



Infommat

A Weekly Review

Friday, November 8, 1996

OVERVIEW

◆ Economic activity grows modestly

Economic activity continued its modest growth in August, as gross domestic product at factor cost rose 0.2%.

◆ Brighter outlook for housing sector

Influenced by low prices and falling mortgage rates, the value of residential building permits rose in the third quarter of 1996. This represented the third straight quarterly increase, following six consecutive declines.

◆ Labour disputes dampen business prospects

In October, production prospects tumbled, due to the effects of automotive industry labour disputes.

◆ Farmers in Eastern Canada face higher costs

Eastern Canadian farmers, particularly those who raise animals, have faced substantially higher costs over the past 12 months than did farmers in the West.

◆ Large businesses more profitable

Larger firms were substantially more profitable than medium and smaller enterprises in 1995, in part because they continued to benefit from Canada's export boom.

◆ Investment income climbs in 1995

The total investment income of Canadian savers and investors has increased in 1995.

Economic activity grows modestly

Economic activity continued its modest growth in August, as gross domestic product (GDP) at factor cost rose 0.2%, about the average pace since January. The rise was led by mining, construction and wholesale trade. July's manufacturing surge, however, slipped into a slight decline.

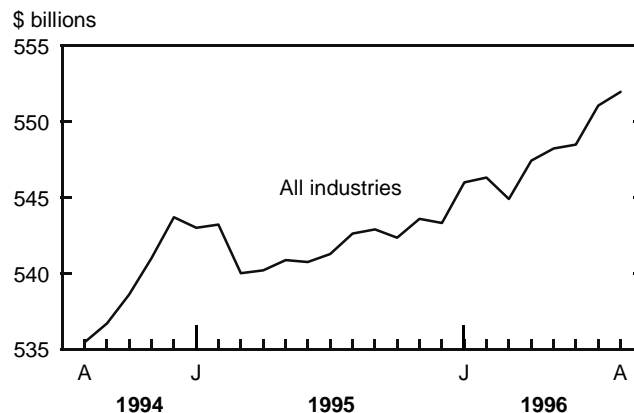
In the first two months of the third quarter of 1996, GDP was 0.6% higher on average than in the second quarter. This compares with advances of 0.5% and 0.4% in the first and second quarters respectively.

Intensified activity in the mining sector boosted output 1.6% in August, a third straight monthly increase. Energy-related industries, including crude oil, coal and natural gas, accounted for more than 70% of the overall advance. Drilling increased for the third consecutive month, following a slump in the spring, when activities were disrupted by a prolonged break-up period. Production of gold, iron ore and base metals also rose.

Wholesale trade increased in 8 of 11 trade groups, led by wholesalers of computers and packaged software, who benefited from the approaching school year. Grain merchants recorded a second consecutive strong gain in August. The gains paralleled a rebound in exports from lows between May and July. Construction gains were led by the quickly recovering residential sector, which

(continued on page 2)

Gross domestic product at factor cost



... Economic activity grows modestly

rose a further 2.7% in August. Transportation and storage services also grew slightly, reflecting a strong advance in rail transport. Rail transport has benefited from the persistent growth in manufacturing and wholesale trade, and has bounced back from 1995's considerable losses.

After a strong 1.5% rise in July, manufacturing production inched down 0.2% in August. Production of electrical and electronic equipment accounted for much of the drop, as manufacturers continued to suffer from the persistent weakness in the office machinery export market. Other sectors experienced offsetting gains and losses. Manufacturers of chemical products, transportation equipment, and printing and publishing saw declines. Rises occurred in the production of machinery and paper and allied products.

Retailing activity fell 0.5% in August, offsetting most of the two previous months' gains. Sales dropped in 13 of 18 trade

Note to readers

Gross domestic product (GDP) of an industry is the value added by labour and capital in transforming inputs purchased from other industries into outputs.

Monthly GDP by industry is valued at 1986 prices. All data are seasonally adjusted at annual rates.

groups, with supermarkets, drug stores and general merchandise stores absorbing about 70% of the decline.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 4671-4674.

