

APR 27 2000

OVERVIEW

Exports declined for the second consecutive month in February (-4.5%), while imports fell for the third straight month (-2.8%).

In March, consumer prices rose 2.5% compared with March 2000, with almost half of the increase attributable to higher food and energy prices. However, this inflation rate is the lowest since August 2000.

Manufacturers' shipments were down 3.6% to \$43.3 billion in February, decreasing for the third time in four months and descending to their lowest level in 14 months.

Retail sales fell 0.3% in February, after advancing in the previous two months. Consumers spent less in the automotive, furniture and clothing sectors.

Wholesale sales fell 1.6% in February, led by a 10.2% drop in sales in the automobile sector. Without that sector, wholesale sales would have risen a modest 0.3%.

The value of merchandise exports by enterprises exporting goods valued at \$30,000 or more climbed 84% from 1993 to 1999. This increase is the result of a near doubling of the number of establishments exporting goods valued at more than \$1 million.

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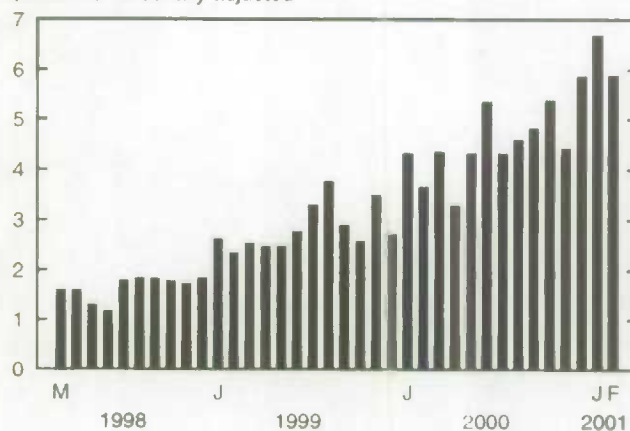
For the second consecutive month, Canada's merchandise exports declined in February (-4.5%), to \$35.1 billion. Lower exports to the United States accounted for two-thirds of the decline. The lower figures in January and February follow a year in which exports growth was the strongest since 1995. Imports fell for the third straight month in February (-2.8%), to \$29.3 billion.

The resulting trade surplus was almost \$5.9 billion in February, down from a peak of \$6.7 billion in January. Canada's trade surplus with the United States fell to \$9.1 billion, after surpassing the \$10 billion mark in January.

Exports fell in most industries, led by machinery and equipment, which fell 8.2% to \$8.5 billion. Exports of other machinery and equipment, which includes the subgroups telecommunications and television equipment, fibre optics and office equipment and machinery, fell 10.0%. This marks the second consecutive monthly decrease from the record set in December.

In the energy sector, exports fell 6.7% to \$5.8 billion. The decline was attributable in part to excess supply combined with a

\$ billions, seasonally adjusted



(continued on page 2)

... Exports and imports post further decline

drop in the price of natural gas. Even so, energy exports were 57.2% higher than in February 2000. Continued high demand for electricity in California extended the rise in electricity exports to the United States for the fourth straight month.

Exports of automotive products declined 2.7% to \$7.2 billion, as automakers continued to scale back production. Passenger car exports fell 3.4%, while truck exports declined for the fourth straight month, this time by 3.0%. Exports of motor vehicle products fell for the eighth straight month in February (-1.0%). Since June 2000, these exports have fallen 22.3%.

Driven by a decline in the demand for durable goods, exports of industrial goods and materials, mainly nickel and copper, decreased 3.8% to just under \$5.4 billion. Metal and alloy exports increased by 5.1%, mainly on the strength of a 41.3% rise in exports of precious metals and alloys.

Imports of automotive parts rose 6.1% after five consecutive months of declines, as manufacturers brought parts inventories in line with seasonal production levels. However, the increase was not enough to offset declines in imports of passenger autos (-13.3%) and trucks (-5.2%). Overall, companies imported

\$5.4 billion in automotive products, down 1.1% from January, and down 16.0% from February 2000.

