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Infomat
A Weekly Review

Friday, May 10, 2002

INSIDE

- **Spending on non-residential construction posts record high**

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- **National wealth hits all-time high**

  National wealth reached a record $3.7 trillion in 2001. Residential real estate was the fastest growing component, driven by housing investment, higher construction costs and brisk activity in the resale market. The net worth of Canadians rose 4.8%, reaching a high of $3.5 trillion or $112,800 per capita.

- **Demand for new housing cools slightly**

  The phenomenal demand for new housing in Canada cooled only slightly in March as builders maintained their pace in taking out residential building permits. Contractors acquired $2.4 billion in permits for housing, down 1.2% from the highest monthly record in February.

- **Timing of motherhood appears to have significant bearing on wages**

  The timing of motherhood appears to have a significant bearing on the wages of Canadian women. Women who had postponed having children until later in life earned at least 6% more in 1998 than women who had their children early.

More manufacturers expect increased output in second quarter

One-quarter of manufacturers expect to increase output this spring, up from 18% in January, according to the Quarterly Business Conditions Survey conducted in April.

Producers in the transportation equipment, primary metals and wood product industries were feeling more upbeat about production prospects between April and June. The proportion of manufacturers expecting to reduce production in these three months fell from 30% in January to 19% in April.

(continued on page 2)

Manufacturers' expectations and business conditions
Seasonally adjusted

	April 2001	July 2001	October 2001	January 2002	April 2002
	% of manufacturers who said				
Volume of production in next three months will be:					
About the same as in previous three months	59	55	57	52	56
Higher	14	17	10	18	25
Lower	27	28	33	30	19
Orders received are:					
About the same	54	52	52	50	57
Rising	12	7	5	14	27
Declining	34	41	43	36	16
Backlog of unfilled orders is:					
About normal	55	54	50	65	68
Higher than normal	6	6	4	6	13
Lower than normal	39	40	46	29	19
Finished-product inventory is:					
About right	74	70	78	66	82
Too low	5	2	2	4	4
Too high	21	28	20	30	14
Employment in next three months will:					
Change little from previous three months	72	72	67	71	76
Increase	9	11	9	10	11
Decrease	19	17	24	19	13

More manufacturers expect... *(continued from page 1)*

Producers also indicated they were more satisfied with both current levels of new orders and unfilled orders. The proportion of manufacturers reporting lower-than-normal orders received stood at 16% in April, down from 36% in January. Manufacturers in the transportation equipment, primary metals and wood product industries were the major contributors to this improvement.

In addition, after months of struggling with high inventory levels, manufacturers were also less concerned about finished product inventory. In April, 82% of them indicated that the current level of finished product inventory was about right, up from 66% in January. Manufacturers in the transportation equipment and primary metals industries were mostly responsible for this improvement.

According to the Monthly Survey of Manufacturing for February, manufacturers continued to draw down finished product inventories. They closed the month at $19.2 billion, down from a high of $20.2 billion in June 2001.

In April, 27% of manufacturers reported that orders received were rising, up 13 percentage points compared with January and more than five times higher than in October 2001.

The proportion of manufacturers indicating the current level of unfilled orders was higher than normal increased seven percentage points to 13% in April. Some 19% indicated the level was lower than normal, a major improvement from October 2001 when this proportion stood at 46%.

Employment prospects in manufacturing are more stable, with some 87% of manufacturers indicating that their employment level would change little or increase in the coming three months. According to the Labour Force Survey, employment in manufacturing increased by almost 100,000 in the first three months of 2002, almost recouping the 111,000 jobs lost in all of 2001.

Fewer manufacturers reported production impediments, but the proportion reporting a shortage of skilled labour increased two percentage points to 6%.

For general information, contact the dissemination officer (1-866-873-8789; 613-951-9497; manufact@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Claude Robillard (613-951-3507; robilcg@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division.

National Population Health Survey

Results from the fourth cycle of the National Population Health Survey (NPHS), 2000/01 (household component), are now available. Begun in 1994/95 and conducted every two years, the NPHS is a longitudinal survey on the health status, determinants and outcomes, as well as related socio-demographic characteristics, of Canadians living in households.

The NPHS household panel consists of 17,276 respondents across the 10 provinces. It provides provincial and national level information on a wide range of health determinants, risk factors and outcomes, such as alcohol consumption, smoking, chronic conditions, health care utilization, self-perceived health status, height, weight, physical activities, restriction of activities, stress, etc.