*The August 1996 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 8.)*

Brighter outlook for housing sector

Influenced by low prices and falling mortgage rates, the value of residential building permits rose in the third quarter of 1996. This represented the third straight quarterly increase, following six consecutive declines.

Municipalities issued building permits for new housing worth \$3.9 billion between July and September, up 1.1% from the second quarter. A rise in the value of permits for single-family dwellings was mostly responsible for the advance. Construction intentions for multi-family units showed a modest 0.6% increase.

Led by the industrial and commercial sectors, non-residential construction intentions rose 5.2% to \$2.8 billion in the third quarter. These gains were partly offset by the institutional component, which recorded a drop.

On a monthly basis, municipalities issued \$2.1 billion in permits in September, down 3.4% from August. Both sectors contributed to the overall decrease: residential fell 4.0% to \$1.2 billion, while non-residential dropped 2.6% to \$0.9 billion. It was the second consecutive monthly drop for both sectors.

During the third quarter, Ontario reported the largest increase in housing intentions, caused by both single- and multi-family dwellings. Also notable were the quarterly gains in residential construction intentions in Alberta and Quebec, due mainly to multi-family dwellings. In contrast, British Columbia and Manitoba reported the most significant quarterly residential declines, the result of large drops in the value of permits for multi-family dwellings and, to a lesser extent, for single-family dwellings.

The overall housing market has shown signs of improvement since the beginning of the year. The year-to-date resale housing market was 20.5% stronger than in the corresponding period a year earlier. The increased demand for housing has translated into more permits. In addition, as a result of better affordability and exceptionally low mortgage rates, the outlook for new housing construction remains positive for the remainder of 1996 and early 1997.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 80 (levels 3-7, 16-22, 24-32), 129, 137, 443, 989-992, 994, 995 and 4073.

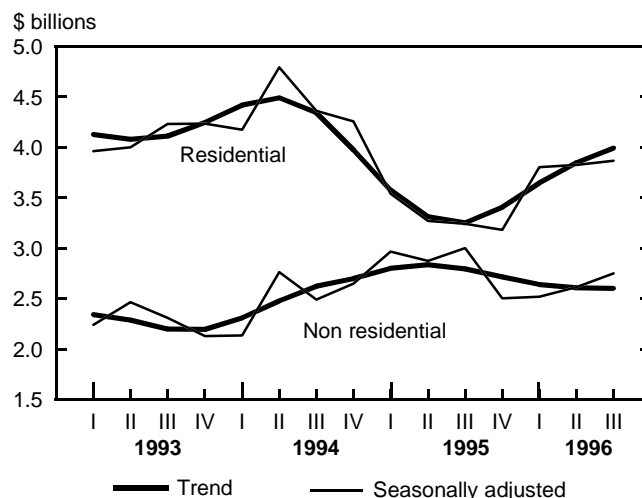
Note to readers

The Building and Demolitions Permits Survey covers 2,400 municipalities each month, representing 93% of the population. It provides an early indication of building activity. The communities representing the other 7% of the population are very small, and their levels of building activity have little impact on the total.

The value of planned construction activities shown in this release excludes engineering projects (e.g., waterworks, sewers, culverts) and land.

Unless otherwise stated, all data are seasonally adjusted. The annual rate is a monthly figure that has been seasonally adjusted and multiplied by 12 to reflect annual levels.

Value of building permits



*The September 1996 issue of **Building permits** (paper version: 64-001-XPB, \$24/\$240; microfiche version: 64-001-XMB, \$25/\$135) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Joanne Bureau (613-951-9689; Internet: burejoa@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division.*

(continued on page 3)