Imports of energy products fell 21.8% to \$1.4 billion, mainly a result of a drop in crude petroleum imports. The machinery and equipment sector reported a 5.0% decline in its imports, led by a drop in imports of computer chips and semi-conductors.

Imports of industrial goods and materials rose 1.8% to \$6.0 billion. Within this sector, metals and metal ore imports fell 5.0%, owing to reduced demand for durable goods. As well, imports of chemicals and plastics decreased 0.7%, as markets remained stable in February. On the other hand, imports of other fabricated materials, of which electricity is a component, rebounded with a 28.9% increase.

The February 2001 issue of Canadian international merchandise trade (Internet: 65-001-XIB, \$14/\$141; paper: 65-001-XPB, \$19/\$188) includes tables by commodity and country on a customs basis. Current account data are available quarterly in Canada's balance of international payments (Internet: 67-001-XIB, \$29/\$93; paper: 67-001-XPB, \$38/\$124). For more information, contact Jocelyne Elibani (1 800 294-5583; 613-951-9647), International Trade Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 8.)

Energy and food account for almost half of price inflation

In March, prices of goods and services in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket rose an average 2.5% compared with March 2000. This increase, smaller than February's rise of 2.9%, is the lowest since August 2000. Almost half of the annual increase in the CPI in March is attributable to higher food and energy prices, and just over one-third came from higher food prices.

Year-over-year, energy prices were up 3.6% in March, the lowest annual increase since June 1999. Natural gas prices jumped 49.1%, a magnitude of increase not previously seen for this product. Exerting downward pressure, gasoline prices declined 3.2%, primarily on the strength of a 6.5% drop in prices in Ontario. This is the first time since March 1999 that gasoline prices have posted a year-over-year decline. For electricity, the

decrease in prices was due primarily to the residual effects of a \$200 rebate given to BC Hydro customers in February.

Consumers paid more than in March 2000 for many food items, particularly fresh vegetables (+23.5%), beef (+18.8%) and restaurant meals (+2.4%). Increases in the cost of mortgage interest, travel services and rent as well as homeowners' replacement cost were among the other factors contributing to the 12-month increase in the All-items CPI in March.

From February to March, the CPI rose 0.3%, slightly less than the 0.4% rise recorded from January to February. The main contributor to the increase was the 10.7% rise in natural gas prices. The upward push came from a 20.2% price rise in Ontario, where some distributors saw higher prices for natural gas supplies.

Electricity prices advanced 4.4% from February to March. This was due to the resumption of payments for BC Hydro consumers, since the unused part of the \$200 rebate offered in February offset only part of their March bill. Clothing prices rose 1.8% with the introduction of the new spring and summer clothing lines. Meat prices rose 2.1%, their largest increase since June 1990; both beef and pork contributed to this increase. Prices for travel tours rose 7.2%; the increase was due primarily to the seasonal trend toward higher rates for Florida destinations.

These monthly advances were moderated by lower prices for gasoline, air transportation and fuel oil. Gasoline prices fell 2.3%, with decreases in all provinces except Newfoundland and Nova Scotia as well as Yellowknife. Prices of air transportation decreased 10.7%, owing to greater availability of seat sales on selected domestic and transborder routes. Fuel oil prices declined for the third consecutive month (-3.8%) because of lower wholesale prices.

The March 2001 issue of Consumer Price Index (Internet: 62-001-XIB, \$8/\$77; paper: 62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. For more information, contact Joanne Moreau (613-951-7130; fax: 613-951-1539; infounit@statcan.ca), Prices Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 8.)

Consumer Price Index, March 2001

% change, previous year, not seasonally adjusted

	All items	Food	Shelter	Transportation	Energy
Canada	2.5	5.0	4.1	-0.8	3.6
Newfoundland	1.2	2.5	1.6	-1.1	-0.9
Prince Edward Island	2.7	4.9	4.0	1.6	7.6
Nova Scotia	1.9	3.8	2.5	-0.5	-1.0
New Brunswick	1.7	3.5	1.5	-0.1	0.3
Quebec	2.5	6.2	2.7	-0.2	0.4
Ontario	3.2	5.0	6.4	-1.3	8.4
Manitoba	2.8	4.6	5.3	-1.4	8.0
Saskatchewan	2.6	3.1	5.0	-0.5	4.8
Alberta	2.5	5.2	4.4	-0.4	4.0
British Columbia	0.9	3.4	-0.7	-0.3	-5.2
Whitehorse	2.5	4.8	3.4	0.2	9.0
Yellowknife	1.4	3.2	1.4	1.1	2.2

