Friday, February 13, 1998

OVERVIEW

Unemployment rate up in January

A rise in the number of temporary layoffs in areas affected by the ice storm and an increase in the number of people looking for work pushed up the unemployment rate in January.

Building permits on the rise

In 1997, the total value of building permits issued reached its highest level in seven years. Permits for single-family homes led the major advance in the housing sector.

◆ Manufacturers remain positive

In January, manufacturers indicated that they expect slightly stronger production prospects in the first quarter. They also remained positive about employment.

Help-wanted Index unchanged

Although the Help-wanted Index was unchanged in January, it remained at its highest level in seven years.

Annual department store sales advance

December sales were flat, but annual department store sales jumped between 1996 and 1997.

Marriages and divorces down

Fewer couples married in 1996, but at the same time far fewer officially ended their marriages.

Unemployment rate up in January

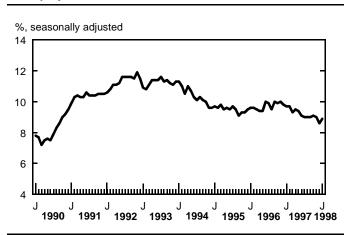
fter a 10-month period of strong growth, employment was unchanged overall in January. Unemployment grew by an estimated 54,000, due both to a rise in the number of temporary layoffs in areas affected by the January ice storm in Central Canada and an increase in the number of people entering the labour market to look for work. Consequently, the unemployment rate rose 0.3 percentage points to 8.9%.

Temporary business closures and workers unable to get to their workplaces resulted in a sharp decline in the number of hours worked during the reference week. In Quebec, hours worked fell 14%—almost four times the usual December-to-January decrease. Hours worked declined only 4% in Ontario, as the hours lost in storm-affected areas were offset by gains elsewhere in the province. Nationally, work hours were down 6% compared with December. This above-average decline was almost entirely attributable to the extensive loss of work hours in regions affected by the ice storm.

In January, employment fell sharply in Quebec (-46,000), while unemployment increased by an estimated 30,000. As a result, Quebec's unemployment rate jumped 0.9 percentage points to 11.3%. Most of the job losses were concentrated in the economic regions of Montréal and Montérégie, which were hard hit by the

(continued on page 2)

Unemployment rate





... Unemployment rate up in January

storm. The effects of the storm were much more localized and involved a smaller proportion of the population in Ontario, where employment continued on a strong upward trend (+39,000).

In Western Canada, Alberta posted a strong employment gain in January (+22,000). This was offset, however, by a decline (-19,000) in British Columbia. Employment advanced in Nova Scotia (+5,000), and was little changed in the rest of the provinces.

Youth employment dropped by 22,000 in January, with losses in both full- and part-time jobs. The proportion of youths aged 15 to 24 with employment plunged 0.6 percentage points to 50.6%, while the youth unemployment rate jumped 0.7 percentage points to 16.5%. Employment for adults edged up slightly. The unemployment rate for both men and women also increased, however, as more adults looked for work.

Business and personal services continued to grow, posting an increase of 61,000. Employment also rose in agriculture (+13,000) and public administration (+12,000). Job losses in trade (-2,000), health and social services (-22,000), and finance, insurance and real estate (-21,000) offset these gains. The number of jobs in both the private and public sectors was unchanged.

Note to readers

The reference week for the January 1998 Labour Force Survey coincided with the week immediately following the ice storm that knocked out the power supply to millions of residents and numerous businesses in Central Canada. Despite the difficult conditions, response rates remained at or above 90% in almost all economic regions of Quebec and Ontario. Statistics Canada would like to express its appreciation to respondents in storm-affected areas and to the interviewers and regional office staff. Their co-operation and diligent efforts under extremely difficult conditions ensured the availability of high quality labour market data.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 3450-3471, 3483-3502 and table 00799999.

Labour force information (71-001-PPB, \$11/\$103; fax version: 71-001-PPB, \$300 annually) for the week ending January 17, 1998 is now available. For further information, contact Deborah Sunter (613-951-4740) or Vincent Ferrao (613-951-4750), Household Surveys Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 7.)