Building permits, September 1996

Seasonally adjusted

Province/Territory	Total		Residential		Non-residential	
	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month	\$ millions	% change, previous month
Canada	2,071	-3.4	1,213	-4.0	858	-2.6
Newfoundland	19	9.4	12	4.2	7	19.9
Prince Edward Island	19	296.5	8	315.5	11	283.5
Nova Scotia	47	-6.3	31	-3.7	15	-11.3
New Brunswick	34	-3.5	18	6.6	16	-12.5
Quebec	404	-6.2	205	2.6	199	-13.8
Ontario	744	-2.0	454	-5.3	290	3.5
Manitoba	42	-1.1	19	-15.6	23	15.3
Saskatchewan	60	52.4	19	-3.2	41	108.5
Alberta	210	-11.1	141	-6.7	69	-18.9
British Columbia	479	-7.3	300	-7.3	180	-7.2
Yukon	9	66.3	3	11.7	5	135.3
Northwest Territories	4	-38.0	2	136.1	2	-66.3

Labour disputes dampen business prospects

After a strong increase in July, production prospects for the remainder of 1996 tumbled, due to the effects of automotive industry labour disputes. Despite this, responses to the October Business Conditions Survey indicated less concern among manufacturers about inventories and positive feelings about new orders. In addition, more are expected to increase their workforce in the coming three months.

Labour disputes in the transportation equipment industries prompted a 19-point drop (to -12) in manufacturers' balance of opinion for production prospects. This downturn was partially offset by positive results in the electrical and electronics products and the machinery industries. Excluding transportation, production prospects were positive for manufacturing. (The balance of opinion of -12 was reached by subtracting the 34% who stated that production prospects for the next quarter are lower from the 22% who said production prospects were higher.)

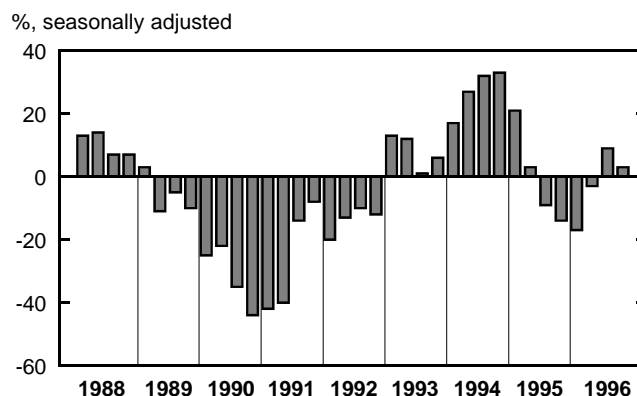
A record 77% of manufacturers indicated that they expected little change in their workforce. Only 10% said they would decrease employment, down from 13% in July. This pushed the October balance to +3 from -1 in July.

Business Conditions Survey

	1995		1996		
	Oct.	Jan.	April	July	Oct.
Balance of opinion*on:					
Production	1	-2	0	7	-12
New orders	-14	-17	-3	9	3
Unfilled orders	-19	-14	-2	-5	-6
Inventories	-15	-21	-26	-13	-12
Employment	-4	-8	-4	-1	3

* The balance is the difference between the proportion of positive responses, such as higher volumes of production, and negative responses, such as lower volumes of production.

Balance of opinion for current level of orders received



In October, 80% of manufacturers said their current inventory of finished products was "about right." This represented a one-point improvement to -12 from July's survey. High inventory levels, however, continued to concern the paper and allied product industries. The Monthly Survey of Manufacturing confirmed this, indicating that inventories in this industry decreased only slightly in August, after reaching an all-time high in July.

The balance of opinion concerning new orders decreased 6 points to +3 in October, following a strong showing in the previous two surveys. This downturn is also attributable to the automotive industry strike. Balance of opinion on unfilled orders slipped 1 point to -6.

A shortage of skilled labour is an impediment to production for 4% of manufacturers, a 1-point increase from July. Because of the strike, only 78% of manufacturers stated that they have no production difficulties at this time.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2843-2845.

For further information, contact Claude Robillard (613-951-3507; Internet robicg@statcan.ca), Monthly Survey of Manufacturing Section, Industry Division.

Farmers in Eastern Canada face higher costs

Eastern Canadian farmers, particularly those who raise animals, have faced substantially higher costs of doing business over the past 12 months. In the third quarter of 1996, farm input prices in the East rose 7.8% over the same period in 1995. By comparison, in Western Canada, prices were up only 2.8%. Nationally, farm input prices rose 5% over the past year. This was the highest annual rate of increase since the third quarter of 1993.