Manufacturers' shipments fall

After January's brief reprieve, manufacturers' shipments were down 3.6% to \$43.3 billion in February, decreasing for the third time in four months and descending to their lowest level in 14 months. Declines of this magnitude were last seen in June 1998 (-3.5%), at the time of the General Motors strike in the United States.

February's declines were widespread, with 17 of the 21 major industry groups reporting lower shipments. Manufacturers in recent months have faced a weakening U.S. economy, higher inventory levels and a growing economic pessimism. Consequently, they have seen contract cancellations, layoffs and production slowdowns.

The computer and electronic products industry carried the brunt of the decline, with shipments falling to \$2.6 billion, down 13.2% from January and 23.0% from December. In recent months, reduced demand and high inventories have resulted in manufacturing slowdowns and layoffs in this sector.

Shipments of motor vehicles declined for the fourth straight month (-5.2%), reaching \$4.9 billion, the lowest level since September 1998. This is in line with previously announced production cutbacks, as manufacturers attempted to reduce their inventories in response to slowing sales of new motor vehicles since the fall of 2000. The petroleum and coal product industry (-8.2%) also saw a significant decline in February, as did the aerospace products and parts industry (-9.0%), after record shipments in January.

Manufacturers' inventories, which have been building steadily over the last two years, rose 0.8% in February to \$65.3 billion. Aerospace products and parts manufacturers showed the greatest build-up: their inventories were up 3.4% to \$7.3 billion, their highest level on record. Inventories also rose in the chemical industry (+3.6%) and the petroleum and coal products industry (+5.6%). Inventories for the computer and electronic products industry decreased modestly (-1.0%).

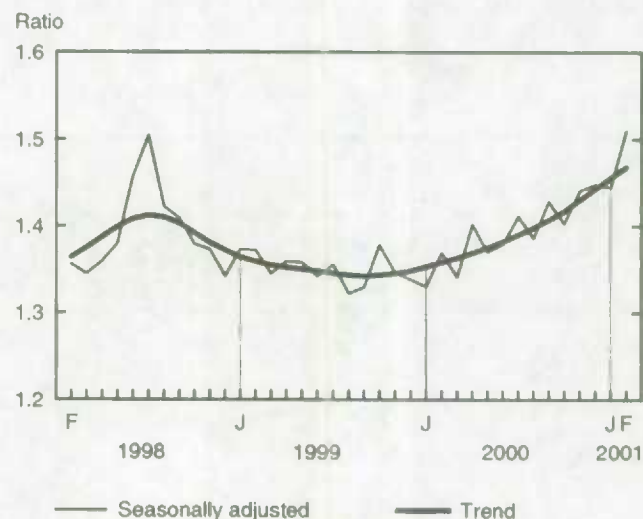
Manufacturers' shipments, February 2001 Seasonally adjusted

	\$ millions	% change, previous month
Canada	43,266	-3.6
Newfoundland	201	1.3
Prince Edward Island	101	3.1
Nova Scotia	701	-3.9
New Brunswick	989	-4.9
Quebec	10,417	-4.4
Ontario	22,500	-3.8
Manitoba	949	-4.9
Saskatchewan	627	-3.1
Alberta	3,782	-2.0
British Columbia	2,996	-0.8
Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut	4	0.5

Note to readers

Data collected from the Monthly Survey of Manufacturing are now classified according to the 1997 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), which replaces the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). Reference year 2000 is the last year for which data are released on an SIC basis. Data previous to the year 2001 have been re-calculated to the new classification system back to 1992.

Inventory-to-shipment ratio



The sharp decrease in shipments, which overshadowed the more gradual increase in inventories, caused February's inventory-to-shipment ratio to jump to 1.51, its highest level since May 1992.

