



Infommat

A Weekly Review

Friday, September 26, 1997

OVERVIEW

◆ Exports rebound, imports hit record level

Automotive exports and industrial goods pushed exports up in July. Imports also rose, following a slight decline in the second quarter.

◆ Retail sales advance in July

Retail sales increased in July, boosted by the automotive sector. Growth was widespread in other sectors as well.

◆ Wholesale trade strong

Sales by wholesalers increased in July, marking another strong month and continuing the upward trend that began in early 1996.

◆ Inflation remains stable

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, remained stable in August. The 12-month change in the index was the same as that recorded in June and July.

◆ Steady growth in Composite Index

The Composite Index continued to grow in August, as increases were posted for 8 of its 10 components.

◆ Weekly earnings recover in July

Employees' average weekly earnings rose in July, more than offsetting the decline recorded in June.

◆ Tourism spending increases slightly

Spending on tourism increased slightly in the second quarter compared with the same period of last year. Foreign visitors spent less, but Canadians more than compensated for this decrease by spending more.

Exports rebound, imports hit record level

In July, automotive products and industrial goods pushed exports up 2.8% to a record \$25.1 billion. This increase marked a rebound from June's sharp declines. Imports also reached a record level, rising 5.2% to \$23.4 billion. Increased imports of machinery and equipment, energy products, industrial goods, agricultural and fishing products and forestry products were behind the gain.

The trade balance was at its lowest level since August 1994: \$1.7 billion. Most of the decline can be attributed to strong import growth in goods related to business investment and falling energy exports.

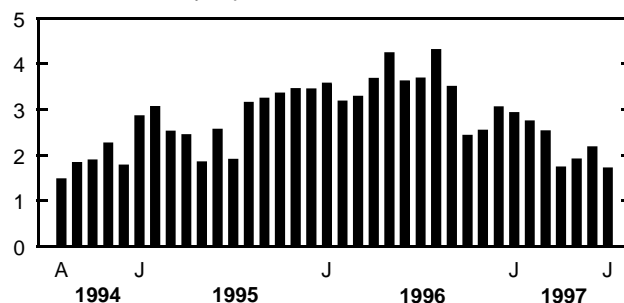
After declining 6.0% in June, automotive exports jumped 12.9% in July, with exports of passenger vehicles and motor vehicle parts contributing to the gain. Industrial goods rose 6.0%, as metal and alloys and metal ores showed large gains.

Exports of forestry products declined 3.1% in July, mostly due to a decrease in lumber exports. After increasing in June, exports of energy products fell 6.2%, dragged down by crude petroleum and petroleum and coal products.

(continued on page 2)

Trade balance

\$ billions, seasonally adjusted



... Exports rebound, imports hit record level

After a small decline in June, machinery and equipment imports jumped 9.0% in July. Imports of all major types of machinery and equipment increased, particularly aircraft and other transportation equipment (+22.6%) and industrial and agricultural machinery (+14.4%). Energy imports rose significantly (+20.7%) for the second consecutive month. Imports of automotive products posted a modest gain of 1.4%, as an increase in motor vehicle parts was partly offset by a decline in both passenger cars and trucks and other motor vehicle imports.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 3611–3616, 3618–3629, 3651, 3685–3713, 3718–3720 and 3887–3913.

The July 1997 issue of Canadian international merchandise trade (65-001-XPB, \$19/\$188) is now available. Current account

Note to readers

Merchandise trade is one component of the current account of Canada's balance of payments, which also includes trade in services. In the second quarter of 1997, the overall merchandise trade surplus of \$5.4 billion contrasted with a current account deficit of \$3.2 billion.

data are available on a quarterly basis in Canada's balance of international payments (67-001-XPB, \$38/\$124). For further information, contact Suzie Carpentier (613-951-9647; 1 800 294-5583), International Trade Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 6.)

Retail sales advance in July

Retail sales advanced 1.3% to \$19.5 billion in July, more than offsetting the 0.4% decline registered in June. The automotive sector accounted for over four-fifths of the increase in sales. On an annual basis, sales were 8.0% higher than the same month in 1996—the largest year-over-year gain since June 1994.

