industries. By contrast, in the service-producing sector, average weekly earnings increased slightly from January, while year-over-year earnings growth was substantially stronger, 2.6%.

Average weekly earnings by industry, February 2001 Seasonally adjusted

	\$	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
All industries	660.22	0.0	1.9
Forestry, logging and support	810.95	-0.3	0.7
Mining and oil and gas	1,146.22	-0.5	2.6
Utilities	1,003.20	0.2	0.7
Construction	809.50	-0.9	0.6
Manufacturing	792.33	0.0	0.2
Wholesale trade	757.25	0.3	0.3
Retail trade	432.54	0.3	1.1
Transportation and warehousing	737.44	0.3	1.6
Information and cultural industries	778.70	0.1	1.6
Finance and insurance	845.62	0.6	1.3
Real estate and rental and leasing	621.10	0.4	8.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	882.12	-0.5	3.4
Management of companies and enterprises	838.78	0.0	0.8
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	535.22	-0.1	6.2
Educational services	686.28	0.0	2.8
Health care and social assistance	576.00	0.2	4.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	475.28	0.5	3.2
Accommodation and food services	281.46	0.3	3.6
Other services (excluding public administration)	515.04	0.1	3.6
Public administration	751.89	0.1	0.9

Note to readers

Beginning with January 2001 data, the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours will publish its estimates based on the North American Industry Classification (NAICS). The NAICS-based estimates are not comparable to the previously published estimates based on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) of 1980. In order to facilitate this transition, NAICS-based historical series from January 1991 to December 2000 have been produced. A concordance table between NAICS and 1980 SIC codes is available on request. A description of the conversion process and its impact on the data will be available in the April 2001 issue of *Employment, earnings and hours*. For more information on the NAICS consult the "Statistical methods" page on Statistics Canada's Web site (www.statcan.ca).

Average hourly earnings for hourly paid employees were \$16.39 in February, down one cent from January. Average weekly hours for hourly employees were also down slightly to 32.0. Average overtime hours were unchanged.

In February, the number of employees on payrolls increased by 16,000. The strongest employment gains were in construction and retail trade. Employment levels were unchanged in most provinces and territories; the only significant gain took place in Alberta.

The February 2001 issue of *Employment, earnings and hours* (Internet: 72-002-XIB, \$24/\$240; paper: 72-002-XPB, \$32/\$320) presents detailed industry data and other labour market indicators. For more information, contact Jean Leduc or Robert Frindt (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca), Labour Statistics Division.

New from Statistics Canada

Perspectives on labour and income

April 2001 online edition

The April 2001 online edition of *Perspectives on labour and income* contains two articles. The first, titled "Repeat users of Employment Insurance," compares demographic characteristics of repeat users of Employment Insurance with those of employees in general. It also examines attitudes of repeat users toward employment and unemployment. The second article, titled "Trends in part-time work," compares trends in short-hour part-time work (1 to 14 hours per week) and long-hour part-time (15 to 29 hours).

The April 2001 online edition of Perspectives on labour and income, Vol. 2, no. 4 (Internet: 75-001-XIE, \$5/\$48) is now available. For more information, contact Henry Pold (613-951-4608; henry.pold@statcan.ca), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.

Health indicators

Vol. 2001, no. 1

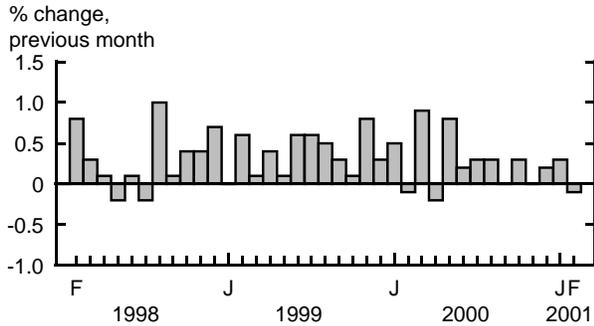
Health indicators is an electronic publication produced by Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information. The data are produced from the National Population Health Survey, National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth, the Vital Statistics Database and the 1996 Census of Population.