Unfilled orders rose 4.1% in February to \$50.4 billion, after decreasing in the previous two months. The increase was largely due to new contracts in the aerospace products and parts industry and, to a lesser extent, the machine industry. In the electrical equipment, appliance and component industry, orders declined by 1.9% after tumbling 13.4% in January.

New orders increased 5.6% in February to \$45.3 billion, due to the significant resurgence of orders in the aerospace product and parts industry. However, excluding this industry, new orders were down 1.1% in February, declining for the fourth month in a row.

The February 2001 issue of *Monthly Survey of Manufacturing* (Internet: 31-001-XIB, \$15/\$147) will be available soon. More detailed data for shipments by province may be available on request. For more information, contact Craig Kuntz (613-951-7092; kuncrai@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 8.)

Retailers report lower sales

Retail sales fell 0.3% in February to \$23.6 billion after advancing 0.5% in January and 1.0% in December. Prior to December, retailers experienced a four-month period of essentially flat sales that followed important gains in May, June and July. In constant dollars, retail sales declined 0.5% in February; the only significant price increases were confined to food and clothing.

A 3.5% drop in sales by motor and recreational vehicle dealers led to an overall 1.8% decline for the automotive sector in February. With this decline, motor and recreational vehicle dealers lost most of the sales gains reported in the previous three months. Sales by retailers of automotive parts, accessories and services advanced 2.4%, while higher prices for gasoline at the pump pushed sales up by 0.8% in gasoline service stations.

Retail sales, February 2001
Seasonally adjusted

	\$ millions	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	23,642	-0.3	4.9
Newfoundland	377	-0.9	2.2
Prince Edward Island	103	-2.0	-0.1
Nova Scotia	691	-4.7	-1.9
New Brunswick	590	-0.9	4.3
Quebec	5,361	-0.1	3.8
Ontario	9,059	-0.5	4.9
Manitoba	799	-0.7	2.6
Saskatchewan	688	-0.6	2.1
Alberta	2,778	-0.4	8.6
British Columbia	3,113	1.5	6.7
Yukon	31	13.9	10.8
Northwest Territories	36	3.0	11.6
Nunavut	16	1.1	8.1

After enjoying a robust January, retailers in the furniture sector posted a 1.5% decrease in February, their largest sales decline in more than a year. Sales in the furniture sector have been strong in the last four years, with annual gains ranging from 8.0% to 11.0%.

Weak consumer spending in all types of clothing stores in February led to a 0.7% sales decline in the clothing sector. Retail sales in this sector have remained essentially unchanged since the fall of 2000.

Retailers in the general merchandise sector posted no change in sales in February, after two months of strong increases. Within this sector, the decline in department store sales was offset by an increase in sales by other general merchandise stores.

As in December 2000, higher prices of fresh products explained a large part of February's 2.4% increase in sales by food stores. These stores had posted a 2.8% decline in January, when food prices remained essentially unchanged compared with the previous month. In 2000, retailers in the food sector experienced their strongest annual increase in sales since 1997.

Retail sales declined in February in all provinces except British Columbia (+1.5%). However, sales in that province declined 1.1% in January, when most of the other provinces experienced strong sales. Retailers in British Columbia have generally been reporting strong sales gains since the fall of 1998. British Columbia and Alberta continue to report strong sales, while other provinces were affected by sales slowdowns during the second half of 2000.

The February 2001 issue of Retail trade (Internet: 63-005-XIB, \$16/\$155; paper: 63-005-XPB, \$21/\$206) is now available. This issue includes the revised 2000 estimates. To order data, or for general information, contact Client Services (1 877 421-3067; 613-951-3549; retailinfo@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541; gratpau@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.

Wholesalers of automotive products hit the wall

Wholesale sales fell 1.6% in February to \$31.8 billion as a result of the slump in the automobile sector, which accounts for about 17% of wholesale activity. Without the auto sector, wholesale sales would have risen a modest 0.3%. They have generally been stable since mid-2000.

After seeing a healthy rise in sales last month, wholesalers of motor vehicles, parts and accessories hit the wall in February. Affected by production cutbacks and lower demand in both the United States and Canada, they saw their sales drop 10.2%. Wholesale sales of motor vehicles, parts and accessories have been generally falling since the spring of 2000.

