



# Infommat

## A Weekly Review

Friday, June 7, 2002

### INSIDE

#### ◆ Surging natural gas exports boost current account surplus

Canada's current account surplus with the rest of the world reached \$5.9 billion during the first quarter of 2002, an increase of \$1.5 billion on a seasonally adjusted basis. The surplus increased for the first time in a year.

#### ◆ New-home market continues its feverish pace

Contractors took out a record value of residential building permits for the second time this year, as the new-home market continued its feverish pace. Municipalities issued \$2.6 billion in housing permits in April, up 10.1% from March, and 8.9% higher than the previous record reached in February.

#### ◆ Foreign travellers spend more in Canada

Canada's international travel deficit — the difference between what Canadians spend abroad and what foreigners spend in Canada — dropped for the seventh consecutive quarter. The deficit fell from \$90 million in the fourth quarter of 2001 to \$30 million in the first quarter of 2002.

#### ◆ Virtually no change in weekly earnings

In March, average weekly earnings for all employees were virtually unchanged from February at \$674.04. Compared with March 2001, they rose 1.9%, slightly above the increase in the Consumer Price Index for the same period.

### Economy grows at fastest pace in over two years

Canada's economy recorded its best quarter of the new millennium as a hot housing market and a rebound in manufacturing and exports propelled the gross domestic product (GDP) to a 1.5% increase in the first three months of 2002. Measured on an annualized basis, the economy grew at a rate of 6.0%.

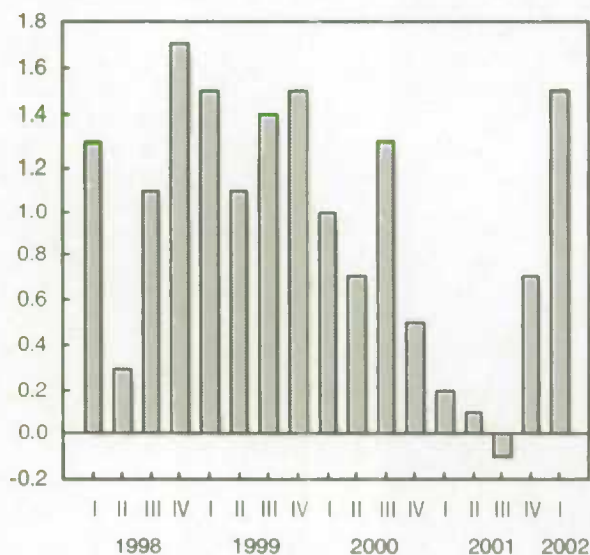
The pace of growth was more than twice that of the previous quarter, and the best since the fourth quarter of 1999. Virtually all the economic growth came during January and February. GDP growth leveled off in March.

Final domestic demand gained a solid 0.9% after a flat fourth quarter, driven mainly by a steep hike in housing investment and robust consumer spending. Manufacturers met demand by stepping up production, drawing down inventories and increasing imports.

*(continued on page 2)*

#### Gross domestic product

Quarterly % change



## Economy grows at... (continued from page 1)

Manufacturing increased 2.5%, reversing five quarters of decline. The gain was propelled by makers of information and communications technology and transportation equipment, as well as chemical and wood products. After struggling to reduce inventory through most of 2001, manufacturers cleared \$4.1 billion of mostly raw materials and goods-in-process during the first quarter.

Household furnishings and appliances, and recreational equipment, remained a source of strength for manufacturers. At the same time, car dealers continued selling new motor vehicles in droves, although sales eased off late in the quarter.

Consumer spending and housing investment each contributed about one-quarter of GDP growth. Investment in new housing construction surged 10.5% to an all-time high in the first quarter, breaking the record set during the housing boom of the late 1980s.

Consumer spending was buoyed by a healthy 1.1% gain in labour income in the first quarter, although rising prices slowed its growth to 0.6% from 1.0% in the fourth quarter. Much of the strength of spending on goods came in January, as consumers took a breather in February and March and retailing activity plateaued at high volumes.

