



Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, May 2, 1997

OVERVIEW

◆ Growth in economic activity continues

Gross domestic product at factor cost advanced in February. Growth picked up in construction, and it remained firm in several other industry groups.

◆ Raw material prices fall again

Manufacturers' raw material prices were lower in March than in February, primarily because of lower prices for crude oil, wood and hogs.

◆ Industrial product prices up over the year

In March, industrial product prices were up over one year earlier. However, prices rose marginally between February and March.

◆ Decline in number of EI recipients continues

The number of Canadians receiving Employment Insurance benefits dropped again in February, for the fifth month in a row.

◆ More Canadians choose common-law unions

In 1995, many more Canadians were in common-law unions compared with 1981. In Quebec, a higher proportion of couples chose a common-law union.

◆ Number of inmates remains stable, but prison operating costs up

Although the number of adult inmates in prisons has stabilized after nearly a decade of rapid growth, the cost of holding inmates rose.

Growth in economic activity continues

Gross domestic product (GDP) at factor cost rose 0.5% in February. Growth picked up in construction, and it remained firm in several other industry groups. In the first two months of 1997, average production grew 0.9%, a pace similar to that recorded for the fourth quarter of 1996.

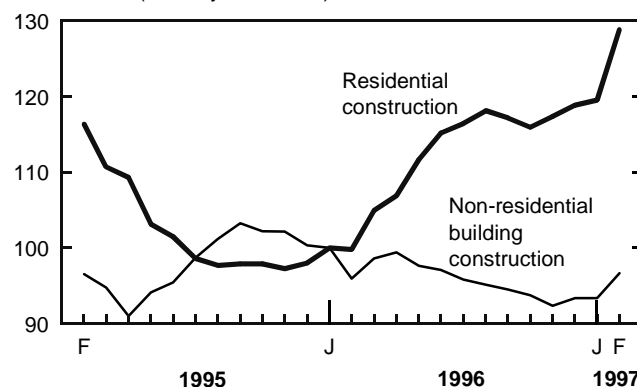
February was also a good month for manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. Community, business and personal services, and communications services continued to increase. Rebounds in mining, and transportation and storage services added to the overall gain. However, declines in the output of utilities, financial and related services, and public administration restrained growth.

Construction activity rose 3.1% in February, led by a 7.8% jump in residential construction. The surge in home building mirrored strong growth in the number of dwelling starts in January and February and a sharp increase in the number of building permits issued since last October. Non-residential building activity also increased. A rebound in institutional building construction accounted for about half of the advance, while construction of industrial and commercial buildings continued to move ahead.

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Construction activity

GDP Indices (January 1996=100)



... Growth in economic activity continues

In February, manufacturers increased production 0.6% following a 1.8% rise in January—the first time since April and May 1996 that output improved two months in a row. Production rose in 15 of the 21 major industry groups. Wood, paper and chemical product manufacturers were among the producers that raised output the most. Output of wood products rose 2.6%, with sawmill operators accounting for about 60% of the advance. Fabrication of paper and allied products increased 2.5%. Declines in the fabrication of electrical and electronic equipment and transportation equipment moderated the advance.

Value added in wholesaling activity rose (+2.0%) for the second consecutive month in February. Sales of machinery and equipment and motor vehicles and parts dominated the increase. Growth in sales of machinery and equipment was firm for a third consecutive month, and paralleled high imports of industrial and office machinery. Strong sales were also recorded for farm machinery and lumber and building materials. Despite the strength in overall sales, wholesalers accumulated inventories from November through February.

Retail trade continued to improve in February (+0.7%), with retailers of automotive parts and general merchandise stores responsible for approximately 70% of the gain. February's advance also reflected the fourth consecutive increase in purchases of furniture and appliances, and a gain in department store sales.

Note to readers

GDP of an industry is the value added by labour and capital in transforming inputs purchased from other industries into output. Monthly GDP by industry is valued at 1986 prices. The estimates presented here are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

Output of utilities continued to fluctuate, dropping 1.7%. Production of electricity declined 1.9% when demand receded due to milder weather in several provinces. Financial and related services declined 0.2% as the resale housing markets dropped following significant gains in the previous four months. Public administration fell 0.3%.