Labour Force Survey, January 1998 Seasonally adjusted

	Labour force		Employment		Unemployment	
	thousands	% change, previous month	thousands	% change, previous month	thousands	rate (%)
Canada	15,490.2	0.4	14,114.5	0.0	1,375.7	8.9
Newfoundland	237.8	- 0.1	196.0	- 0.2	41.9	17.6
Prince Edward Island	70.1	- 1.1	59.9	- 1.5	10.3	14.7
Nova Scotia	453.5	0.8	402.6	1.3	50.9	11.2
New Brunswick	368.1	-0.3	320.4	- 0.8	47.7	13.0
Quebec	3,669.7	- 0.4	3,256.1	- 1.4	413.6	11.3
Ontario	6,011.1	0.9	5,533.0	0.7	478.1	8.0
Manitoba	575.2	-0.4	542.4	0.0	32.8	5.7
Saskatchewan	510.8	1.1	482.4	0.6	28.4	5.6
Alberta	1,589.1	1.2	1,503.6	1.5	85.4	5.4
British Columbia	2,004.9	- 0.3	1,818.2	- 1.0	186.6	9.3

Building permits on the rise

unicipalities issued \$31.5 billion in building permits in 1997, up 20.6% over 1996 and the highest total in seven years. Residential construction intentions recorded a major increase for the second year in a row. The higher level of permits issued in 1997 was partially reflected in a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation survey that reported a 17.9% jump in housing starts. In December, the value of permits rose 2.3% to \$2.9 billion. Both residential and non-residential sectors contributed to the monthly rise. Construction intentions for housing increased 2.4% to \$1.5 billion, while non-residential construction advanced 2.2% to \$1.4 billion.

In 1997, the value of building permits for the housing sector increased 17.9% to \$18.5 billion. And once again, the single-family component—the key portion of the housing sector—led the residential advance. This component, which represents more than

Note to readers

The monthly Building and Demolitions Permits Survey covers 2,400 municipalities representing 93% of the population. It provides an early indication of building activity. The communities representing the other 7% 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 to ease comparisons by removing the effects of seasonal variations. The annual rate is a monthly figure that has been seasonally adjusted and multiplied by 12 to reflect annual levels.

(continued on page 3)

... Building permits on the rise

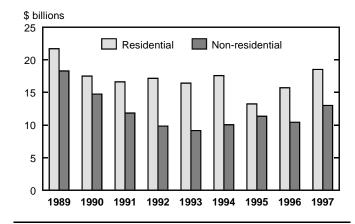
70% of the total residential value, rose 21.3%. In contrast, the multi-family component increased 9.4%.

In Ontario, which led the residential sector, housing intentions jumped 33.6% to \$7.9 billion—almost \$2 billion more than in 1996. Alberta followed, posting a 49.6% increase. These jumps were mainly due to the strength of single-family dwellings. Quebec (+14.3%), Manitoba (+26.5%) and Saskatchewan (+19.1%) also recorded significant increases in 1997. The biggest decline in the value of residential permits was registered in British Columbia (-11.8%). Nova Scotia and Newfoundland also posted significant decreases (-4.5% and -11.5% respectively).

In the non-residential sector, construction intentions advanced 24.6% to \$13.0 billion. All three components—commercial, industrial and institutional—contributed almost equally to the annual advance. Permits for commercial construction increased 16.9%, mainly due to increased intentions for warehouses and office buildings. The industrial component recorded a 32.3% jump, spurred by major new construction intentions in the manufacturing sector. The institutional component also jumped (+34.8%), led by new construction intentions and building improvements in the education sector.

Alberta recorded the largest rise in value of non-residential permits in 1997: 65.3%. This advance was mainly due to a record surge in its industrial component and a large gain in commercial intentions. Ontario posted a 48.1% increase, mostly due to the institutional and commercial components. Significant decreases

Building permits



were recorded in industrial and institutional projects in Nova Scotia, where the value of non-residential permits fell 12.1% in 1997.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 80 (levels 3-7, 16-22 and 24-32), 129, 137, 443, 989-992, 994, 995 and 4073.

The December 1997 issue of **Building permits** (64-001-XPB, \$24/\$240; microfiche: 64-001-XMB, \$25/\$135) is now available. 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.