Corporate profits also rebounded strongly in the first quarter, jumping 13.8% and recovering almost half the ground lost since the first quarter of 2001. Profit gains were widespread.

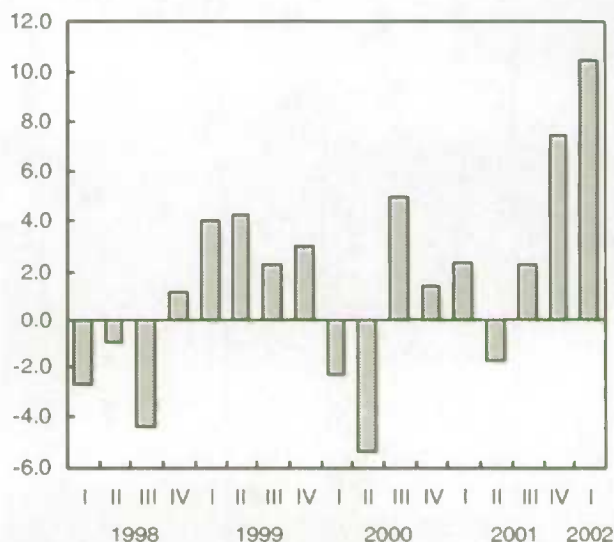
### Gross domestic product, \$ chained (1997)<sup>1</sup>

	Change	Annualized change	Year-over- year change
	%		
First quarter 2001	0.2	0.6	2.6
Second quarter 2001	0.1	0.3	2.0
Third quarter 2001	-0.1	-0.5	0.6
Fourth quarter 2001	0.7	2.9	0.8
First quarter 2002	1.5	6.0	2.1

<sup>1</sup> The **change** is the growth rate from one period to the next. The **annualized change** is the growth rate compounded annually. The **year-over-year change** is the growth rate of a given quarter compared with the same quarter in a previous year.

## Investment in new housing construction

Quarterly % change



Exports advanced 1.4%, halting four straight quarterly declines as the U.S. economy continued to recover. The strength came mostly from exports of energy, industrial and consumer goods, while machinery and equipment exports continued to slide. Imports rose 1.3%, halting a five-quarter slump.

On a monthly basis, gross domestic product by industry edged ahead by only 0.1% in March, although it was the sixth consecutive monthly increase.

Insatiable demand for new housing was behind the increase as residential construction surged 4.9%. On the other hand, the manufacturing sector declined 0.8% in March after sizeable gains in January and February, and retailing activity fell 0.7%. Declining sales of new motor vehicles were responsible for much of the weakness in retailing.

The first quarter 2002 issue of *National income and expenditure accounts, quarterly estimates* (Internet: 13-001-XIB, \$33/\$109; paper: 13-001-XPB, \$44/\$145) will be available soon. For further information, contact the information officer (613-951-3640), Income and Expenditure Accounts Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 7.)



## Surging natural gas exports boost current account surplus

Canada's current account surplus with the rest of the world reached \$5.9 billion between January and March this year, up \$1.5 billion on a seasonally adjusted basis. The surplus increased for the first time in a year.

Almost the entire increase resulted from a larger quarterly surplus on goods, led by a 28% surge in natural gas exports.

Net profits accruing to direct investors fell, while the travel deficit remained low.

The current account, which summarizes all foreign transactions associated with current economic activity in Canada, includes four types of transactions: trade in goods, trade in services, flows of investment income and transfers. A surplus is seen as positive for the Canadian currency.

The surplus on goods reached \$14.2 billion in the first quarter, an increase of \$1.2 billion. Energy exports led the way, rising \$1.4 billion. In addition to natural gas, crude petroleum and electricity also contributed to the gain.

The goods surplus with the United States rose in the first quarter after three straight declines. At the same time, the deficit contracted noticeably with the European Union, while widening with other trading areas.

The deficit on investment income was just under \$7.0 billion, down from \$7.4 billion in the fourth quarter of 2001.

