



Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, July 4, 1997

OVERVIEW

◆ Economic situation improves

Economic activity rose firmly in April when gross domestic product at factor cost advanced.

◆ Growth in Composite Index unchanged

The growth of the Composite Index was unchanged in May, after a slight downward revision to April's gain.

◆ Weekly earnings rise in April

After three months of little change, employees' average weekly earnings rose in April.

◆ Raw material prices increase

In May, manufacturers paid more for raw materials (particularly crude oil) than they did in April.

◆ Little change in industrial product prices

Canadian manufacturers' prices showed little overall change in May. If the effects of the Canada-U.S. exchange rate movements were removed, industrial products would have registered a monthly increase.

◆ Ports handle record level of international cargo

Canada's major ports handled a record level of international cargo in 1996. But total overall tonnage declined as domestic shipments continued to slide.

Economic situation improves

Economic activity rose firmly in April, when gross domestic product (GDP) at factor cost increased 0.8%. Despite a drop in March, GDP grew 0.5% a month on average from January through April, compared with a monthly pace of 0.2% in 1996.

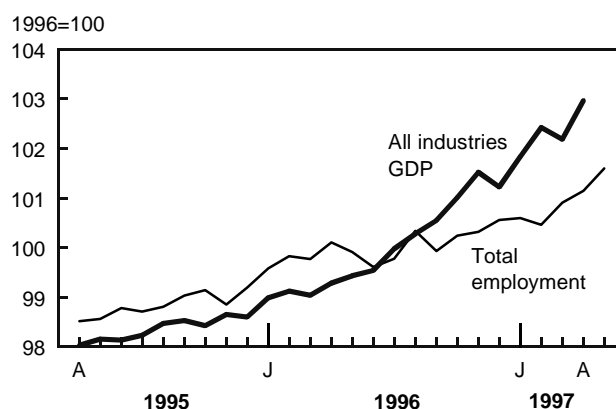
In April, retailers, wholesalers, and manufacturers—all of whom suffered losses in March—accounted for about 60% of the gain in production. Financial and related services and the mining sector also contributed significantly to the advance. Elsewhere, production rose in all major industry groups except government services and utility services.

Growth in retail sales resumed in April (+1.1%), with sales of automotive products leading the gain. Increased sales of miscellaneous semi-durable goods (books, hardware and toys, for example) and miscellaneous durable goods (such as sporting goods, jewellery and cameras) were also sizeable. Wholesaling activity rebounded (+1.7%) in April. Sales of motor vehicles and parts, beverages, drug and tobacco products, as well as apparel and household goods all increased, and accounted for a large portion of the overall gain. Sales of lumber and building materials continued to advance, but sales of machinery and equipment eased.

Manufacturing production rose 1.5% in April, more than offsetting March's decline. Manufacturers' shipments increased, mainly in response to domestic demand, while shipments abroad

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Economic activity



... Economic situation improves

sagged in March and April. While output increased in 18 of the 21 major industry groups, a 1.9% gain in production of durable goods accounted for over 70% of the advance. Motor vehicle assembly rose 2.4%, and manufacturers of motor vehicle parts raised output 1.5%. Output also increased for fabricated metallic products, primary metals, and wood products.

Financial and related services rose 0.7% in April, as housing resales picked up sharply. Activity in banks and other deposit institutions continued to advance at a good pace. Output in the mining sector increased 2.1%, reflecting a jump in drilling activity. Declines in the production of crude oil, non-ferrous metals and gold moderated the overall gain in mining.

Note to readers

The gross domestic product (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. Estimates are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4670–4674.

*The April 1997 issue of **Gross domestic product by industry** (15-001-XPB, \$15/\$145) will be released in July. For further information, contact Michel Girard (613-951-9145), Industry Measures and Analysis Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 7.)*

Growth in Composite Index unchanged

The growth of the Composite Index was unchanged in May, after a slight downward revision to April's gain. Eight of the index's ten components advanced. The housing index recorded the only decline (–0.3%), while the shipments-to-inventories ratio was unchanged in May. It seems that the economy is set for continued steady growth, led by business spending.

In business services, employment picked up sharply following a marked upturn in first quarter profits that sparked the largest gain in business investment since early 1994. Business spending has accelerated steadily so far this year.

