



Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, March 20, 1998

OVERVIEW

◆ More jobs in February

Employment was up in February, and nearly half of the jobs went to youths. At the same time, the unemployment rate dropped.

◆ Vehicle sales drop

Sales of new motor vehicles dropped in January, following unusually strong sales in December.

◆ Industrial capacity use up slightly

Industries increased their rate of capacity use only slightly in the fourth quarter of 1997, reflecting the slowed rate of economic growth.

◆ GDP rises in fourth quarter

In the fourth quarter of 1997, real gross domestic product rose 0.7%. For 1997 as a whole, the economy posted its best performance since 1994.

◆ Number of help-wanted ads increases

After pausing for a month, the Help-wanted Index advanced in February. Seven provincial indexes recorded increases.

◆ New homes cost more

Contractors' selling prices for new houses rose between December and January. Prices were also up over January 1997.

◆ Breaking and entering on the rise

Residential break-ins increased in 1996, as thieves broke into about 1 in every 50 residences.

More jobs in February

Canada's employment level rose by 82,000 in February, mainly the result of continued job growth in Ontario and a rebound in Quebec following the ice storm. Full-time employment posted a large increase (+84,000), continuing the surge that began a year ago. Unemployment fell by an estimated 38,000, dropping the unemployment rate 0.3 percentage points to 8.6%.

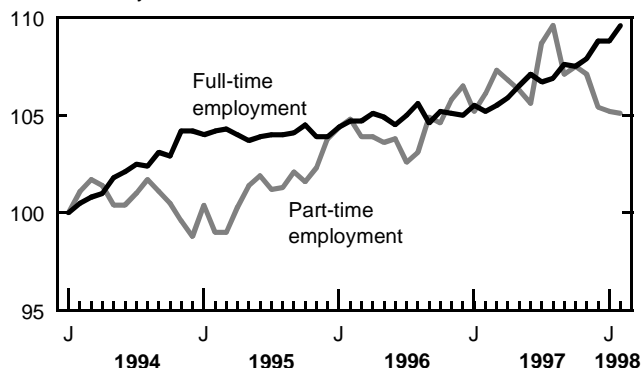
Nearly half (+38,000) of February's employment increase went to youths 15 to 24 years of age—the first major increase in six months. Two-thirds of this gain was in full-time work. Unemployment for youth declined by 23,000, causing the youth unemployment rate to drop to 15.5% from 16.5% in January. Adult women also had more jobs (+30,000), with half the gain in full-time positions. Among adult men, full-time work increased by 42,000, while part-time dropped 28,000.

New jobs continued to come from the private sector, which added 100,000 employees in February. Private sector hiring has accounted for all of the net growth over the last 12 months. Self-employment, which was the source of job growth for most of the 1990s, stood at the same level in February as a year earlier. Public sector employment was unchanged.

(continued on page 2)

Employment

Index, January 1994=100



... More jobs in February

The upward trend in manufacturing continued in February, as manufacturers added 30,000 more workers. Over the last year, job growth in durable goods production (+8.1%) has been somewhat greater than that of non-durable goods (+6.6%). Employment in business and personal services was up by 26,000. Wholesale trade employment also expanded (+12,000).

Employment continued to grow in Ontario, where 35,000 jobs were added in February. The unemployment rate in Ontario was 7.6%, down 1.4 percentage points from a year earlier. In Quebec, the number of people with jobs rose by 35,000, rebounding from a drop in January (–46,000) when the ice storm led to many temporary lay-offs. Quebec's unemployment rate dropped 0.7 percentage points to 10.6% in February, close to the December rate.

In Nova Scotia, employment increased by 7,000, and compared with last February, 22,000 (+5.6%) more Nova Scotians had work. In British Columbia, more people entered the labour force to look for work, causing a higher unemployment rate. The other provinces posted little change in labour market conditions in February.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 3450–3471, 3483–3502 and table 799999.

