



# Infomat

## A Weekly Review

Friday, June 20, 1997

### OVERVIEW

#### ◆ Industries increase their capacity use

In the first quarter of 1997, industries increased their use of production capacity for the third straight quarter.

#### ◆ CPI rises in May

The price of the goods and services contained in the Consumer Price Index basket rose 1.5% between May 1996 and May 1997.

#### ◆ Vehicle sales fall in April

Both car and truck sales were down in April. Despite this decline, however, new motor vehicle sales were strong in the first four months of 1997.

#### ◆ New housing prices continue to rise

The New Housing Price Index posted its sixth consecutive monthly increase in April, as well as its largest positive annual change since February 1994.

#### ◆ Canada's net liability to foreigners declines

In 1996, Canada's net liability to foreigners—foreign investments in Canada minus Canadian investments—declined for the first time in almost 50 years.

#### ◆ Domestic air fares down in 1996

The cost of domestic air travel in Canada fell sharply in the first half of 1996.

#### ◆ Job sharing—balancing work and family

According to national data on job sharing, the original appeal of this approach to balancing work and family held in 1995.

### Industries increase their capacity use

In the first quarter of 1997, industries increased their use of production capacity for the third straight quarter, bringing the level to 85.0%, down slightly from the most recent peak of 85.3% reached in the fourth quarter of 1994. Despite the rising rate of capacity use and increasing production, the first-quarter level remained below the record of 86.8% reached in 1988.

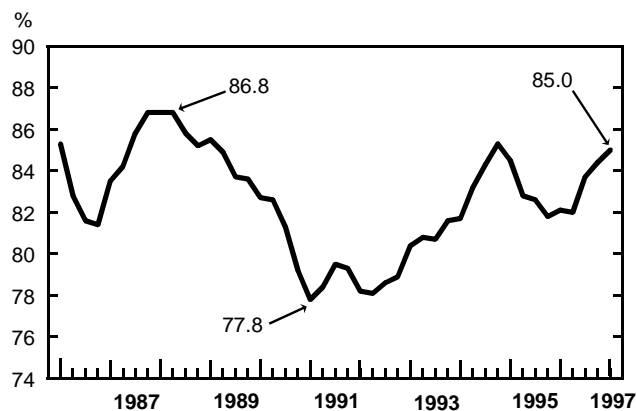
Several factors led to increased production in the first quarter. Export demand rebounded from the fourth quarter of 1996. Consumer spending, construction activity, and business spending on new machinery and equipment increased. Manufacturers were among the major contributors to the rise in production.

Manufacturers increased their capacity use for the fourth consecutive quarter, bringing the first-quarter level to 86.2%. Seventeen of the twenty-two industry groups in manufacturing raised their level of capacity use.

In transportation equipment, a strong performance in January raised output for the first quarter despite a weak February and March. This brought the level of capacity use to 84.8%, an increase of 3.8 percentage points. The textile products and beverage industries also recorded large gains in production during the first quarter. The wood industry and manufacturers of furniture and fixtures, which benefited from the upswing in housing construction, both raised their rate of capacity use.

*(continued on page 2)*

Industrial capacity utilization rate



### ... Industries increase their capacity use

A surge in new-home construction and renovation spending was responsible for the higher output by construction industries during the first quarter, as the rate of capacity use rose by 2.3 percentage points to 82.0%. All other non-manufacturing industry groups recorded first-quarter declines in capacity use.

The logging and forestry industries recorded the largest decline in the first quarter, down 4.4 percentage points to 75.6%. The drop in capacity use in the mining, quarrying and oil wells sector was mainly attributable to reduced drilling activity and lower production by gold mines. Producers of crude oil and natural gas also reduced their use of capacity in the first quarter. In electric power and gas distribution systems, capacity use fell as a result of milder weather in February in several provinces. Capacity use in gas distribution systems fell due to lower demand.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 3140.