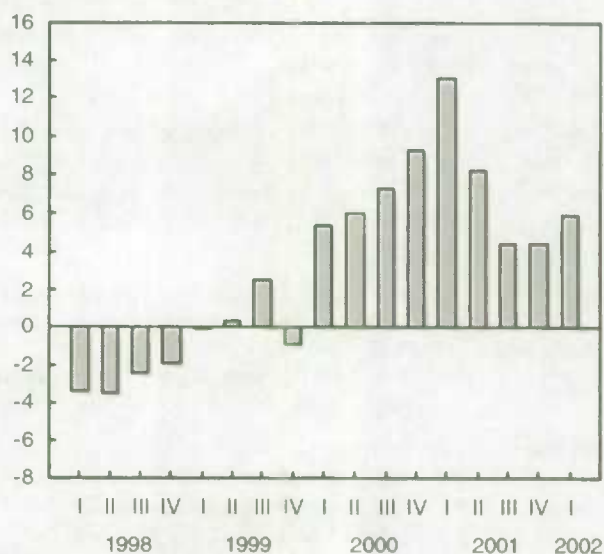
Canada's travel deficit — the difference between what Canadians spend abroad and what foreigners spend in Canada — fell to \$30 million, down from a revised \$90 million in the fourth quarter last year. It was the smallest since the third quarter of 1974.

Foreign travellers injected just under \$4.2 billion into the Canadian economy during the first three months of this year, up 3.6% from the previous quarter. Canadians spent just over \$4.2 billion outside the country, up 2.0%.

In the financial account, which is not seasonally adjusted, foreign direct investment into Canada increased \$17.1 billion between January and March. This was the largest investment during the past five quarters.

### Current account balance

\$ billions, seasonally adjusted



The main factor was foreign acquisitions of \$10.6 billion, primarily in the energy and mining sectors. The vast majority, over 90%, came from American firms that were active in acquiring Canadian companies.

On the other hand, Canadian direct investment abroad amounted to \$7.2 billion, virtually unchanged from the fourth quarter. Acquisitions of foreign companies played a very small role, hitting their lowest level in nine quarters.

Canadian portfolio investors, mainly mutual and pension funds, increased their holdings in foreign securities by \$11.7 billion in the first quarter. Higher Canadian holdings of foreign equities accounted for \$9.2 billion of this total. Canadians invested \$2.5 billion in foreign bonds in the quarter, entirely issued in the U.S.

*The first quarter 2002 issue of **Canada's balance of international payments** (Internet: 67-001-X1B, \$29/\$93; paper: 67-001-XPB, \$38/\$124) will be available soon. For more information, contact Arthur Ridgeway (613-951-8907), Balance of Payments Division.*

## New-home market continues its feverish pace

Contractors took out a record value of residential building permits for the second time this year in April, as the new-home market continued its feverish pace.

Municipalities issued \$2.6 billion in housing permits, up 10.1% from March, and 8.9% higher than the previous record reached in February. Strong activity will be maintained on the residential building sites as construction of 19,800 dwelling units was authorized in April alone.

Consumers have been attracted to the new-home market by a scarcity of existing vacant dwellings, low mortgage rates and strong consumer confidence. Furthermore, strength in the level of employment is also related to the new record for construction intentions in the residential sector.

Building permits for multi-family dwellings rose 40.3% in April to a record \$867 million, as proposed projects for apartment units soared. The value of permits for single-family dwellings remained virtually unchanged from March at \$1.8 billion.

The total value of building permits reached \$3.9 billion, the highest level since August 1989. On a year-to-date basis, the value of building permits totalled \$15.1 billion, up 13.7% from the first four months of 2001. This advance was entirely the result of a 38.3% increase in residential construction intentions.

On the other hand, builders took out \$1.2 billion in non-residential permits, down 3.0% from March and the lowest level since February 2000. Permits for industrial projects, the only component to increase, showed a spectacular gain of 62.8% to \$317 million, with increases in all categories. This gain was largely the result of proposed projects in the Vancouver and London areas.