Labour force information (paper version: 71-001-PPB, \$11/\$103; fax version: 71-001-PFB, \$300 per year) for the week ending February 21, 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 8.)

Labour Force Survey, February 1998

Seasonally adjusted

	Labour force		Employment		Unemployment	
	thousands	% change, previous month	thousands	% change, previous month	thousands	rate (%)
Canada	15,534.2	0.3	14,196.2	0.6	1,338.0	8.6
Newfoundland	237.1	– 0.3	195.6	– 0.2	41.5	17.5
Prince Edward Island	69.9	– 0.3	60.4	0.8	9.5	13.6
Nova Scotia	458.0	1.0	410.0	1.8	48.0	10.5
New Brunswick	368.9	0.2	322.0	0.5	46.9	12.7
Quebec	3,680.9	0.3	3,290.8	1.1	390.1	10.6
Ontario	6,026.9	0.3	5,568.4	0.6	458.5	7.6
Manitoba	574.7	– 0.1	541.1	– 0.2	33.5	5.8
Saskatchewan	510.6	0.0	482.5	0.0	28	5.5
Alberta	1,538.8	– 0.3	1,498.7	– 0.3	85.1	5.4
British Columbia	2,023.4	0.9	1,826.8	0.5	196.6	9.7

Vehicle sales drop

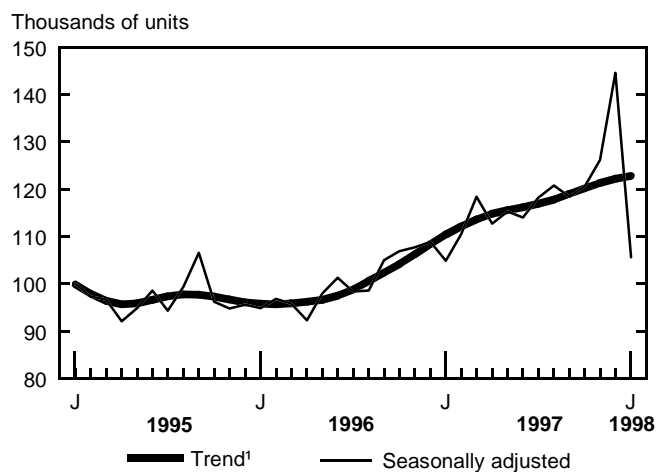
Between December 1997 and January 1998, sales of new motor vehicles fell 27%—the largest month-to-month decrease since January 1976. Compared with January 1997, however, new vehicle sales were up slightly.

Industry sources have suggested that dealers might have drawn some of January's business into December by offering customers strong incentives to buy new vehicles. This shift, combined with the January ice storm, appears to have contributed to the substantial decline in January vehicle sales.

Both truck and car sales fell in January (–29.4% and –24.1%, respectively). But truck sales were strong compared with January 1997 (+16.0%), which helped push total new vehicle sales to a moderate year-over-year increase of 0.7%. New car sales were down 11.9% from a year earlier.

Year-over-year sales declines were recorded in six provinces. Quebec (–30.7%), Prince Edward Island (–23.8%) and Manitoba (–10.7%) all posted declines. On the other hand, dealers in New Brunswick (+18.8%), Alberta (+11.2%), Ontario (+11.0%) and Nova Scotia (+1.4%) sold more new vehicles than they did a year earlier. Quebec suffered the largest drop, falling 30.7% from January 1997. (Provincial data are unadjusted.)

New motor vehicle sales



1. The short-term trend represents a moving average of the data.

(continued on page 3)

... Vehicle sales drop

Early estimates for February predict a slight gain in total new motor vehicle sales.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 64.

The December 1997 issue of *New motor vehicle sales* (63-007-XPB; \$17/\$165) is now available. For analytical information, contact Jason Randall at (613-951-5668; Internet: randjas@statcan.ca); for further information, contact Serge Dumouchel (613-951-2210), Distributive Trades Division.