#### 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.

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

### Industrial capacity utilization rates

	Q1 1996	Q4 1996	Q1 1997	Q1 1996 to Q1 1997	Q4 1996 to Q1 1997
	%			percentage point change	
<b>Total, non-farm goods-producing industries</b>	<b>82.1</b>	<b>84.4</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Logging and forestry	80.7	80.0	75.6	- 5.1	- 4.4
Mining (including milling), quarrying and oil wells	87.3	88.0	86.6	- 0.7	- 1.4
Manufacturing	82.3	85.1	86.2	3.9	1.1
Durable goods	82.7	84.4	85.5	2.8	1.1
Non-durable goods	81.7	86.0	87.1	5.4	1.1
Construction	77.0	79.7	82.0	5.0	2.3
Electric power and gas distribution systems	82.8	83.5	82.4	- 0.4	- 1.1

## CPI rises in May

The price of the goods and services making up the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket rose 1.5% between May 1996 and May 1997. Compared with May 1996, new vehicles, vehicle insurance, postsecondary tuition, meat and tobacco products posted notable price increases, while the cost of mortgage loans and gasoline declined.

In May 1997, the annual rate of inflation slowed for the third consecutive month. Lower annual movements in the energy sector explained most of the slowdown.

On a monthly basis, the CPI rose 0.1%, mainly due to higher prices for recreation (+1.3%), food (+0.4%), vehicle registration (+0.9%), gasoline (+0.6%), alcoholic beverages (+0.6%) and cigarettes (+0.9%). Lower prices for women's clothing (-2.2%), shelter (-0.2%) and air transportation (-3.5%) partially offset these increases.

Between May 1996 and May 1997, increases in provincial CPIs ranged from 0.9% in British Columbia to 2.4% in Manitoba. The relatively small increase in British Columbia was due mainly to declines in auto insurance premiums and owned accommodation charges. Manitoba's relatively large increase came from above average advances in the indexes for food, shelter, and clothing and footwear.

(continued on page 3)

### ... CPI rises in May

#### Consumer Price Index, May 1997

% change, previous year, not seasonally adjusted

	All-items	Food	Energy	Housing	Transportation
<b>Canada</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>- 1.3</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>1.8</b>
Newfoundland	1.7	1.0	8.6	3.5	2.7
Prince Edward Island	1.4	0.8	3.0	0.2	2.5
Nova Scotia	1.4	1.5	3.3	2.1	0.6
New Brunswick	1.5	0.5	9.4	3.7	2.2
Quebec	1.0	1.8	- 5.0	0.1	- 0.7
Ontario	1.8	0.2	1.3	0.1	4.6
Manitoba	2.4	3.7	1.5	1.7	2.1
Saskatchewan	1.1	3.2	- 1.3	1.0	0.1
Alberta	1.8	4.2	- 0.5	0.4	0.9
British Columbia	0.9	2.9	- 1.2	- 1.4	- 0.6
Whitehorse	2.4	4.9	4.9	1.0	2.9
Yellowknife	- 0.3	- 3.4	0.0	- 0.8	2.6

Between April and May, the provincial monthly CPI changes ranged from a decline of 0.4% in Prince Edward Island to increases of 0.4% in both Manitoba and British Columbia. The drop in Prince Edward Island was largely the result of declines in fuel oil, gasoline, and food prices. Manitoba showed larger than average movements for food, recreation, clothing and footwear, and transportation. In British Columbia, higher than average movements for recreation, clothing and footwear, and transportation were behind the increase.

**Available on CANSIM: matrices 7440-7454, 7477 and 7478.**

The May 1997 issue of the *Consumer Price Index* (62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. For further information, contact Sandra Shadlock (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: shadsan@statcan.ca), Prices Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 7.)

## Vehicle sales fall in April

In April, the number of new motor vehicles sold fell 4.9%. Car sales were down 6.2%, while truck sales declined 3.4%. The Big Three automakers, who recorded a 12.4% drop in the number of cars sold, were responsible for the decrease. Other automakers, however, saw sales rise by 4.6%.

Despite the decline in April, new motor vehicle sales for the first four months of 1997 were 18.4% higher compared with the same period last year. Sales have generally been on the increase since April 1996. Year-to-date sales were the highest they have been for the past several years.

Industry sources expect that May sales figures will increase.

#### Note to readers

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

Monthly data have been seasonally adjusted unless otherwise specified.