Also in February, natural gas distribution decreased, and production and exports of motor vehicles fell after soaring in January. Spending in restaurants increased for the second consecutive month, and rail transport rose after declining in the previous two months.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4670–4674.

The February 1997 issue of **Gross domestic product by industry** (15-001-XPB, \$14/\$140) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Michel Girard (613-951-9145), Industry Measures and Analysis Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 6.)

Raw material prices fall again

In March, manufacturers' raw material prices were down 1.0% from February. Lower prices for crude oil, wood and hogs were partly offset by higher prices for copper and wheat. If the mineral fuels category (90% of which is crude oil) were excluded, raw material prices would have increased by 0.8%. Compared with March 1996, raw material prices were up 1.4%. Again, if mineral fuels were excluded, the rise would be 0.9%.

Crude oil prices were down for the third consecutive month (–5.2%), as refiners cut crude oil use to make seasonal repairs, and heating oil demand fell off due to the milder weather. Between March 1996 and March 1997, crude oil prices rose 2.5%.

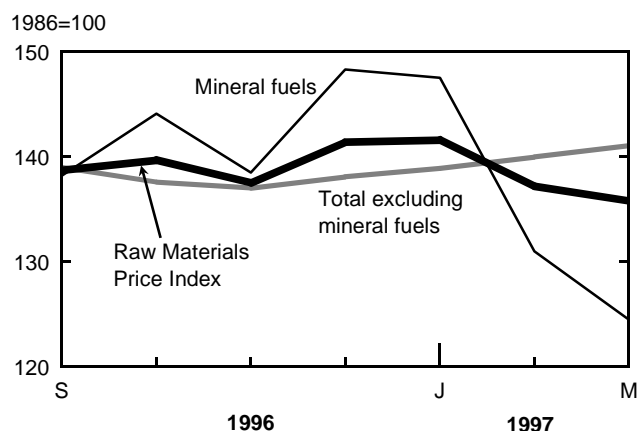
In March, wood prices declined slightly (–0.6%), as lower prices for logs were somewhat offset by higher pulpwood prices. Compared with March 1996, wood prices were up 3.3%. Log prices have increased dramatically over the last five years (close to +90%). A large part of the rise comes from increased stumpage fees (the fees companies pay provinces for trees cut from Crown land) and the costs of complying with stringent new forest practice codes.

In the animals and animal products group, prices edged down 0.3% in March. Hog prices fell to an 11-month low (–5.3%) when a rising slaughter level combined with weaker demand threatened to create an oversupply. However, the recent report of hoof-and-mouth disease affecting Taiwanese hogs (the main supplier to the world's largest pork importer, Japan) may boost demand for Canadian pork. The lower hog prices were mostly offset by higher prices for cattle for slaughter and hides and skins. Compared with March 1996, animal and animal product prices were up 4.2%.

Note to readers

The Raw Materials Price Index (RMPI) reflects the prices paid by Canadian manufacturers for key raw materials. Many of these prices are set in a world market. Also, unlike the Industrial Product Price Index, the RMPI includes goods that are not produced in Canada.

Raw material prices



Non-ferrous metal prices were up 3.6% in March—the highest month-to-month change in 21 months. Higher prices were recorded for most metals, especially copper concentrates and gold. Demand for copper has been high in the automotive and construction industries. However, non-ferrous metal prices were 4.3% lower than in March 1996.

(continued on page 3)

... Raw material prices fall again

Between February and March, vegetable product prices increased 3.6%—the highest monthly increase in 10 months. Higher prices for grains, oilseeds and green coffee were the major contributors. Compared with 12 months earlier, vegetable product prices were down 3.7%.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 2009.

The March 1997 issue of **Industry price indexes** (62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Paul-Roméo Danis (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: danipau@statcan.ca), Prices Division.

Industrial product prices up over the year

In March, the 12-month change in industrial product prices rose to 0.9%. Between February and March, however, prices increased only 0.2%. The Industrial Product Price Index stood at 130.2 in March (1986=100), up from its revised February level of 129.9.

The increase in the 12-month change was due more to the decline in prices in early 1996 than to the rise in prices in early 1997. In the first quarter of 1996, the overall industrial price level declined by almost 1.0% as pulp prices dropped. But in the first three months of 1997, industrial product prices rose by less than 0.25%.