Note to readers

Passenger cars include those used for personal and commercial purposes (for example, taxis and rental cars). Trucks include minivans, sport utility vehicles, light and heavy trucks, vans, coaches and buses.

All numbers have been seasonally adjusted unless otherwise specified.

Industrial capacity use up slightly

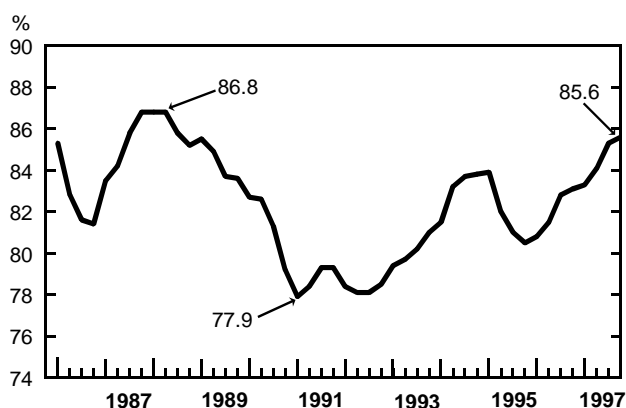
In the fourth quarter of 1997, industries increased their rate of capacity use 0.3 percentage points to 85.6%. This slight rise reflected the slowed rate of economic growth. Increased exports and consumer spending, along with a build-up of inventories, contributed to the increased production. Of the 28 industry groups included in the total non-farm industrial aggregate, 7 recorded rates of over 90%, and only 4 had rates of less than 80%.

Manufacturers marked a full year of rising rates of capacity use with a fourth-quarter increase of 0.3 percentage points to 86.0%. Among manufacturing's 22 industry groups, 17 raised their rates. On the durable goods side, capacity use for non-metallic mineral products rose 4.5 percentage points to 84.4%, as cement and concrete producers benefited from increased non-residential construction activity. Consumer spending on furniture and fixtures spurred producers to raise their rate 3.7 percentage points to 91.0%. Makers of telecommunications equipment cut back production, lowering the rate of capacity use in electrical and electronic products to 80.8% (-3.8 percentage points). This was the largest decline in the manufacturing sector.

Note to readers

An industry's capacity use is the ratio of its actual output to its estimated potential output. Statistics Canada derives estimates of an industry's potential output from measures of its capital stock. In addition, since 1987, Statistics Canada has been surveying companies for their estimates of annual capacity use in order to produce survey-based industry measures. A company's measure of its level of operation, as a percentage of potential, takes into account changes in the obsolescence of facilities, capital-to-labour ratios and other characteristics of production techniques. The surveyed rates anchor the calculated quarterly series and ensure they reflect such changes.

Industrial capacity utilization rate



On the non-durable goods side of manufacturing, producers of refined petroleum and coal products brought their level of capacity use up to an all-time peak of 99.3% (+4.8 percentage points). Planned spending on plant and equipment in 1998 should provide additional production capacity in the future.

Elsewhere, construction posted a 1.1 percentage point increase, bringing its level to 87.1%. Both residential and non-residential construction contributed to the gain. In mining, quarrying and oil wells, a lower rate for the crude petroleum and natural gas industries offset a rise in the rate for mining and quarrying. This left the rate for the sector as a whole at 84.3%, unchanged from the third quarter. Rates also fell in both electric power and gas distribution, as production declined due to relatively mild weather.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 3140.

For further information, contact Susanna Wood (613-951-0655) or Richard Landry (613-951-2579), Investment and Capital Stock Division.