For more information, contact Mario Bédard (613-951-8933; mario.bedard@statcan.ca), Health Statistics Division.

Spending on non-residential construction posts record high

Businesses and governments spent a record $7.2 billion on non-residential construction during the first three months of 2002, up 0.7% from the fourth quarter of 2001 and up 3.4% from the first quarter of 2001.

Most of this investment was in commercial projects, where businesses spent $3.8 billion in the first quarter, although this was down 3.3% from the fourth quarter of 2001.

Institutional investment in construction projects by the government sector reached a new high of $2.1 billion (+8.7 %) in the first quarter, fuelled by sharp jumps in the third and fourth quarters of 2001. All categories of institutional buildings contributed to this increase, particularly spending on hospitals.

Ontario contributed the most (in dollar terms) to this strong performance with a 12.5% gain in the government sector, followed by Quebec (+10.9%), Alberta (+10.4%) and British Columbia (+6.8%). Ontario has registered continual growth since the first quarter of 1999. This increase is the result of sustained investment in the hospital and education categories.

Investment in Ontario accounted for 39% of the quarterly total, investment in Quebec, 23% and in Alberta, 14%. Quebec recorded the largest increase in dollar terms; investment was up significantly in the census metropolitan area of Montréal. Spending declined only in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia and Nunavut.

Total investment in the business sector, which includes both industrial and commercial construction projects, declined 2.2% in the first quarter compared with the fourth quarter of 2001.

After reaching a record high of almost $4.2 billion in the second quarter of 2001, investment in the commercial sector could not maintain the pace. During the following three quarters, commercial investment declined 8.7%. This decline reflects business indicators.

Also, higher vacancy rates for office buildings in different areas affected decisions to invest in office building construction. Demand for professional services remained practically unchanged in January. However, the fourth consecutive increase in retail trade in January may have a positive impact on future commercial building investment.

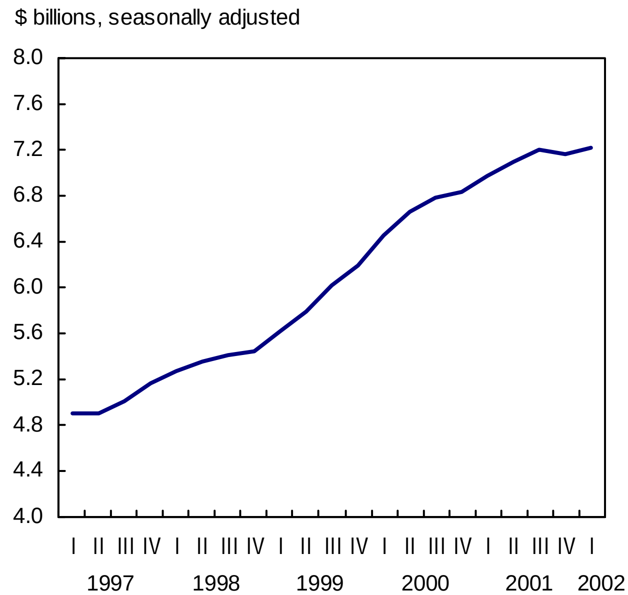
The industrial sector posted its fourth straight quarterly increase. Investment in industrial projects has increased 14.2% from the most recent low of just under $1.2 billion in the first quarter of 2001. The $1.3-billion investment in the first quarter of 2002 was the highest since 1997.

Note to readers

This first analysis of investment in non-residential building construction is primarily based on the Building Permits Survey of municipalities, which collects information on construction intentions. Investments in non-residential building construction exclude engineering construction.

Additional data from the Survey of Private and Public Investment are used to create this investment series. Investment in non-residential building data is benchmarked to Statistics Canada's System of National Accounts of non-residential building investment series.

Investment in non-residential construction



Dwindling production and a sharp drop in corporate profits led to stabilized investments in the first quarter. Industries operated at 80.3% capacity in the fourth quarter of 2001, the sixth consecutive quarterly decline.

To obtain data, contact Joanne Bureau (613-951-9689; burejoa@statcan.ca). For more information, contact Valérie Gaudreault (613-951-1165; gaudval@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division.

National wealth hits all-time high

National wealth, the sum of all the assets of people, corporations and governments in Canada, rose to a record $3.7 trillion in 2001. However, this growth was at a slower pace than the year before, reflecting markedly slower domestic economic activity.