**Available on CANSIM: matrix 64.**

The April 1997 issue of *New motor vehicle sales* (63-007-XPB, \$17/\$165) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Louise G  n  reux (613-951-3549), Distributive Trades Division.

#### New motor vehicle sales, April 1997

Seasonally adjusted

	April 1996	March 1997 <sup>p</sup>	April 1997 <sup>p</sup>	April 1996 to April 1997	March 1997 to April 1997
	% change				
<b>New motor vehicles</b>	<b>90,638</b>	<b>118,582</b>	<b>112,723</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>- 4.9</b>
Passenger cars	49,469	64,827	60,814	22.9	- 6.2
North American <sup>1</sup>	42,448	57,269	52,412	23.5	- 8.5
Imports	7,021	7,558	8,402	19.7	11.2
Big Three automakers	31,175	41,189	36,080	15.7	- 12.4
Other automakers	18,294	23,638	24,734	35.2	4.6
Trucks, vans and buses	41,169	53,755	51,909	26.1	- 3.4

<sup>r</sup> Revised figures.

<sup>p</sup> Preliminary figures.

1. Manufactured or assembled in Canada, the United States or Mexico.

## New housing prices continue to rise

The New Housing Price Index (1986=100) showed an increase of 0.8% in April 1997 compared with April 1996. This is the largest positive annual change since February 1994.

Between March 1997 and April 1997, the index increased 0.2%—its sixth consecutive monthly advance.

Favourable interest rates and higher consumer confidence have contributed to the improvement in housing markets in recent months and they continued to do so in April.

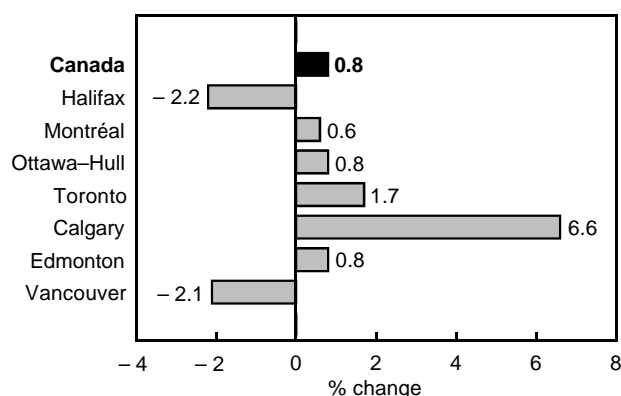
*Available on CANSIM: matrix 2032.*

The second quarter issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79) will be available in September. For further information, contact Paul-Roméo Danis (613-951-3350; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: danipau@statcan.ca), Prices Division.

### Note to readers

On April 1, 1997, the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) came into effect in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The New Housing Price Index, which is a contractors' selling price index, showed monthly declines in all cities surveyed in these provinces. It would appear that a majority of sample builders have not yet fully reflected the HST's impact on the prices of new houses.

New housing price indexes, April 1996 to April 1997



## Canada's net liability to foreigners declines

Canada's net liability to foreigners—foreign investments in Canada minus Canadian investments abroad—has declined for the first time in almost 50 years. At the end of 1996, the nation's net foreign liability was \$333.1 billion, down 1.1% from the level of \$336.8 billion the year before. It was the first improvement since 1949.

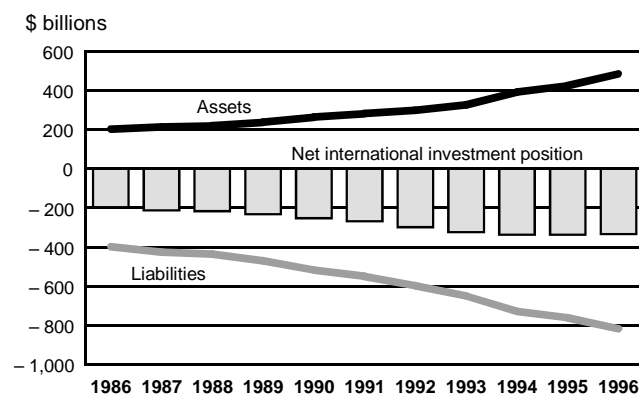
Canada's total liability to foreigners at the end of 1996 stood at \$818.2 billion, while the nation's total external assets were \$485.1 billion. As a share of gross domestic product, the net foreign liability declined to 42% last year from its peak of 45% in 1994. It hovered around 37% in the 1980s.