(continued on page 4)

... Industrial capacity use up slightly

Industrial capacity utilization rates

				Annual average		
	Q3 1997	Q4 1997	Q3 to Q4 1997	1996	1997	1996 to 1997
	%	percentage point change		%	percentage point change	
Total, non-farm goods-producing	85.3	85.6	0.3	82.1	84.6	2.5
Logging and forestry	78.6	79.7	1.1	80.7	77.7	− 3.0
Mining (including milling), quarrying and oil wells	84.3	84.3	0.0	82.1	83.2	1.1
Manufacturing	85.7	86.0	0.3	82.5	84.8	2.3
Durable goods	86.3	86.6	0.3	82.2	85.2	3.0
Non-durable goods	84.9	85.3	0.4	82.8	84.5	1.7
Construction	86.0	87.1	1.1	80.1	85.6	5.5
Electric power and gas distribution systems	84.5	83.2	− 1.3	83.1	84.4	1.3

GDP rises in fourth quarter

Consumer spending and business investment moderated in the fourth quarter of 1997, which held the growth of real gross domestic product (GDP) to 0.7%. Merchandise exports and a substantial build-up of inventories helped to sustain growth. Final domestic demand, which had been driving the economy for several quarters, grew a moderate 0.3%. For 1997 as a whole, real GDP grew 3.8%—the economy's best performance since 1994.

Personal expenditure on consumer goods and services grew 0.6%, down from 1.3% in the previous quarter. Purchases of new motor vehicles were largely responsible for the strength in spending. Spending on durable goods was up; at the same time, spending on semi-durable goods slipped after advancing all year, as did spending on non-durable goods.

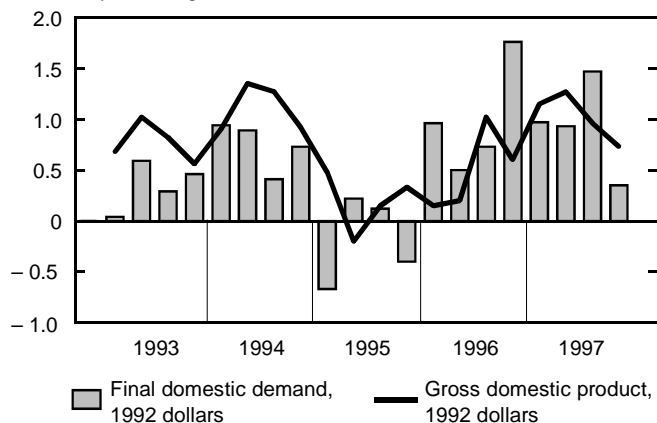
Personal income and labour income both grew during the quarter (+0.9% and +0.5%, respectively). Governments took a larger share of personal income, and disposable income grew slightly (+0.7%). The personal saving rate fell to a new low of 0.6%. Personal sector borrowing remained strong and acquisition of financial assets slowed.

After several quarters of strong growth, business investment in non-residential structures and equipment edged down 0.5%. Investment in non-residential structures also fell. Business investment in residential structures gained 2.1% during the fourth quarter after edging down in the third. New home construction and renovation activity picked up, while resale activity declined for the fourth consecutive quarter.

Corporation profits before taxes advanced 5.2% in the fourth quarter. The petroleum and natural gas industry fared especially well, but transportation services and telecommunications, postal and courier services also recorded noteworthy gains. Corporate capital spending rose to record levels.

Growth of domestic demand and gross domestic product

Quarterly % change



The fourth quarter saw a \$9.7 billion accumulation of business non-farm inventories, the third consecutive quarter of large inventory build-ups. Manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade all registered higher stockpiles on prospects of continued strong sales. The build-up in trade inventories softened, while farm inventories declined.

Exports of goods advanced 2.6% in the fourth quarter, down from 3.2% in the third. Imports of energy products, industrial goods and materials, automotive products and other consumer goods were especially brisk. Both imports and exports of services fell. The surplus on the balance of trade in goods and services fell to \$7.9 billion (current prices), its third consecutive quarterly decline.

(continued on page 5)

... GDP rises in fourth quarter

The government sector continued to show a surplus as revenues outpaced expenditures. Gross current expenditure on goods and services edged down while transfer payments rose 1.4%. Interest payments on the public debt were flat. Direct taxes rose with the gains in labour income and corporation profits; indirect taxes gained on the strength of sales.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 701-726, 728-735, 737-744, 748-750, 796, 797, 6520-6575 and 6597-6624.