With the exception of prices for feeder cattle, which declined 14.4%, farmers paid more on a national basis for all inputs into animal production. Higher prices for weanling pigs (+38.9%), broiler chicks (+23.5%) and grain feed (+36.7%) led the increase. Farmers also faced higher prices for phosphoric fertilizers, machinery and motor vehicles, and building and fencing. On the other hand, they benefited from lower interest costs (-16.6% from the year before), due to falling rates for non-mortgage loans.

Eastern Canadian farmers paid 45.2% more for grain feed and 43.4% more for weanling pigs, compared with a year earlier. In fact, they faced increases in six of seven input categories. Building materials contributed the most to the increase in building and fencing prices, while insecticides and phosphoric fertilizers pushed the crop production index up. Hired farm labour costs rose, along with costs for supplies and services, such as heating fuel and custom work. However, farmers in the East paid 16.9% less for interest, as a result of lower costs for non-mortgage loans.

In the West, farmers also experienced price increases in six of the seven input categories, although on a more moderate scale.

Note to readers

The Ontario – Manitoba boundary is the dividing line between the East and the West.

They faced higher prices for inputs into animal production (+7.3%) and crop production (+6.3%). Like their Eastern counterparts, Western farmers also benefited from lower interest costs, which fell 16.2% compared with the third quarter of 1995.

Between the second and third quarters of 1996, farm inputs on a national level rose 1.5%. Once again, it was Eastern farmers who experienced the highest increases. Input costs climbed 2.4% in the East, compared with 0.7% in the West.

Although prices for grain feed declined 1.0% nationally from the second to the third quarter, farmers paid more for all other inputs into animal production (+5.9%).

Prices declined in four of the seven input categories. And for the first time since the fourth quarter of 1995, farmers did not face price increases for fertilizers and pesticides. Higher prices for building materials contributed to a 3.2% price hike for building and fencing. However, interest costs fell for the fifth straight quarter (-4.2%).

Available on CANSIM: matrices 550-582 (series 7) and 2050-2063.

*The third quarter 1996 issue of **Farm input price indexes** (62-004-XPB, \$24/\$80) will be available shortly. For further information, contact Sandra Shadlock (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-2848; the Internet: shadsan@statcan.ca), Prices Division.*

Large businesses more profitable

Larger firms were substantially more profitable than medium and smaller enterprises in 1995, in part because they continued to benefit from Canada's export boom.

Large firms had an average rate of return on assets of 6.0%. This compares with 4.0% for medium-sized firms and 4.2% for smaller firms. Average rates of profitability have generally been on the rise since 1992.

Rates of return for large firms peaked at 9.0% in 1988. This compares with the 1995 rate of 6.0%. Taking into account the fact that current rates of inflation are much lower than those in 1988, the rates of return have fully recovered.

Larger firms may tend to have higher rates of profitability for several reasons, such as market competitiveness, corporate concentration and international trade. In many industries, larger firms tend to be more export-oriented and have therefore benefited more from the surge in exports.

The smallest firms tend to rely on the domestic market, which was slower to recover in the post-recession period. Among smaller firms, profitability tends to be greater in industries where market conditions are less competitive.

Among the larger enterprises, the most profitable in 1995 were firms engaged in computer manufacturing, electronic computing

Note to readers

The measure of profitability in this article is the return on assets. The formula is pre-tax profit to total assets. The measurement used to rank industries from most to least profitable is the return on capital employed, which indicates the number of cents returned (net earnings) to every dollar of capital.

Large firms are those with revenues of more than \$75 million. Medium firms are those with revenues between \$5 million and \$75 million, and small firms are those with revenues below \$5 million.

Large firms accounted for only 0.3% of non-financial industries, but had 50% of the operating revenue in 1993. Medium firms made up 4.5% and had 25% of the revenue, while small firms accounted for 95.2% and had the other 25% of the revenue.

and peripheral equipment servicing, and the provision of computer programming and systems analysis services. They were followed closely by chemical fertilizers (excluding potash) and explosives manufacturers, and inorganic chemical manufacturers. The least profitable of the larger firms included advertising agencies, contractors doing building interior and exterior structural work, and industrial and heavy engineering general contractors.