Encouraging signs continued to emerge from the manufacturing sector that could have a positive influence on industrial projects. According to the April Business Conditions Survey, producers indicated that inventories were under control, orders were picking up and it was time to increase production.

Meanwhile, commercial intentions fell 9.8% to \$629 million, mostly due to fewer projects in three categories: hotels and restaurants, laboratories and office buildings.

After recording stunning levels in 2001, permits in the institutional component declined for the fourth straight month this year. The value of institutional permits fell 25.4% to \$267 million because of a large decrease in the medical and hospital category.

At the provincial level, Ontario had the most significant monthly decrease in terms of dollars (-15.4% to \$498 million) because of a strong decline in the commercial component in the census

**Value of building permits by census metropolitan area**  
Seasonally adjusted

	April 2002 <sup>P</sup>	March to April 2002	January to April 2002	January- April 2001 to January- April 2002
	\$ millions	% change	\$ millions	% change
St. John's	25.2	22.5	77.2	68.6
Halifax	35.1	16.6	145.4	78.8
Saint John	8.5	33.1	29.0	21.5
Chicoutimi- Jonquière	12.0	-27.9	40.2	-44.6
Québec	48.4	-30.2	205.0	-23.1
Sherbrooke	16.7	-4.1	78.7	77.0
Trois-Rivières	18.6	17.2	51.3	79.0
Montréal	330.7	-8.6	1,520.8	3.5
Hull	20.2	-29.9	133.6	0.4
Ottawa	182.0	71.8	496.1	-14.3
Kingston	44.7	466.1	76.9	22.9
Oshawa	36.4	-30.1	193.2	30.4
Toronto	840.4	28.2	2,910.1	-4.5
Hamilton	70.0	-46.4	391.2	38.3
St. Catharines-Niagara	53.2	-48.0	222.1	82.2
Kitchener	82.2	7.4	335.3	27.5
London	61.9	33.9	215.7	-4.3
Windsor	61.0	0.3	250.4	48.3
Sudbury	14.8	181.9	25.8	25.1
Thunder Bay	3.9	-85.2	83.2	188.7
Winnipeg	34.1	-1.4	151.0	9.5
Regina	11.9	49.8	45.8	-39.7
Saskatoon	23.2	19.9	114.5	33.0
Calgary	266.5	18.1	896.7	30.6
Edmonton	118.3	-14.1	554.6	33.5
Abbotsford	11.3	-24.0	55.6	-10.3
Vancouver	395.0	27.2	1,186.3	6.3
Victoria	27.9	-39.9	153.4	32.1

<sup>P</sup> Preliminary data.

metropolitan areas of Hamilton and St. Catharines-Niagara. In contrast, New Brunswick recorded the largest increase (+302.3% to \$41 million) because of a recreational project.

The dichotomy between the performance in residential and non-residential sectors so far this year has been reflected at the census metropolitan area level across Canada. On a year-to-date basis, all 28 census metropolitan areas have shown gains in the residential sector. However, 16 have posted declines in the non-residential sector.

The April 2002 issue of *Building permits* (Internet: 64-001-XIE, \$14/\$145) will be available soon. To obtain data, contact Vere Clarke (613-951-6556 or 1-800-579-8533; [clarver@statcan.ca](mailto:clarver@statcan.ca)). For more information, contact Étienne Saint-Pierre (613-951-2025; [saineti@statcan.ca](mailto:saineti@statcan.ca)), Investment and Capital Stock Division.



## Foreign travellers spend more in Canada

Canada's international travel deficit — the difference between what Canadians spend abroad and what foreigners spend in Canada — recorded its seventh consecutive decline in the first quarter of 2002.

The deficit fell from a revised \$90 million in the fourth quarter of 2001 to an estimated \$30 million in the first quarter. This was the lowest deficit since the third quarter of 1974 (apart from a one-quarter surplus at the time of the Vancouver Expo 86).