After posting rapid gains early in 1997, household demand eased in May. Housing recorded its first drop since January 1996, while spending on durable goods slowed. This reflects the mixed

bag of rising confidence and employment gains along with weak incomes and low savings.

The stock market shot up in May, surpassing its previous record high set in February. The money supply continued to trend upwards, expanding by 1.2%.

The U.S. leading indicator also continued to grow steadily in May. Manufacturing remained strong, led by a rebound in orders for consumer goods. Consumer confidence remained high as the unemployment rate hit a 24-year low.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 191.

*For further information on the economy, see the June issue of **Canadian economic observer** (11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227), now available. For further information, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627), Current Economic Analysis Group. (See also "Current trends" on page 7.)*

Weekly earnings rise in April

In April, employees' average weekly earnings rose 0.6%, or \$3.40, following three months of little change. This growth in earnings was particularly notable in logging and forestry services, construction, wholesale trade, and manufacturing. Compared with April 1996, employees' weekly earnings grew by 4.0%.

Average weekly earnings, April 1997
Seasonally adjusted

	Industrial aggregate \$	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	599.88	0.6	4.0
Newfoundland	526.12	– 0.1	0.9
Prince Edward Island	489.51	2.5	1.5
Nova Scotia	498.97	– 0.4	2.6
New Brunswick	519.50	0.3	1.9
Quebec	564.01	0.6	2.6
Ontario	639.38	0.3	3.8
Manitoba	528.27	1.1	3.4
Saskatchewan	537.71	1.0	10.0
Alberta	612.99	1.7	10.7
British Columbia	610.30	0.1	2.3
Yukon	726.37	1.9	4.7
Northwest Territories	718.50	– 1.2	– 0.6

Average hours worked per week for employees paid by the hour reached a record 31.3 hours in April. Miscellaneous services (which includes amusement, recreation, personal and household services) and wholesale trade recorded the most noticeable increases in hours of work. Manufacturers maintained their peak of 39.1 hours per week.

The number of employees on business payrolls increased by 7,000, virtually unchanged from March. Increased employment in both accommodation, food and beverage services and manufacturing was partly offset by a decline in construction.

Since the beginning of the year, employment gains have been registered mainly in manufacturing, accommodation, food and beverage services, and wholesale and retail trade. Over the same period, employment in education, public administration, and construction has declined.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4285–4466, 9438–9452, 9639–9664 and 9899–9911.

*Also see the monthly publication **Employment, earnings and hours** (72-002-XPB, \$32/\$320) and the historical publication **Annual estimates of employment, earnings and hours, 1983–1995** (diskette: 72F0002XDE, \$120). For further information, contact Stephen Johnson (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; Internet: labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.*

Raw material prices increase

The Raw Materials Price Index stood at 137.3 in May (1986=100), up from 134.0 in April. If the mineral fuels category—90% of which is crude oil—were excluded, raw material prices would have increased 1.7%.

Compared with 12 months earlier, raw material prices were down 0.7%. Lower prices for vegetable products, primarily grains (–34%), and non-ferrous metals and mineral fuels were partly offset by higher prices for animals and animal products and wood. Again, if mineral fuels were excluded, raw material prices would be down 0.4% compared with May 1996.

The major contributors to the higher monthly prices were crude oil, copper, aluminum materials, logs, pulpwood and hogs. Lower prices for rubber, iron ore, and radioactive and lead concentrates partly diminished the overall monthly increase.

Crude oil prices were up 4.8%, partly due to concern over gasoline stockpiles in the United States, recent tensions in the Middle East, and expectations for increased global demand.

Non-ferrous metal prices were up 3.6% in May, but remained 7.2% lower than in May 1996. Higher monthly prices for copper, aluminum materials, zinc concentrates and nickel were somewhat offset by lower prices for radioactive and lead concentrates.

Wood prices increased 1.8% in May due to higher prices for logs and pulpwood. Compared with 12 months earlier, wood prices were up 4.2% as higher prices for logs were partly offset by lower pulpwood prices.

In the animals and animal products group, prices edged up 0.9% in May compared with April. Higher prices for hogs (+3.0%) were partly offset by lower prices for furs, hides and skins (–2.1%). Compared with May 1996, prices were up 5.0% for animals and animal products. Higher prices for cattle for slaughter and unprocessed whole milk were somewhat offset by lower prices for undressed ranch mink skins and hunting and trapping products.