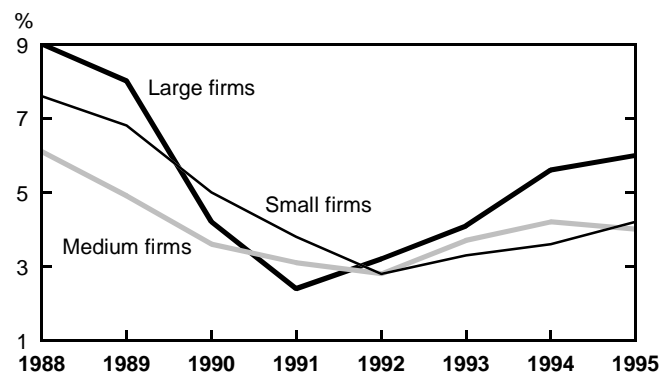
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... Large businesses more profitable

Among smaller firms, offices of physicians, surgeons and dentists were the most profitable in 1993. Next were sawmills and manufacturers of planing mill products, followed by offices of other health practitioners. The least profitable small enterprises included paper and paper products wholesalers and paint and varnish manufacturers.

Financial performance indicators for Canadian business (61F0058XPE, \$170; 61F0059XPE, \$210) is now available. For further information, contact Gail Sharland (613-951-9843), Industrial Organization and Finance Division or the Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre nearest you.

Return on assets: non-financial industries



Investment income climbs in 1995

Canadian savers and investors earned \$28.3 billion in interest and dividend income in 1995, up 18% from 1994. This is the first time in five years that total investment income has increased.

After peaking in 1990 at \$42 billion, total investment income dropped 43% in four years, before increasing in 1995. A principal factor in this upturn was a rise in the Bank of Canada rate. Prior to 1995, investment income fell simultaneously with the bank rate. The bank rate declined from a 1990 average of 13.05% to a 1994 average of 5.77%. In 1995, it climbed back to a 7.33% average.

Note to readers

Investment income refers to the interest and dividend income received by Canadian savers and investors.

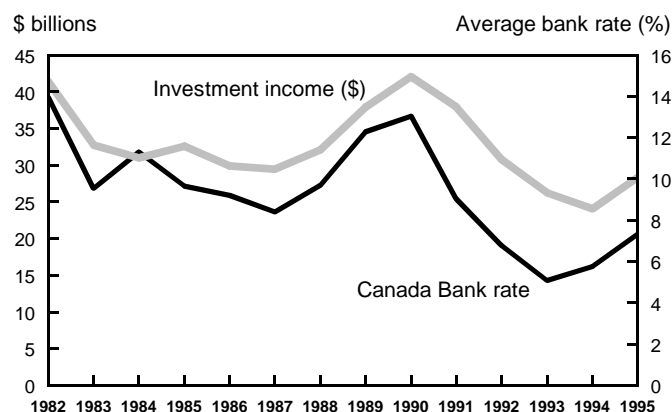
A saver is a taxfiler who reported investment income from interest and no dividend income. Investors are taxfilers who reported dividend income and, possibly, income from interest.

All figures have been adjusted for inflation as measured by the consumer price index.

Median total incomes of savers and investors, and median investment income 1995

	Median income			Median investment income
	Taxfilers	Savers	Investors	
	\$			Total
Canada	19,500	22,800	36,100	600
Newfoundland	14,300	23,300	36,200	300
Prince Edward Island	16,600	21,300	30,100	400
Nova Scotia	17,000	22,400	33,900	300
New Brunswick	16,100	22,200	33,500	300
Quebec	18,000	22,100	37,400	600
Ontario	21,400	24,300	37,200	600
Manitoba	17,600	20,600	31,100	500
Saskatchewan	17,400	19,500	31,000	700
Alberta	20,000	21,700	35,500	600
British Columbia	20,500	22,300	35,400	700
Yukon	25,000	35,500	45,500	400
Northwest Territories	24,000	50,400	63,300	300

Investment income



Fifty-two percent of individuals reporting some investment income on their tax return were women. They reported \$14.3 billion, about \$300 million more than men. It is possible that some investment income is being reported by the lower-income spouse or common-law partner, often the woman.