This result was mostly due to an increase in spending by foreign visitors in Canada, which exceeded the growth recorded in Canadian spending abroad. From January to March, foreign visitors injected just under \$4.2 billion in the Canadian economy, 3.6% more than in the fourth quarter. Canadian travellers spent just over \$4.2 billion outside the country, up 2.0% from the fourth quarter. In both cases, this was the first increase since the first quarter of 2001.

Foreigners made 11.4 million same-day and overnight trips to Canada in the first quarter, an 8.0% rise from the fourth quarter of 2001. Also, travel outside the country by Canadian travellers increased 6.1% to 9.8 million trips.

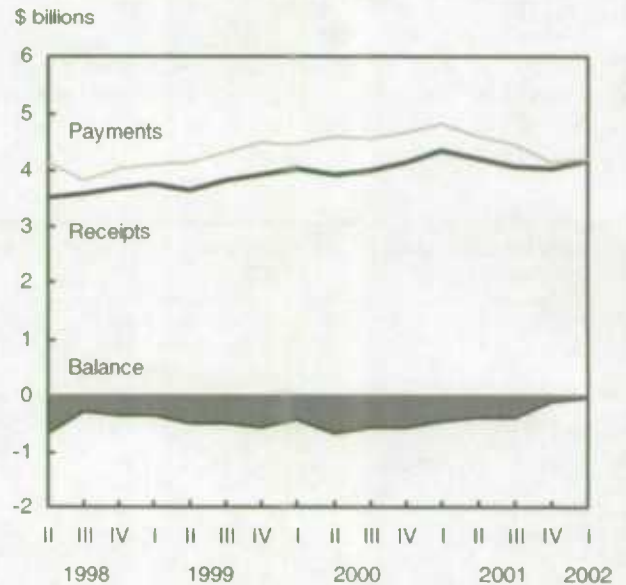
Canada's travel deficit with the United States declined from \$67 million in the fourth quarter to \$40 million in the first quarter of 2002, because of a larger increase in both the number of trips and travel spending made by American visitors.

Americans took just under 10.4 million same-day and overnight trips north of the border in the first quarter, 8.2% more than in the fourth quarter of 2001. They spent an estimated \$2.5 billion, up 3.6%. During the first quarter of 2002, the Canadian dollar depreciated 0.9% against the U.S. dollar on average.

Canadians spent just under \$2.6 billion south of the border in the first quarter, up 2.4%. Their number of trips increased 6.9% to 8.7 million.

Overseas travellers spent slightly more than \$1.6 billion in Canada, a 3.6% increase compared with the fourth quarter. They

Canada's travel deficit



made 6.1% more trips in the first quarter, up to just over 1.0 million. Canadians, for their part, took 1.1 million trips to overseas destinations in the first quarter, up slightly (+0.6%). Their spending on those trips rose 1.5% to just over \$1.6 billion.

Consequently, Canada's travel balance with countries other than the United States showed a surplus of \$10 million in the first quarter of 2002, following a revised deficit of \$24 million in the fourth quarter. This was the first travel surplus with overseas countries in more than 10 years. During the period, the Canadian dollar appreciated against several major European currencies, including the Euro.

For more information, contact Jocelyn Lapierre (613-951-3720) or Client services (1-800-307-3382; 613-951-7608; [cult.tourstats@statcan.ca](mailto:cult.tourstats@statcan.ca)), Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics.

## Virtually no change in weekly earnings

In March, average weekly earnings for all employees were virtually unchanged from February at \$674.04. Compared with March 2001, they rose 1.9%, slightly above the 1.8% increase in the Consumer Price Index for the same period.

**Average weekly earnings, all industries, March 2002**  
Seasonally adjusted

	\$	% change, previous month	% change, previous year
<b>Canada</b>	<b>674.04</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	617.79	-0.1	2.6
Prince Edward Island	526.61	-0.6	1.8
Nova Scotia	582.59	-0.5	2.6
New Brunswick	598.42	0.2	1.4
Quebec	636.23	0.1	2.4
Ontario	718.46	0.2	1.7
Manitoba	600.11	0.1	2.8
Saskatchewan	609.12	0.5	2.3
Alberta	697.99	0.4	2.7
British Columbia	670.04	0.1	0.5
Yukon	759.01	-0.6	2.1
Northwest Territories <sup>1</sup>	883.80	0.0	2.4
Nunavut <sup>1</sup>	799.65	1.3	1.2

<sup>1</sup> Data not seasonally adjusted.

