



Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, November 29, 2002

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◆ Foreign investors reduce their holdings of Canadian securities

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◆ Urban students outperform rural students in reading

Students in urban schools recorded higher reading scores than their rural counterparts. The average score for urban students in reading literacy was 538, compared with 523 for rural students.

Energy prices send inflation to 16-month high

Energy prices were almost entirely responsible for a 16-month high in inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in October.

Consumers paid 3.2% more than they did in October 2001 for the goods and services included in the CPI basket. It was the highest year-over-year rate of growth since June 2001, when the all-items index increased 3.3%.

Energy prices increased 5.6% from October 2001 to October 2002, exerting an accelerating effect on the all-items CPI for the first time in a year. In contrast, they had declined 1.8% from September 2001 to September 2002.

However, October's increase was measured against energy prices that were actually falling in October last year, and which had pushed the overall CPI index down. If energy had been excluded, the year-over-year increase in October this year would have been 2.9%.

The core rate, which excludes the eight most volatile factors in the price index and is closely watched by the Bank of Canada, was 2.5%.

(continued on page 2)

Consumer Price Index, October 2002
% change, previous year, not seasonally adjusted

	All items	Food	Shelter	Transportation	Energy
Canada	3.2	1.5	1.9	5.8	5.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.3	0.5	2.7	13.4	4.9
Prince Edward Island	4.2	2.5	1.3	9.4	2.6
Nova Scotia	4.8	2.6	2.8	11.2	9.2
New Brunswick	5.1	3.4	1.6	12.3	9.0
Quebec	3.1	0.9	1.9	6.6	5.3
Ontario	2.8	1.7	2.0	4.7	6.5
Manitoba	1.9	1.9	0.4	1.2	-1.6
Saskatchewan	3.2	2.0	1.1	3.4	3.0
Alberta	5.2	2.1	3.7	9.5	8.1
British Columbia	2.5	1.1	0.6	4.3	2.7
Whitehorse	1.1	-1.9	-0.5	4.4	0.7
Yellowknife	3.6	0.7	4.6	4.0	9.3



Energy prices send... (continued from page 1)

The main factor behind October's increase in the energy index was a 9.1% jump in the price of gasoline. The remainder was due to a 9.8% rise in the price of electricity.

Natural gas prices exerted the only downward pressure on the energy index. They remained 10.8% lower than in October 2001, despite increasing for a third consecutive month.

Although energy prices were the key factor, their total impact on October's 12-month increase was still less than that of cigarette prices and automotive vehicle insurance premiums.

Cigarette prices rose 42.0% from October 2001, while automotive vehicle insurance premiums rose 18.7% on average.

On a month-to-month basis, the CPI increased 0.3% from September. Monthly changes in the CPI since the beginning of 2002 have ranged from 0.0% to 0.7%.

The main upward pressure in October came from an increase in natural gas prices, followed by increases in automotive vehicle insurance premiums, property taxes and gasoline prices. A decrease in traveller accommodation and electricity prices mitigated the upward pressure on the CPI.

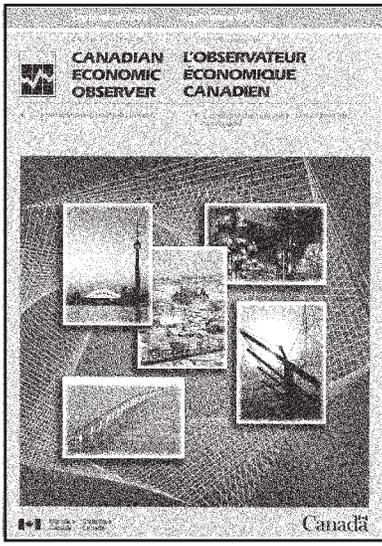
Gasoline prices rose 1.6% on average during the month. The natural gas index went up 18.5% as a result of price increases in Ontario and Alberta.

The 19.3% rise in Ontario was due mainly to higher transportation tolls for delivery from western Canada, as well as to the elimination of a temporary storage refund. The 60.3% rise in Alberta prices was due to the increase in the cost of natural gas and to a full resumption of billing for subscribers in the northern sector of ATCO Gas, which includes Edmonton, at a time when the average consumer had fully used up (in September) the credit paid in March 2002.

Without the impact of energy prices, the all-items index would have remained stable from September to October.

