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A Weekly Review

Friday, March 24, 1995

OVERVIEW

- **Trade surplus increases**

  In Januray 1995, the merchandise trade surplus increased from December's level as exports grew more than imports.

- **Retail sales on the rise**

  Consumers continued to increase their spending as retail sales rose in January.

- **Wholesale merchants' sales level off**

  Offsetting movements caused wholesale merchants' sales to edge up only 0.2% in January.

- **Composite index maintains its moderate climb**

  The composite index continued to rise moderately in February, up 0.5% from the month before.

- **Manufacturing shipments continue up**

  Strong foreign demand, escalating prices and a weak Canadian dollar helped boost manufacturers' shipments in January.

- **January – record month for international travel**

  Foreigners from overseas visited Canada in record numbers in January. Similarly, Canadians made a record number of overnight trips to countries other than the United States.

Trade surplus increases

Propelled by strong auto shipments to the United States and healthy worldwide demand for Canadian industrial goods, exports surged 6.2% in January to a record $22.5 billion. Exports of most other commodities increased as well, resulting in part from the low Canadian dollar. Exports to the United States grew 5.2%, to the European Union 20.4% and to Japan 11.7%.

Reflecting Canada's buoyant manufacturing sector, imports grew more than 5% to $20.1 billion. Most commodities advanced, especially autos, industrial goods, and energy products. Although imports from the United States grew the most in absolute terms ($646 million), high growth was also evident in imports from the European Union (30%) and Japan (12.7%).

Because exports grew more than imports, the merchandise trade surplus was up $285 million, reaching $2.4 billion. Rapidly climbing exports to the United States helped push the surplus with the Americans to a record $3.1 billion. Canada's surplus with the Japanese grew to $142 million, while balances with all other trading partners remained negative.

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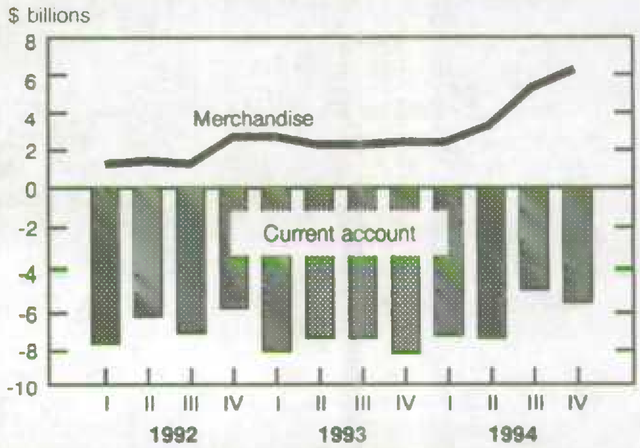
Merchandise and current account balances



... Trade surplus increases

Automotive products made up more than a third of January's increase in exports. Most were shipments of cars destined for the United States. The exports of industrial goods, agricultural commodities, and natural resources all advanced strongly. Machinery and equipment was also on the rise.

January's growth in imports occurred mostly because of the auto sector. As with exports, the growth was greatest for cars. Imports were also up for crude petroleum, industrial goods, machinery and equipment and consumer goods, while they dipped for agricultural products.

Note to users

Merchandise trade is only one component of the current account of Canada's balance of payments. The current account also includes trade in services. In the fourth quarter of 1994, an overall merchandise trade surplus of $6.2 billion contrasted with a current account deficit of $5.4 billion.

For further information, order Canadian international merchandise trade *(catalogue 65-001) or contact International Trade Division at (613) 951-9647. (See also "Current trends" on page 9.)*

Retail sales on the rise

Consumers continued to increase their spending as retail sales jumped 0.8% to $17.9 billion (seasonally adjusted) in January. This followed a 0.6% gain in December. Since early 1992, retail sales have generally been rising, with the rate of increase faster since mid-1994.