At the provincial level, gains in average weekly earnings since March 2001 ranged from 2.8% in Manitoba to only 0.5% in British Columbia. In Manitoba, earnings were strong in three sectors: finance and insurance; professional, scientific and technical services; and health care and social assistance. In British Columbia, the weaker than average earnings growth in goods-producing industries was due mostly to reduced paid-hours in sawmills in the previous 12 months.

Average hourly earnings for hourly paid employees stood at \$17.03, unchanged from February but 2.8% higher than in March 2001. Average weekly hours and average overtime hours were essentially unchanged.

Employees on payrolls increased by 0.2 % to 27,000. Employment growth would have been substantially higher except for the Ontario public service strike that reduced employment in public administration by about 30,000. All sectors recorded employment gains except public administration and forestry.

There were notable gains in real estate and rental and leasing, professional, scientific and technical services, wholesale trade, manufacturing and in construction. At the provincial level, Quebec (+17,900) recorded the strongest employment gain, followed by Alberta (+4,900).

Detailed data will be available in the monthly publication *Employment, earnings and hours* (Internet: 72-002-XIB, \$24/\$240). For more information, contact the Client Services Unit (613-951-4090; 1-866-873-8788; labour@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Robert Frindt (613-951-4069) or Jean Leduc (613-951-4061), Labour Statistics Division.

## Survey of Household Spending: Public-use microdata file

Understanding consumer spending is important for a wide variety of users, including social policy analysts, advocacy and community groups, businesses and all levels of government.

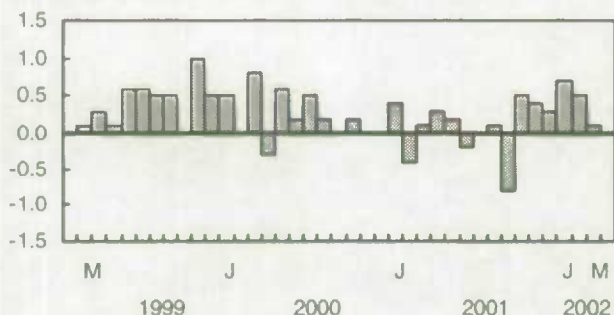
The *Public-use microdata file from the 2000 Survey of Household Spending* offers users information about spending on a wide variety of goods and services as well as dwelling characteristics and information about household ownership of equipment.

The *Public-use microdata file for the Survey of Household Spending in 2000* (CD-ROM: 62M0004XCB, \$3,000) is now available. For more information, contact Client Services (613-951-7355; 1-888-297-7355; income@statcan.ca), Income Statistics Division.

## Current trends

### Gross domestic product

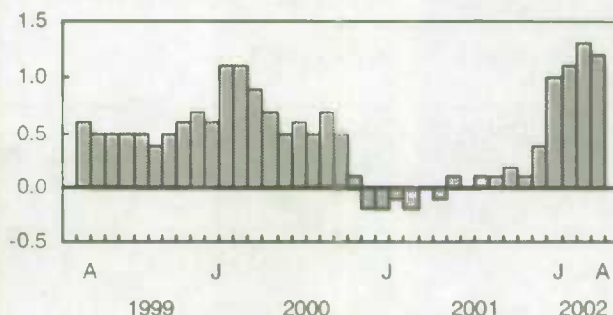
% change, previous month



Total economic activity advanced 0.1% in March, after rising 0.5% in February.