The decline in net foreign borrowing during 1996 resulted from fluctuations in the value of the Canadian dollar against foreign currencies and a slower pace of borrowing from abroad for the third consecutive year.

Bonds accounted for the biggest foreign investment in Canada by a wide margin. Foreigners held \$356.1 billion in Canadian bonds at the end of 1996, 44% of total foreign investment in Canada. That largely represented government debt. By comparison, Canadians held only \$21.3 billion worth of foreign bonds. Canadian holdings abroad were more diversified, with direct investment and portfolio stocks accounting for more than half of total assets.

American investors increased their share of Canada's net foreign liability to 53% in 1996, consolidating their position as

Canada's international investment position



Canada's largest net creditors. The U.S. share has increased for five straight years, after declining steadily to a low of 34% at the end of 1991. The European Union's share of Canada's net liability narrowed to 24% in 1996 while Japan's share held steady at 15%.

*Available on CANSIM: matrices 4180-4190 and 4194.*

*Canada's international investment position, 1926 to 1996* (67-202-XPB, \$52) is now available. For further information, contact Christian Lajule (613-951-2062), Balance of Payments Division.

## Domestic air fares down in 1996

The cost of flying between small cities in Canada fell 28.7% in the first six months of 1996 compared with the same period in 1995. It was the largest year-over-year decline in the cost of air travel in the history of Statistics Canada's air fare survey. The cost of flying between medium-sized cities fell 7.6%, while fares between the largest cities were down by 14.6%.

These lower fares coincided with the arrival of two new domestic airlines. At the end of February 1996, WestJet Airlines began discount services to seven cities in Western Canada, and in April 1996 Greyhound Air began to reserve seats for its new domestic services. Kelowna, Regina and Saskatoon—all small cities—received new scheduled services from WestJet or Greyhound. With the exception of Halifax, all of the large- and medium-sized cities received new services from one or both carriers.

The activity in the first six months of 1996 marked a sharp turnaround from the previous trend. Over the preceding seven years, the cost of flying between small cities in Canada had increased 12.0% a year.

By early 1995, air travellers were paying an average of 30.0 cents per kilometre for flights between small cities; however, in the first half of 1996, this cost plunged to only 21.4 cents per kilometre (–28.7%).

The drop in fares was accompanied by strong growth in the domestic air travel market. After 14 years of fairly steady decline, the number of domestic air passengers rose 19% in the first half of 1996 to 6.0 million—the highest level since 1990.

The total number of flights offered in the Western Triangle (Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver) by all airlines increased 28.3% in the first half of 1996 compared with the same period in 1995. In the seven cities newly served by WestJet, the number of flights was up 41.6% from a year earlier. WestJet accounted for a quarter of this increase. Air Canada and Canadian, as well as their affiliates and the major domestic charter carriers, all showed significant increases in the number of flights in Western Canada.

### Note to readers

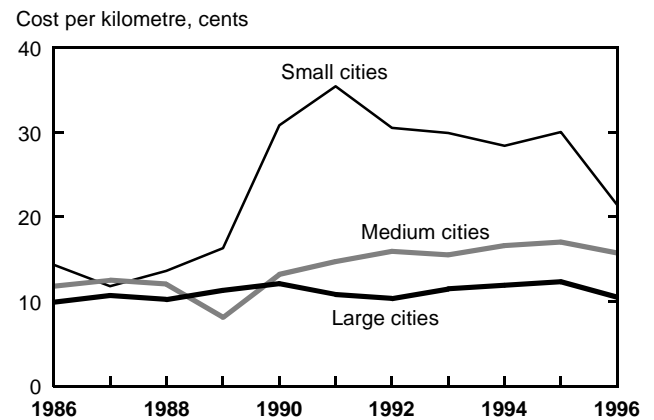
Canadian cities were placed into one of three categories:

**Small cities**, such as Kelowna, Saskatoon, Regina, Thunder Bay and St. John's, handled 0.5% to 2.0% of domestic scheduled passengers on major carriers within a year.