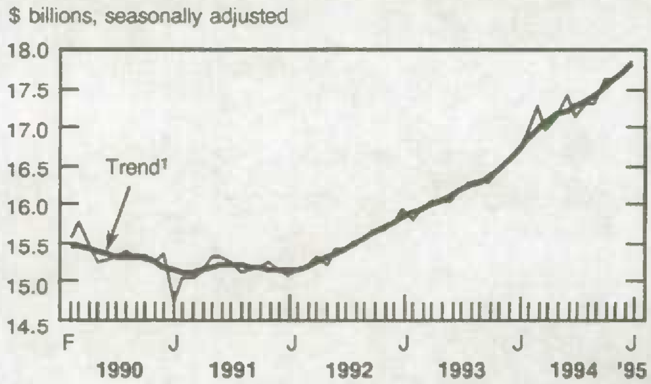
January's largest gain in value was by retailers of department store-type merchandise (33% of total retail trade), who increased sales 1.6% after a 0.5% rise in December. Within this category, other durable (8.4%) and general merchandise stores (1.6%) led the latest growth.

A 0.2% decline in the auto sector was the first drop since July 1994. Lower sales by gas stations (-2.3%) more than offset increases by dealers of new motor vehicles and retailers of auto parts, accessories and services. The decline in gas stations' sales was the fourth consecutive monthly drop and coincided with a fall in gas prices in January. The slight rise in the sales of new motor vehicles occurred despite a decline in the number sold, reflecting an increase in the price of new models compared with a year earlier.

Sales in British Columbia grew strongly (2.1%) for a second consecutive month and stood 12.6% higher than in January 1994. Since then, sales increases in this province have generally surpassed growth at the national level. Among the other provinces and territories, six recorded growing sales compared with the month before, four reported declines, and one remained unchanged.

Early indications of February sales are not entirely encouraging. Estimates indicate a drop in department store sales as well as the number of new motor vehicles sold. These two categories account for about one-third of retail sales. Employment in trade declined 0.9% from January 1995. In the United States, retail sales declined 0.5% in February after a 0.6% increase the month before.

Retail sales



Note: Data prior to 1991 have been adjusted to remove the federal sales tax to be comparable to January 1991 and subsequent data.
[1] Trend represents smoothed seasonally adjusted data.

Note to users

Department store-type merchandise *includes goods sold by drug and patent medicine, clothing, furniture, general merchandise, and other semi-durable and durable goods stores.*

Other semi-durable goods *include commodities sold by hardware, book and stationary, florist, lawn and garden, paint, glass and wallpaper, toy, hobby, gift, novelty and souvenir stores.*

Other durable goods *include merchandise sold by sporting goods, bicycle, musical instrument, record and tape, jewellery, watch and jewellery repair, and camera and photographic supply stores.*

For further information, order Retail trade *(catalogue 63-005) or contact Industry Division at (613) 951-9682.*

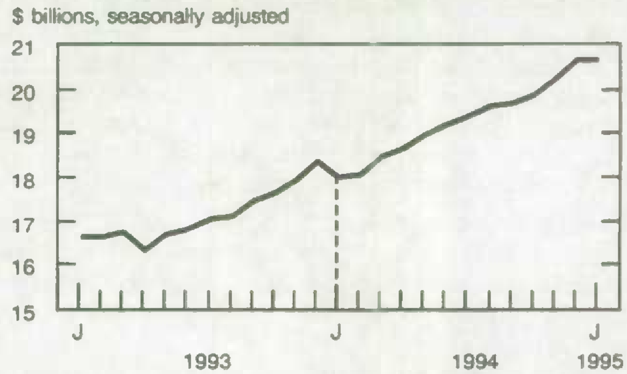
Wholesale merchants' sales level off

Offsetting movements caused wholesale merchants' sales to edge up only 0.2% in January. Sales rose for the twelfth month in a row, while inventories recorded the strongest increase in six years.

Wholesale merchants' sales totalled $20.6 billion, up 0.2% from December 1994 and up 14.8% from a year earlier. Five of the nine trade groups (accounting for about 60% of sales) posted significant gains, resulting mostly from a weak Canadian dollar, strong U.S. demand and increased manufacturing shipments. In addition, low supplies of specific commodities led to price rises. The remaining four trade groups, which are more consumer related, recorded some very large declines.

Inventories increased the most (2.2% or $656 million) since December 1987 with the surge widely distributed among all sectors. Only two categories, food, beverage, drug and tobacco products, and lumber and building, recorded relatively smaller growth. The inventories-to-sales ratio increased from 1.42 in December to 1.45 at the end of January.

Wholesale merchants' sales



Regionally, western wholesalers performed better than their eastern counterparts. Sales in British Columbia, which had grown sharply in recent years, have been almost flat since June.

