



Infomat

A Weekly Review

Friday, April 11, 2003

INSIDE

◆ Value of building permits remains strong despite declines

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◆ Another large gain for electronic commerce sales

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◆ Mothers staying home longer with their newborn infants

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◆ Dramatic decline in religious attendance

Attendance at religious services has fallen dramatically across the country over the past few decades, according to data from the General Social Survey. However, some regions have defied the trend, partly because they have either a high proportion of seniors or a high proportion of immigrants, both of whom are more likely to attend religious services than other groups.

Quarterly pace of job growth weakest since late 2001

The economy created a modest 14,000 jobs during March, enough to push the unemployment rate for the month from 7.4% to 7.3%, its lowest level in 18 months. The gain boosted the number of new jobs created during the first three months of the year to an estimated 67,000, but it was the smallest quarterly increase since late 2001.

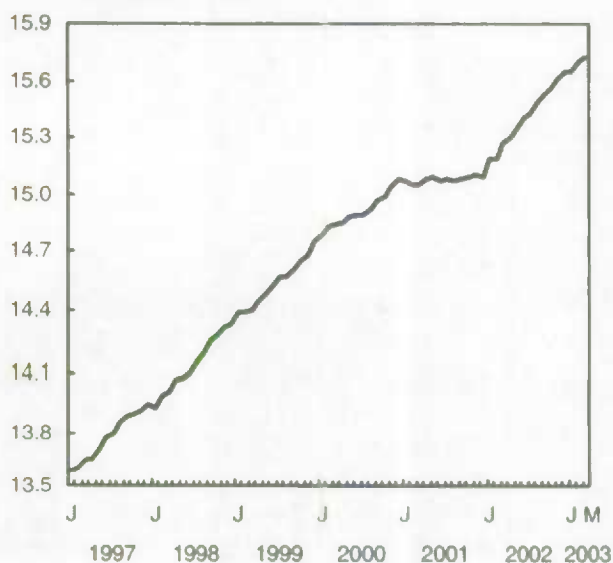
In the United States, employers cut their payrolls by another 108,000 jobs in March, adding to the 357,000 positions eliminated a month earlier. The US unemployment rate remained unchanged at 5.8%.

The Canadian labour market was hit by a decline in employment in two key areas: the manufacturing sector, and in the group aged 25 to 54, where the number of jobs fell nearly 11,000.

(continued on page 2)

Employment

Millions, seasonally adjusted



Quarterly pace ... (continued from page 1)

Overall, eight out of 16 sectors reported a decline in employment. In manufacturing, the number of jobs dropped by 37,000, the fifth decline in the past seven months. The losses occurred in the automotive and plastics industries, as well as in food and wood products. About 2.3 million people were employed in manufacturing in March, virtually the same level as a year ago.

Offsetting the loss in factory jobs was a gain of nearly 33,000 in accommodation and food services, most of it in full-service restaurants.

In addition, employment in construction jumped by 12,000, the first gain since December. In total, 59,000 more people were employed in construction in March 2003 than the same month a year earlier, the result of a robust housing market.

The mix of job creation was also solid. Full-time employment rose 23,000, while the number of part-time jobs fell 9,000.

The youth unemployment rate fell from 13.2% to 12.7%, mostly as a result of a drop in labour force participation. The unemployment rate among adult men was unchanged at 6.4%, but the rate for adult women edged up from 6.1% to 6.2%.

Provincially, the unemployment rate fell in six provinces: Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

In Ontario, a gain of 17,000 jobs in March helped nudge the unemployment rate down from 6.7% to 6.5%. A decline in employment in automotive and plastics industries was more than offset by gains in health and social assistance, as well as in accommodation and food. Ontario's economy created 71,000 jobs in the first quarter, well above the average quarterly gain of 49,000 last year.

In British Columbia, employment increased by 18,000, all full-time. As a result, the province's unemployment rate fell from 8.2% to 7.7%. Employment growth picked up in the first quarter in British Columbia as a result of strength in the goods-producing sector.