### Composite index

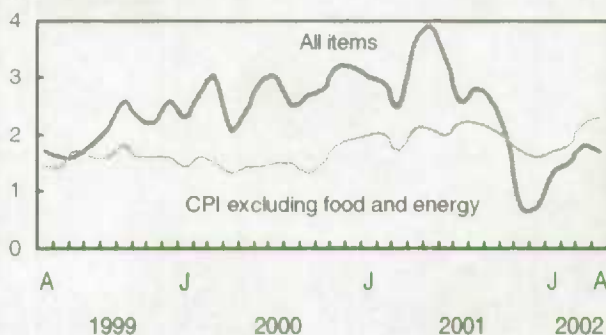
% change, previous month



The leading indicator gained 1.2% in April. Manufacturing turned up noticeably as household and export demand improved.

### Consumer Price Index

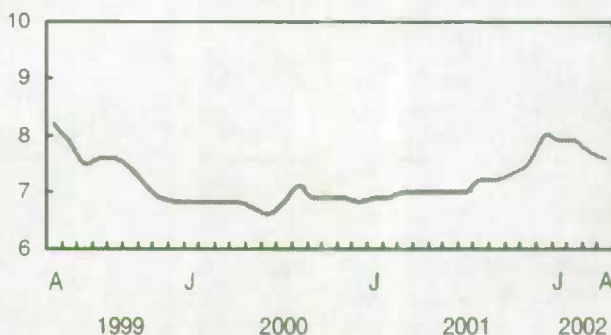
% change, previous year



Consumer prices for goods and services were 1.7% higher in April than they were a year earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices rose 2.3%.

### Unemployment rate

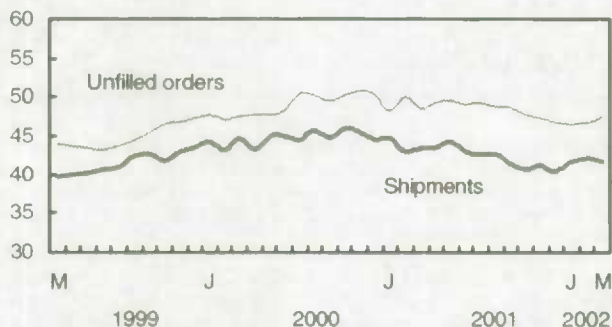
%



In April, the unemployment rate fell 0.1 percentage points to 7.6%.

### Manufacturing

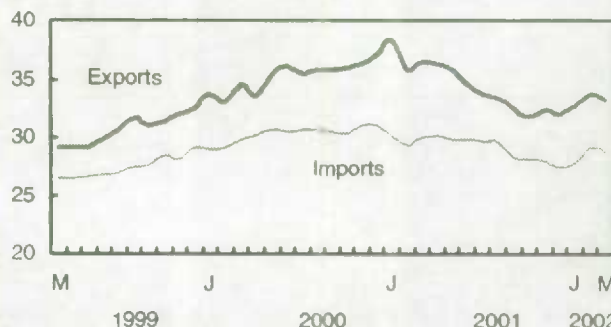
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments declined 0.7% in March to \$41.7 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders rose 1.4% to \$47.6 billion.

### Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In March, the value of merchandise exports slipped 2.0% to \$33.2 billion. Imports decreased 1.0% to \$28.8 billion.