(continued on page 6)

... Investment income climbs in 1995

The number of savers increased from 5.4 million in 1994 to 6.2 million in 1995. The average saver was 51 years of age. Savers reported interest income of \$13.5 billion, almost 24% more than in the previous year. Although savers accounted for 79% of individuals reporting investment income, their interest income made up less than half (47%) of total investment income.

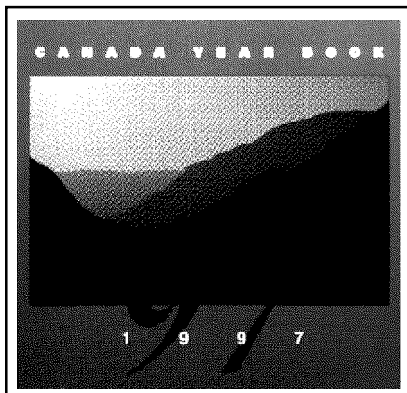
The number of investors has been steadily increasing for the past five years. In 1995, 1.7 million investors reported \$14.9 billion from Canadian corporation dividend payments and other

investment income. This was a 13% increase from 1994. Although the median investment income of investors was \$1,800 in 1995, it was still well below its 1990 peak of \$3,300.

Investors had a median total income of \$36,100 in 1995, substantially higher than the savers' median total income of \$22,800. Since 1990, 1995 marks the first year that investors' dividend and interest income has increased.

For further information, contact Client Services (613-951-9720; fax: 613-951-4745; the Internet: saadinfo@statcan.ca), Small Area and Administrative Data Division.

New from Statistics Canada



Canada year book

1997

Statistics Canada signals a historic first, with the release of the *1997 Canada year book* in both print and CD-ROM versions. With 16 chapters on the social, economic and cultural life of Canada, this edition also features an exciting visual tour of the country through some 100 colour and black and white photographs. Both CD-ROM and print versions come complete with more than 300 tables, charts and graphs containing the latest socio-economic data available on Canada.

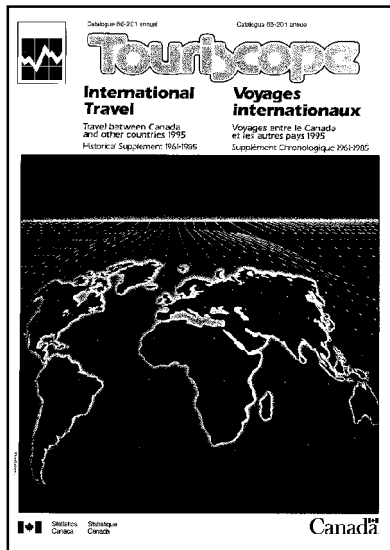
Canada's oldest and most reliable reference resource, the *Canada year book*, was first published in 1867 and continues to be the on-going record of life in Canada, providing both perspective and analytical insights into the trends and developments of our national life.

The new Windows- and Macintosh-compatible CD-ROM offers exciting features such as powerful search capacity and maps and videos, with both English and French versions on one disc. These make the *Canada year book* a truly multimedia product, well-adapted to the needs of all readers.

As Canada's premier reference resource, the *Canada year book* is a compelling and interesting review of the nation and holds special appeal for all readers, from students and teachers, librarians, journalists, politicians, lawyers and policy makers to visitors from other lands.

*Both the hardcover bound volume of the **Canada year book** (11-402-XPE, \$54.95) and the CD-ROM version (11-402-XCB, \$74.95) are now available. For further information about the print version, contact David Gonczol (613-951-0008), Communications Division, or for the CD-ROM version, contact Diane Leblanc (613-951-1182), Communications Division.*

New from Statistics Canada



Touriscope: International travel

1995

The 1995 issue of *Touriscope: International travel* summarizes the annual data on travel to and from Canada in tables, charts and an analytical review. The publication profiles international travellers by their province, state or country of residence, area of destination, mode of transportation, purpose of trip, length of stay, expenditures, age group and sex.