Labour Force Survey, March 2003 Seasonally adjusted¹

	Labour force		Employment		Unemployment	
	'000	% change, previous month	'000	% change, previous month	'000	rate (%)
Canada	16,963.7	0.0	15,717.0	0.1	1,246.7	7.3
Newfoundland and Labrador	263.7	-0.5	218.7	0.0	45.0	17.1
Prince Edward Island	77.2	0.9	67.2	-0.9	9.9	12.8
Nova Scotia	480.8	0.6	436.3	0.2	44.5	9.3
New Brunswick	389.7	-0.6	351.4	0.3	38.3	9.8
Quebec	3,989.8	-0.2	3,634.5	-0.6	355.3	8.9
Ontario	6,672.8	0.1	6,237.0	0.3	435.8	6.5
Manitoba	596.0	-0.2	567.2	0.1	28.8	4.8
Saskatchewan	516.3	-0.4	487.4	0.0	28.9	5.6
Alberta	1,789.9	0.0	1,697.6	-0.1	92.3	5.2
British Columbia	2,187.6	0.3	2,019.7	0.9	167.9	7.7

¹ Data are for both sexes aged 15 and over.

Following two months of little change, employment in Quebec fell 21,000 in March, pushing up the unemployment rate from 8.6% to 8.9%. Manufacturing employment in Quebec fell by 21,000, mainly as a result of declines in wood products, clothing and aerospace. The province's recent weakness in overall employment follows strong growth in 2002.

Labour force information (Internet: 71-001-XIE, \$8/\$78) for the week ending March 15 is now available. For general information, contact Client Services (1-866-873-8788; 613-951-4090; labour@statcan.ca). For analytical information, contact Vincent Ferrao (613-951-4750), Labour Statistics Division. (See also "Current trends" on page 6.)

Life expectancy at record high

The gap in life expectancy between men and women has narrowed again, according to new vital statistics. Life expectancy at birth, a key indicator of a population's health status, increased slightly to new record highs for both sexes in 2000. A woman born in 2000 could expect to live 82.0 years, up 0.3 years from 1999. A man's life expectancy at birth reached 76.7 years in 2000, up 0.5 years.

British Columbia had the highest life-expectancy rates for both sexes; men in British Columbia had a life expectancy of 78.2 years in 2000, up from 77.3 in 1999. Women could expect to live 82.9 years, up from 82.6.

A total of 218,062 people died in Canada in 2000, down 0.7% from 1999. This was the first year-over-year decrease in the number of deaths since 1981. The decline in deaths, combined with an increase in Canada's population, resulted in a crude mortality rate of 7.1 deaths per 100,000 population in 2000.

The shelf tables **Deaths, 2000** (paper: 84F0211XPB, \$20) are now available. For more information, contact Patricia Tully (613-951-1759; patricia.tully@statcan.ca) or Leslie Geran (613-951-5243; leslie.geran@statcan.ca), Health Statistics Division.

Value of building permits remains strong despite declines

Construction intentions remained strong in February, despite declines in the value of building permits for the residential and non-residential sectors. Municipalities issued a total of \$3.9 billion in building permits, down 9.8% from the record high in January.

Builders took out permits worth \$2.4 billion for housing in February, down 14.2% from January. But again, the decline came on the heels of a record high in January, and February's total remained just 1.4% short of the average monthly level in 2002, which was an exceptional year.

The value of multi-family permits declined 33.6% from January to \$562 million, their lowest level over the last 12 months. This drop followed a 23.1% increase in January.

Builders also took out fewer single-family permits, which fell 5.6% to \$1.8 billion. However, putting this decline into perspective, single-family permits were also at a record high in January.