The indicators are organized into four categories: health status (including health conditions, mortality rates and measures of well-being); non-medical determinants of health (socio-economic characteristics and health behaviours); health system performance (measures of accessibility, appropriateness and effectiveness of health care services); and community and health system characteristics (contextual information). They are designed to provide comparable information at the Canada, provincial/territorial and health region level.

*The publication **Health indicators** (Internet: 82-221-XIE, free) is available on Statistics Canada's Web site (www.statcan.ca). For more information, contact Beverley Webster (613-241-7860), Canadian Institute for Health Information, or Jason Gilmore (613-951-7118; jason.gilmore@statcan.ca), Statistics Canada.*

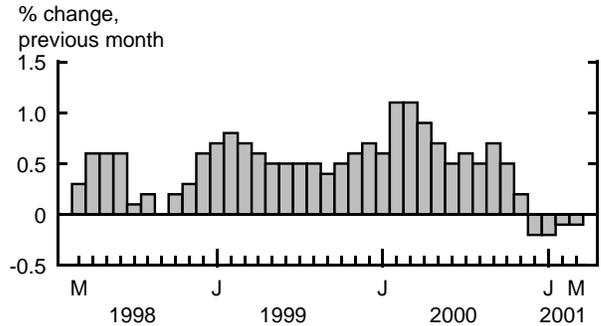
Current trends

Gross domestic product



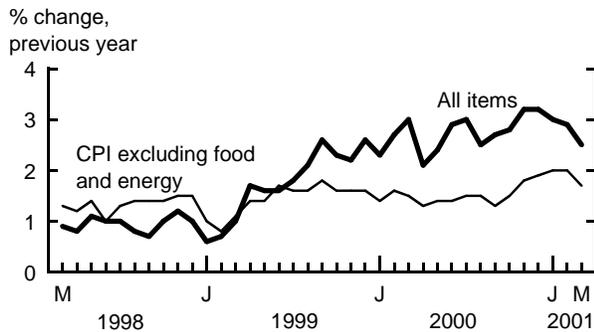
After January's 0.3% gain, gross domestic product slipped 0.1% in February, led by a sharp drop in the production of telecommunication equipment.

Composite Index



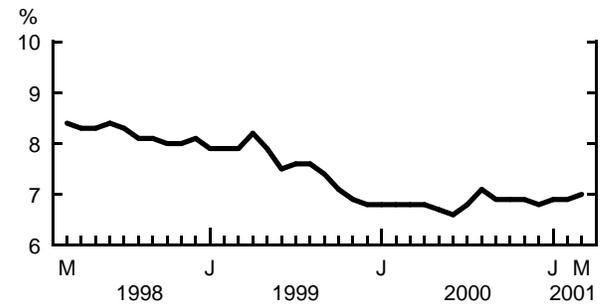
The leading indicator edged down 0.1% in March, its fourth straight decline. The stock market and the manufacturing sector remained the main sources of weakness.

Consumer Price Index



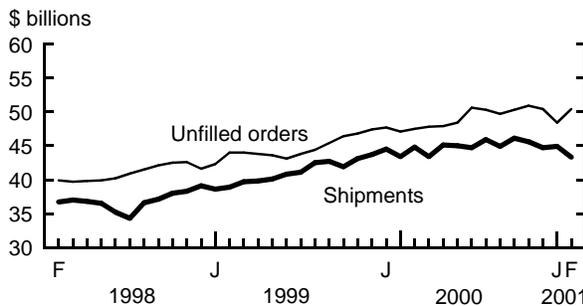
Consumer prices for goods and services were 2.5% higher in March than they were a year earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices rose 1.7%.