The fourth quarter 1997 issue of National economic and financial accounts, quarterly estimates (13-001-XPB, \$44/\$145) will be available shortly. Detailed printed tables of unadjusted and seasonally adjusted quarterly national accounts (13-001-PPB, \$50/\$180) and financial flow statistics (13-014-PPB, \$50/\$180), plus supplementary analytical tables and charts are now available. For further information, contact the information officer (613-951-3640), National Accounts and Environment Division.

Number of help-wanted ads increases

The Help-wanted Index rose 2.3% in February, after pausing for a month. The index has increased by nearly 39% since March 1996, to stand at its highest level since November 1990.

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

	Level	% change, previous year	% change, previous month
Canada	113	20.4	2.3
Newfoundland	112	21.4	0.7
Prince Edward Island	121	9.1	5.6
Nova Scotia	111	19.8	0.8
New Brunswick	111	31.5	-0.7
Quebec	103	22.3	5.0
Ontario	116	19.8	3.7
Manitoba	121	24.0	2.0
Saskatchewan	118	17.8	-2.1
Alberta	130	22.3	0.6
British Columbia	112	4.5	-1.7

Note to readers

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

Seven of the provincial indexes recorded increases in January. In Ontario, the index advanced 3.7% to reach its highest level since October 1990. The number of help-wanted advertisements grew by 5.0% in Quebec. Two of the three Prairie provinces posted increases, along with three of the four Atlantic provinces.

Declines in the index were recorded in Saskatchewan, British Columbia and New Brunswick.

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

For further information, contact Michael Scrim (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; Internet: labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.

New homes cost more

In January 1998, the New Housing Price Index was 1.2% higher compared with the same period a year earlier. From December 1997 to January 1998, this index of contractors' selling prices for new houses increased 0.1%.

The largest monthly increases were in Calgary (+1.4%) and Edmonton (+0.9%) as some builders passed on increased construction costs to home buyers. Smaller increases were noted in several other Canadian cities as builders reacted to higher consumer confidence and favourable interest rates. Offsetting these increases were significant monthly declines in Charlottetown (-1.1%), Victoria (-1.0%) and Vancouver (-0.9%). Generally, contractors attributed these decreases to very competitive market conditions.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 9921.

The first quarter 1998 issue of Construction price statistics (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79) will be available in June 1998. For further information, contact Elvira Marinelli (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division.

Note to readers

In January 1998, new housing prices indexes (formerly CANSIM matrix 2032) will be shown on a 1992=100 time base in CANSIM matrix 9921, retroactively to January 1981.

New housing price indexes
1992=100

	January 1998	January 1997 to January 1998	December 1997 to January 1998 % change
Canada	99.8	1.2	0.1
Halifax	106.9	-2.2	0.1
Montréal	102.2	-0.1	0.2
Ottawa-Hull	96.9	-0.6	-0.2
Toronto	101.0	3.9	0.3
Calgary	120.1	7.4	1.4
Edmonton	106.3	3.3	0.9
Vancouver	89.7	-4.1	-0.9

Breaking and entering on the rise

After declining for three straight years in the early 1990s, the number of residential break-ins was up in 1996. Thieves broke into about 1 in every 50 residences (just over 242,000 homes), as the rate of residential break-ins rose 2% for the second year in a row. Residential break-ins accounted for 6 in every 10 break-ins in 1996.

Overall, police reported 396,085 break-ins in 1996, counting residential, commercial and other types. After declining for four years in a row, the overall rate remained virtually unchanged in 1996 (+0.2%). Police statistics indicate that thieves took mainly audio and video equipment and jewellery from homes, and money and office equipment from businesses. Just over 110,000 businesses reported a break-in to police in 1996, leaving the rate for businesses stable after it declined for four consecutive years.