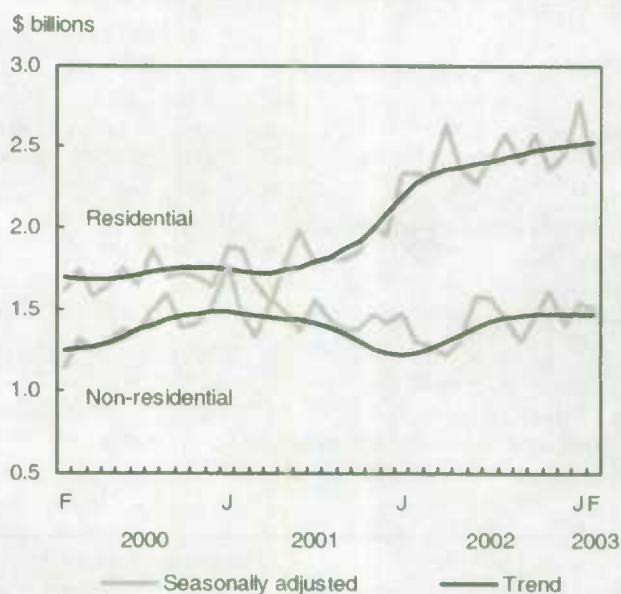
The demand for new housing remained strong, sustained by an upward trend in employment, advantageous mortgage rates, rising incomes and a low inventory of available existing housing. However, over the longer term, a low level of consumer confidence noted in February by the Conference Board of Canada could lead to less marked growth in the residential sector.

Provincially, the largest declines in the value of housing permits occurred in Ontario (-15.3%) and Quebec (-17.5%). The declines followed strong gains in January.

In the non-residential sector, construction intentions fell 1.9% to \$1.5 billion. However, they were still 7.0% higher than the average monthly level in 2002. A sharp drop in commercial permits more than offset gains in the institutional and industrial components.

The value of commercial permits fell 31.1% in February to \$632 million, following a 56.8% jump in January. The most significant reductions occurred in proposals for hotels and restaurants, office buildings, and trade and services buildings.

Value of building permits



Construction intentions for industrial projects rose 31.5% to \$350 million in February as a result of a large increase in the manufacturing building category. Following two sharp monthly decreases, the institutional component rebounded with a 48.0% gain to \$528 million, the result of projects in the medical and hospital category.

Provincially, the largest decline in non-residential permits (in dollars) occurred in British Columbia (-44.6% to \$108 million), driven mainly by retreats in commercial permits in Vancouver. In contrast, the largest increase was in Ontario (+12.3% to \$821 million).

The February 2003 issue of *Building permits* (Internet: 64-001-XIE, \$14/\$145) is now available. For more information, contact Étienne Saint-Pierre (613-951-2025; saineti@statcan.ca), Investment and Capital Stock Division.

Productivity growth from new plants of multinationals

The competitive process that brings new firms into an industry and forces old firms out makes a significant contribution to productivity growth. Each year, a large number of businesses enter and leave the Canadian manufacturing sector. About 40% of manufacturing plants in 1997 were new plants that entered between 1988 and 1997; half of the plants in 1988 were no longer operating in 1997.

All new plants do not contribute equally to productivity growth; a disproportionately large share of the contribution to labour productivity growth was due to foreign-controlled firms opening up or closing down plants. From 1988 to 1997, foreign-controlled entrants accounted for 20% of employment of all entering plants, and foreign-controlled exiters accounted for 28% of employment of all exiting plants. However, plant turnover of foreign-controlled firms provided 60% of the contribution that entry and exit made to productivity growth.

Foreign-controlled new plants have become an increasingly more important source of productivity growth relative to their domestic-controlled counterparts over the last three decades.

The research paper *Plant turnover and productivity growth in Canadian manufacturing* (11F0019MIE2003193, free) is now available on Statistics Canada's website (www.statcan.ca). For more information, contact John Baldwin (613-951-8588) or Wulong Gu (613-951-0754), Micro-economic Analysis Division.