For further information, order Wholesale trade *(catalogue 63-008) or contact Industry Division at (613) 951-9683.*

PROVINCIAL PERSPECTIVES

Retail and wholesale trade, January 1995
Seasonally adjusted

	Retail sales		Wholesale sales	
	$ millions	% change from previous month	$ millions	% change from previous month
Canada	**17,880**	**0.8**	**20,654**	**0.2**
Newfoundland	286	0.0	164	-10.3
Prince Edward Island	74	2.2	44	-3.7
Nova Scotia	548	-0.6	423	-9.4
New Brunswick	413	-0.8	278	-4.9
Quebec	4,300	0.8	4,670	-2.4
Ontario	6,650	1.0	8,891	1.0
Manitoba	588	-1.1	684	4.0
Saskatchewan	539	1.1	667	3.4
Alberta	1,846	-0.5	2,004	3.1
British Columbia	2,577	2.1	2,807	1.3
Yukon	18	2.0	22	-9.0
Northwest Territories	41	0.5		

Composite index maintains its moderate climb

The composite index continued to rise at a moderate rate in February, up 0.5% from the month before. Rising interest rates took their toll as the components related to the financial and housing markets all retreated. However, this weakness has not yet spread to other sectors of the economy. In particular, manufacturing again posted impressive growth.

Manufacturers of durable goods recorded a 2.8% increase in new orders. Another testament to the strength of demand, especially for export and capital

(continued on page 4)

... Composite index maintains its moderate climb

goods, was a further hike in the ratio of shipments to inventories of finished goods. Meanwhile, for the fifth straight month, the average work week stabilized at an eight year high of 38.9 hours. Employment in this industry jumped 2.6%, the largest of five consecutive monthly increases. This strength compensated aggregate employment for weaknesses in a number of other sectors.

Consumer spending plodded ahead, despite rising interest rates in recent months. Sales of durable goods in fact picked up slightly. Housing demand continued to slide, with both starts and sales off sharply.

Financial markets also continued to slip early in the new year. The stock market posted a fourth consecutive decrease, while the money supply registered its first back-to-back decline since early 1991. These two components, along with housing, have historically had the longest lead times – between five and seven months – in signalling turning points. However, they also have an above-average rate for false signals. It is therefore important to see if this weakness is transmitted to other sectors.

The U.S. leading indicator edged up by only 0.1%. Nevertheless, Canada's exports have shown no signs of letting up, even with the slowdown in auto demand in December. Demand continued to boom in key sectors for Canadian exports, notably natural resources such as forestry and metal products as well as machinery and equipment. The low value of the Canadian dollar also stimulated export earnings.

For further information, order Canadian economic observer *(catalogue 11-010) or contact Current Economic Analysis Division at (613) 951-1789. (See also "Current trends" on page 9.)*

Manufacturing shipments continue up

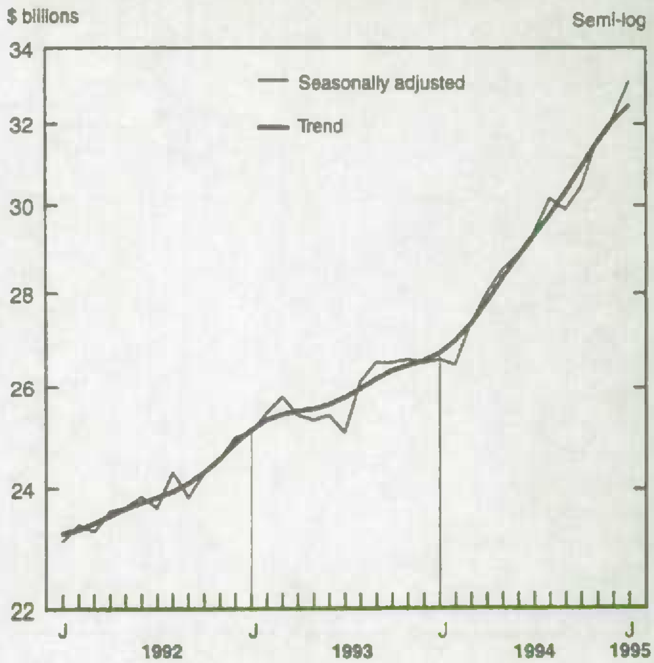
Strong foreign demand, escalating prices and a weak Canadian dollar helped boost manufacturers' shipments 3.0% in January to $33.1 billion. Increases have averaged 2.6% a month since October 1994. January's rise was widespread as 15 of the 22 major groups (accounting for 72% of shipments) posted gains.