Building permits,¹ December 1997 Seasonally adjusted

	Total		Residential		Non-residential	
	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month
Canada	2,924	2.3	1,543	2.4	1,382	2.2
Newfoundland	15	22.5	11	9.8	5	64.8
Prince Edward Island	10	52.4	6	30.7	4	110.8
Nova Scotia	40	- 26.7	27	3.0	13	- 53.4
New Brunswick	34	16.0	15	- 14.3	19	60.4
Quebec	418	- 9.7	218	- 4.4	200	- 14.9
Ontario	1,312	8.7	670	- 3.4	642	25.2
Manitoba	59	- 2.2	34	38.7	26	- 29.7
Saskatchewan	85	43.3	30	50.6	55	39.6
Alberta	483	- 10.4	296	27.0	186	- 38.9
British Columbia	462	10.8	230	- 5.7	231	34.2
Yukon	4	- 46.7	3	2.3	1	- 85.5
Northwest Territories	2	- 24.5	2	58.8	1	- 70.9

^{1.} Data may not add to totals due to rounding.

Manufacturers remain positive

In the latest quarterly Business Conditions Survey, which was conducted in January, manufacturers indicated slightly stronger production prospects in the first quarter. They also remained positive about employment prospects. Manufacturers were satisfied with the current levels of finished product inventories and unfilled orders. Although satisfaction with the level of new orders decreased somewhat, it did remain positive.

While 23% of manufacturers expected to increase production, 7% indicated a possible decrease. The January balance of opinion (+16) was 3 points higher than in October 1997. Overall, a full 93% of manufacturers expected production in the first quarter of 1998 to increase or remain about the same.

About 17% of manufacturers reported plans to increase their work force in the first three months of 1998. About half as many

(continued on page 4)

... Manufacturers remain positive

(9%) expected employment to decrease, while almost three-quarters (74%) predicted little change.

Most (about 80%) manufacturers were satisfied with their current level of finished product inventories. Some (6%) stated that inventories were too low, while 14% indicated they were too high. The balance of opinion concerning the current level of unfilled orders was at +3 in January, a 3-point increase over the previous survey. Some 15% of manufacturers felt that unfilled orders were higher than normal, up from 11% in October. Almost three-quarters of manufacturers indicated the level of unfilled orders was about right in January.

Manufacturers weren't quite as happy with the current level of orders received, as the balance of opinion slipped 9 points. In January, 29% stated orders were rising compared with 35% in the October survey. And 11% stated that new orders were declining compared with 8% last quarter. Although decreasing, the current

Business	Conditions	Survey, January 1998	
		4007	

	1997				1998
	January	April	July	October	January
Balance of opinion on:					
Production New orders Unfilled orders Inventories Employment	28 21 - 1 - 9 3	6 27 - 7 - 6 5	14 22 2 0 5	13 27 0 - 5 10	16 18 3 - 8

Note to readers

The Business Conditions Survey is conducted in January, April, July and October, and the majority of responses are recorded in the first two weeks of these months. Results are based on replies from about 5,000 manufacturers and are weighted by a manufacturer's shipments or employment. Consequently, larger manufacturers have a correspondingly larger impact on the results than smaller manufacturers.

Data have been revised back to 1995. Revisions are due to the updating of the sample and weights and generally have a minor effect on previously released data. Except for the data on production difficulties, data are seasonally adjusted.

The impact of January's ice storm may not be fully reflected in the January survey, as many manufacturers responded before the disaster.

balance remained more positive than most posted during 1995 and 1996.

A shortage of skilled labour concerned 7% of manufacturers. The number of manufacturers reporting a shortage of unskilled labour returned to less than 1%, after registering 1% in the last two surveys. Shortages of raw materials (2%) and working capital (2%) were also given as impediments to production. Some 83% of manufacturers saw no impediments.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2843-2845.

For further information, contact Claude Robillard (613-951-3507; Internet: robilcg@statcan.ca), Industry Division.

Help-wanted Index unchanged

he Help-wanted Index was unchanged in January. This was the first time in 17 months that the index did not record a month-to-month increase. Despite the lack of movement, the index remained at its highest level in seven years.