Retail and wholesale trade, July 1997^p
Seasonally adjusted

	Retail sales		Wholesale sales	
	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month
Canada	19,506	1.3	24,142	2.1
Newfoundland	314	0.8	196	0.7
Prince Edward Island	90	5.7	55	9.0
Nova Scotia	618	4.1	504	- 5.2
New Brunswick	446	- 2.4	315	3.7
Quebec	4,718	1.2	5,035	2.1
Ontario	7,036	1.3	10,650	2.2
Manitoba	692	- 3.0	923	- 1.2
Saskatchewan	658	1.2	914	- 1.9
Alberta	2,161	0.6	2,617	3.4
British Columbia	2,706	3.1	2,908	3.8
Yukon	25	1.2	13	2.7
Northwest Territories	42	- 0.9	14	3.5

^p Preliminary figures.

Following a decline in June, the automotive sector rebounded sharply in July (+3.0%). Most of the increase was due to rising sales by motor and recreational vehicle dealers (+3.7%). Automotive parts, accessories and services stores posted a 4.6% gain in July. Gasoline service station sales declined for the third consecutive month (-1.0%).

Widespread growth was seen in other sectors in July. Stores selling department store type merchandise (+0.9%), drug stores (+2.2%), furniture stores (+0.5%) and stores selling more specialized goods (+0.7%) all reported higher sales. Department store sales led the 0.7% advance in general merchandise stores. These increases more than offset the declines in clothing and food store sales (both - 0.4%).

Retailers in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia reported the largest sales increases in July. Both of these provinces, along with Newfoundland, also recorded large year-over-year increases in retail sales. The low value of the Canadian dollar and attractions such as the 500th anniversary of the landing of John Cabot and the opening of the Confederation Bridge may have boosted the number of tourists in these provinces.

According to initial estimates, the number of new motor vehicles sold in August increased, the number of employees in retail trade declined by 0.9% compared with July, and the number of housing starts rose 2.3% compared with the same period in 1996.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2299, 2398–2417 and 2420.

The July 1997 issue of Retail trade (63-005-XPB, \$21/\$206) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Louise G  n  reux (613-951-3549), Distributive Trades Division.

Wholesale trade strong

Total sales by wholesalers increased 2.1% in July to reach \$24.1 billion. This marked another strong month for wholesalers and continued the upward trend that began in early 1996. Since January 1996, total sales have increased by 20.4%.

In July, total sales were up in 9 of the 11 trade groups. Wholesalers of beverage, drug and tobacco products, as well as wholesalers of metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment, registered the largest increases.

Note to readers

Wholesalers also sell a certain proportion of their products directly to household consumers. Half of the sales made directly to households come from building materials (40%) and computers and packaged software (10%). Traditionally, wholesale sales in these two sectors were destined to non-household consumers. However, since the arrival of personal computers and warehouse-type building supply stores, sales to households have been increasing. Sales to households are estimated to be about \$1 billion a month, which represents approximately 4% of total wholesale sales.

(continued on page 3)

... Wholesale trade strong

Wholesalers of beverage, drug and tobacco products reported a 7.2% increase in sales for July. Some of that strength may be linked to larger shipments of tobacco products by manufacturers in the last two months. Sales of metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment increased by 6.8% in July, due to the high level of activity in the housing sector and strong exports of metals and alloys. Wholesale sales of lumber and building materials were also affected by the good performance of the housing sector.

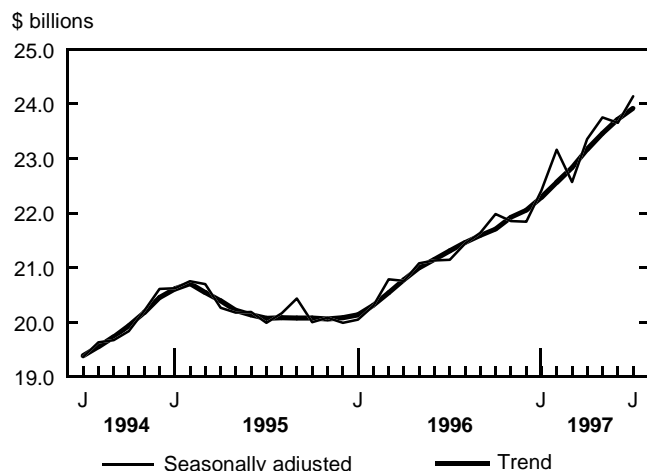
Sales of motor vehicles and parts were up 3.1% in July, partially reflecting a 12.9% advance in exports of automotive products and a 3.3% increase in the number of new motor vehicles sold.