British Columbia reported the highest rate of total break-ins among the provinces (2,039 per 100,000 population), followed by Saskatchewan (1,803). Rates were lowest in the Atlantic provinces, with Newfoundland reporting the lowest rate (less than half that of British Columbia).

Among 25 census metropolitan areas (CMAs), Regina reported the highest overall break-in rate (3,034 per 100,000), followed by Vancouver (2,510) and Saskatoon (2,100). Overall, rates declined in 13 of the CMAs in 1996.

Note to readers

The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey categorizes breaking and entering (both completed and attempted break-ins) as follows:

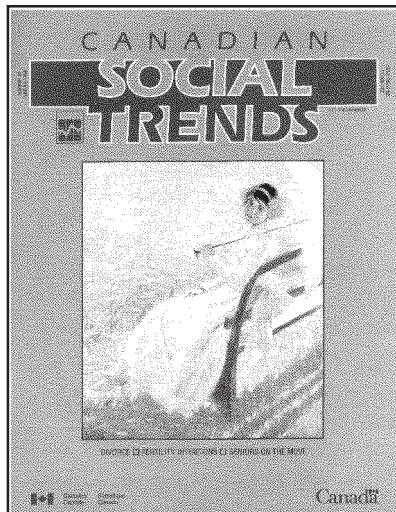
Residential break-ins—private residences, including single homes, garden homes, apartments, cottages, mobile homes, rooming houses, etc.

Business break-ins—facilities used for commercial or public affairs, including stores, financial institutions, government buildings and non-profit organizations.

Other break-ins—private property structures, (e.g., sheds, detached garages) or storage or transport facilities.

"Breaking and entering in Canada, 1996," which appears in Juristat (paper: 85-002-XPE, \$10; Internet: 85-002-XIE, \$7), Vol. 18, no. 5, is now available. For further information, contact Information and Client Services (613-951-9023 or 1 800 387-2231), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

New from Statistics Canada



Canadian social trends Spring 1998

The spring 1998 issue of *Canadian social trends* features the following articles: "What influences people's plans to have children?," "Canadian attitudes to divorce," "The impact of family structure on high school completion," "Older Canadians on the move" and "Breast cancer and mammography."

Each quarter, *Canadian social trends* integrates data from many sources to examine emerging social trends and issues. It also features the latest social indicators, as well as information about Statistics Canada's products and services.

The spring 1998 issue of Canadian social trends (11-008-XPE, \$11/\$36) is now available. For further information, contact Susan Crompton (613-951-2556), Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division.

New from Statistics Canada - concluded

The 1996 Census

Statistics Canada recently released the following 1996 Census products on labour market activities, industry and occupation, unpaid work, place of work and mode of transportation:

From *The Nation series*: 44 tables (labour market activities, industry and occupation, and unpaid work: 16 tables; place of work and mode of transportation: 28 tables), providing data for Canada, provinces and territories, and census metropolitan areas (package no. 7, catalogue no. 93F0027XDB96000.) The price for the set (or any subset) of tables is \$60. Twenty-one extracts from some of these tables will be available free of charge on the Statistics Canada Internet site (www.statcan.ca) under "1996 Census."

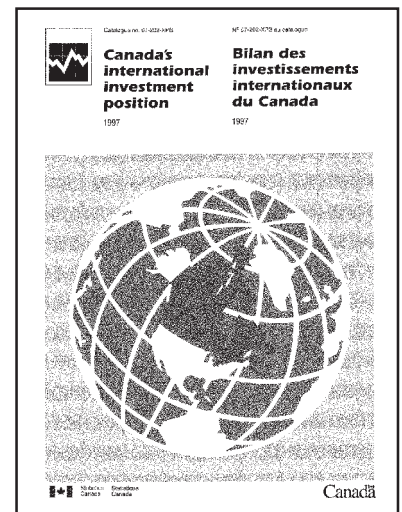
From the *Area Profiles series*: electronic area profiles for census divisions and census subdivisions. Profiles for the remaining geographic levels-CMA/tracted CA/CT, CMA/CA, FED (1996 Representation Order and 1987 Representation Order/EA), and FSA-will be available on April 17, 1998. Prices for area profiles vary depending on the format and geographic level required by the user.