Help-wanted Index, January 1998 (1996=100), seasonally adjusted

	Level	% change, previous year	% change, previous month
Canada	111	19.	8 0.0
Newfoundland	110	22.	7 2.3
Prince Edward Island	117	6.	0.0
Nova Scotia	109	21.	1 0.0
New Brunswick	106	38.	7 2.8
Quebec	102	17.	6.0
Ontario	113	18.	6.0
Manitoba	117	25.	6 0.7
Saskatchewan	115	23.	5 0.7
Alberta	124	23.	5 1.9
British Columbia	111	7.	2 – 4.0

Note to readers

The Help-wanted Index is compiled from the number of help-wanted ads published in 22 newspapers in 20 major metropolitan areas. The index measures the intention of companies to hire new workers. These indexes have been seasonally adjusted and smoothed to ease month-to-month comparisons.

Advances recorded in Alberta (+1.9%), Newfoundland (+2.3%) and New Brunswick (+2.8%) were offset by a 4.0% drop in British Columbia. All other provincial indexes showed little change from December 1997.

Recent movements observed in the number of help-wanted advertisements have been in line with other economic indicators.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 105 (levels 8 to 10).

For further information, contact Michael Scrim (613-951-4085; fax: 613-951-4087; Internet: labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.

Annual department store sales advance

In 1997, annual department store sales jumped 10.3% over 1996, reaching \$15,929.3 million. The advance was more than double those of each of the previous three years. Alberta experienced the greatest improvement (+14.0%), followed by Saskatchewan (+11.6%) and Ontario (+11.2%). Manitoba, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick recorded the lowest annual increases.

Women's clothing and accessories maintained the largest share (14.3%) for all departments (as a percentage of annual sales), despite its steady decline from 16.4% in 1994. The share of men's clothing (9.1%), however, has not changed appreciably since 1994. Boys', girls', children's and infants' wear (a 5.8% share) declined slightly.

In other departments, home entertainment equipment increased its share from 1994 (+1.0 percentage points). In contrast, furniture and major appliances fell 1.1 percentage points. Gains were also posted in housewares and small electrical appliances, and in toys and games.

In December 1997, department store sales were flat. At \$1,369.2 million (seasonally adjusted), sales were 0.1% higher than in November. Compared with December 1996, however, sales were 9.4% higher, due to strong sales increases during the first eight months of the year.

All provinces posted year-over-year sales increases (unadjusted) in December, led by Alberta (+16.0%), Saskatchewan (+12.9%), and Manitoba (+11.8%). Department stores in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia posted the smallest year-over-year gains.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 111-113.

The December 1997 issue of **Department store sales and stocks** (63-002-XPB, \$17/\$165) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Jason Randall (613-951-5668; Internet: randjas@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.

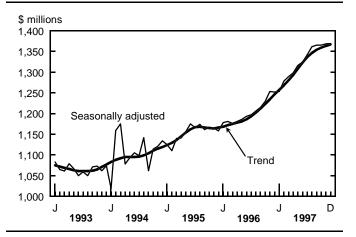
Note to readers

The department store sector underwent a period of restructuring between 1993 and 1994. To ensure consistent analysis, all commodity references are based on the structure of the sector as it stood in 1994.

Seasonally adjusted sales, inventory and accounts receivable data have been revised back to January 1994. Unadjusted sales for 1997 have also been revised. These revisions are now available on CANSIM, or upon request from the Distributive Trades Division.

The December release of Department store sales and stocks will be the last in its current form. Sales by province and seasonally adjusted department store sales will continue to be released; however, with the January 1998 reference month, sales by commodity will be included as part of the new Monthly Survey of Large Retailers.

Department store sales



Department store sales including concessions,	December	1997
Unadjusted		

	December 1997	December 1996 to December 1997	January to December 1997	January-to- December 1996 to January-to- December 1997
	\$ millions	% change	\$ millions	% change
Canada	2,529.3	11.5	15,929.3	10.3
Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island	49.0	11.9	298.3	9.4
Nova Scotia	86.9	8.7	505.6	7.7
New Brunswick	63.6	9.2	379.5	7.6
Quebec	414.9	9.6	2,884.5	8.9
Ontario	1,094.8	11.4	6,707.8	11.2
Manitoba	104.3	11.8	661.9	7.8
Saskatchewan	82.2	12.9	517.7	11.6
Alberta	295.0	16.0	1,811.9	14.0
British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories	338.7	11.2	2,162.1	8.0