The 2.6% decrease in the electricity index for Canada was the largest monthly decrease observed since February 2001, when the government of British Columbia issued credits to consumers. October's drop was entirely attributable to a 6.5% decline in Ontario's prices. The sale of electricity on an open market in this province is making prices more volatile. Ontario electricity prices remained 23.2% higher than their October 2001 level.

The October 2002 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 Louise Chagné (1-866-230-2248; 613-951-9606) or Joanne Moreau (613-951-7130), Prices Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 6.)



Canadian economic observer

The November 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 October and presents a feature article on the digital divide in Canada. 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 November 2002 issue of Canadian economic observer, Vol. 15, no. 11 (paper: 11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. Visit the Canadian economic observer's page on Statistics Canada's website (www.statcan.ca). From the Canadian statistics page, choose Economic conditions, and on that page see the banner ad for Canadian economic observer. For more information, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627; ceo@statcan.ca), Current Economic Analysis Group.

Census of Agriculture: Canada's greying farm operators

Canada's farm operators have become a rarer breed, they are older than ever before, and the proportion of young farmers is plunging, according to the second round of data from the 2001 Census of Agriculture.

The census enumerated 346,195 farm operators as of May 15, 2001, down 10.2% since 1996. Ontario alone lost almost 12,000, one-quarter of them women, the largest absolute decline among the provinces.

Nationally, the number of male operators fell 11.5% to 255,015, while the number of female operators declined 6.3% to 91,180.

Women accounted for 26% of the total, unchanged from 1996. In British Columbia, they represented 36% of all farm operators, their highest share among the provinces.

The first round of data from the Census of Agriculture, released in May 2002, showed that the number of farms had declined almost 11% from 1996, but farms were getting bigger. The average farm increased from 608 acres to 676 acres.

The statistical portrait depicted by these new data showed that as a group, farmers are aging. Their median age in 2001 was 49, compared with 44 for individuals in Canada's self-employed labour force, and 38 for the entire labour force. British Columbia had the oldest farmers; Quebec, the youngest.

Of the total, only 39,920 farm operators were aged 34 and under in 2001, a 34.6% decline since 1996. These young people accounted for just under 12% of all farmers, compared with 16% five years earlier.

Meanwhile, the proportion of older farmers across the country has grown. In 2001, nearly 54% of farmers were aged 35 to 54, up from 52% in 1996. More than one-third (35%) were 55 and older, up from 32%.

The result has been a change in the complexion of farm operations. In 2001, 16% of farmers were working on large farms, those with gross receipts exceeding \$250,000, compared with only 12% in 1996.

Operations involving multiple generations represented 7% of all farms and, within that group, over 56% included a young farmer.

One-third of all farms with operators from multiple generations had gross receipts of \$250,000 or more; about one-quarter of operators on these farms with high receipts were young.

While bigger farms can mean more money, the census found that more farmers have been moonlighting to make ends meet. In 2001, about 45% of farmers also worked off the farm, up from 37% a decade earlier.

Farm operators by age and sex

Canada	Operators				
	1996		2001		1996 to 2001
	number	% of total	number	% of total	% change
All operators	385,610	100.0	346,195	100.0	-10.2
Under 35 years	61,055	15.8	39,920	11.5	-34.6
35-54 years	200,175	51.9	185,575	53.6	-7.3
55 years and over	124,380	32.3	120,705	34.9	-3.0
Median age	47	...	49	...	4.3
Male	288,265	74.8	255,015	73.7	-11.5
Under 35 years	44,705	11.6	29,430	8.5	-34.2
35-54 years	144,235	37.4	132,060	38.1	-8.4
55 years and over	99,325	25.8	93,530	27.0	-5.8
Median age	48	...	49	...	2.1
Female	97,345	25.2	91,180	26.3	-6.3
Under 35 years	16,350	4.2	10,490	3.0	-35.8
35-54 years	55,940	14.5	53,510	15.5	-4.3
55 years and over	25,055	6.5	27,175	7.8	8.5
Median age	45	...	48	...	6.7

Farmers with total receipts of less than \$25,000 were most likely to work off the farm. About 61% of those farmers had such jobs, and nearly half of them worked more than 40 hours a week off the farm.

However, nearly one-fifth (19%) of farmers with more than \$250,000 in revenue took off-farm jobs.

Most of the 91,180 female farm operators worked on two-operator farms where the other operator was male, likely a spouse. Of all farms with two operators, 85% were male-female combinations.