Another large gain for electronic commerce sales

Combined private and public sector online sales posted another strong gain in 2002, up 27.2% to \$13.7 billion after rising 46.0% in 2001. However, electronic commerce sales still accounted for only a small fraction of total operating revenues.

The proportion of private sector businesses selling goods and services online rose marginally from 6.7% in 2001 to 7.5% in 2002, according to the Survey of Electronic Commerce and Technology. Yet, the value of online orders rose 28.4% from 2001 to \$13.3 billion in 2002.

In contrast, public sector sales over the Internet totalled \$327 million, down 7.8% from 2001. Despite this decline, the proportion of public sector institutions selling goods and services online rose from 12.8% in 2001 to 14.2% in 2002.

Purchasing over the Internet in selected industries

	2000	2001	2002
	Percentage of enterprises that use the Internet to buy goods or services		
All private sector	18.2	22.4	31.7
All public sector	49.1	54.5	65.2
Mining and oil and gas extraction	20.4	14.5	26.4
Utilities	25.5	31.5	41.6
Manufacturing	21.3	29.1	40.5
Wholesale trade	22.9	26.4	36.3
Retail trade	13.5	16.9	29.1
Information and cultural industries	52.7	51.8	59.9
Finance and insurance	20.2	24.9	36.6
Professional, scientific and technical services	35.8	42.1	50.6
Administration and support, waste management and remediation services	22.5	30.9	28.5
Educational services (private sector)	41.0	39.3	46.1
Health care and social assistance (private sector)	14.4	20.0	29.5
Arts, entertainment and recreation	15.9	23.2	35.6

Despite the overall growth, e-commerce sales still accounted for only 0.6% of total private sector operating revenue in 2002, up from 0.5% in 2001 and from 0.2% in 1999.

The e-commerce market remains volatile. Among the businesses that responded to the survey in both 2001 and 2002, 43% of those that sold online in 2001 stopped selling in 2002. In 2002, seven firms stopped selling over the Internet for every 10 that started.

For the second straight year, the value of e-commerce sales was highest in wholesale trade, followed by manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and retail trade. Combined, these industries accounted for 70% of all Internet sales in 2002.

Only 27% of sales over the Internet were to consumers or households, despite another substantial increase last year. The dollar value of business-to-consumer sales rose 58.5% to \$3.7 billion in 2002. Business-to-business sales reached \$9.7 billion, an increase of 19.8%.

Although online sales for export in 2002 increased marginally from \$2.7 billion to \$2.9 billion, the value of domestic online sales rose 35.1% to \$10.4 billion in 2002. These sales accounted for nearly four-fifths of total e-commerce sales.

About 32% of firms bought goods or services over the Internet, up from 22% in 2001 and 18% in 2000. These same businesses accounted for 65% of all gross business income in Canada.

Although the value of sales over the Internet was small, businesses continued to embrace the Internet in 2002: 76% of them used the Internet, up from 71% in 2001 and 63% in 2000. Firms that used the Internet accounted for 97% of economic activity. The proportion of businesses using the Internet advanced in nearly all industry sectors.

About 31% of businesses had a website in 2002, up from 26% in 2000. These businesses accounted for 83% of all gross business income.

While Canadian businesses continue to show increases in the adoption of information and communication technologies, the public sector appears to have fully embraced them. For the third straight year, nearly 100% of public sector organizations used the Internet. Almost 88% had a website and 77% used an intranet.

For more information, contact Bryan van Tol (613-951-6663; bryan.vantol@statcan.ca), Science, Innovation and Electronic Information Division.

Farming operating revenues and expenses

Operating margins for Canadian farms edged up in 2001 as revenues increased at a slightly faster pace than expenses, according to data from income tax records. Average operating revenues per farm increased 5.8% from 2000 to \$193,329; average operating expenses rose at a slightly slower pace of 4.8% to \$164,331. As a consequence, operating margins went from 14.2 cents for every dollar of revenue to 15.0 cents.