The March increase in the value of the U.S. dollar against the Canadian dollar raised the value in Canadian dollars of all export prices quoted in U.S. currency. This increased the month-to-month change in industrial prices from zero to 0.2%. The impact was most noticeable for motor vehicles, pulp, paper and wood products, as producers frequently quote export prices for these items in U.S. dollars.

In March, the most important monthly price increases were for non-ferrous metal products, motor vehicles, and feeds using oilseed products. However, declines in prices for petroleum products offset most of these increases.

Price increases for non-ferrous metal products were quite widespread in March, and included copper and copper alloy products (+3.9%), aluminum and nickel products (+2.4% and +6.8% respectively), and refined zinc (6.6%). Copper prices recovered 21.5% since July 1996, but were still significantly below their level in early 1995. The recovery in copper prices was partly attributed to U.S. demand for automobiles and housing. Aluminum product prices recovered 15.1% since November 1996 but remained 19.3% below their February 1995 peak. Nickel prices continued to recover in March: prices have risen by 21.1% since they bottomed out in January.

In March, virtually all of the change in motor vehicle prices was due to the change in the value of the Canadian dollar. Automobile domestic prices edged down 0.1% and truck domestic prices edged up 0.1%, while export prices were up 1.0% for both automobiles and trucks.

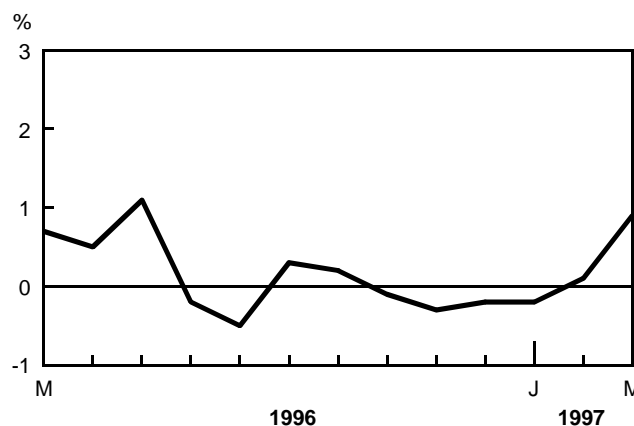
Prices for animal feeds were up 3.3% in March. Oil meal and cake prices from soybean and from canola both jumped (+11.4% and +7.9% respectively). At the raw material level, soybeans were up 8.4% and canola increased by 6.0%.

Note to readers

The Industrial Product Price Index (IPPI) reflects the prices that producers in Canada receive as the goods leave the plant gate. It does not reflect what the consumer pays. Unlike the Consumer Price Index, the IPPI excludes indirect taxes and all the costs that occur between the time when a good leaves the plant and the time when the final user takes possession of it, including the transportation, wholesale, and retail costs.

Canadian producers export many goods. They often quote their prices in foreign currencies, particularly for motor vehicles, pulp, paper, and wood products. A rise or fall in the value of the Canadian dollar against the U.S. dollar therefore affects the IPPI. A 1.0% change in the value of the Canadian dollar against the U.S. dollar has been estimated to change the IPPI by approximately 0.2%.

Industrial product prices



In March, the overall price for gasoline and fuel oil continued to fall, dropping 3.4% at the manufacturers' level. Crude oil prices also continued their decline (-5.2%). Consumers paid 1.6% less at the fuel pumps in March than they did in February.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2000–2008.

The March 1997 issue of **Industry price indexes** (62-011-XPB, \$22/\$217) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Paul-Roméo Danis (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: danipau@statcan.ca), Prices Division.

Decline in number of EI recipients continues

In February, the estimated number of Canadians who received regular Employment Insurance benefits fell 3.3% to 597,000. This was the fifth consecutive monthly decline. Declines were recorded in eight provinces and the Northwest Territories. The downward trend in the number of beneficiaries throughout 1996 continued into February. The number of regular beneficiaries has declined 14% since September 1996.

Regular benefit payments declined to \$755 million (– 1.5%) in February. Eight provinces and the Northwest Territories recorded declines, with the largest drop in Quebec (– 4.8%). Payments have generally remained flat since June 1996.