Manufacturers of transportation equipment led the increase in value with a jump of 6.0%, which resulted mostly from strong North American demand for motor vehicles. However, recent sales slumps and extended shutdowns in February by some auto manufacturers could potentially slow this industry's growth in coming months. Chemicals posted a gain of 5.5%, while wood product shipments were up 5.9%. Declines were small, with the food (-0.7%) and the electrical and electronic products industries (-0.5%) being the most significant.

Total shipment levels in January were 25% higher ($6.6 billion) than in February 1994. This remarkable growth represents increased production in response to strong, mostly foreign, demand as well as price hikes. Recent jumps in industrial and raw material prices have also contributed to this increase. While manufacturers have absorbed most of these costs in the past, they are now beginning to pass some of them on to their clients. The capacity utilization rate of 85.3% is at a historic high for manufacturers.

Both new and unfilled orders posted gains over last month's levels. Continuing demand for motor vehicles throughout North America contributed to an increase of 1.5% in new and 0.5% in unfilled orders. According to the January Business conditions survey, manufacturers are less optimistic about future orders than they were during the previous quarter.

Shipments



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... Manufacturing shipments continue up

Rising raw material prices contributed to a 1.5% increase in total inventories. The inventory-to-shipments ratio, however, fell to a record low of 1.22 as the growth in shipments outpaced inventory levels. Manufacturers have expressed concern over increasing finished product inventory levels. Total inventories owned now stand at their highest level ever ($40.5 billion), up 11% since January 1994. Most of the growth has been in raw materials, which account for almost half of total inventories.

In the United States, January's shipments increased by a slight 0.4% to $297.3 billion. This rate of growth is considerably below the 1.7% of the previous month. Following December's healthy rise, the growth of new orders also slowed in January (to 0.6% from 2.0%), while the level of unfilled orders increased 0.9% from 0.8% the month before. The inventory-to-shipments ratio rose slightly over December's historic low to 1.33.

For further information, order Monthly survey of manufacturing *(catalogue 31-001) or contact Industry Division at (613) 951-9497. (See also "Current trends" on page 9.)*

Manufacturers' shipments, January 1995
Unadjusted data (Adjusted data not available by province)

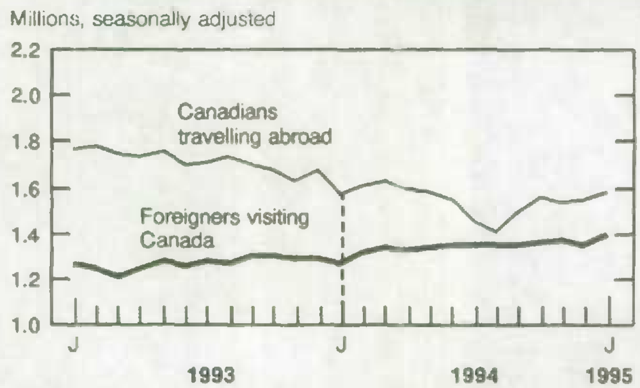
Province	$ millions	% change, previous year
Canada	**29,936**	**28.4**
Newfoundland	80	1.2
Prince Edward Island	40	11.2
Nova Scotia	474	16.0
New Brunswick	617	24.4
Quebec	6,919	23.3
Ontario	16,182	33.0
Manitoba	558	18.3
Saskatchewan	357	22.8
Alberta	2,168	28.5
British Columbia	2,539	22.5

January – record month for international travel

In January, overseas visitors made a record 310,000 overnight trips to Canada, up 3.7% from December. This type of travel has been increasing since mid-1992. The number of overnight visits by Americans also increased (2.8%) to reach 1.1 million. Overall, 1.4 million foreigners visited Canada for at least one night, a 3.0% increase over December and the most since February 1988.

Over time, residents of countries other than the United States have increased their share of visitors to Canada from 5% in 1972 to 22% in January 1995. Since overseas visitors tend to make longer trips to Canada than Americans, the economic impact of this increase is significantly greater than that of a comparable rise in the number of U.S. visitors. In addition, the weak Canadian dollar has stimulated higher spending by visitors. This has contributed to reducing Canada's international travel account deficit, which stood at $6.0 billion in 1994.