**Medium cities** handled 2.0% to 10.0% of domestic passengers. Montréal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Halifax and Edmonton fell into this category.

**Large cities** handled 10.0% or more of domestic scheduled passengers on major carriers within a year. In 1996, only three cities were considered large: Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary.

### Domestic scheduled flights



The June edition of the *Aviation: Service bulletin* (51-004-XPB, Vol. 29, no. 6, \$11/\$109) will be released shortly. For further information, contact Bradley Snider (819-997-6189), Aviation Statistics Centre.

## Job sharing—balancing work and family

About 171,000 individuals, or 8% of all part-time paid workers, shared a job with someone in 1995, according to the 1995 Survey of Work Arrangements. Compared with regular part-time employees, people who shared jobs were more likely to be women, to be college- or university-educated, to hold professional occupations and to have children at home.

In the 1970s, job sharing emerged as a way of offering part-time hours in career-oriented positions that normally require full-time work. Usually two people voluntarily share the responsibilities of one full-time job, which allows employers to keep valued employees who prefer to work part time.

Women held 72% of part-time jobs in 1995, but they occupied an even larger proportion of shared jobs: 84%. Almost 1 in 10 women working part time shared a job, compared with just 1 in 20 men who worked part time. More than half of job sharers were

### Note to readers

The 1995 Survey of Work Arrangements was conducted by Statistics Canada on behalf of Human Resources Development Canada as a supplement to the November 1995 Labour Force Survey. The survey offers first-time national data on job sharing.

aged 35 and over, compared with 40% of regular part-time workers. Half of job sharers had graduated from college or university, compared with only 37% of regular part-timers.

The original appeal of job sharing—allowing career people with children to better balance work and family—was still a major factor in 1995. For example, about 40% of job sharers worked as professionals, compared with 25% of regular part-timers. Also, half of job sharers had children under 25 at home, compared with 35% of regular part-timers. Teaching and nursing made up one-quarter of all job sharing occupations, compared with 14% of all other regular part-time work.

(continued on page 6)



### ... Job sharing—balancing work and family

In 1995, shared jobs were more likely to be permanent than were regular part-time jobs. Shared jobs were also more likely to be unionized than other part-time jobs. About 1 in 5 job sharers had worked in the job for over 10 years, compared with 1 in 10 regular part-timers. The average hourly pay was also better for job sharers (\$13.51 compared with \$10.96 for regular part-timers).

Benefits offered to job sharers were also considerably better than those offered to regular part-timers. In 1995, 45% of job

sharers had paid vacations, compared with 29% of regular part-timers. About 1 in 3 job sharers was entitled to a supplementary health care plan, paid sick leave, dental plan and private pension, compared with just 1 in 5 regular part-timers.

*The Summer 1997 issue of **Perspectives on labour and income** (75-001-XPE, \$18/\$58) is now available. For further information, contact Katherine Marshall (613-951-6890), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.*

## New from Statistics Canada

### Canadian economic observer

June 1997

The June issue of Statistics Canada's flagship publication for economic statistics, *Canadian economic observer*, analyses the current economic conditions, summarizes the major economic events that occurred in May, and features an article on provincial trends in gross domestic product. 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 June 1997 issue of **Canadian economic observer** (11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. For further information, contact Cyndi Bloskie (613-951-3634; Internet: ceo@statcan.ca), Current Economic Analysis Group.*

### Inter-corporate ownership

Second quarter 1997

Statistics Canada recently released *Inter-corporate ownership* on CD-ROM. This latest edition of the directory, which covers more than 70,000 corporations, shows who owns and controls what corporations in Canada. The data is presented in a user-friendly tiered format and shows the hierarchy of subsidiaries within each enterprise. The information is based on non-confidential returns filed under the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act and extensive research of public sources.