Wholesalers of computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery did not escape the volatility that is affecting their sector. Their sales fell 4.4% in February, as a result of slowing demand for personal computers, telecommunications equipment and associated components. Despite this drop, wholesale sales in the computer and electronic sector have been generally advancing since the start of 2000.

Wholesale trade, February 2001
Seasonally adjusted

	\$ millions	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
Canada	31,766	-1.6	2.3
Newfoundland	228	-1.6	1.9
Prince Edward Island	50	-4.2	-8.2
Nova Scotia	558	-2.3	-4.7
New Brunswick	403	6.5	2.3
Quebec	6,736	-0.3	10.0
Ontario	15,488	-3.1	-0.7
Manitoba	926	-3.7	3.7
Saskatchewan	932	-3.7	-3.6
Alberta	3,190	0.4	7.8
British Columbia	3,219	1.4	-0.2
Yukon	13	18.3	34.2
Northwest Territories	20	22.3	15.5
Nunavut	3	-9.1	17.8

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... Wholesalers of automotive products hit the wall

After January's drop, wholesalers of beverage, drug and tobacco products saw their sales recover, rising 5.7% in February. The main contributors to the increase were the wholesaling of beverages and of toiletries and preparations. Notable increases were also reported by the farm machinery, equipment and supplies sector (+2.9%) and the lumber and building materials sector (+1.3%). Food products bounced back in February, rising 1.0%.

Among the provinces, a 6.5% increase in wholesale sales was posted by New Brunswick, after six consecutive months of falling sales. Sales were especially strong in computers and electronics, industrial and other machinery, and metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment.

Elsewhere in the Atlantic provinces, lower sales were reported in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The severe winter weather that battered this region dampened sales in February. In addition, in Prince Edward Island, the trade dispute over potatoes continued to affect the sales of food product wholesalers, a segment that represents almost 38% of P.E.I.'s wholesale activity.

In British Columbia, wholesalers saw their sales increase for a second consecutive month (+1.4%). This was only the second time since the summer of 1999 that sales have increased for two consecutive months. Contributing to this increase were lumber and building materials as well as metals, hardware, plumbing and heating, two key sectors with strong links to housing and renovation.

Wholesale inventories edged up 0.2% in February to \$44.3 billion. Faced with flattening sales, wholesalers continued to accumulate inventory. The inventory-to-sales ratio rose from 1.37 in January to 1.40 in February. The ratio has been climbing since mid-2000.

The February 2001 issue of Wholesale trade (Internet: 63-008-X1B, \$14/\$140) is now available. For data or general information, contact Client Services (1 877 421-3067; 613-951-3549; wholesaleinfo@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Alexander Hays (613-951-3552; haysale@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division.

A profile of Canadian exporters

In all, 29,243 establishments exported commodities in 1999, 26% more than in 1993, according to the second issue of the Canadian Exporter Registry. The value of merchandise exports from these enterprises was \$325 billion, an 84% increase from 1993.

This increase in the value of exports from 1993 to 1999 is the result of a near doubling of the number of establishments exporting goods valued at more than \$1 million. The number of establishments exporting goods worth less than \$1 million declined during the latter part of the 1990s, as did the total value of their exports. Most of this drop occurred in Canada's trade with countries other than the United States.

Furthermore, the number of small establishments reporting annual exports of between \$30,000 and \$99,999 has been declining since reaching a peak of 7,655 in 1997. This can be attributed to a

Note to readers

The Exporter Registry is a joint initiative of Statistics Canada and Team Canada, a network of federal departments and agencies that delivers international business development services to Canadians. Data were released for the first time from this registry in March 2000 for the years 1993 to 1997. (On this subject, see the March 31, 2000 issue of Infomat.)

combination of influences, such as the growth of small establishments and attrition due to increased specialization and concentration.