Marriages and divorces down

total of 156,692 couples married in 1996, down 2.2% from 1995. The average age at first marriage rose slightly for both men (up 0.3 years to 29.3) and women (up 0.2 years to 27.3) in 1996. The proportion of previously divorced persons who married also increased from 21.0% to 21.8%. However, the marriage rate (marriages per 1,000 Canadians) fell to 5.2 from 5.4 in 1995 (and from a high of 7.0 in 1988). Provincially, the number of marriages declined in every province except Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Meanwhile, 71,528 couples were divorced, down 7.9% from 1995 and the lowest number of divorces since 1985. Amendments to the Divorce Act came into effect in 1986, allowing divorce after one year of separation instead of three. Those amendments resulted in a record 96,200 divorces in 1987.

Ontario and Quebec were largely responsible for the overall drop in divorces in 1996. In Ontario, 25,035 couples officially ended their marriages (–14.7%). In Quebec, 18,078 couples obtained

divorces (-10.2%). Divorces declined slightly in all other provinces except British Columbia (+5%) and Newfoundland (+8%).

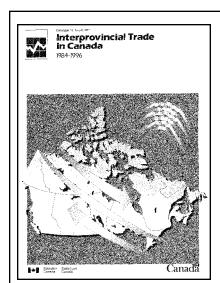
A number of factors may explain the 7.9% decline in divorces in 1996. One could be the decline in marriages nationally between 1990 and 1991, given that the incidence of divorce peaks after five or six years of marriage.

According to a 1997 report by the Law Society of Upper Canada, the number of completed divorce cases funded by the Ontario Legal Aid Plan dropped to 5,800 in the April 1996-to-March 1997 fiscal year, down from 11,600 the year before. Given that the cost of divorce may induce some couples to remain legally separated, reduced legal aid funding may have contributed to the falling divorce rate in Ontario, particularly among lower-income couples. (Ontario accounted for 35% of divorces nationally in 1996.)

Available on CANSIM: matrix 7.

For further information, contact François Nault (613-951-1764), Health Statistics Division.

New from Statistics Canada



Interprovincial trade in Canada 1984 to 1996

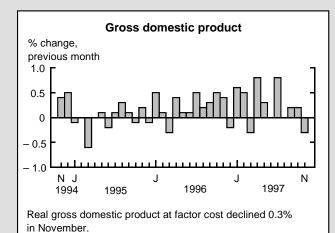
The evolution of interprovincial trade in Canada from 1984 to 1996 was shaped by a series of economic and political events that affected patterns of trade and the extent to which provinces exchanged goods and services with each other and collectively as a trading nation. Continued globalization of markets, the implementation of a free trade agreement with Canada's largest trading partner in 1989, and subsequent introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement set the stage for provinces to seek new and expanded markets outside Canada. Likewise, free trade and the emergence of new economic superpowers like China have increased competition for the Canadian consumer dollar.

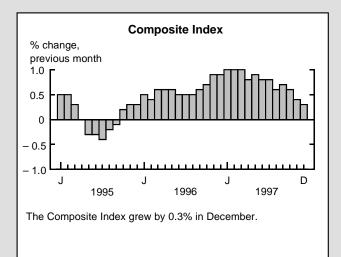
The 160-page publication *Interprovincial trade in Canada*, 1984–1996 uses tables, charts and analysis to examine interprovincial and international trade flows.

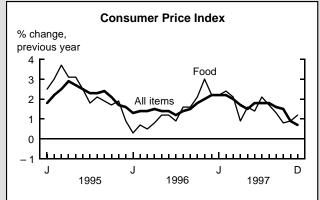
Interprovincial trade in Canada, 1984–1996 is now available on paper (15-546-XPE, \$55), diskette (15-546-XDE, \$55), and on the Internet (15-546-XIE, \$41). For further information, contact Ronald Rioux (613-951-3697; Internet: riouxrstatcan.ca), Input–Output Division.

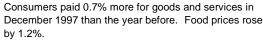
Current trends

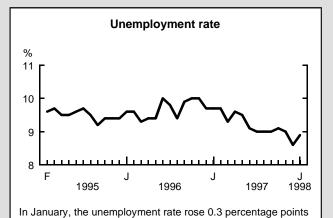
to 8.9%.