One-half of all farm operators were on farms with sales under \$50,000. This also held true for farms with both male-female combinations, as well as exclusively male operators. On the other hand, nearly 80% of farms operated exclusively by women had receipts of less than \$50,000.

About 5% of farms were operated exclusively by women, up from 4% a decade earlier. The proportion of farms run exclusively by women was twice the national share in both British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

*A complete set of data on farm operators is now available in **Farm operator data: initial release (95F0355XIE, free)** on Statistics Canada's website (www.statcan.ca). For more information, contact Gaye Ward (613-951-3172), Census of Agriculture.*

Only two retail sectors post gains

Consumer spending in retail stores fell 0.5% in September, after advancing 0.4% in August. Retail sales amounted to \$25.6 billion. Only two of the seven retail sectors posted sales increases. Sales advanced 0.8% in the "other retail" sector and 0.7% in the furniture sector.

Most of the strength in the "other retail" sector came from a 1.8% increase in sales of alcoholic beverages by liquor, wine and beer stores. Retail sales fell in the clothing, general merchandise and automotive sectors, but remained essentially unchanged in drug stores and food stores.

Retail sales, September 2002 Seasonally adjusted

	\$ millions	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	25,572	-0.5	7.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	438	2.7	5.7
Prince Edward Island	111	0.7	6.1
Nova Scotia	772	0.8	6.9
New Brunswick	610	-0.1	6.3
Quebec	5,855	-0.6	8.6
Ontario	9,630	-0.8	7.9
Manitoba	873	-3.0	5.1
Saskatchewan	739	-2.3	5.7
Alberta	3,118	0.0	9.4
British Columbia	3,332	-0.2	5.5
Yukon	34	-1.8	11.3
Northwest Territories	44	2.7	20.3
Nunavut	18	-1.0	10.9

The traditional back-to-school clothing purchases in August and September have been weak in 2002. The hot weather in this period may have led some consumers to postpone their purchases of clothing, which posted their third consecutive monthly sales decline in September (-2.3%).

Sales by general merchandisers were also down for a third consecutive month in September (-1.4%). Within this sector, sales fell 3.5% in department stores, but advanced 1.8% in other general merchandise stores.

Sales by motor and recreational vehicle dealers remained unchanged in September and August, after falling 1.0% in July. Despite these weaker results, motor and recreational vehicle dealers are still enjoying historically high monthly sales. For the first nine months of 2002, sales by these dealers were up 10.3% from the same period of 2001.

Furniture stores posted flat sales in the third quarter, despite two consecutive monthly gains in September (+0.7%) and August (+1.3%). Nevertheless, consumer spending in furniture stores remained strong, partly reflecting the high level of activity in new home construction. Cumulative furniture store sales for the first nine months of 2002 were up 12.3% from the same period of 2001.

Newfoundland and Labrador (+2.7%) led the three provinces posting retail sales gains in September. Consumer spending in retail stores also advanced in Nova Scotia (+0.8%) and Prince Edward Island (+0.7%). Ontario's retail sales fell 0.8% in September after three consecutive months on the rise.

*The September 2002 issue of **Retail trade** (Internet: 63-005-XIB, \$16/\$155) is now available. For general information, contact Client Services (1-877-421-3067; 613-951-3549; retailinfo@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541; paul.gratton@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.*

Canada food stats

Canada food stats is an easy-to-use CD-ROM that provides access to a broad spectrum of food statistics and indicators. It contains information on per capita food consumption and food prices, nutrition, supply and demand, as well as data on the food industry, processing, employment, productivity, trade and much more.

This product contains over 65 formatted reports with, in some cases, up to 40 years of data, along with topical analyses. There are also a number of data sets available for the provinces, along with selected quarterly and monthly statistics. It is an invaluable research tool for nutritionists, food industry analysts, market researchers, or consumers who are just looking for reliable data on food.

*The **Canada food stats** CD-ROM (23F0001XCB, \$75/\$120) is now available. The subscription includes two issues, released in July and November. For more information, contact Conrad Ogrodnik (613-951-2860; foodstats@statcan.ca) or Client Services (1-800-465-1991), Agriculture Division.*

Foreign investors reduce their holdings of Canadian securities

Foreign investors reduced their holdings of Canadian securities by \$1.6 billion in September. At the same time, demand for foreign bonds by Canadian investors rose sharply, but their buying of foreign stocks came to a halt.