The average value of commodities exported by large establishments—those with exports worth \$25 million or more—increased from 1997 to 1999, while the average export value of small establishments—those with exports worth less than \$1 million—showed little change. This could be the consequence

Exporting establishments by value of exports

	1993			1999		
	Number of establishments	Value of exports	Share of exports ¹	Number of establishments	Value of exports	Share of exports ¹
		\$ millions	%		\$ millions	%
Total establishments	23,130	176,352	100.0	29,243	325,203	100.0
\$30,000 to \$99,999	6,674	391	0.2	6,128	367	0.1
\$100,000 to \$999,999	9,777	3,401	1.9	12,138	4,603	1.4
\$1,000,000 to \$4,999,999	3,927	9,098	5.2	6,199	14,880	4.6
\$5,000,000 to \$24,999,999	1,853	20,803	11.8	3,238	37,004	11.4
\$25,000,000 and over	899	142,659	80.9	1,540	268,349	82.5

¹ Percentages may not add to total due to rounding.

(continued on page 6)

... A profile of Canadian exporters

of amalgamations and takeovers, with the enterprise streamlining exports among select establishments. Some of the loss in small exporters may also be attributed to methodology changes that occurred in various divisions of Statistics Canada in 1997.

The three industry groups that posted the largest growth in exports by dollar value from 1993 to 1999 were retail trade (+262%), communication and other utilities (+189%) and agriculture and related services (+124%).

In 1999, large establishments accounted for 5% of all establishments, but their exports accounted for almost 83% of the value of all exports. Smaller establishments represented 62% of all establishments but accounted for only 1.5% of the value of all exports.

A publication presenting tables and explaining the methodology of the *Exporter Registry* will be available by mid-spring 2001. For more information, contact Cynthia Carter (613-951-6755), International Trade Division.

New from Statistics Canada



Canadian economic observer April 2001

The April issue of Statistics Canada's flagship publication for economic statistics, *Canadian economic observer*, analyses current economic conditions, summarizes the major economic events that occurred in March and presents a feature article reviewing the economy's performance in 2000.

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

The April 2001 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (paper: 11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) is now available. For more information, contact Cyndi Bloskie (613-951-3634; ceo@statcan.ca), Current Economic Analysis Group.

Travel-log Spring 2001

The Spring 2001 issue of *Travel-log*, Statistics Canada's quarterly tourism newsletter, features the article "Canada benefiting from cruising boom," which describes trends in the cruise market for the East and West coasts. According to the article, cruise ships sailing the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are bringing international visitors to Canada in unprecedented numbers.

Each quarter, *Travel-log* examines the trends of the Travel Price Index. It also features the latest travel indicators, travellers' characteristics and the international travel account.

The Spring 2001 issue of *Travel-log* (Internet: 87-003-XIE, \$5/\$16; paper: 87-003-XPB, \$13/\$42) is now available. For more information, contact Monique Beyrouiti (613-951-1673; fax: 613-951-2909; beyrmon@statcan.ca), Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics.

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New from Statistics Canada

Farm Product Price Index

Starting with February 2001 data, Statistics Canada's index for measuring the change in prices farmers receive for the agricultural commodities they produce and sell gets a new look. The Farm Product Price Index offers the same authoritative data as its predecessor, but with substantial improvements.

The index has been reformulated to capture the continual shift in agricultural commodities produced and sold, and introduces the seasonal basket concept. The new index uses 1997 as the time base (1997=100) and covers more agricultural commodities.

The monthly publication *Farm Product Price Index* (Internet: 21-007-XIB, free) is available on Statistics Canada's Web site (www.statcan.ca). Under "Our products and services," choose "Free Publications," then "Agriculture." For more information, contact Gail-Ann Breese (204-983-3445; fax: 204-983-3122; gail-ann.breese@statcan.ca), Agriculture Division.



Services indicators Fourth quarter 2000

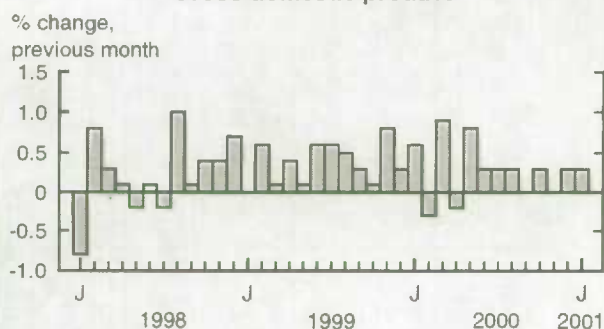
The most recent issue of *Services indicators* includes the feature article "The services industries and trade in services," which describes the contribution of the services industries to Canada's output and employment and offers a statistical review of trade in services for Canada and some other G-7 countries.