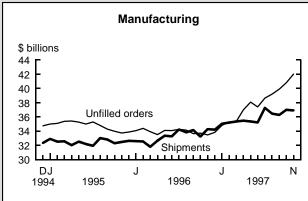












Manufacturers' shipments edged down 0.3% in November to \$36.9 billion. The level of unfilled orders increased 2.6% to \$42.0 billion.



In November, the value of merchandise exports jumped 1.5% from October to \$25.6 billion. Imports declined 0.9% to \$24.5 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) Composite Index (1981=100) Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion) Capacity utilization (%)	November December Q3 1997 Q3 1997	697.6 202.2 27.7 86.2	- 0.3% 0.3% 2.7% 1.2†	3.3% 9.2% 11.9% 2.9†
DOMESTIC DEMAND Retail trade (\$ billion) New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	November November	19.5 123.4	- 1.2% 3.4%	4.4% 15.2%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions) Unemployment rate (%) Participation rate (%) Labour income (\$ billion) Average weekly earnings (\$)	January* January* January* October November	14.1 8.9 64.9 37.48 601.64	0.0% 0.3† 0.1† 0.2% 0.9%	2.5% - 0.8† 0.2† 3.8% 1.5%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion) Merchandise imports (\$ billion) Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	November November November	25.6 24.5 1.0	1.5% - 0.9% 6.0	7.4% 15.4% - 1.5
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion) New orders (\$ billion) Unfilled orders (\$ billion) Inventory/shipments ratio	November November November November	36.9 38.0 42.0 1.30	- 0.3% - 0.1% 2.6% 0.01	5.7% 9.8% 23.4% - 0.02
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1986=100) Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100) Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100) New Housing Price Index (1986=100)	December December December November	137.8 120.0 118.4 133.4	$-0.1\% \\ -0.2\% \\ -4.1\% \\ 0.4\%$	0.7% 0.8% - 10.9% 1.2 %

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

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^{*} new this week

[†] percentage point

Publications released from February 6 to 12, 1998

			Price: Issue/Subscription	
Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
AGRICULTURE				
Cereals and oilseeds review	November 1997	22-007-XPB	15/149	15/149
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE STATISTICS				
Juristat: Missing and abducted children (paper)	1996	85-002-XPE	10/93	10/93
Juristat: Missing and abducted children (Internet)	1996	85-002-XIE	7	7
DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES				
Retail trade	November 1997	63-005-XPB	21/206	21/206
HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS				
Historical labour force statistics	1997	71-201-XPB	114	114
Labour force information	week ending			
	January 17, 1998	71-001-PPB	11/103	11/103
INDUSTRY MEASURES AND ANALYSIS				
Gross domestic product by industry	November 1997	15-001-XPB	15/145	15/145
INPUT-OUTPUT				
Interprovincial trade in Canada (paper)	1984–1996	15-546-XPE	55	55
Interprovincial trade in Canada (diskette)	1984–1996	15-546-XDE	55	55
Interprovincial trade in Canada (Internet)	1984–1996	15-546-XIE	41	41
INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL STOCK				
Building permits (paper)	December 1997	64-001-XPB	25/248	25/248
Building permits (microfiche)	December 1997	64-001-XMB	25/140	25/140
Building permits (Internet)	December 1997	64-001-XIB	19	19
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY				
Asphalt roofing	December 1997	45-001-XPB	7/62	7/62
Oil pipeline transport	November 1997	55-001-XPB	12/114	12/114
Production and disposition of tobacco products Production and shipments of steel pipe and tubing	December 1997 December 1997	32-022-XPB 41-011-XPB	7/62 7/62	7/62 7/62
Shipments of solid fuel-burning heating products	O4 1997	25-002-XPB	8/25	8/25
Steel wire and specified wire products	December 1997	41-006-XPB	7/62	7/62
The sugar situation	Q4 1997	32-013QXPB	13/41	13/41
TRANSPORTATION				
Passenger bus and urban transit statistics (paper)	1996	53-215-XPB	40	40
Passenger bus and urban transit statistics (Internet)	1996	53-215-XIB	30	30

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