Overnight trips



Meanwhile, Canadians made a record 297,000 overnight trips to countries other than the United States, 2.0% more than in December. Nonetheless, most overnight international travel by Canadians is to the United States. In January, these types of trips have increased 1.9% to reach 1.3 million.

(continued on page 6)

...January – record month for international travel

Finally, same-day car trips by Americans to Canada have been on the rise, while similar trips by Canadians to the United States have been relatively stable. In January, 1.9 million Americans visited Canada, a 0.8% rise from the month before and the highest level since December 1986.

Note to users

Year-over-year comparisons use unadjusted data, which are the actual traffic counts, while month-to-month comparisons use seasonally adjusted data.

For further information, order International travel, advance information *(catalogue 66-001P) or contact Education, Culture and Tourism Division at (613) 951-1791.*

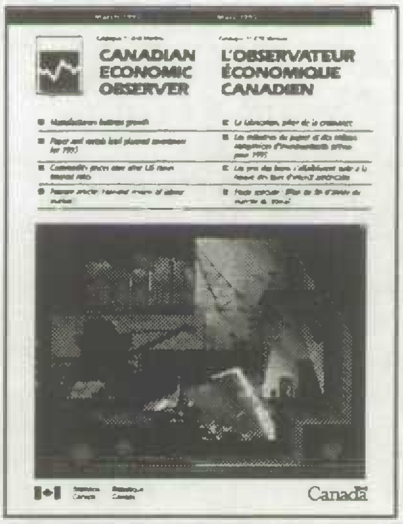
International travel between Canada and other countries, January 1995

	('000)	% change, previous month	('000)	% change, previous year
	Seasonally adjusted		Unadjusted	
Canadian trips abroad				
Auto trips to the United States				
Same-day	3,065	-3.3	2,522	-11.9
One or more nights	878	8.5	528	-1.4
Total trips, one or more nights				
United States	1,275	1.9	962	-1.8
Other countries	297	2.0	418	5.3
Travel to Canada				
Auto trips from the United States				
Same-day	1,944	0.8	1,398	31.8
One or more nights	729	1.7	280	5.8
Total trips, one or more nights				
United States	1,073	2.8	439	7.1
Other countries	310	3.7	129	18.4

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED FROM MARCH 17 to 23, 1995

Division/title of publication	Period	Catalogue number	Price: Issue/Subscription Canada (Cdn.$)	United States (US$)	Other countries (US$)
AGRICULTURE					
Farm products price index	January 1995	62-003	8/76	10/92	11/107
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE STATISTICS					
Juristat: victims' use of police and social services	Vol. 15, no. 6	85-002	5/60	6/72	7/84
CURRENT ECONOMIC ANALYSIS					
Canadian economic observer	March 1995	11-010	22/220	27/264	31/308
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND TOURISM					
Touriscope: international travel, advance information	January 1995	66-001P	7/70	9/84	10/98
HEALTH STATISTICS					
Mortality: summary list of causes	1992	84-209	30	36	42
Surgical procedures and treatments	1992-1993	82-217	20	24	28
HOUSING FAMILY AND SOCIAL STATISTICS					
Canadian social trends	Spring 1995	11-008E	9/34	11/41	12/48
INDUSTRY					
Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables	January 1995	32-011	6/60	8/72	9/84
Coal mines	1993	26-206	24	29	34
Monthly production of soft drinks	February 1995	32-001	3/30	4/36	5/42
Monthly survey of manufacturing	January 1995	31-001	19/190	23/228	27/266
Oil pipeline transport	December 1994	55-001	11/110	14/132	16/154
Particleboard, waferboard and fiberboard	January 1995	36-003	6/60	8/72	9/84
Primary iron and steel	January 1995	41-001	6/60	8/72	9/84
Refined petroleum products	December 1994	45-004	20/200	24/240	28/280
INDUSTRY MEASURES AND ANALYSIS					
Gross domestic product by industry	December 1994	15-001	14/140	17/168	20/196
INTERNATIONAL TRADE					
Imports by country	Jan.-Dec. 1994	65-006	90/360	108/432	126/504
INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL STOCK					
Industrial capacity utilization rates in Canada	4th quarter 1994	31-003	12/48	15/158	17/168
LABOUR					
Employment, earnings and hours	December 1994	72-002	29/285	35/342	40/399
Trusteed pension funds, financial statistics	1993	74-201	42	51	59
TRANSPORTATION					
Air carrier operations in Canada	January-March 1994	51-002	25/99	30/119	35/139
Surface and marine transport service bulletin	vol. 11, no. 2	50-002	11/80	14/96	16/112
SERVICES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY					
Science statistics service bulletin: Scientific and technological activities of provincial governments	1985-86 to 1993-94	88-001	8/76	10/92	12/107