For further information, contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.

Canada's international investment position 1997

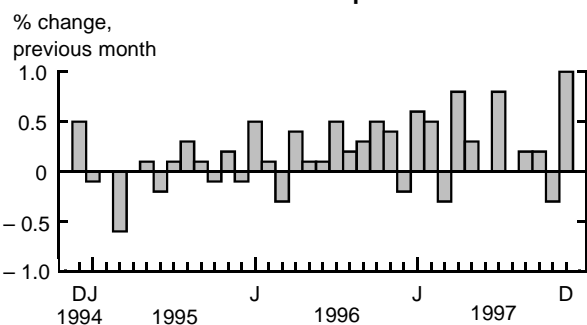
International investment, both in Canada and abroad, forms one of the cornerstones of Canada's economy. Canada's international investment position gives a detailed account of Canada's assets and liabilities abroad. This publication helps you understand today's economy and how it has evolved. Useful geographical comparisons, such as our position in relation to European Union countries, are also featured.

Canada's international investment position, 1997 (67-202-XPB, \$25) is now available. For further information, contact Christian Lajule (613-951-2062), Balance of Payments Division.



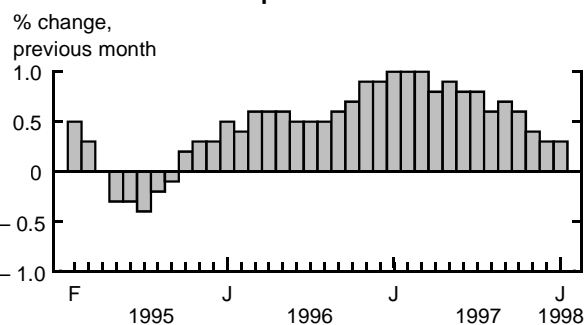
Current trends

Gross domestic product



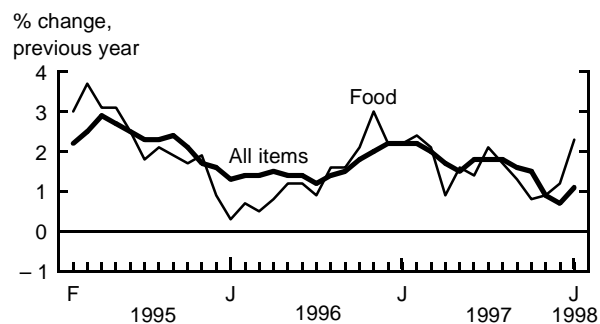
Real gross domestic product at factor cost soared 1.0% in December.

Composite Index



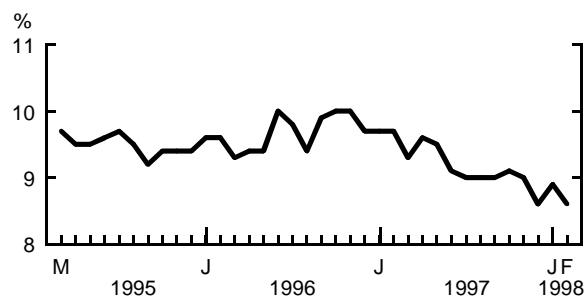
The Composite Index grew by 0.3% in January.