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



## Latest statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
<b>GENERAL</b>				
Gross domestic product (\$ billions, 1997) <sup>1</sup>	March*	956.0	0.1%	2.0%
Composite Index (1992=100)	April	175.2	1.2%	5.4%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billions)	Q4 2001	33.8	-5.6%	-29.9%
Capacity utilization rate (%) <sup>2</sup>	Q4 2001	80.3	-1.2†	-4.8†
<b>DOMESTIC DEMAND</b>				
Retail trade (\$ billions)	March	25.2	-0.2%	6.1%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	March	139.9	-3.8%	10.2%
Wholesale trade (\$ billions)	March	33.6	-0.2%	2.8%
<b>LABOUR</b>				
Employment (millions)	April	15.3	0.2%	1.4%
Unemployment rate (%)	April	7.6	-0.1†	0.6†
Participation rate (%)	April	66.6	0.0†	0.5†
Average weekly earnings (\$)	March	674.04	0.14%	1.86%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	May*	126.8	0.2%	-19.4%
Regular Employment Insurance beneficiaries (in thousands)	March	548.8	-0.8%	9.1%
<b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</b>				
Merchandise exports (\$ billions)	March	33.2	-2.0%	-9.1%
Merchandise imports (\$ billions)	March	28.8	-1.0%	-4.1%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billions)	March	4.4	-0.4	9.2
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>				
Shipments (\$ billions)	March	41.7	-0.7%	-4.2%
New orders (\$ billions)	March	42.3	-0.3%	0.9%
Unfilled orders (\$ billions)	March	47.6	1.4%	-2.1%
Inventory/shipments ratio	March	1.49	0.01	-0.01
<b>PRICES</b>				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	April	118.4	0.6%	1.7%
Industrial Product Price Index (1997=100)	April	107.3	0.1%	-1.5%
Raw Materials Price Index (1997=100)	April	112.0	1.1%	-5.7%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	March	108.7	0.4%	3.3%

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

\* new this week

† percentage point

<sup>1</sup> 1997 replaces 1992 as the base year used in determining prices for gross domestic product by industry. Also, valuation has been changed from factor cost to basic prices.

<sup>2</sup> Calculation of the rates of capacity use is now based on the 1997 North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS), which has replaced the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

## Infomat

### A weekly review

Editor: Lahouaria Yssaad; (613) 951-0627; lahouaria.yssaad@statcan.ca.

Head of Official Release: Madeleine Simard; (613) 951-1088;

madeleine.simard@statcan.ca.

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## Products released from May 30 to June 5, 2002

SUBJECT AREA Title of product	Period	Catalogue number	Price (\$) (issue/subscription)
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>			
Cereals and oilseeds review	March 2002	22-007-XIB	11/112
Cereals and oilseeds review	March 2002	22-007-XPB	15/149
Farm Product Price Index	March 2002	21-007-XIB	free
Production of eggs	December 2001	23-003-XIB	free
Production of eggs	January 2002	23-003-XIB	free
Production of eggs	February 2002	23-003-XIB	free
Production of eggs	March 2002	23-003-XIB	free
Stocks of frozen meat products	May 2002	23-009-XIE	free
<b>ANALYTICAL STUDIES</b>			
Do neighbourhoods influence long-term labour market success?			
A comparison of adults who grew up in different public housing projects	11F0019MIE2002185	free	
Purchasing power parity: A Canada/U.S. exploration	11F0027MIE2002002	free	
<b>BALANCE OF PAYMENTS AND FINANCIAL FLOWS</b>			
Canada's international transactions in securities	March 2002	67-002-XIB	14/132
Canada's international transactions in securities	March 2002	67-002-XPB	18/176
<b>CANADIAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE STATISTICS</b>			
Highlights of the conditional sentencing special study	1997/98 to 2000/01	85F0027XIE02001	free
Home invasion	1995 to 2000	85F0027XIE02002	free
Juristat - Criminal victimization: An international perspective	85-002-XIE	8/70	
Juristat - Criminal victimization: An international perspective	85-002-XPE	10/93	
<b>CENSUS OPERATIONS</b>			
A national overview	2001	93-360-XPB	40
<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS</b>			
Estimates of labour income, monthly estimates	March 2002	13F0016DDB	125/500
Estimates of labour income, monthly estimates, tables and analytical document	March 2002	13F0016XPB	20/65
Income and expenditure accounts, quarterly estimates	Q1 2002	13-001-DDB	125/500
Income and expenditure accounts, quarterly estimates, tables and analytical document	Q1 2002	13-001-PPB	50/180
Financial flow accounts, quarterly estimates	Q1 2002	13-014-DDB	300/1,200
Financial flow accounts, quarterly estimates, tables and analytical document	Q1 2002	13-014-PPB	50/180
<b>INCOME STATISTICS</b>			
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