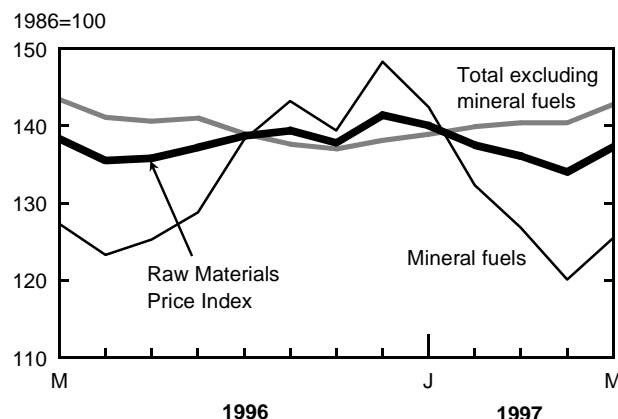
Vegetable product prices were up 1.3% in May, but down 11.0% compared with the same period in 1996. Higher prices for green coffee and wheat were partly offset by lower prices for rubber, unrefined sugar, corn and canola.

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.

In July 1997, Statistics Canada will be converting its economic series to 1992=100 as its time reference year. The new series will be on different CANSIM matrices and will have different databank numbers.

Raw material prices



There were some other notable monthly price changes for raw materials in May. Platinum increased due to short supply, while gold rose due to increased demand for jewellery and the Busang-Bre-X news. Soybeans were down partly due to the large Brazilian crop and the good planting progress in the United States. Iron and steel scrap prices were also up.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 2009.

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

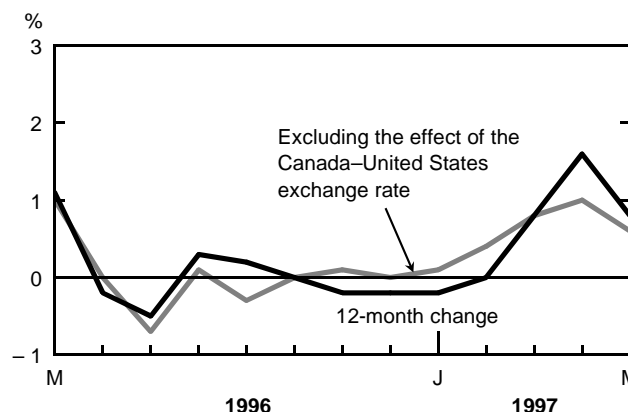
Little change in industrial product prices

The Industrial Product Price Index stood at 130.7 in May (1986=100), the same level recorded in the previous month.

If the effects of the Canada–U.S. dollar exchange rate movements on the monthly and the 12-month changes in industrial prices were removed, Canada would have seen a 0.3% increase in manufacturing prices in May and a 12-month price change of 0.6%.

The decline in the value of the U.S. dollar against the Canadian dollar reduced the value in Canadian dollars of all export prices quoted in U.S. currency. Consequently, the month-to-month change in industrial prices was reduced from 0.3% to 0.0%. The impact was most noticeable for motor vehicles, pulp, paper and wood products. Producers frequently quote export prices for these items in U.S. dollars.

Monthly change in industrial prices



(continued on page 4)

... Little change in industrial product prices

The most important monthly price declines were for motor vehicles (–1.0%) and softwood lumber (–1.7%). Wood product prices were down 0.8% overall, in large part due to the effect of the decline in the value of the U.S. dollar.

Canadian pulp prices rose (+3.5%) for a second consecutive month in May, to stand 8.3% higher than a year earlier. An initial recovery in Canadian pulp prices, after their collapse in late 1995 and early 1996, failed as winter began. Overall prices only began to recover again in April.

Canadian manufacturers' prices for pork jumped 4.0% in May, after a 9.0% increase in April. North American pork prices are rising along with hog prices. The upward pressure on pork results in part from the devastation of the pork industry in Taiwan, which is forcing Japan to find new sources of supply.

As prices for Canadian manufacturers continue to show little change overall, Canadian economic conditions remain encouraging. In May, total employment rose for a third consecutive month. Manufacturing employment continued to hold its own for the second consecutive month following its strong gain in March. In April, there were increases in the value of manufacturing shipments together with sales in both the retail and wholesale sectors. Exports were also up, though only marginally. In the United States, Canada's major trading partner, industrial production rose 0.4% in May as manufacturing expanded by 0.5%. The unemployment rate also continued to fall, dropping to 4.8%.