Consumer Price Index



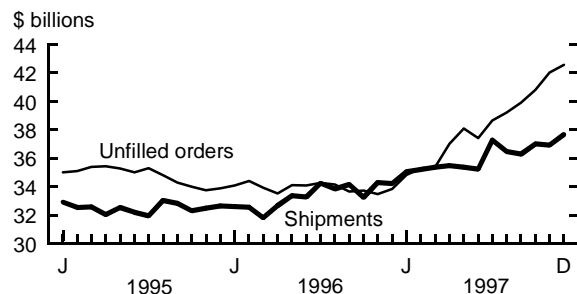
Consumers paid 1.1% more for goods and services in January 1998 than the year before. Food prices rose by 2.3%.

Unemployment rate



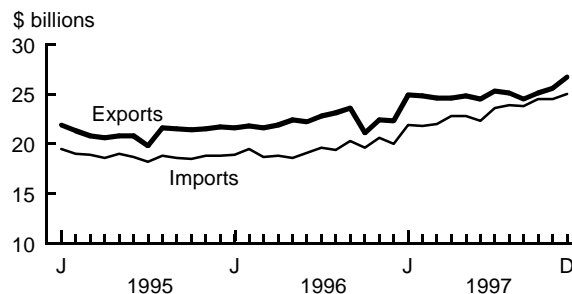
In February, the unemployment rate fell 0.3 percentage points to 8.6%.

Manufacturing



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

Merchandise trade



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

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

Latest monthly statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
GENERAL				
Gross domestic product (\$ billion, 1992)	December	704.9	1.0%	4.5%
Composite Index (1981=100)	January	202.8	0.3%	8.4%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q4 1997	29.2	3.1%	16.0%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q4 1997*	85.6	0.3†	2.5†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	December	20.1	2.7%	8.2%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	January*	105.6	-27.0%	0.7%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	February*	14.2	0.6%	3.3%
Unemployment rate (%)	February*	8.6	-0.3†	-1.1†
Participation rate (%)	February*	65.0	0.1†	0.4†
Labour income (\$ billion)	October	37.48	0.2%	3.8%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	December	601.79	0.2%	1.0%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	December	26.7	3.9%	12.3%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	December	25.0	2.2%	20.0%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	December	1.7	0.5	-1.2
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	December	37.6	2.0%	8.1%
New orders (\$ billion)	December	37.5	-1.7%	6.9%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	December	42.5	-0.4%	24.2%
Inventory/shipments ratio	December	1.27	-0.03	-0.04
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	January	107.0	0.6%	1.1%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	January	119.8	0.0%	0.8%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	January	114.7	-3.1%	-13.7%
New Housing Price Index (1986=100)	January*	99.8	0.1%	1.2%

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

* new this week

† percentage point

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Publications released from March 13 to 19, 1998

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription	
			Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
BALANCE OF PAYMENTS				
Canada's international investment position	1997	67-202-XPB	52	52
Canada's international transactions in securities	December 1997	67-002-XPB	18/176	18/176
HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS				
Household facilities by income and other characteristics	1997	13-218-XPB	37	37
Labour force information	week ended February 21, 1998	71-001-PPB	11/103	11/103
HOUSING, FAMILY AND SOCIAL STATISTICS				
Canadian social trends	Spring 1998	11-008-XPE	11/36	11/36
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Exports by country:	January to December 1997			
microfiche		65-003-XMB	62/206	62/206
paper		65-003-XPB	124/412	124/412
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY				
Industrial chemicals and synthetic resins	January 1998	46-002-XPB	7/62	7/62
Oil pipeline transport	December 1997	55-001-XPB	12/114	12/114
Oils and fats	January 1998	32-006-XPB	7/62	7/62
Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard	January 1998	36-003-XPB	7/62	7/62
Primary iron and steel	January 1998	41-001-XPB	7/62	7/62
Production and disposition of tobacco products	January 1998	32-022-XPB	7/62	7/62
Quarterly report on energy supply-demand in Canada	Q2 1997	57-003-XPB	43/141	43/141
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Shipments of office furniture products	July to December 1997	35-006SXPB	14/28	14/28
Steel wire and specified wire products	January 1998	41-006-XPE	7/62	7/62
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