Services indicators is a quarterly publication that profiles the services industries. Each issue carries many updated tables and charts based on various services industries' output, finances, employment and remuneration data over the most recent eight quarters.

The fourth quarter 2000 issue of *Services indicators* (Internet: 63-016-XIB, \$26/\$87; paper: 63-016-XPB, \$35/\$116) is now available. For more information, contact Don Little (613-951-6739; littldon@statcan.ca), Services Industries Division.

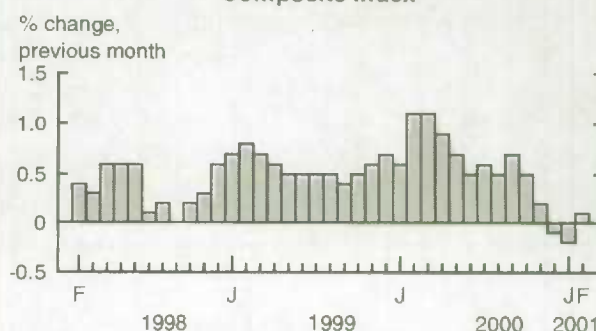
Current trends

Gross domestic product



Gross domestic product rose 0.3% in January, the same pace as in December.

Composite Index



The leading indicator posted a 0.1% growth in February due to a firming in housing and services.

Consumer Price Index



Consumer prices for goods and services were 2.5% higher in March than they were a year earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices rose 1.7%.

Unemployment rate



In March, the unemployment rate edged up 0.1 percentage points to 7.0%, as more people entered the labour force in search of work.

Manufacturing



Manufacturers' shipments fell 3.6% in February to \$43.3 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders recovered some lost ground, rising 4.1% to \$50.4 billion.

Merchandise trade



In February, the value of merchandise exports declined 4.5% to \$35.1 billion. Imports fell for the third straight month, declining 2.8% to \$29.3 billion.

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

Latest statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
GENERAL				
Gross domestic product (\$ billions, 1992)	January	799.8	0.3%	3.2%
Composite Index (1992=100)	March*	166.6	-0.1%	4.1%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billions)	Q4 2000	54.0	2.2%	13.9%
Capacity utilization (%)	Q4 2000	85.4	-0.2†	0.7†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billion)	February*	23.6	-0.3%	4.9%
Department store sales (\$ billions)	February	1.62	-1.1%	8.9%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	February	125.6	-4.0%	-3.5%
Wholesale trade (\$ billion)	February*	31.8	-1.6%	2.3%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	March	15.07	0.2%	1.6%
Unemployment rate (%)	March	7.0	0.1†	0.2†
Participation rate (%)	March	66.1	0.1†	0.2†
Average weekly earnings (\$)¹	January	659.46	0.1%	1.9%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	March	168	-1.8%	-1.8%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billions)	February	35.1	-4.5%	8.5%
Merchandise imports (\$ billions)	February	29.3	-2.8%	1.9%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billions)	February	5.9	-0.8	2.2
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billions)¹	February	43.3	-3.6%	-0.3%
New orders (\$ billions)¹	February	45.3	5.6%	5.6%
Unfilled orders (\$ billions)¹	February	50.4	4.1%	7.0%
Inventory/shipments ratio¹	February	1.51	0.07	0.14
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	March*	115.6	0.3%	2.5%
Industrial Product Price Index (1992=100)	February	129.3	0.5%	2.6%
Raw Materials Price Index (1992=100)	February	146.5	1.5%	4.7%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	February	104.9	0.3%	2.4%

Note: All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.

* new this week

† percentage point

¹ These estimates are now based on the North American Industry Classification (NAICS). They are not comparable to the previously published estimates based on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) of 1980.

Infomat

A weekly review

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