EI beneficiaries receiving regular benefits, February 1997
Seasonally adjusted

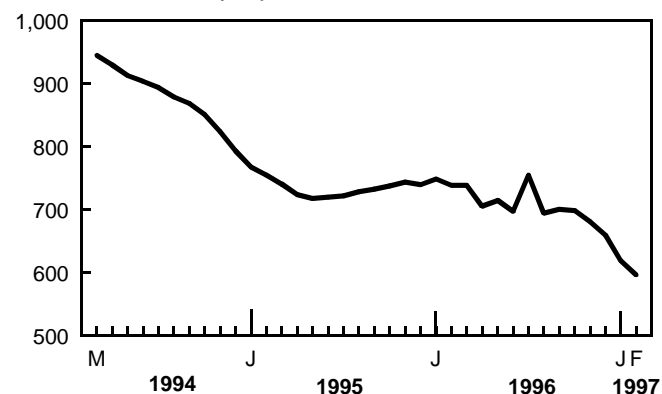
	Total, thousands	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	597	– 3.3	– 19.5
Newfoundland	36	– 2.2	– 5.1
Prince Edward Island	10	– 1.3	0.3
Nova Scotia	33	– 2.3	– 15.1
New Brunswick	38	– 3.9	– 14.2
Quebec	210	– 1.8	– 18.7
Ontario	154	– 3.3	– 17.6
Manitoba	14	1.9	– 22.7
Saskatchewan	10	1.6	– 31.0
Alberta	32	– 3.3	– 35.5
British Columbia	68	– 1.6	– 19.3
Yukon	1	5.5	– 1.0
Northwest Territories	1	– 2.1	– 17.0

Note to readers

The discrepancy between the estimated number of regular beneficiaries and regular payments series can be explained by the difference in their time frames. The number of beneficiaries is a one-week census of the month (the week containing the 15th); benefit payments is the total amount of money received by individuals for the entire month.

Number of EI beneficiaries paid regular benefits

Thousands, seasonally adjusted



The number of individuals who applied for Employment Insurance benefits in February declined 6.2% to 226,000, continuing the trend that began in April 1996. The largest declines were in Quebec (– 6.3%) and Ontario (– 5.6%).

Available on CANSIM: matrices 26 (series 1.6), 5700–5717, 5735 and 5736.

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

More Canadians choose common-law unions

The phenomenon of common-law unions has been rising over the last two decades or so. Between 1981 and 1995, the number of Canadians in common-law unions rose from 700,000 to almost 2 million. In 1981, only 1 couple in 16 was in a common-law union, but by 1995, the figure was 1 couple in 7. However, there are important regional variations. In 1995, 1 couple out of 4 in Quebec was in a common-law union, compared with 1 in 10 in the rest of the country, and 1 couple in 14 in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Today, people in common-law relationships are increasingly less inclined to subsequently legalize their unions. From the late 1970s to the early 1990s, the proportion of first common-law unions that were transformed into marriages within three years fell by half, from 38% of first common-law unions to 18%.

For Canada as a whole, between 1985 and 1994, married women had almost double the number of children (2.87) as women in common-law unions (1.44). If Quebec is compared with the rest of Canada over this period, the fertility of common-law unions was 1.58 children per woman, compared with 1.30 in the rest of Canada.

Note to readers

This article is based on information from the 1996 Report on the demographic situation in Canada. Part I of the report takes stock of the Canadian population, presents the demographic trends in the various regions of the country, and compares Canada with other industrialized nations. Part II examines the phenomenon of common-law unions. The report studies the evolution of the phenomenon and the principal factors associated with its spread, and reviews some of the consequences. The analysis is based mainly on the results of Statistics Canada's 1995 General Social Survey.

In 1995, the total fertility rate of 1.64 children per woman was practically unchanged from previous years. It was much the same for life expectancy, as no notable gains in the mortality rate were posted. In 1994, life expectancy was 75.1 years for men and 81.2 for women. Between 1971 and 1993, the gains in life expectancy at age 50 slowed, as a substantial part of the gain due to the reduction in mortality from disease of the circulatory system was offset by an increase in deaths from cancer of the respiratory system, especially lung cancer. And women did not gain as much as men.