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%.

In July 1997, Statistics Canada will be converting its economic series to 1992=100 as its time reference year. The new series will be on different CANSIM matrices and will have different databank numbers.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2000–2008.

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

Ports handle record level of international cargo

In 1996, Canada's 200 major ports again handled a record level of international cargo. However, as domestic shipments continued their 10-year slide, total overall tonnage declined 0.7%.

Total international cargo reached 260.3 million tonnes, up 0.2% over 1995. International unloadings of crude petroleum, which rose 3.1% to 26.5 million tonnes, and substantial increases in coal and iron ore shipments were major factors behind the gain. At the same time, total domestic cargo shipments fell 3.1% to 97.7 million tonnes in 1996. (Cargo that is shipped from one Canadian port to another and is handled twice by the port system is considered domestic cargo.) Because of the drop in domestic cargo, overall port activity fell slightly (–0.7%) to 357.9 million tonnes.

Summary of international and domestic shipping statistics, 1994 to 1996

	1994	1995	1996	1994 to 1995	1995 to 1996
	millions of tonnes			% change	
Total	351.3	360.5	357.9	2.6	–0.7
January to December:					
International	246.9	259.7	260.3	5.2	0.2
Unloaded	76.9	83.2	86.0	8.1	3.3
Loaded	170.0	176.5	174.3	3.8	–1.3
Domestic	104.4	100.7	97.7	–3.5	–3.1

Note to readers

Data for international cargo shipments are from Revenue Canada. Data for domestic shipments are provided by shipping companies.

Containerized cargo is high-value freight that is carried in a box and sent from door to door without the contents being handled. Containers can easily be transferred from ships to trucks or trains for inland distribution. Transshipments are foreign cargoes handled at Canadian ports en route to or from a third country.

Only half of Canada's top 10 ports posted increases in total cargo in 1996: Vancouver, Saint John, Montréal, Halifax and Hamilton. And only two—Port-Cartier and Halifax—had increases in domestic shipments. Port Hawkesbury slipped off the top 10 list into 11th place in the wake of declines in domestic cargo and international shipments.

The port of Vancouver consolidated its position as the nation's busiest harbour by handling 71.3 million tonnes of cargo in 1996 (+2.5%). The overall increase for Vancouver occurred despite a 25.2% decline in domestic cargo. Vancouver's overall increase in tonnage was due mainly to higher international shipments of coal and sulfur. More than one-quarter of Canada's entire international marine shipments went through Vancouver in 1996.

The port of Montréal shipped 19.2 million tonnes of cargo in 1996 (+3.3%), due to a record 7.7 million tonnes of international containerized cargo handled (+10.5%). Montréal remained the premier container port in Canada, handling 45.4% of the nation's international containerized cargo compared with 43.9% in 1995.

(continued on page 5)

... Ports handle record level of international cargo

Atlantic Canada's three major ports—Saint John, Halifax and Port Hawkesbury—had mixed records in 1996. Total cargo handled by Saint John rose 9.8%, as international shipments rose substantially. Halifax reported increases in domestic and international shipments, which led to an overall 1.8% increase of tonnage. Port Hawkesbury's overall decline (–30.3%) was caused mainly by the 38.7% drop in transshipments of crude petroleum.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 145 and 146.

For further information, contact Yves Gauthier (613-951-0579; fax: 613-951-0579; Internet: gautyve@statcan.ca), Transportation Division.

New from Statistics Canada



Canada's international transactions in services 1961 to 1996

The publication *Canada's international transactions in services, 1961 to 1996* contains many breakouts updated to 1996 (the latest available year had been 1994), a dozen new breakouts added to commercial services and all data revised historically according to the international reporting standards introduced last year.

The latest figures show that Canadian services exporters raised their sales abroad in 1996 by 8% to \$39 billion; services imports grew more slowly, by 5%, but remained larger at \$49 billion.

Canada's international transactions in services, 1961 to 1996 (67-203-XPB, \$37) is now available. For further information, contact Hugh Henderson (613-951-9049; Internet: hendhug@statcan.ca), Balance of Payments Division.

Heart disease and stroke in Canada 1997

Heart disease and stroke in Canada outlines the patterns of risk factors, mortality and disability attributable to cardiovascular disease, as well as its impact on the health care system.