***Inter-corporate ownership** on CD-ROM (annual subscription with quarterly updates: \$3,000; single copy without updates: \$1,750) is now available. The 1996 directory of **Inter-corporate ownership** is also available in hard copy (61-517-XPB, \$350). To order, contact Ron Vanasse (613-951-3469; fax: 613-951-0318; Internet: vanaron@statcan.ca), Industrial Organization and Finance Division.*

### StatCan: CANSIM directory disc

June 1997

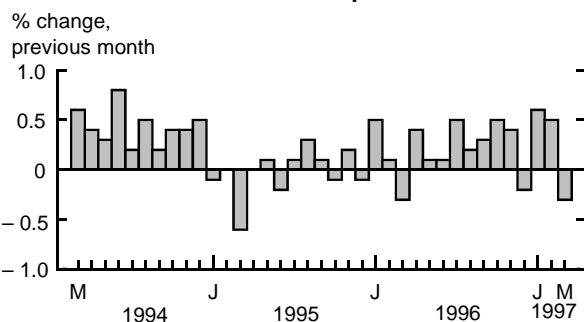
The *StatCan: CANSIM directory disc* on CD-ROM serves as a guide to the data contained in the CANSIM time series database. Online access to this database is available worldwide through a number of distributors.

The *StatCan: CANSIM directory disc* makes finding data easy. You can search by keyword or by topic. The disc also contains the Statistical Data Documentation System, a database of information about the surveys and statistical programs used at Statistics Canada. There is a glossary of terms and an instructional module called "About Statistics Canada Data," which contains additional information on the data and services available.

*The June 1997 edition of the **StatCan: CANSIM directory disc** (Canada: \$103; other countries: US\$103) is now available. An annual subscription includes four quarterly issues. For further information, contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.*

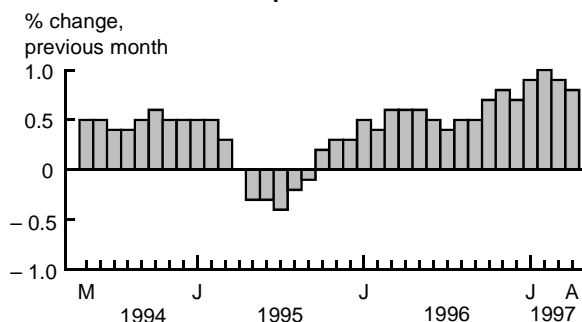
## Current trends

### Gross domestic product



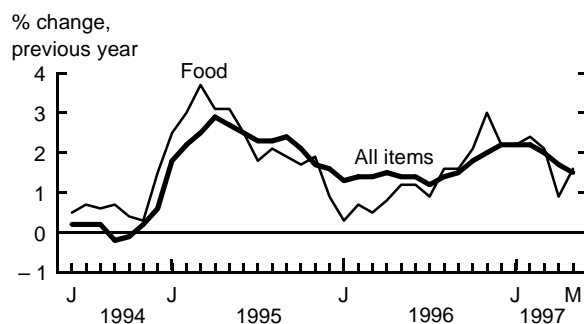
Real gross domestic product at factor cost decreased 0.3% between February and March.

### Composite Index



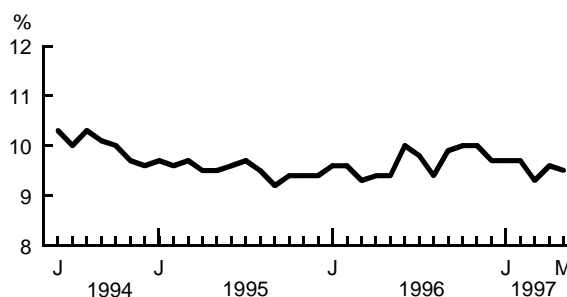
The Composite Index grew by 0.8% in April.

### Consumer Price Index



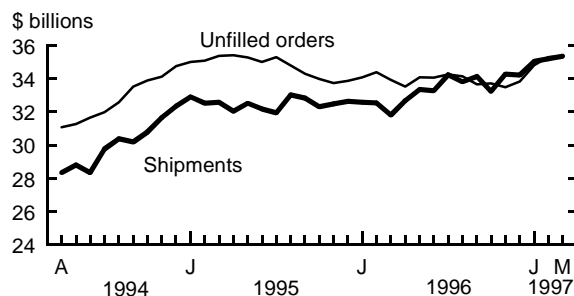
Consumers paid 1.5% more for goods and services in May 1997 than the year before. Food prices rose by 1.6%.