Foreign investors reduced their holdings of Canadian stocks by \$1.3 billion in September, as markets remained weak. September's reduction consisted entirely of secondary market shares, bringing the sell-off in that market to \$6.6 billion in the past three months and to \$8.2 billion since the beginning of 2002.

However, there have been some inflows coming from other transactions with Canadian companies raising capital in foreign markets and also resulting from merger and acquisition activity. Taken together, foreigners have reduced their holdings of Canadian equities by \$3.8 billion so far in 2002.

After registering a small gain in August, Canadian stock prices resumed their downward trend in September. The 6.5% decline in September was the seventh monthly decline since the start of 2002, bringing the year-to-date loss to 19.6%.

After making their first significant divestment of Canadian money market paper of the year in August, foreign investors followed with a further reduction of \$0.8 billion in September.

The two-month total of \$2.0 billion completely erased the \$1.9 billion worth they acquired over the first seven months of 2002.

The differential between Canadian and US short-term rates, which reached its highest level in recent years in August, receded somewhat in September. The differential, which moved in favour of investment in Canada in March 2001, had grown to 134 basis points in August 2002 before pulling back to 120 basis points in September.

Foreigners added \$0.5 billion worth to their holdings of Canadian bonds in September following the \$2.6 billion investment in August. Corporations continued to tap into foreign markets, issuing \$3.1 billion of new bonds in these markets in September and retiring just \$1.6 billion of such debt.

Canadian investors acquired \$1.8 billion in foreign bonds in September, their largest investment in seven months. The investment went primarily to US treasuries, with some increase in overseas bonds. This brought their investment in foreign bonds so far in 2002 to \$6.3 billion, compared with \$2.2 billion for the same period of 2001.

*The September 2002 issue of **Canada's international transactions in securities** (Internet: 67-002-XIB, \$14/\$132) is now available. For more information, contact Donald Granger (613-951-1864), Balance of Payments Division.*

Urban students outperform rural students in reading

Students from urban schools in Canada performed significantly better in reading than students from rural schools, according to data from the 2000 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Students in all provinces performed above the average score of 500 for member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The national average in Canada was 534. Internationally, scores ranged from 546 in Finland to 422 in Mexico.

Within Canada, however, students in urban schools recorded higher reading scores than their rural counterparts. The average score for urban students in reading literacy was 538, compared with 523 for rural students.

Urban students significantly outperformed those in rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Alberta. There was no difference in Nova Scotia and Manitoba, and the differences were not significant in the remaining provinces.

Rural students in Alberta, nevertheless, exceeded the national average and did better than urban students in some other provinces. For their part, urban students in Alberta scored far higher than the national average for urban schools.

The study found that there were no major differences in the nature of schools in rural and urban communities that could

explain the reading gap. There were, however, large differences in the characteristics of students' families and in the communities themselves.

Parents of rural students tend to be less well educated and less likely to be employed in professional occupations (such as doctors, lawyers, and bankers). These differences, however, do not explain the gap in performance between rural and urban students. Even if one compares rural and urban students whose parents had the same level of education and the same occupation, the reading gap still remains.

Community characteristics most strongly related to the rural-urban reading difference were the educational attainment and nature of jobs held by students' parents, the proportion of adults with post-secondary education, and the proportion of workers whose jobs required university training.

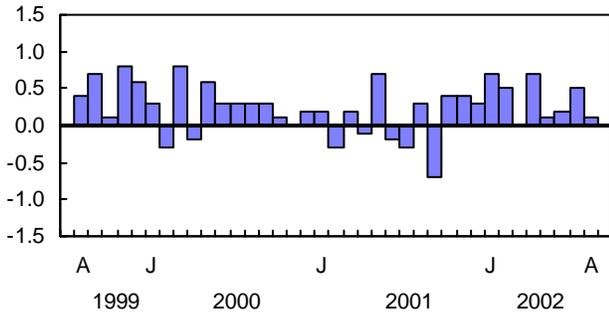
Although it is unlikely that these community variables directly cause lower student achievement, they are indicators of the broader environment in which students learn and look for support for their learning. Furthermore, these influential community differences are not reflected in schools where the environment is essentially the same for rural and urban students.