This document is a collaborative effort of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (HSFC), the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control, Health Canada and Statistics Canada, and was prepared by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan Epidemiology Unit at the University of Saskatchewan.

Included in this fourth edition is a focus section on "Stroke in Canada: Strategies," as well as the current trends in stroke mortality and disability.

For more information, contact the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (613-241-4361), or Cyril Nair (613-951-8387), Health Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

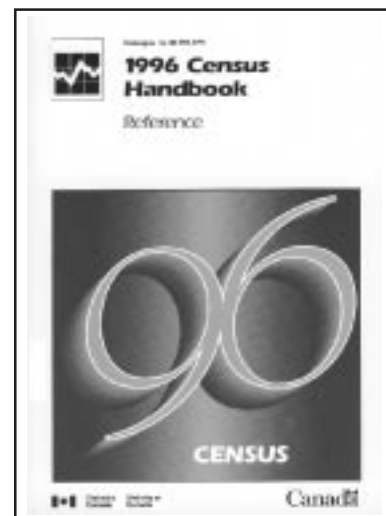
New from Statistics Canada

1996 Census Handbook

The *1996 Census handbook* gives readers a non-technical look at many issues concerning the census. These include: an overview of the census process from determining the content of the questionnaire to distributing the census results; a brief history of census-taking in Canada, including the introduction of self-enumeration and sampling; discussions of data quality, confidentiality, and use of census data; Census of Agriculture activities, products and services; and modifications since the 1991 Census.

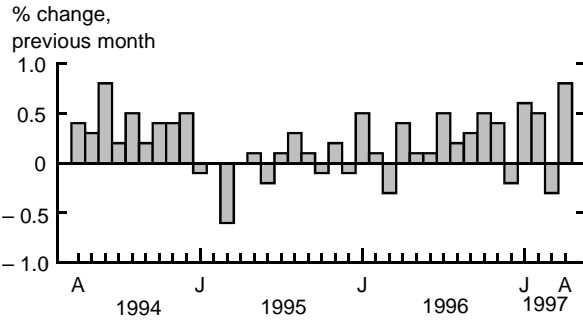
Review exercises and a copy of the 1996 long questionnaire complete the package.

*For further information, or to order your copy of the **1996 Census Handbook** (92-352-XPE, \$25), contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.*



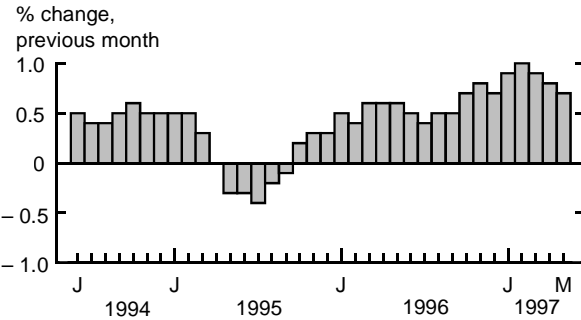
Current trends

Gross domestic product



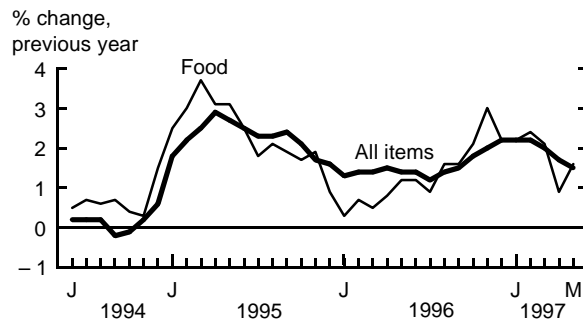
Real gross domestic product at factor cost advanced 0.8% between March and April.

Composite Index



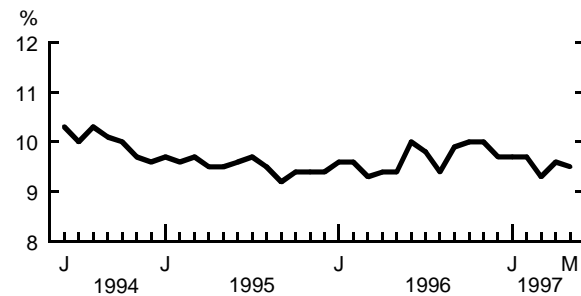
The Composite Index grew by 0.7% in May.