National wealth increased 4.6% last year, compared with a 5.3% increase in 2000. Residential real estate was the fastest growing component, driven by housing investment, higher construction costs and brisk activity in the resale market.

Even after subtracting an estimated $203.4 billion in net debt to foreigners, Canada's net national worth was still $3.5 trillion, up 4.8% from 2000. On a per capita basis, this represented $112,800 for every person in Canada, an all-time high, up from $108,700 the year before.

The growth rate in national worth was down sharply from the 7.1% increase in 2000. This reflected slower gains in national wealth and a levelling-off in the net foreign liability, following two years of sharp declines. Nevertheless, net foreign debt continued its downward slide relative to national wealth.

The net worth of households increased 3.7%, also a slower pace than in 2000. A decline in personal savings was offset by gains in the value of household assets. Non-financial assets outpaced financial assets, led by consumer durable goods and real estate.

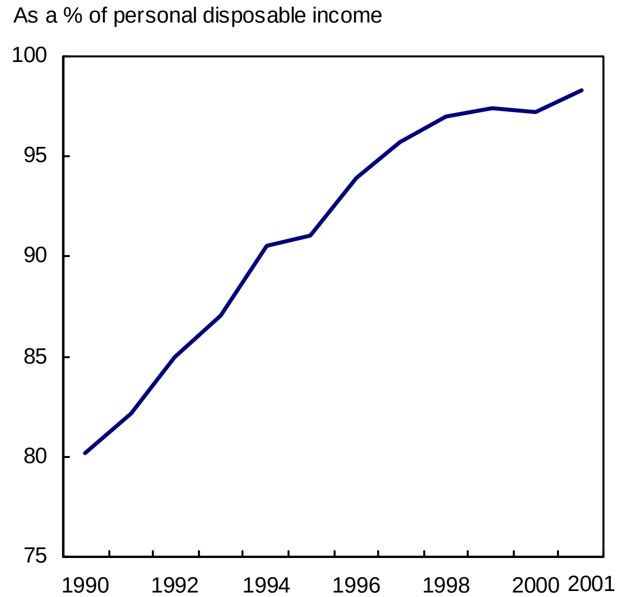
Canadians saw their income growth slow last year, but they borrowed more money. As a result, the ratio of consumer credit and mortgage debt to personal disposable income rose to a new high of 98.3%. In other words, Canadians accumulated nearly $1 in debt for every dollar they took home in their paycheques. Higher household debt was partly offset by the decline in interest rates. Nevertheless, interest payments edged up relative to income for the year as a whole, although these costs fell in the fourth quarter.

Credit market debt (short-term paper, loans, mortgages and bonds) grew faster than in 2000. The slide in interest rates encouraged spending and borrowing in certain sectors, particularly housing. Reduced government surpluses also played a role. Higher values of liabilities denominated in foreign currencies added to the growth in debt, reflecting the sharp depreciation of the Canadian dollar against its U.S. counterpart in the second half of the year.

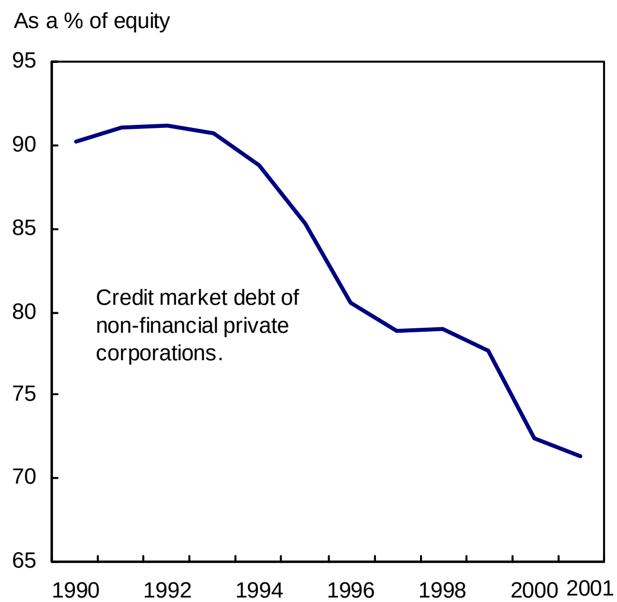
Despite a decline in corporate profits, firms continued to restructure their balance sheets. For the second consecutive year, and for six of the last nine, corporations were net suppliers of funds to the economy, a departure from their traditional role as net borrowers. Among non-financial private corporations, the debt-to-equity ratio continued its long-term slide in 2001, though at a more modest pace.