Livestock revenues increased 6.2% from 2000, explaining in part the overall rise in average operating revenues. Total crop revenues fell 2.3%, mainly because of a decline in grain and oilseed revenues.

Eight of the 11 major farm types reported higher average operating revenues in 2001. Poultry and egg farms had average operating revenues of \$733,133, the highest among farm types. Eight of the 11 major farm types also reported higher average operating expenses. Poultry and egg farms had the highest average operating expenses, at \$652,817.

For more information, contact Daniel Michaud (613-951-0701), Agriculture Division.

Mothers staying home longer with their newborn infants

Since the extension of parental benefits two years ago, qualifying mothers are staying home longer with their newborn infants, and more fathers are claiming benefits, according to a new study.

Amendments to the *Employment Insurance Act* in December 2000 increased parental leave benefits from 10 weeks to 35 weeks, effectively increasing the total maternity and parental paid leave time from six months to one year. In addition, the threshold for eligibility was lowered from 700 to 600 hours of insurable employment.

A monthly average of 4,900 parents who would not have qualified under the old program received parental benefits in 2002. These people received benefits after having worked between 600 and 700 hours in the year before they requested benefits.

The proportion of all new mothers receiving maternity or parental benefits increased from 54% in 2000 to 61% in 2001.

Over 80% of all employed mothers in 2000 and 2001 returned or planned to return to work within two years. However, only those receiving maternity or parental benefits substantially extended their stay at home following the parental benefit amendment.

The median time at home for mothers with maternity or parental benefits increased from 6 months in 2000 to 10 months in 2001. Employed mothers not receiving benefits took about 4 months off work in both years.

Not only were newborns receiving full-time care by their mothers for longer, but many more children had a father at home for some of the time as well. The average number of fathers receiving parental benefits each month reached 7,900 in 2002, five times the average of 1,600 two years earlier.

In 2000, only 3% of fathers claimed or planned to claim paid parental benefits. By 2001, this proportion had more than tripled to 10%. This claim rate for fathers moves Canada ahead of many other countries, but still leaves it considerably behind those such as Norway, for example, where almost 80% of fathers take parental leave.

The article "Benefiting from extended parental leave" is available in the March 2003 online edition of *Perspectives on labour and income* (75-001-XIE, \$5/\$48). For more information, contact Katherine Marshall (613-951-6890; katherine.marshall@statcan.ca), Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division.

Dramatic decline in religious attendance

Attendance at religious services has fallen dramatically across the country over the past few decades, according to data from the General Social Survey. However, some regions have defied the trend.

Part of the reason may be that they have either a high proportion of seniors or a high proportion of immigrants, both of whom are more likely to attend religious services than other groups. Seniors have the highest rates of attendance, while those aged 25 to 34 have the lowest.

Across Canada in 2001, less than one-third (31%) of individuals aged 15 and over attended religious services on a monthly basis, compared with 43% in 1986.

Monthly attendance increased in only a handful of census metropolitan areas: Toronto, Thunder Bay, Calgary, Vancouver and Abbotsford.

The largest gains occurred in two British Columbia urban areas. In Vancouver, 28% of the population aged 15 and over attended religious services on a monthly basis in 2001, up from 24% a decade earlier. The proportion in Abbotsford rose from 38% to 41%. Both have a high proportion of immigrants.

In Toronto and Vancouver, the monthly religious attendance rates of adults born outside Canada rose, while the rate among Canadian-born individuals declined or showed no significant change.

In Montréal, attendance rates declined among both adults born outside Canada and among the Canadian-born. However, the decline was smaller among immigrants.

Provincially, the biggest decline in religious attendance occurred in Quebec, where monthly attendance fell from 37% in the early 1990s to 25% in 2001.