*The research paper **Understanding the rural-urban reading gap** (81-595-MIE, no. 1, free) is now available on Statistics Canada's website (www.statcan.ca). From the Our products and services page, under Browse our Internet publications, choose Free, then Education. For more information, contact Client Services (1-800-307-3382; 613-951-7608; educationstats@statcan.ca), Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics.*

Current trends

Gross domestic product

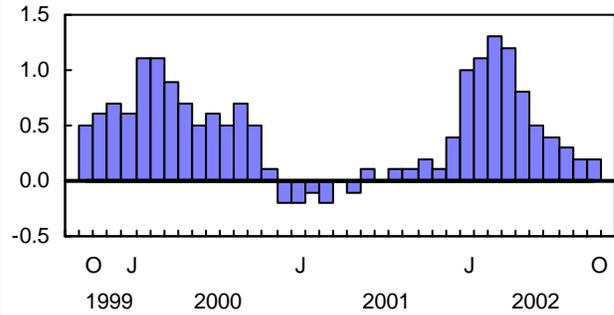
% change, previous month



Total economic activity edged up 0.1% in August, following a 0.5% increase in July.

Composite Index

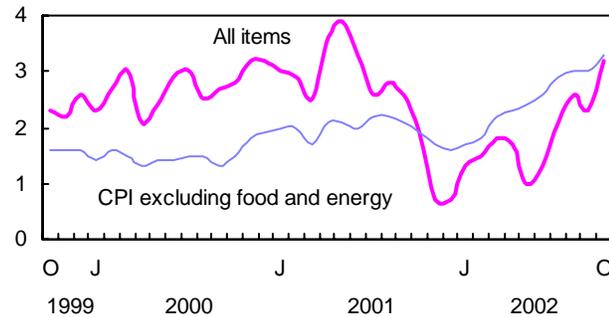
% change, previous month



Growth in the leading indicator was unchanged at 0.2% in October. Six of the ten components were up, led by housing.

Consumer Price Index

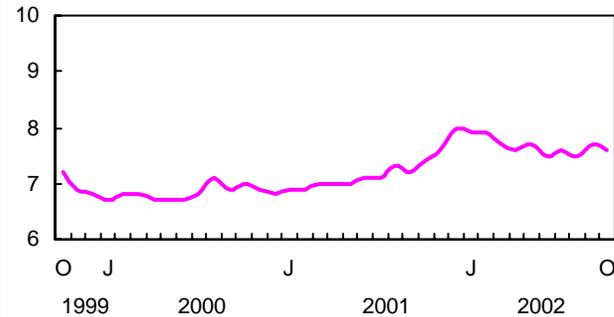
% change, previous year



Consumer prices for goods and services were 3.2% higher in October than they were a year earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices rose 3.3%.

Unemployment rate

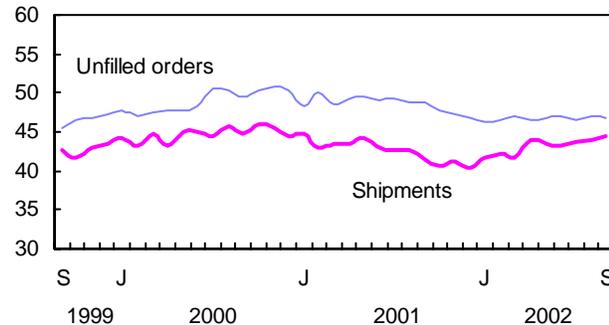
%



In October, the unemployment rate fell 0.1 percentage points to 7.6%.

Manufacturing

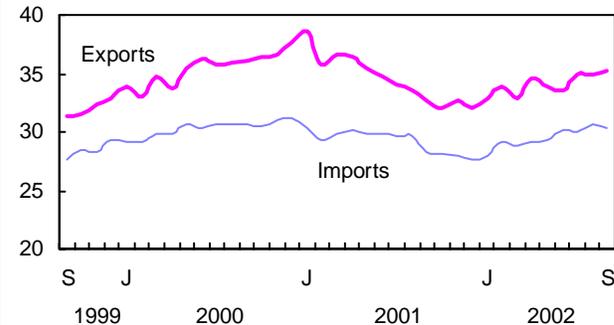
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments rose 1.2% in September to \$44.5 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders declined 0.9% to \$46.7 billion.

Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In September, the value of merchandise exports increased 0.8% to \$35.2 billion. Imports fell 1.3% to \$30.3 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, 1997) ¹	August	978.9	0.0%	3.1%
Composite Index (1992=100)	October*	179.3	0.2%	7.6%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billions)	Q3 2002*	40.3	2.6%	12.9%
Capacity utilization rate (%) ²	Q2 2002	83.2	1.3†	-0.1†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billions)	September*	25.6	-0.5%	7.7%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	September	145.5	-0.4%	12.2%
Wholesale trade (\$ billions)	September	35.2	0.0%	6.9%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	October	15.5	0.2%	3.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	October	7.6	-0.1†	0.2†
Participation rate (%)	October	67.2	0.0†	1.3†
Average weekly earnings (\$)	September*	679.61	0.15%	1.66%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	October	120.9	-2.7%	-9.4%
Regular Employment Insurance beneficiaries (in thousands)	September*	553.3	-0.8%	3.0%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billions)	September	35.2	0.8%	7.5%
Merchandise imports (\$ billions)	September	30.3	-1.3%	6.8%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billions)	September	4.9	0.7	0.5
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billions)	September	44.5	1.2%	7.4%
New orders (\$ billions)	September	44.1	-1.2%	6.7%
Unfilled orders (\$ billions)	September	46.7	-0.9%	-4.2%
Inventory/shipments ratio	September	1.41	-0.01	-0.13
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	October	120.5	0.3%	3.2%
Industrial Product Price Index (1997=100)	October*	109.0	0.4%	2.4%
Raw Materials Price Index (1997=100)	October*	116.7	-0.1%	11.1%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	September	111.2	0.2%	4.2%

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 Industry Classification System (NAICS), which has replaced the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

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SUBJECT AREA Title of product	Period	Catalogue number	Price (\$) (issue/subscription)
AGRICULTURE			
Canadian potato production – Updates	November 2002	22-008-UIB	free
Canada food stats	1960-2002	23F0001XCB	75/120
Farm cash receipts	Jan.-Sept. 2002	21-001-XIB	15/48
The dairy review	July-Sept. 2002	23-001-XIB	27/89
BALANCE OF PAYMENTS AND FINANCIAL FLOWS			
Canada's international transactions in securities	September 2002	67-002-XIE	14/132
CULTURE, TOURISM AND THE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS			
Understanding the rural-urban reading gap	2000	81-595-MIE2002001	free
CURRENT ECONOMIC ANALYSIS			
Canadian economic observer	November 2002	11-010-XPB	23/227
DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES			
Retail trade	September 2002	63-005-XIB	16/155
Wholesale trade	September 2002	63-008-XIB	14/140
INTERNATIONAL TRADE			
Canadian international merchandise trade	September 2002	65-001-XIB	14/141
Canadian international merchandise trade	September 2002	65-001-XPB	19/188
Imports by country	Jan.-Sept. 2002	65-006-XMB	62/206
Imports by country	Jan.-Sept. 2002	65-006-XPB	124/412
Imports by commodity	September 2002	65-007-XMB	37/361
Imports by commodity	September 2002	65-007-XPB	78/773
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY			
Construction type plywood	September 2002	35-001-XIB	5/47
General review of the mineral industries, mines, quarries and sandpits	2000	26-201-XIB	free
Mineral wool including fibrous glass insulation	October 2002	44-004-XIB	5/47
Monthly Survey of Manufacturing	September 2002	31-001-XIB	15/147
Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard	September 2002	36-003-XIB	5/47
Production and disposition of tobacco products	October 2002	32-022-XIB	5/47
Sawmills and planing mills	September 2002	35-003-XIB	9/86
Steel wire and specified wire products	September 2002	41-006-XIB	5/47
SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND ELECTRONIC INFORMATION			
Science statistics, Vol. 26, no. 6		88-001-XIB	6/59
Science statistics, Vol. 26, no. 7		88-001-XIB	6/59
TRANSPORTATION			
Canadian Vehicle Survey	Second quarter 2002	53F0004XIE	free
Monthly railway carloadings	September 2002	52-001-XIE	8/77

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Calendar of key releases: December 2002

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9	10 Census of population: Language, mobility and migration, 2001	11 New Housing Price Index, October 2002 Industrial capacity utilization rates, third quarter 2002 Survey of Household Spending, 2001	12 New motor vehicle sales, October 2002	13 Labour productivity, third quarter 2002 Composite Index, November 2002
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