Even as the combined surplus of the government sector narrowed in 2001, net government debt continued to fall. Government net debt relative to gross domestic product declined for the sixth year in a row.

Household debt



Corporate debt



The publication ***National balance sheet accounts*** *(paper: 13-214-PPB, $50) is now available. Balance sheet data are also available (diskette: 13-214-XDB, $60). To purchase any of these products or for more information, contact Client Services (613-951-3810). For analytical information, contact Patrick O'Hagan (613-951-1798) or Charles Wright (613-951-9044), Income and Expenditure Accounts Division.*

Demand for new housing cools slightly

The phenomenal demand for new housing in Canada cooled only slightly in March as builders maintained their pace in taking out residential building permits. Contractors acquired $2.4 billion in permits for housing, down 1.2% from the highest monthly record in February.

Permits for single-family housing accounted for three-quarters of the total. Builders took out $1.8 billion in single-family permits, down 0.6% from February. Despite this minor retreat, the level of construction intentions for single-family dwellings was still 34.3% higher than the average monthly level in 2001.

After a record-setting February, housing permits in Alberta fell 9.6% to $381 million, the largest decline among the provinces in absolute dollars. In contrast, housing permits were at a 15-year high in Quebec, which posted the largest advance (+4.8% to $462 million).

The housing market has been booming across Canada in the wake of low mortgage rates, high consumer confidence and the scarcity of existing dwellings for rent or resale. Housing permits reached $7.2 billion for the first three months of 2002, up 30.0% from the same period a year earlier.

On a year-to-date basis, all 10 provinces recorded double-digit advances in the residential sector compared with the same period in 2001. The largest increases (in dollars) occurred in Alberta (+56.4%) and Quebec (+45.7%).

In contrast, the trend continued downward in the non-residential sector. Pulled down by a substantial drop in industrial permits, the value of non-residential permits fell 2.1% to $1.3 billion, the lowest level since April 2000. After two sharp monthly increases, the value of permits for industrial projects fell 35.7% to $197 million, largely because of a decrease in the utility and transportation category. Ontario recorded the largest decline (-62.7% to $73 million) following a tremendous increase in February.

Institutional building intentions fell 6.5% to $375 million, the third straight monthly decline, as a gain in education projects was more than offset by retreats in welfare home projects. These three monthly declines follow a strong performance during the last six months of 2001. Permits for proposed commercial construction jumped 18.4% to $695 million, driven by a strong gain in permits for hotel and restaurant and office building categories.

At the provincial level, the most significant monthly decline occurred in Manitoba (-54.3% to $31 million). However, this decline should be put in perspective as a large permit was issued in February for a hospital. Alberta recorded the largest increase (+25.5% to $195 million) due to projects in the hotel and restaurant category.

Value of building permits by census metropolitan area
Seasonally adjusted

	March 2002ᵖ	February to March 2002	January to March 2002	January-March 2001 to January-March 2002
	$ millions	% change	$ millions	% change
St. John's	19.2	22.0	50.7	50.7
Halifax	30.1	-24.1	110.3	84.5
Saint John	6.4	0.6	20.6	32.4
Chicoutimi- Jonquière	17.1	185.6	28.5	-44.0
Québec	71.5	33.1	158.7	-9.8
Sherbrooke	18.1	-37.5	62.6	82.3
Trois-Rivières	15.7	203.6	32.6	61.7
Montréal	374.5	7.0	1,202.6	6.3
Hull	31.6	20.0	116.2	7.9
Ottawa	104.6	-20.7	312.8	-32.7
Kingston	7.8	-22.3	32.0	-9.7
Oshawa	47.9	-29.8	152.6	25.3
Toronto	665.0	14.0	2,079.2	-16.1
Hamilton	130.2	9.5	320.9	41.2
St. Catharines-Niagara	102.2	240.9	168.9	92.7
Kitchener	75.8	-28.0	252.3	58.0
London	45.8	-6.3	153.3	5.8
Windsor	60.3	-30.0	188.9	50.5
Sudbury	5.2	34.6	11.0	-12.7
Thunder Bay	26.7	-43.2	79.4	228.1
Winnipeg	34.5	-15.0	116.8	9.3
Regina	7.9	-20.9	34.0	-16.0
Saskatoon	19.1	-60.0	91.0	35.9
Calgary	222.9	4.8	627.6	22.3
Edmonton	135.6	12.9	434.1	43.2
Abbotsford	14.7	-24.0	44.1	-1.6
Vancouver	297.9	6.7	778.6	5.8
Victoria	45.7	-9.5	124.7	34.6

ᵖ *Preliminary data.*

The continuing downward trend in the non-residential sector is in line with some business indicators. Declining industrial capacity utilization rates and corporate operating profits in 2001 may have hurt the sector.