Important components of the International Travel Account have been revised due to changes in the international balance of payments definitions. Data from 1961 forward have been revised to reflect these changes and are shown in the historical supplement on international travel statistics included in this issue.

The 1995 issue of *Touriscope: International travel* (66-201-XPB, \$40) is now available. For further information, contact Luc Dubois (613-951-1674; fax: 613-951-2909; Internet: duboluc@statcan.ca), International Travel Section, Education, Culture and Tourism Division.

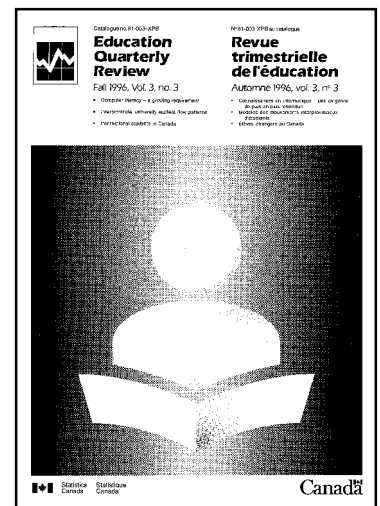
Education quarterly review

Fall 1996

The fall 1996 issue of *Education quarterly review*, released today, presents articles on the following issues: computer literacy, interprovincial university student flow patterns, and international students in Canada.

Additional information offered in each issue includes insight into education surveys — their variables and their potential for research — as well as a series of social, economic and education indicators for Canada, the provinces and territories and the G-7 countries.

The fall 1996 issue of *Education quarterly review* (81-003-XPB, \$20/\$66) is now available. For further information, contact Jim Seidle (613-951-1500; fax: 613-951-9040; Internet: seidjim@statcan.ca), Education, Culture and Tourism Division.



Databank on charitable donors

1995

The 1995 edition of the databank on charitable donors is now available. New for this year are data by age and sex. The information included in the databank will be of particular interest to researchers, policy planners, fundraisers and marketers.

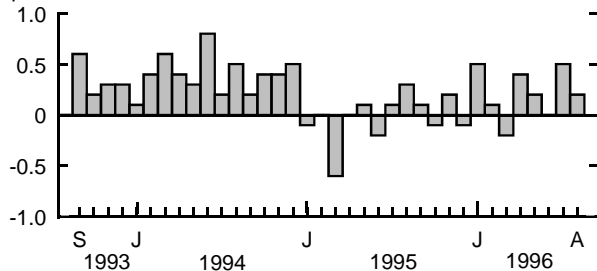
Produced annually, these data are a unique source of information on small areas and are ideal for supporting market analyses and policy decisions. Data are available for provinces and territories, cities, towns, census metropolitan areas and census divisions, as well as forward sortation areas (the first three characters of postal codes) and letter carrier walks (groupings of postal codes).

For further information, contact Client Services (613-951-9720; fax 613-951-4745; Internet: saadinfo@statcan.ca), Small Area and Administrative Data Division.

Current trends

Gross domestic product

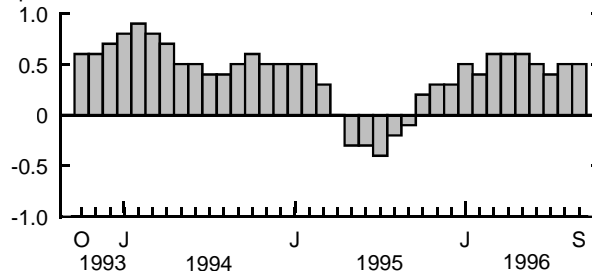
% change,
previous month



Real gross domestic product at factor cost increased 0.2% between July and August.