Wholesalers increased their inventories by 0.8% in July to \$33.9 billion. Despite this increase, the inventories-to-sales ratio dropped for a second time this year to the historic low of 1.40. To remain competitive, wholesalers prefer to keep the ratio as low as possible to reduce their storage expenses.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 59, 61, 648 and 649.

The July 1997 issue of **Wholesale trade** (63-008-XPB, \$19/\$186) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541) or Jacques Dorion (613-951-3538), Distributive Trades Division.

Wholesale sales



Inflation remains stable

In August, consumers paid an average of 1.8% more than they did a year earlier for the goods and services included in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket. This same annual increase was also recorded in June and July.

Compared with August of last year, consumers paid more for transportation; in particular, the prices of gasoline, vehicle insurance, new vehicles and air fares all rose. They also paid more for food, clothing, university tuition, cigarettes, and telephone

services. Homeowners who renewed mortgage loans benefitted from lower interest rates, and consumers who bought computer equipment paid less than they would have a year earlier.

Between July and August, the CPI edged up 0.1%. Consumers paid more for gasoline, clothing, footwear and alcoholic beverages purchased from stores, but they paid less for shelter and food purchased from stores.

Gasoline prices rose 4.8% in August, with notable increases in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia. In the rest of the country, gasoline prices either fell or remained essentially unchanged. Clothing and footwear prices advanced 2.1%, and prices of alcoholic beverages rose by an average of 0.7%. Shelter charges (– 0.1%) and the cost of food purchased from grocery stores (–1.0%) both declined in August.

Between August 1996 and August 1997, increases in provincial CPIs ranged from 1.1% in British Columbia to 2.3% in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Monthly changes in provincial CPIs varied from declines of 0.1% in Newfoundland, Manitoba and Saskatchewan to an increase of 0.4% in Nova Scotia.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 7440–7454 and 7477 and 7478.

The August 1997 issue of the **Consumer Price Index** (62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. For further information, contact Paul-Roméo Danis (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-2848; Internet: danipau@statcan.ca), Prices Division. (See also “Current trends” on page 6.)

Consumer Price Index, August 1997

% change, previous year, not seasonally adjusted

	All-items	Food	Energy	Housing	Transportation
Canada	1.8	1.7	4.4	0.3	4.1
Newfoundland	2.3	0.4	12.3	3.7	5.7
Prince Edward Island	1.4	0.2	1.6	0.0	1.8
Nova Scotia	2.3	1.3	10.9	1.8	5.2
New Brunswick	1.8	0.3	10.8	3.8	2.5
Quebec	1.7	2.3	4.8	0.0	3.2
Ontario	2.2	0.7	3.9	0.3	6.4
Manitoba	1.8	0.7	2.0	1.2	2.8
Saskatchewan	1.2	0.9	1.9	1.7	1.6
Alberta	1.8	3.4	3.1	0.8	2.0
British Columbia	1.1	3.3	2.5	– 1.2	1.8
Whitehorse	2.2	5.2	6.2	1.4	4.0
Yellowknife	0.3	– 1.3	– 0.1	– 1.3	5.0

Steady growth in Composite Index

The Composite Index maintained its steady rate of growth in August, rising 0.6%. Strong investment and consumer spending pushed up 8 of the index's 10 components.

Employment in services continued to rise, as the demand from firms returned to the peak rates seen this spring. The marked improvement in the labour market so far in the third quarter helped trigger solid gains in durable goods sales, along with a recovery in housing starts.

The strike at Inco and temporary auto parts supply problems slowed new orders and contributed to the first drop in the ratio of stocks to shipments in six months. The average workweek

continued to be extended, which bodes well for resumed growth in manufacturing output.

The Toronto stock market index slumped in August. Energy stocks were not affected by this correction, however, and have led the turnaround so far in September.

The U.S. leading indicator continued to grow overall, and in most of its components. The growth was led by a 20-year low in unemployment insurance demands.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 191.

For more information on the economy, the September 1997 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. For further information, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627), Current Economic Analysis Group. (See also "Current trends" on page 6.)

Weekly earnings recover in July

Employees' average weekly earnings increased 0.9%, or \$5.58, in July. This gain more than offset the decline reported in June. Construction, logging, forestry services, real estate operators and insurance agencies, and mining, quarrying and oil wells posted the most significant increases.