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... More Canadians choose common-law unions

Among older age groups, the number of deaths caused by Alzheimer's disease has been increasing rapidly since the disease was identified. In 1994, it caused more deaths than AIDS, as 1,685 women and 859 men died from Alzheimer's. The difference between the sexes reflects the larger number of women in the age groups

Couples in common-law unions

	1981	1986	1991	1995
	%			
Canada	6.3	8.2	11.2	14.3
Canada less Quebec	5.6	6.7	8.6	10.7
Atlantic provinces	3.9	5.5	8.7	11.2
Quebec	8.2	12.5	19.0	25.0
Ontario	5.0	6.2	7.5	9.9
Manitoba and Saskatchewan	4.7	6.0	8.1	7.1
Alberta	7.7	8.3	10.1	12.2
British Columbia	7.9	8.5	11.2	13.8

most affected by this disease. The incidence of Alzheimer's increases with age.

Provincially, Newfoundland had the lowest fertility rate of any Canadian province in 1995, for the fourth consecutive year. At 1.25 children per woman, the rate was progressively lower each year. Quebec had the highest suicide rate, averaging 27.2 suicides for every 100,000 people between 1990 and 1994, compared with an average of 16.3 between 1970 and 1974. The suicide rate in most other provinces fell.

In 1994, Canada's total abortion rate rose slightly to 487 per 1,000 women, compared with 480 in 1993. More importantly, the percentage of women who had a second abortion increased sharply, rising from 11% in 1975 to 34% in 1994.

The Report on the demographic situation in Canada 1996 (91-209-XPE, \$30) is now available. For further information, contact Jean Dumas (613-951-2327), or Alain Bélanger (613-951-2326; fax: 613-951-2952; Internet: belaala@statcan.ca.), Demography Division.

Number of inmates remains stable, but prison operating costs up

After nearly a decade of rapid growth, the number of adult inmates in prisons has stabilized since 1993/94. In 1995/96, the custodial population of 33,785 inmates was up only 26 people over the previous year. Although the population remained virtually unchanged, the cost of holding inmates rose 2% to average \$42,292 a year.

However, prison inmates represented about a quarter of individuals serving time in the correctional system in 1995/96. Almost three out of four offenders served sentences on some type of community supervision program—mostly on probation or parole.

In any given month in 1995/96, over 120,000 adults were supervised in the community (84% on probation and 16% on parole or statutory release). This total represented a marginal decrease (– 0.2%) from the previous year, and was the second consecutive drop in the community caseload. However, in the last decade, the number of offenders supervised in the community increased at twice the rate of the prison population. Although three-quarters of all offenders were under some form of community

supervision, the cost of keeping them amounted to only 12% of Canada's total corrections budget in 1995/96.

Almost 20,000 adults were in provincial jails and just over 14,000 were in federal penitentiaries on any given day in 1995/96. Although the number of inmates in provincial jails was down from the previous year (– 0.4%), the number of offenders in the federal system increased by almost 1.0%. Over the last 10 years, the number of offenders at provincial (+24%) and federal (+27%) facilities increased at almost the same rate.

Provincial inmates were serving slightly less time in prison during 1995/96 (31 days) compared with the year before (33 days). Conversely, federal inmates served an average sentence of 46 months in 1995/96, up 2 months from a year earlier. Lengthier federal terms reflect the more serious offenses punishable by longer sentences.

Provincial governments spent \$39,470 a year on average for each inmate in their jail systems in 1995/96—up slightly (+0.2%) from the previous year. The average cost per inmate in federal penitentiaries rose 4% to \$46,250. When adjusted for inflation, the average federal cost over the past four years increased 2.0%, while provincial costs fell by nearly 8.0%.

Overall, federal and provincial corrections expenditures reached \$1.92 billion in 1995/96, up from \$1.87 billion four years earlier.

Available on CANSIM: tables 00180701, 00180703–00180706.