Of the 28 census metropolitan areas, 16 showed a decrease on a year-to-date basis, in terms of non-residential permits. The largest loss was in the Toronto area, due to a decline in proposed office building construction. Provincially, Manitoba recorded the largest year-to-date increase (+59.1% to $131 million). The strongest drop was recorded in Quebec (-19.5% to $900 million), driven by declines in all non-residential components in Montreal.

*The March 2002 issue of **Building permits** (Internet: 64-001-XIE, $14/$145) will be available soon. To obtain data, contact Vere Clarke (1-800-579-8533; 613-951-6556; clarver@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Étienne Saint-Pierre (613-951-2025; saineti@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division.*

Timing of motherhood appears to have significant bearing on wages

The timing of motherhood appears to have a significant bearing on the wages of Canadian women, according to a new study using data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics.

Trends in fertility patterns suggest that young women are delaying having a family to concentrate on developing their careers. In 1996, mothers were 27.1 years old on average at the birth of their first child, compared with 25.7 in 1986.

The study shows that the work experience of women who postponed motherhood was different from that of women who had children early. For example, among women of the baby boom generation, mothers who delayed having children spent 80% of their career working full year, full time compared with 68% for mothers who had children early.

Women who had postponed having children until later in life earned at least 6% more in 1998 than those who had their children early. This observation takes into account important differences in work histories and education.

There are several possible reasons for the wage gap. Wage growth and promotion opportunities are substantial early in one's career. If women miss this stage due to child-rearing, they may not recover, relative to others who do not miss this stage.

Women who postpone childbirth may be exiting during a period when interruptions are less critical for their careers, and consequently may have higher wages in the longer run. These women might also be more flexible making decisions on training, promotions, travel and other factors that affect job advancement. Those who have children early may be more restricted in their choices because of the presence of young children.

In addition, women who postpone having children may be inherently more career-oriented, earning higher wages at the beginning of their careers than those women who had children early. The wage advantage of mothers who delayed parenthood persisted after the birth of their first child, but decreased as children grew older. This may reflect the fact that mothers who delayed parenthood may assume traditional family roles that may limit their involvement in the labour market.

The wage gap between mothers who delayed having children and those who had children early was widespread among mothers of all ages, but was greatest among younger women. This may reflect changes in the types of careers available to women born at different times. For example, from 1971 to 1991, the share of women increased in male-dominated occupations such as management, and occupations in natural sciences, engineering and mathematics.

The report ***Wives, mothers and wages: Does timing matter?*** *(Internet: 11F0019MIE, free) is now available on Statistics Canada's website (www.statcan.ca). From the* Our products and services *page, choose* Research papers (free), *then* Social conditions. *For more information, contact Marie Drolet (613-951-5691; drolmar@statcan.ca), Business and Labour Market Analysis Division.*

Environment industry: business sector

Businesses comprising Canada's environment industry derived $14.3 billion from the sales of environmental products in 2000, or 55% of their total revenues. The remaining 45% comprised revenues derived from production activities not directly related to the environment.

Three product categories accounted for this total. Environmental services and environmental goods categories accounted for 43% and 42%, respectively. Environment-related construction services accounted for the remaining 15%.

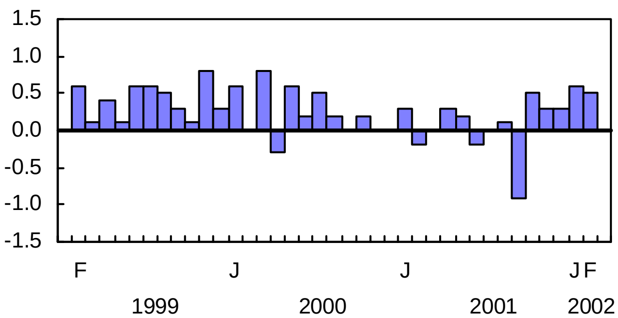
The environment industry is composed of businesses that produce goods and services that are used or can be used to measure, prevent, limit or correct environmental damage to water, air and soil as well as problems related to waste, noise and ecosystems. The industry also produces "eco-efficient" technologies that decrease material inputs, recover valuable by-products and reduce energy consumption.