Unemployment rate



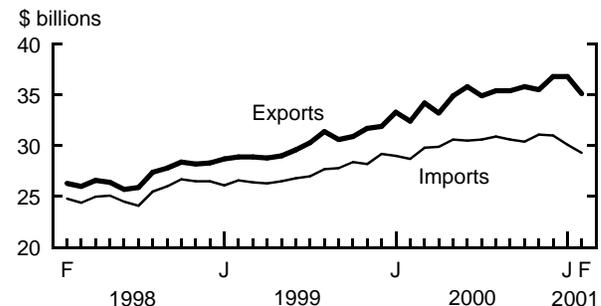
In March, the unemployment rate edged up 0.1 percentage points to 7.0%, as more people entered the labour force in search of work.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments fell 3.6% in February to \$43.3 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders recovered some lost ground, rising 4.1% to \$50.4 billion.

Merchandise trade



In February, the value of merchandise exports declined 4.5% to \$35.1 billion. Imports fell for the third straight month, declining 2.8% to \$29.3 billion.

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)	February*	798.1	-0.1%	3.1%
Composite Index (1992=100)	March	166.6	-0.1%	4.1%
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)	February	23.6	-0.3%	4.9%
Department store sales (\$ billions)	February	1.62	-1.1%	8.9%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	February	125.6	-4.0%	-3.5%
Wholesale trade (\$ billion)	February	31.8	-1.6%	2.3%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	March	15.07	0.2%	1.6%
Unemployment rate (%)	March	7.0	0.1†	0.2†
Participation rate (%)	March	66.1	0.1†	0.2†
Average weekly earnings (\$)¹	February*	660.22	0.0%	1.9%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	March	168	-1.8%	-1.8%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billions)	February	35.1	-4.5%	8.5%
Merchandise imports (\$ billions)	February	29.3	-2.8%	1.9%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billions)	February	5.9	-0.8	2.2
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billions)¹	February	43.3	-3.6%	-0.3%
New orders (\$ billions)¹	February	45.3	5.6%	5.6%
Unfilled orders (\$ billions)¹	February	50.4	4.1%	7.0%
Inventory/shipments ratio¹	February	1.51	0.07	0.14
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	March	115.6	0.3%	2.5%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	March*	130.1	0.5%	2.4%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	March*	144.0	-2.1%	1.1%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	February	104.9	0.3%	2.4%

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.

Infomat

A weekly review

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Products released from April 26 to May 2, 2001

SUBJECT AREA Title of product	Period	Catalogue number	Price (\$) (issue/subscription)
AGRICULTURE			
Cereals and oilseeds review	February 2001	22-007-XIB	11/112
Cereals and oilseeds review	February 2001	22-007-XPB	15/149
Greenhouse, sod and nursery industries	2000	22-202-XIB	26
Stocks of frozen meat products	April 2001	23-009-XIE	no charge
DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES			
New motor vehicle sales	February 2001	63-007-XIB	13/124
Retail trade	February 2001	63-005-XIB	16/155
Retail trade	February 2001	63-005-XPB	21/206
Wholesale trade	February 2001	63-008-XIB	14/140
HEALTH STATISTICS			
Health indicators, Vol. 2001, no. 1	April 2001	82-221-XIE	no charge
Health reports, Vol. 12, no. 3		82-003-XIE	no charge
LABOUR AND HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS ANALYSIS			
Perspectives on labour and income, Vol. 2, no. 4	April 2001	75-001-XIE	5/48
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY			
Asphalt roofing	March 2001	45-001-XIB	5/47
Coal and coke statistics	February 2001	45-002-XIB	9/85
Construction type plywood	February 2001	35-001-XIB	5/47
Electric power statistics	February 2001	57-001-XIB	9/85
Mineral wool including fibrous glass insulation	March 2001	44-004-XIB	5/47
Monthly Survey of Manufacturing	February 2001	31-001-XIB	15/147
Pulpwood and wood residue statistics	February 2001	25-001-XIB	6/55
Sawmills and planing mills	February 2001	35-003-XIB	9/86
SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND ELECTRONIC INFORMATION			
Networked Canada	1993 to 1999	56-504-XPE	50

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