Average weekly earnings, July 1997
Seasonally adjusted

	Industrial aggregate, \$	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	603.69	0.9	2.6
Newfoundland	542.52	0.5	0.8
Prince Edward Island	477.69	-0.7	-5.0
Nova Scotia	513.54	0.9	3.1
New Brunswick	538.90	2.2	5.5
Quebec	568.15	0.4	3.9
Ontario	643.01	0.6	2.0
Manitoba	530.00	1.6	3.6
Saskatchewan	528.84	1.0	2.4
Alberta	604.61	0.9	3.4
British Columbia	616.23	0.2	0.4
Yukon	687.36	-0.4	-0.4
Northwest Territories	733.24	1.6	-1.7

Compared with July 1996, average weekly earnings were 2.6% higher. Employees working in construction, finance, insurance and real estate, business service establishments, and logging and forestry services profited the most. Average weekly earnings for employees in public administration remained stable, while they declined for those in the mining, quarrying and oil wells sector.

In July, the average workweek for employees paid by the hour continued its upward trend. Employees paid by the hour worked an average of 31.8 hours per week. The goods-producing industries were mainly responsible for the increase in hours worked.

The number of employees on business payrolls grew by 62,000 in July. The increase was concentrated among manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers, and health and social services. Since January, businesses have added 246,000 workers to their payrolls.

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, 1984-1996* (diskette: 72F0002XDE, \$120). For further information, contact Stephen Johnson (613-951-4090; fax: 613-951-4087; Internet: labour@statcan.ca), Labour Division.

Tourism spending increases slightly

Spending on tourism reached \$10.4 billion (unadjusted) during the second quarter of 1997, an increase of just 2.3% over the same period a year earlier. Foreign visitors spent less, but Canadians more than compensated for the slight dip by spending more.

Compared with the first quarter of 1997, total tourism spending remained unchanged (after adjusting for inflation and seasonality).

Spending by Canadians was up 1.5% from the previous quarter, just enough to offset the 3.3% drop in spending by foreign visitors.

Overall, spending on tourism has been rising since the second quarter of 1995, but at a gradually slower pace. Between April and June, travellers from the United States and other countries injected \$3.2 billion into the Canadian economy, down 0.3% from the second quarter of 1996. This was the first year-over-year decline since the first quarter of 1992. International visitors spent less on airfares, vehicle rentals, and meals and alcohol. They did spend more on lodging, however.

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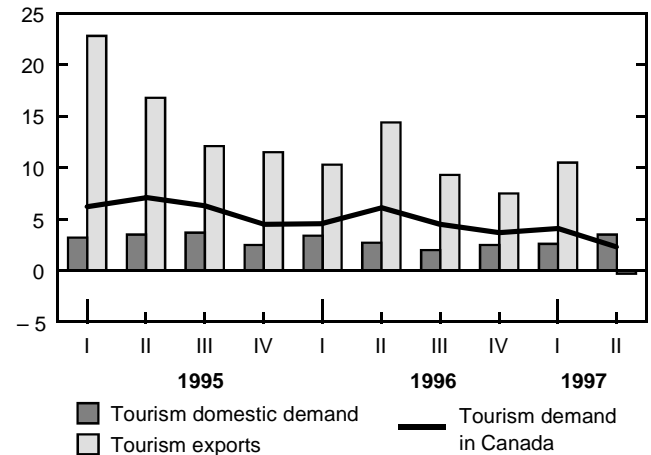
... Tourism spending increases slightly

By contrast, spending on tourism by Canadians in their own country advanced 3.5% in the second quarter compared with the same period of 1996, to reach a level of \$7.2 billion—the highest year-over-year increase in almost two years. This increase was due in part to the continuing weakness of the Canadian dollar against the American dollar. After adjusting for seasonality and inflation, domestic spending for airfares rose compared with the previous quarter, as Canadians continued to take advantage of lower airline ticket prices. They also spent more on accommodation and food and beverage services.

The second quarter 1997 issue of *National tourism indicators* (13-009-XPB, \$21/\$70) is now available. For further information, contact Katherine Kemp (613-951-3814), National Accounts and Environment Division.

Tourism spending

Year-over-year % change, unadjusted data



New from Statistics Canada



E-STAT

1997



E-STAT 1997

E-STAT, Statistics Canada's interactive learning tool, is continually evolving to meet the changing needs of the educational sector. This year, students can access the first results of the 1996 Census. A large block of historical data has also been added. All of the previous modules are included, at no additional cost.