### Unemployment rate



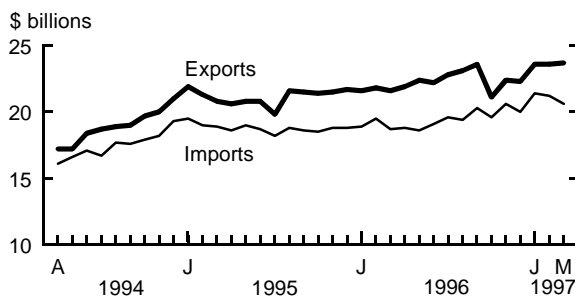
In May, the unemployment rate edged down to 9.5%.

### Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments rose 0.4% in March to \$35.3 billion. The level of unfilled orders increased 0.2% to \$35.4 billion.

### Merchandise trade



In March, the value of merchandise exports increased 0.4% from February to \$23.7 billion. Imports declined 2.7% to \$20.6 billion.

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

## Latest monthly statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
<b>GENERAL</b>				
Gross domestic product (\$ billion, 1986)	March	562.0	- 0.3%	3.1%
Composite Index (1981=100)	April	192.2	0.8%	9.1%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q1 1997	25.5	3.3%	10.5%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q1 1997	85.0	0.6†	2.9†
<b>DOMESTIC DEMAND</b>				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	March	18.9	- 0.8%	6.1%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	April*	112.7	- 4.9%	24.4%
<b>LABOUR</b>				
Employment (millions)	May	13.9	0.4%	1.7%
Unemployment rate (%)	May	9.5	- 0.1†	0.1†
Participation rate (%)	May	64.9	0.1†	0.2†
Labour income (\$ billion)	March	36.8	- 0.2%	4.1%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	March	594.68	- 0.3%	2.7%
<b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</b>				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	March	23.7	0.4%	9.5%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	March	20.6	2.7%	10.0%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	March	3.1	0.7	0.2
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>				
Shipments (\$ billion)	March	35.3	0.4%	11.1%
New orders (\$ billion)	March	35.4	- 0.2%	13.1%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	March	35.4	0.2%	4.2%
Inventory/shipments ratio	March	1.30	0.00	- 0.13
<b>PRICES</b>				
Consumer Price Index (1986=100)	May*	137.7	0.1%	1.5%
Industrial Product Price Index (1986=100)	April	130.7	0.5%	1.6%
Raw Materials Price Index (1986=100)	April	134.0	- 1.1%	- 2.6%
New Housing Price Index (1986=100)	April*	132.7	0.2%	0.8%

**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 June 13 to 19, 1997

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription	
			Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
<b>CULTURE, TOURISM AND THE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS</b> Touriscope: International travel: Advance information, Vol. 13, no. 4	June 1997	66-001-PPB	8/73	8/73
<b>CURRENT ECONOMIC ANALYSIS</b> Canadian economic observer	June 1997	11-010-XPB	23/227	23/227
<b>DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES</b> Department store sales and stocks New motor vehicle sales	April 1997 March 1997	63-002-XPB 63-007-XPB	17/165 17/165	17/165 17/165
<b>INDUSTRY MEASURES AND ANALYSIS</b> Gross domestic product by industry Industrial monitor on CD-ROM	March 1997 June 1997	15-001-XPB 15F0015XCB	15/145 258/995	15/145 258/995
<b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</b> Exports by commodity, Vol. 54, no. 3 Microfiche version Paper version	March 1997 March 1997	65-004-XMB 65-004-XPB	37/361 78/773	37/361 78/773
<b>LABOUR DIVISION</b> Employment, earnings and hours	March 1997	72-002-XPB	32/320	32/320
<b>MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY</b> Particleboard, oriented strandboard and fibreboard, Vol. 33, no. 4	April 1997	36-003-XPB	7/62	7/62
<b>PRICES</b> Consumer Price Index Farm Input Price Index	May 1997 Q1 1997	62-001-XPB 62-004-XPB	11/103 25/83	11/103 25/83

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