Composite index

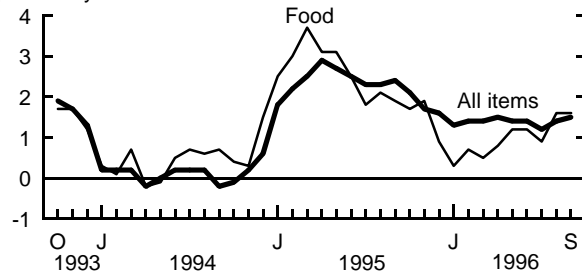
% change,
previous month



The composite index grew by 0.5% between August and September.

Consumer price index

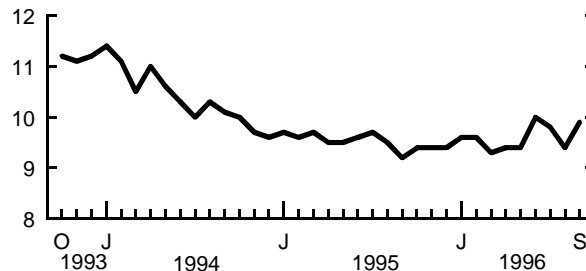
% change,
previous year



Consumers paid 1.5% more for goods and services in September 1996 than the year before. Food prices rose by 1.6%.

Unemployment rate

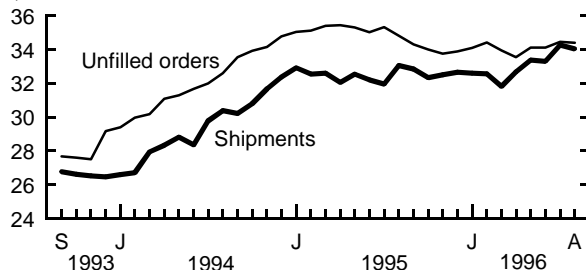
%



In September, the unemployment rate climbed 0.5 percentage points to 9.9%.

Manufacturing

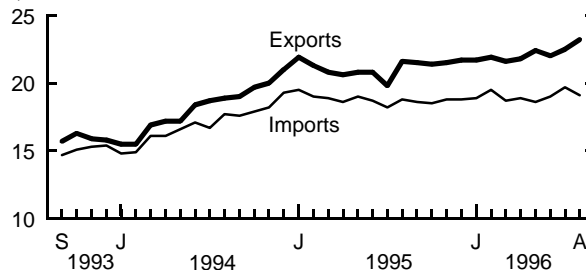
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments slipped 0.7% in August to \$34.0 billion. The level of unfilled orders fell 0.2% to \$34.4 billion.

Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In August, the value of merchandise exports rose 2.7% from July to \$23.2 billion. Imports fell 2.7% to \$19.1 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)	August	552.0	0.2%	1.7%
Composite index (1981=100)	September	180.6	0.5%	5.4%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billion)	Q2 1996	22.1	-1.6%	-6.4%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q2 1996	82.7	0.3†	-0.9†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	August	17.9	-0.4%	0.3%
New motor vehicle sales ('000 units)	August	97.3	0.7%	-3.3%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	September	13.7	-0.3%	1.0%
Unemployment rate (%)	September	9.9	0.5†	0.7†
Participation rate (%)	September	64.8	0.0†	0.2†
Labour income (\$ billion)	June	35.7	0.3%	2.1%
Average weekly earnings (\$)	August	590.16	0.3%	2.6%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billion)	August	23.2	2.7%	7.0%
Merchandise imports (\$ billion)	August	19.1	-2.7%	1.9%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billion)	August	4.0	1.1	1.1
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billion)	August	34.0	-0.7%	3.0%
New orders (\$ billion)	August	34.0	-1.8%	4.4%
Unfilled orders (\$ billion)	August	34.4	-0.2%	-1.2%
Inventory/shipments ratio	August	1.31	0.01	-0.05
PRICES				
Consumer price index (1986=100)	September	135.9	0.1%	1.5%
Industrial product price index (1986=100)	September	129.7	0.2%	0.0%
Raw materials price index (1986=100)	September	139.8	1.5%	9.0%
New housing price index (1986=100)	July	131.5	-0.1%	-2.2%

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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