NEW FROM STATISTICS CANADA



Canadian economic observer

The March issue of *Canadian economic observer*, Statistics Canada's flagship publication for economic statistics, presents a summary of current economic conditions and a feature article, "Year-end review of labour markets".

A statistical summary contains a wide range of tables and graphs on the principal economic indicators for Canada, the provinces and the major industrial nations.

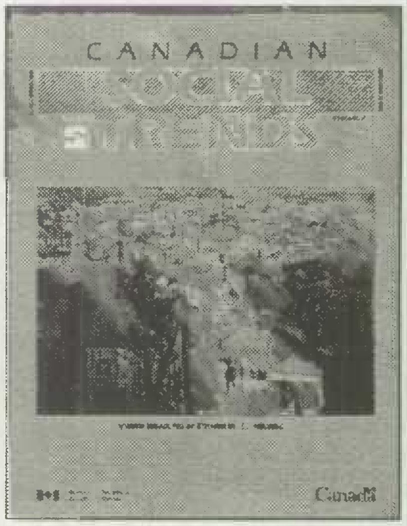
The March 1995 issue of Canadian economic observer *(11-010, $22/$220) is now available. For further information on this release, contact Dominique Pérusse (613-951-1789), Current Analysis Group.*

Canadian social trends

The spring 1995 issue of *Canadian social trends* features an article entitled "Women assaulted by strangers", as well as two articles about housing ("Housing tenure trends, 1951-1991" and "Housing affordability problems among renters"). Other articles include "Sport participation in Canada", "Working mothers" and "Women, men and work."

Each quarter, *Canadian social trends* integrates data from various sources to examine social trends and issues. It also features the latest social indicators and information about Statistics Canada's products and services.

The Spring 1995 issue of Canadian social trends (11-008E, $9/$34), *is now available. For further information on "Women assaulted by strangers", contact Karen Rodgers at (613) 951-2064, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. For further information on other articles in this issue, contact Cynthia Silver at (613) 951-2556, Housing Family and Social Statistics Division.*



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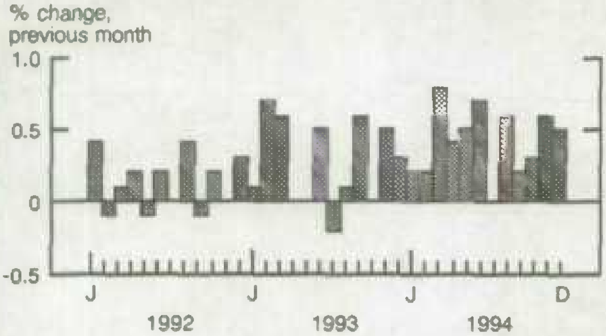
For further information, contact Mary Townson at (613) 951-1122, Marketing Division, or your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.

CURRENT TRENDS

Gross domestic product

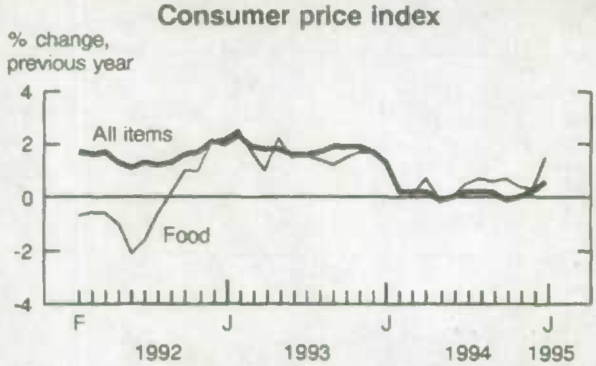


Real gross domestic product at factor cost grew 0.5% in December.