Consumer Price Index



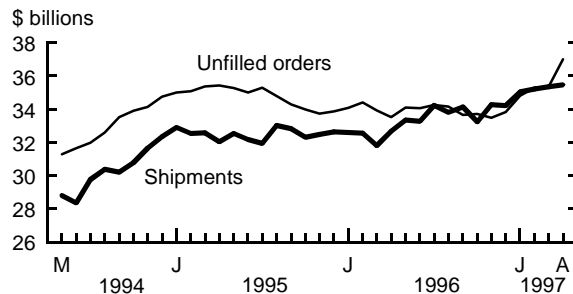
Consumers paid 1.5% more for goods and services in May 1997 than the year before. Food prices rose by 1.6%.

Unemployment rate



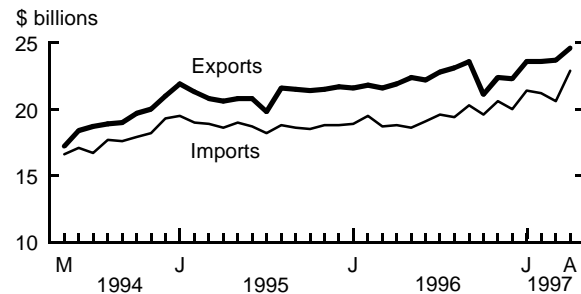
In May, the unemployment rate edged down to 9.5%.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments rose 0.7% in April to \$35.5 billion. The level of unfilled orders increased 4.4% to \$37.0 billion.

Merchandise trade



In April, the value of merchandise exports increased 0.3% from March to \$24.6 billion. Imports surged 4.3% to a record \$22.9 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)	April*	567.4	0.8%	3.7%
Composite Index (1981=100)	May*	193.3	0.7%	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†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	April	19.1	1.1%	7.2%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	April	112.7	- 4.9%	24.4%
LABOUR				
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 (\$)	April*	599.88	0.6%	4.0%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	April	24.6	0.3%	6.8%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	April	22.9	4.3%	18.2%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	April	1.7	- 0.9	- 1.9
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	April	35.5	0.7%	8.6%
New orders (\$ billion)	April	37.0	4.9%	14.8%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	April	37.0	4.4%	10.4%
Inventory/shipments ratio	April	1.29	0.00	- 0.10
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1986=100)	May	137.7	0.1%	1.5%
Industrial Product Price Index (1986=100)	May*	130.7	0.0%	0.8%
Raw Materials Price Index (1986=100)	May*	137.3	2.5%	- 0.7%
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 27 to July 3, 1997

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription	
			Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
AGRICULTURE				
Field reporting series no. 4: Preliminary estimates of principal field crop areas, Canada	1997	22-002-XPB	15/88	15/88
BALANCE OF PAYMENTS				
Canada's international transactions in services	1991 to 1996	67-203-XPB	37	37
CENSUS OPERATIONS DIVISION				
1996 Census handbook, Reference		92-352-XPE	25	25
DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES				
Retail trade	April 1997	63-005-XPB	21/206	21/206
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY				
Asphalt roofing	May 1997	45-001-XPB	7/62	7/62
Coal and coke statistics	April 1997	45-002-XPB	12/114	12/114
Energy statistics handbook, Electronic version	June 1997	57-601-XDE	284	284
Energy statistics handbook, Paper version	June 1997	57-601-UPB	387	387
Gas utilities	March 1997	55-002-XPB	17/165	17/165
Sawmills and planing mills, Vol. 51, no. 4	April 1997	35-003-XPB	12/114	12/114
NATIONAL ACCOUNTS AND ENVIRONMENT				
National tourism indicators—historical estimates	1987-1996	13-220-XPB	44	44
National tourism indicators—quarterly estimates	Q1 1997	13-009-XPB	21/70	21/70
PRICES				
Average prices of selected farm inputs, Vol. 5, no. 3	May 1997	62-012-XPB	11/50	11/50
TRANSPORTATION				
Aviation, Service Bulletin, Aviation Statistics Centre	Monthly	51-004-XPB	11/109	11/109

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Local calls: (306) 780-5405
Toll free: 1 800 263-1136
Fax: (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: (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: (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: (604) 666-4863

Telecommunications Device for the Hearing Impaired

Toll free: 1 800 363-7629