Preliminary data from the ***2000 Environment Industry Survey*** *are now available on request. For more information, contact the information officer (613-951-0297; environ@statcan.ca), Environment Accounts and Statistics Division.*

Current trends

Gross domestic product

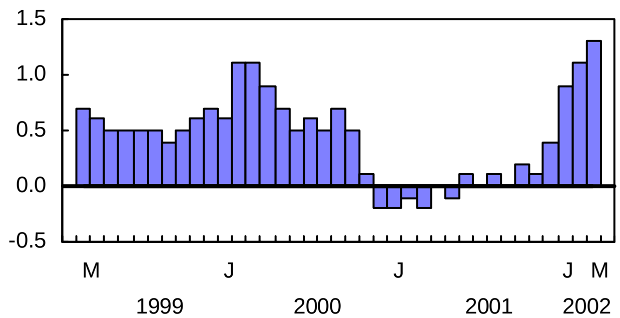
% change, previous month



Total economic activity advanced 0.5% in February, after rising 0.6% in January.

Composite index

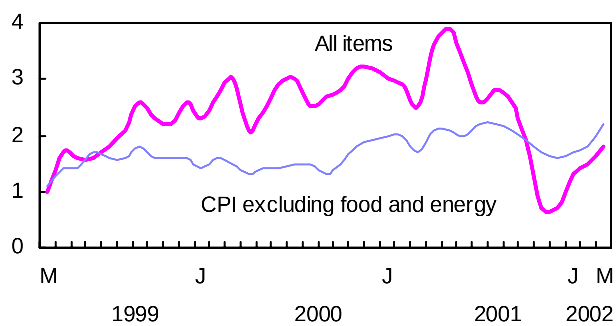
% change, previous month



The leading indicator gained 1.3% in March. Household demand remained a pillar of strength, while manufacturing continued to lag.

Consumer price index

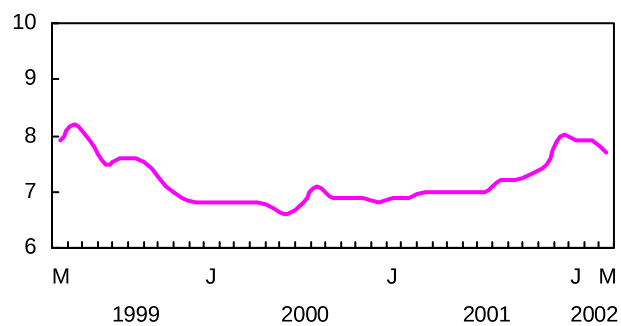
% change, previous year



Consumer prices for goods and services were 1.8% higher in March than they were a year earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices rose 2.2%.

Unemployment rate

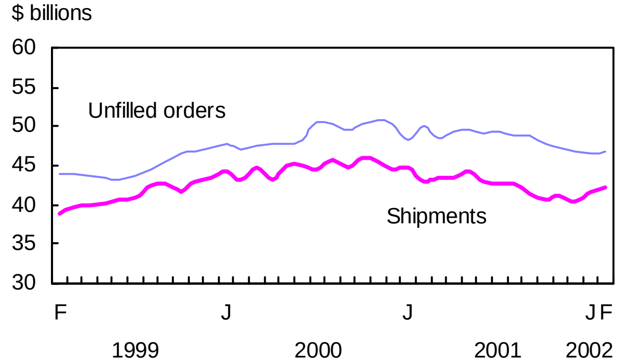
%



In March, the unemployment rate fell 0.2 percentage points to 7.7%.

Manufacturing

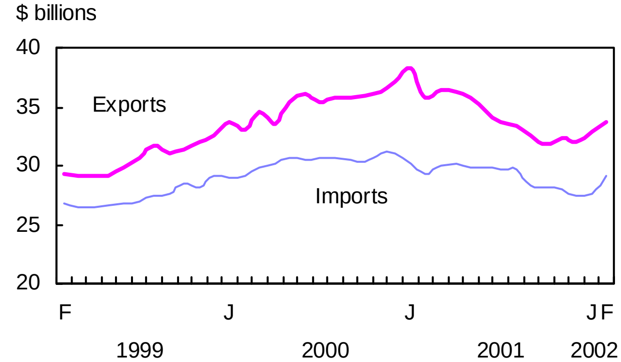
$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments increased 0.8% in February to $42.1 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders rose 0.5% to $46.7 billion.