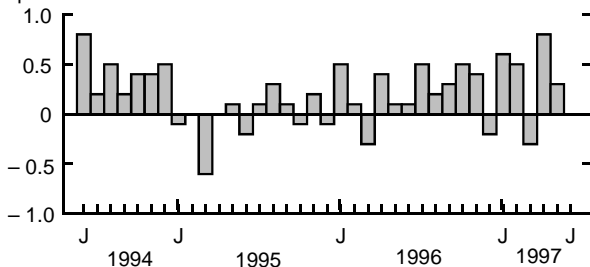
E-STAT brings current statistical and demographic data about Canada into the classroom. Students learn how to develop critical thinking skills, and they can transform data into colourful, easy-to-read graphs and maps. The E-STAT lesson plans were written by teachers for teachers.

The 1997 edition of *E-STAT* is now available on CD-ROM. For further information, or to order, contact the Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre nearest you. *E-STAT* is also available on the Internet @ www.statcan.ca/english/Estat/estat.htm.

Current trends

Gross domestic product

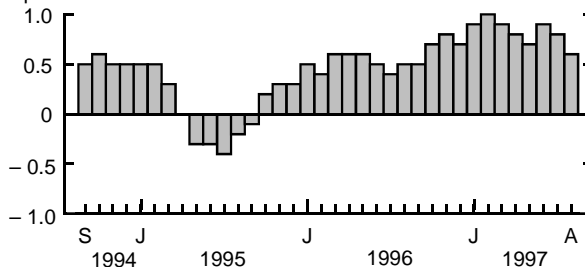
% change,
previous month



Real gross domestic product at factor cost was flat in June (– 0.0%), as economic growth paused.

Composite Index

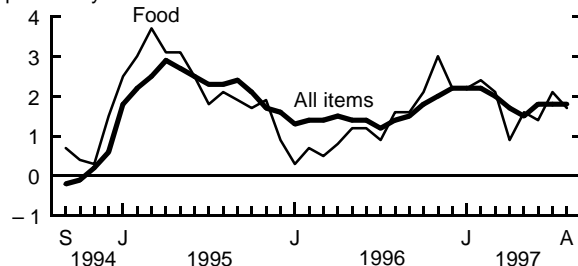
% change,
previous month



The Composite Index grew by 0.6% in August.

Consumer Price Index

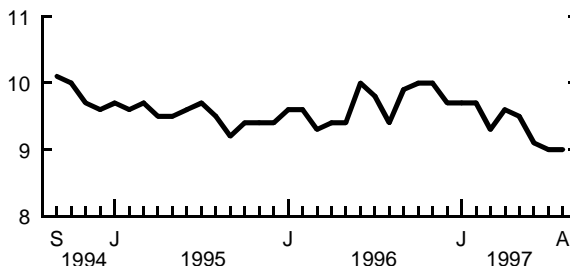
% change,
previous year



Consumers paid 1.8% more for goods and services in August 1997 than the year before. Food prices rose by 1.7%.

Unemployment rate

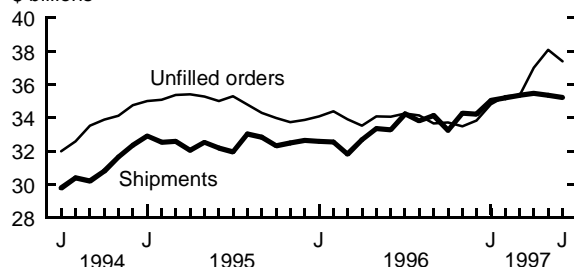
%



In August, the unemployment rate held at 9.0%.

Manufacturing

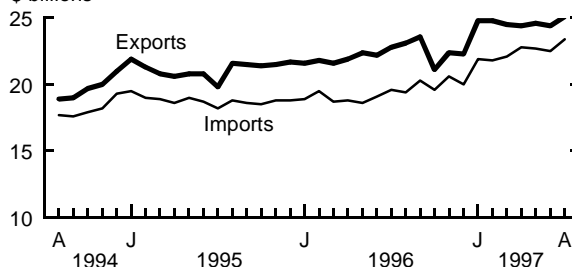
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments fell 0.1% in June to \$35.2 billion. The level of unfilled orders decreased 1.8% to \$37.4 billion.

Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In July, the value of merchandise exports rebounded 2.8% from June to a record \$25.1 billion. Imports rose 5.2% to reach a record level of \$23.4 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)	June	569.8	0.0%	3.8%
Composite Index (1981=100)	August*	197.7	0.6%	10.1%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q2 1997	26.5	0.5%	13.9%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q2 1997	84.8	0.9†	2.8†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	July*	19.5	1.3%	8.0%
New motor vehicle sales (thousand of units)	July	117.1	3.3%	19.0%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	August	14.0	0.4%	2.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	August	9.0	0.0†	- 0.5†
Participation rate (%)	August	64.9	0.2†	0.1†
Labour income (\$ billion)	June	37.32	0.1%	3.9%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	June	599.55	- 0.5%	1.8%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	July*	25.1	2.8%	5.5%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	July*	23.4	5.2%	16.4%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	July*	1.7	- 0.5	- 2.0
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	June	35.2	- 0.1%	5.9%
New orders (\$ billion)	June	34.5	- 4.6%	3.8%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	June	37.4	- 1.8%	9.8%
Inventory/shipments ratio	June	1.32	0.01	- 0.02
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1986=100)	August*	135.7	0.1%	1.8%
Industrial Product Price Index (1986=100)	July	130.1	- 0.2%	1.0%
Raw Materials Price Index (1986=100)	July	133.4	- 0.4%	- 1.8%
New Housing Price Index (1986=100)	July	132.9	0.0%	1.1%

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 September 19 to 25, 1997

Division/Title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription	
			Canada (C\$)	Outside Canada (US\$)
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE STATISTICS				
Corrections key indicator report for adults and young offenders:				
microfiche version	1996-97	85-222-XME	37	37
paper version	1996-97	85-222-XME	39	39
National directory of courts	August 1997	85-510-XPB	30	30
DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES				
New motor vehicle sales	June 1997	63-007-XPB	17/165	17/165
INDUSTRY MEASURES AND ANALYSIS				
Gross domestic product by industry	June 1997	15-001-XPB	15/145	15/145
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Canadian international merchandise trade	July 1997	65-001-XPB	19/188	19/188
Exports by country:				
microfiche version	January to June 1997	65-003-XMB	62/206	62/206
paper version	January to June 1997	65-003-XPB	124/412	124/412
Imports by commodity:				
microfiche version	July 1997	65-007-XMB	37/361	37/361
paper version	July 1997	65-007-XPB	78/773	78/773
MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY				
Construction type plywood	July 1997	35-001-XPB	7/62	7/62
Electric lamps (light bulbs and tubes)	August 1997	43-009-XPB	7/62	7/62
Gas utilities	June 1997	55-002-XPB	17/165	17/165
Mineral wool including fibrous glass insulation	August 1997	44-004-XPB	7/62	7/62
Pulpwood and wood residue statistics	July 1997	25-001-XPB	8/73	8/73
Sawmills and planing mills, Vol. 51, no. 7	July 1997	35-003-XPB	12/114	12/114
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index	August 1997	62-001-XPB	11/103	11/103

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Key release calendar: October 1997

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
		1 Employment Insurance, July 1997	2	3
6 Building permits, August 1997	7 Health reports: Factors associated with bicycle helmet use, 1994–1995	8 Field crop reporting series: September crop production estimates, September 1997	9 New motor vehicles sales, August 1997 Help-wanted Index, September 1997	10 Labour Force Survey, September 1997 New Housing Price Index, August 1997
13	14 Age, sex, marital and common-law status and families, 1996 Census	15	16 Monthly Survey of Manufacturing, August 1997 Travel between Canada and other countries, August 1997	17
20 Wholesale trade, August 1997	21 Canadian international merchandise trade, August 1997 Composite Index, September 1997	22 Consumer Price Index, September 1997 Retail trade, August 1997	23 Financial performance indicators for Canadian businesses, 1994 and 1996 Employment, earnings and hours, August 1997 Canada's international transaction in securities, August 1997	24
27	28	29 Industrial Product Price Index, September 1997 Raw Materials Price Index, September 1997	30 Employment Insurance, August 1997	31 Real gross domestic product at factor cost by industry, August 1997

Note: Release dates for Canadian international merchandise trade, the Consumer Price Index and the Labour Force Survey are fixed; dates for other data series may change.

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M4T 1M4

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