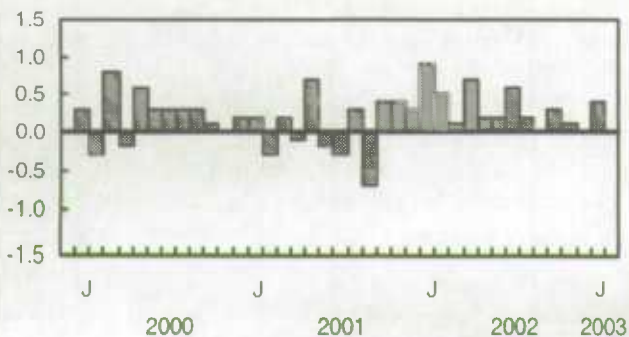
On May 13, 2003, Statistics Canada will release a detailed analysis of the size, composition and geographical distribution of religious affiliations from the 2001 Census.

For more information, contact Warren Clark (613-951-2560), Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division.

Current trends

Gross domestic product

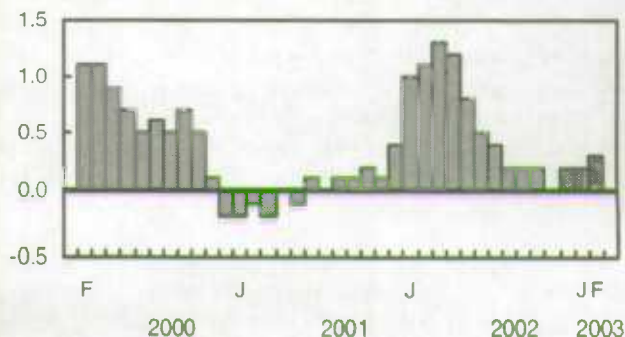
% change, previous month



Total economic activity rose 0.4% in January, after no gain in December.

Composite Index

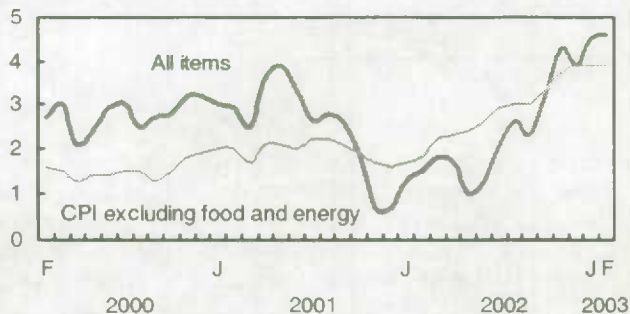
% change, previous month



The leading indicator grew 0.3% in February after rising 0.2% in January.

Consumer Price Index

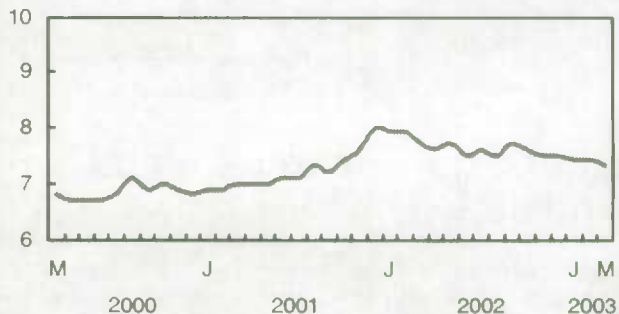
% change, previous year



Consumer prices for goods and services were 4.6% higher in February than they were a year earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices rose 3.9%.

Unemployment rate

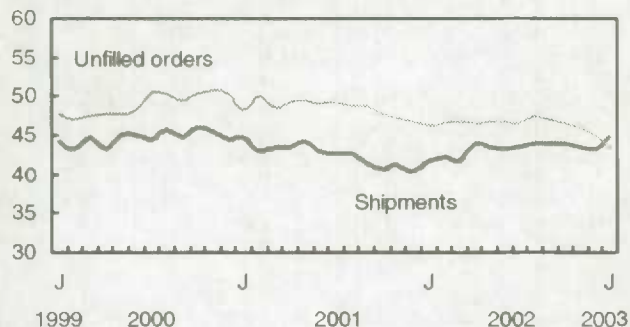
%



In March, the unemployment rate edged down 0.1 percentage points to 7.3%.