Merchandise trade

$ billions



In February, the value of merchandise exports rose 2.7% to $33.7 billion. Imports climbed 5.1% to $29.1 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, 1997)[1]	February	953.1	0.5%	1.8%
Composite Index (1992=100)	March	173.0	1.3%	4.1%
Operating profits of enterprises ($ billions)	Q4 2001	33.8	-5.6%	-29.9%
Capacity utilization rate (%)[2]	Q4 2001	80.3	-1.2†	-4.8†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade ($ billions)	February	25.2	-0.1%	6.9%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	February	146.4	-0.4%	17.2%
Wholesale trade ($ billions)	February	33.8	0.2%	5.6%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	March	15.3	0.6%	1.3%
Unemployment rate (%)	March	7.7	-0.2†	0.7†
Participation rate (%)	March	66.6	0.2†	0.5†
Average weekly earnings ($)	February	674.50	0.33%	2.12%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	April*	127	0.2%	-21.4%
Regular Employment Insurance beneficiaries (in thousands)	February	553.5	-1.0%	12.1%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports ($ billions)	February	33.7	2.7%	-5.9%
Merchandise imports ($ billions)	February	29.1	5.1%	-0.7%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in $ billions)	February	4.5	-0.5	-1.9
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments ($ billions)	February	42.1	0.8%	-1.8%
New orders ($ billions)	February	42.3	2.2%	-5.3%
Unfilled orders ($ billions)	February	46.7	0.5%	-6.9%
Inventory/shipments ratio	February	1.47	-0.02	-0.05
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	March	117.7	0.7%	1.8%
Industrial Product Price Index (1997=100)	March	107.2	0.6%	-1.2%
Raw Materials Price Index (1997=100)	March	111.0	5.5%	-7.0%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	February	108.3	0.7%	3.2%

Note: *All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.*
* *new this week*
† *percentage point*
[1] *1997 replaces 1992 as the base year used in determining prices for gross domestic product by industry. Also, valuation has been changed from factor cost to basic prices.*
[2] *Calculation of the rates of capacity use is now based on the 1997 North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS), which has replaced the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.*

Infomat
A weekly review

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The first (official) release of all statistical information produced by Statistics Canada occurs in *The Daily* (www.statcan.ca), available at 8:30 a.m. *The Daily* presents highlights from new data releases, along with sources, links and contacts for further information. It also contains schedules of upcoming major news releases and announces the Agency's new products and services.

Products released from May 2 to 8, 2002

SUBJECT AREA Title of product	Period	Catalogue number	Price ($) (issue/subscription)
AGRICULTURE			
Field crop reporting series: Stocks of Canadian grain	March 31, 2002	22-002-XIB	11/66
Field crop reporting series: Stocks of Canadian grain	March 31, 2002	22-002-XPB	15/88
Whole farm database reference manual	April 2002	21F0005GIE	free
Whole farm database reference manual	April 2002	21F0005GPE	free
HEALTH STATISTICS			
Births	1999	84F0210XPB	20
Causes of death	1999	84F0208XPB	20
Health indicators	2002	82-221-XIE	free
INDUSTRY MEASURES AND ANALYSIS			
Gross domestic product by industry	February 2002	15-001-XIE	11/110
INTERNATIONAL TRADE			
Exports by commodity	February 2002	65-004-XMB	37/361
Exports by commodity	February 2002	65-004-XPB	78/773
LABOUR STATISTICS			
Employment, earnings and hours	February 2002	72-002-XIB	24/240
Working smarter: The skill bias of computer technologies	1999	71-584-MIE02003	free
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY			
Cement	March 2002	44-001-XIB	5/47
Coal and coke statistics	February 2002	45-002-XIB	9/85
Electric power statistics	February 2002	57-001-XIB	9/85
Electric power generation, transmission and distribution	2000	57-202-XIB	23
Industrial chemicals and synthetic resins	March 2002	46-002-XIB	5/47
Production and shipments of steel pipe and tubing	March 2002	41-011-XIB	5/47

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