Adult correctional services in Canada, 1995/96 (85-211-XPB, \$35) and the Juristat: Adult correctional services in Canada, 1995/96 (85-002-XPE, \$10) are now available. For further information, contact Information and Client Services (1 800 387-2231; 613-951-9023; fax: 613-951-6615), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

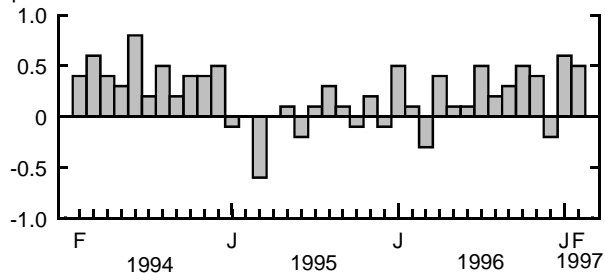
Federal and provincial correctional services, 1995/96

	Federal	Provincial	Combined
Caseload	24,305	129,741	154,046
Inmates in correctional facilities	14,055	19,730	33,785
Offenders on community supervision	10,250	110,011	120,261
Average cost per year (\$)	46,250	39,470	42,292
Budget (\$ million)	949	970	1,919

Current trends

Gross domestic product

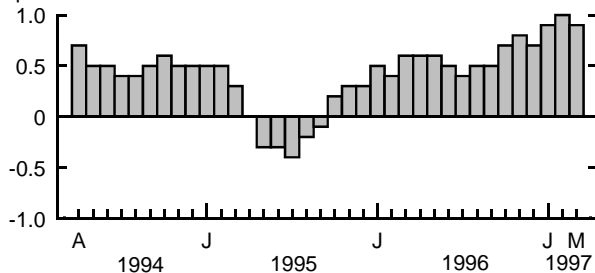
% change,
previous month



Real gross domestic product at factor cost increased 0.5% between January and February.

Composite Index

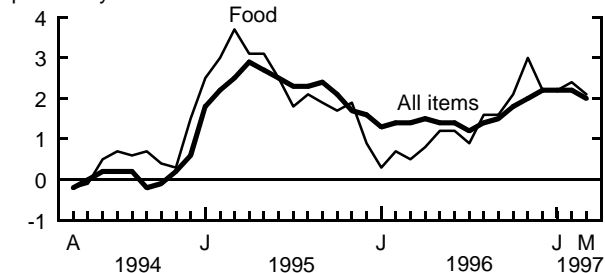
% change,
previous month



The Composite Index grew by 0.9% in March.

Consumer Price Index

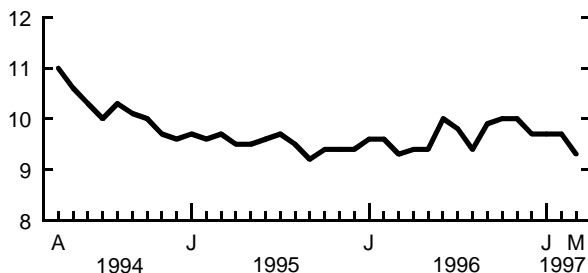
% change,
previous year



Consumers paid 2.0% more for goods and services in March 1997 than the year before. Food prices rose by 2.1%.

Unemployment rate

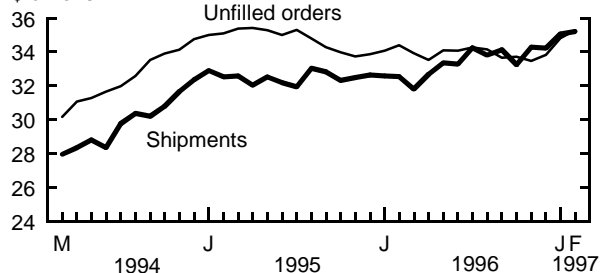
%



In March, the unemployment fell to 9.3%.

Manufacturing

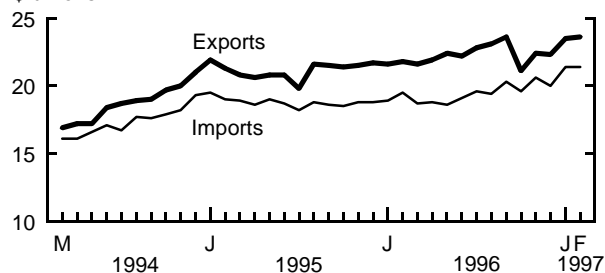
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments rose 0.6% in February to \$35.2 billion. The level of unfilled orders increased 0.8% to \$35.3 billion.

Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In February, the value of merchandise exports increased 0.6% from January to \$23.6 billion. Imports held steady at \$21.4 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, 1986)	February*	564.8	0.5%	3.5%
Composite Index (1981=100)	March	190.6	0.9%	8.8%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q4 1996	25.7	5.7%	10.4%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q4 1996	84.8	0.7†	2.4†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	February	19.1	1.1%	7.7%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	February	111.4	5.1%	14.5%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	March	13.8	0.4%	1.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	March	9.3	- 0.4†	- 0.1†
Participation rate (%)	March	64.5	- 0.1†	- 0.3†
Labour income (\$ billion)	January*	36.8	0.1%	3.9%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	January	596.78	0.2%	4.1%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	February	23.6	0.6%	7.8%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	February	21.4	- 0.3%	10.1%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	February	2.2	0.2	- 0.3
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	February	35.2	0.6%	8.2%
New orders (\$ billion)	February	35.5	- 2.0%	7.9%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	February	35.3	0.8%	2.6%
Inventory/shipments ratio	February	1.29	0.00	- 0.11
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1986=100)	March	137.6	0.2%	2.0%
Industrial Product Price Index (1986=100)	March*	130.2	0.2%	0.9%
Raw Materials Price Index (1986=100)	March*	135.8	- 1.0%	1.4%
New Housing Price Index (1986=100)	February	132.4	0.2%	0.0%

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

* new this week

† percentage point

Infomat

A weekly review

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Publications released from April 25 to May 1, 1997

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription	
			Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
AGRICULTURE				
Cereals and oilseeds review	February 1997	22-007-XPB	15/149	15/149
Field crop reporting series no. 2: March intentions of principal field crop areas, Canada	1997	22-002-XPB	15/88	15/88
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE STATISTICS				
Legal aid in Canada: Resource and caseload statistics				
Microfiche version	1995–1996	85F0015XMB	26	26
Paper version	1995–1996	85F0015XPB	33	33
DEMOGRAPHY				
Annual demographic statistics	1996	91-213-XPB	67	67
INDUSTRY				
Crude petroleum and natural gas production	January 1997	26-006-XPB	19/186	19/186
Energy statistics handbook				
Electronic version	April 1996	57-601-XDE	284	284
Mineral wool including fibrous glass insulation	March 1997	44-004-XPB	7/62	7/62
Production and disposition of tobacco products	March 1997	32-022-XPB	7/62	7/62
LABOUR				
Quarterly estimates of trusteed pension funds	Q3, 1996	74-001-XPB	19/62	19/62
TRANSPORTATION				
Railway carloadings	February 1997	52-001-XPB	11/103	11/103

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M4T 1M4

Local calls: (416) 973-6586
Toll free: 1 800 263-1136
Fax: 1-416-973-7475

Manitoba

Advisory Services
Statistics Canada
Via Rail Building, Suite 200
123 Main Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 4V9

Local calls: (204) 983-4020
Toll free: 1 800 263-1136
Fax: 1-204-983-7543

Saskatchewan

Advisory Services
Statistics Canada
Avord Tower, 9th Floor
2002 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 0R7

Local calls: (306) 780-5405
Toll free: 1 800 263-1136
Fax: 1-306-780-5403

Southern Alberta

Advisory Services
Statistics Canada
Discovery Place, Room 201
3553-31 Street N.W.
Calgary, Alberta
T2L 2K7

Local calls: (403) 292-6717
Toll free: 1 800 263-1136
Fax: 1-403-292-4958

Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories

Advisory Services
Statistics Canada
8th Floor, Park Square
10001 Bellamy Hill
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3B6

Local calls: (403) 495-3027
Toll free: 1 800 263-1136
Fax: 1-403-495-5318

British Columbia and the Yukon

Advisory Services
Statistics Canada
Library Square Tower, Suite 600
300 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 6C7

Local calls: (604) 666-3691
Toll free: 1 800 263-1136
Fax: 1-604-666-4863

Telecommunications Device for the Hearing Impaired

Toll free: 1 800 363-7629