Manufacturing

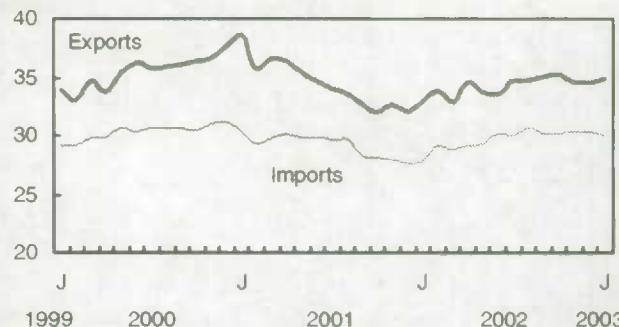
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments rose 3.7% in January to \$44.7 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders declined 3.3% to \$43.5 billion.

Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In January, the value of merchandise exports rose 1.3% to \$35.0 billion. Imports fell 1.3% to \$30.0 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, 1997) ¹	January	994.2	0.4%	3.5%
Composite Index (1992=100)	February	180.6	0.3%	5.7%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billions)	Q4 2002	41.9	5.1%	32.8%
Capacity utilization rate (%) ²	Q4 2002	82.9	-0.2†	2.5†
DOMESTIC DEMAND				
Retail trade (\$ billions)	January	26.0	0.7%	2.9%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	January	129.0	-14.1%	-11.8%
Wholesale trade (\$ billions)	January	36.8	1.8%	8.6%
LABOUR				
Employment (millions)	March*	15.7	0.1%	2.9%
Unemployment rate (%)	March*	7.3	-0.1†	-0.4†
Participation rate (%)	March*	67.5	0.0†	0.9†
Average weekly earnings (\$)	January	687.44	-0.08%	1.83%
Help-wanted Index (1996=100)	February	111.4	-0.2%	-11.5%
Regular Employment Insurance beneficiaries (in thousands)	January	529.7	-3.3%	-5.6%
INTERNATIONAL TRADE				
Merchandise exports (\$ billions)	February*	34.6	-1.6%	2.0%
Merchandise imports (\$ billions)	February*	30.0	0.0%	2.8%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billions)	February*	4.6	0.5	-0.2
MANUFACTURING				
Shipments (\$ billions)	January	44.7	3.7%	6.9%
New orders (\$ billions)	January	43.2	2.9%	4.8%
Unfilled orders (\$ billions)	January	43.5	-3.3%	-5.8%
Inventory/shipments ratio	January	1.41	-0.06	-0.08
PRICES				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	February	122.3	0.7%	4.6%
Industrial Product Price Index (1997=100)	February	109.2	0.6%	2.3%
Raw Materials Price Index (1997=100)	February	128.9	3.1%	22.6%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	February*	113.8	0.6%	5.1%

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

* new this week

† percentage point

¹ 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.

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

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A weekly review

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INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS

Gross domestic product by industry

January 2003

15-001-XIE

11/110

INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL STOCK

Building permits

February 2003

64-001-XIE

14/145

LABOUR STATISTICS

Labour force information, week ending March 15, 2003

71-001-XIE

8/78

MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY

Cement

February 2003

44-001-XIB

5/47

Construction type plywood

January 2003

35-001-XIB

5/47

Oil and gas extraction

2001

26-213-XIB

22

Production and shipments of steel pipe and tubing

February 2003

41-011-XIB

5/47

Supply and disposition of crude oil and natural gas

April 2002

26-006-XPB

19/186

Supply and disposition of crude oil and natural gas

May 2002

26-006-XPB

19/186

PRICES

Industry price indexes

January 2003

62-011-XIE

17/163

Industry price indexes

January 2003

62-011-XPE

22/217

TRANSPORTATION

Monthly railway carloadings

December 2002

52-001-XIE

8/77

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