Composite index

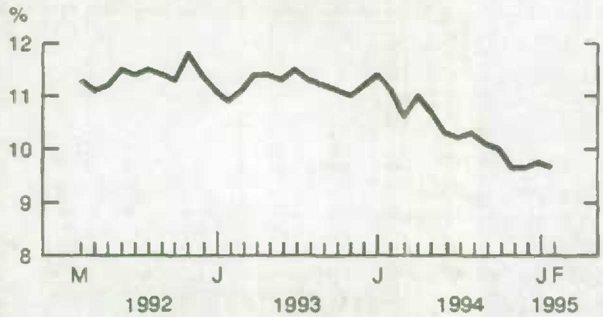
In February 1995, the composite index continued to grow moderately, up 0.5% from the month before.

Consumer price index



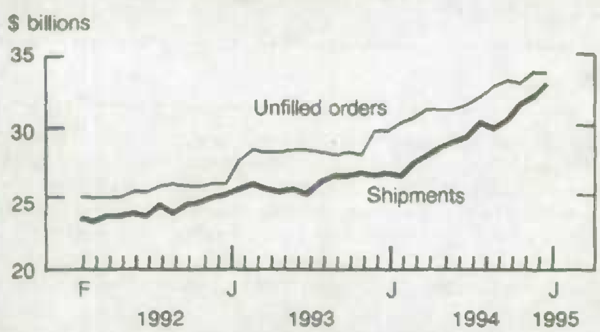
Consumers paid 0.6% more for goods and services in January 1995 than the year before. Food prices rose by 1.5%.

Unemployment rate



In February, the unemployment rate dipped 0.1 percentage points to 9.6%.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments jumped 3.0% in January to $33.1 billion. The level of unfilled orders grew by 0.5% to $33.9 billion.

Merchandise trade

The value of merchandise exports surged 6.2% in January, to $22.5 billion. Imports grew more than 5% to $20.1 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)	December	545.2	0.5%	5.1%
Composite index (1981=100)	February*	173.4	0.5%	6.9%
Operating profits of enterprises ($ billion)	3rd quarter	20.2	11.4%	48.5%
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade ($ billion)	January*	17.9	0.8%	7.1%
New motor vehicle sales ('000 units)	January	101.0	-6.5%	-5.3%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	February	13.5	-0.1%	2.5%
Unemployment rate (%)	February	9.6	-0.1†	-1.4†
Participation rate (%)	February	65.1	-0.2†	-0.3†
Labour income ($ billion)	December	34.8	0.7%	4.2%
Average weekly earnings ($)	December	572.69	0.3%	2.5%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports ($ billion)	January*	22.5	6.2%	41.8%
Merchandise imports ($ billion)	January*	20.1	5.4%	33.4%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in $ billion)	December	2.1	-0.2	1.5
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments ($ billion)	January*	33.1	3.0%	24.5%
New orders ($ billion)	January*	33.3	1.5%	24.6%
Unfilled orders ($ billion)	January*	33.9	0.5%	14.1%
Inventory/ shipments ratio	January*	1.22	-0.02	-0.15
Capacity utilization (%)	4th quarter	84.8	0.9†	4.6†
PRICES				
Consumer price index (1986=100)	January	132.1	0.4%	0.6%
Industrial product price index (1986=100)	January	125.7	1.7%	9.4%
Raw materials price index (1986=100)	January	130.6	4.1%	18.5%
New housing price index (1986=100)	January	135.8	0.0%	-0.3%

Note: *All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.*
* *new this week*
† *percentage point*

I•N•F•O•M•A•T

A weekly review

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Local calls: (204) 983-4020
Toll free: 1-800-661-7828
Fax: 1-204-983-7543

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

Local calls: (306) 780-5405
Toll free: 1-800-667-7164
Fax: 1-306-780-5403

Southern Alberta
Advisory Services
Statistics Canada
First Street Plaza, Room 401
138-4th Avenue Southeast
Calgary, Alberta
T2G 4Z6

Local calls: (403) 292-6717
Toll free: 1-800-882-5616
Fax: 1-403-292-4958

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: 1-800-563-7828
Fax: 1-403-495-5318

British Columbia and the Yukon
Advisory Services
Statistics Canada
Sinclair Centre, Suite 300
757 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6C 3C9

Local calls: (604) 666-3691
Toll free: 1-800-663-1551
Fax: 1-604-666-4863

Telecommunications Device for the Hearing Impaired
Toll free: 1-800-363-7629