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MAJOR RELEASES

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Cash registers remained quiet in March as retail sales declined for a third consecutive month.

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MAJOR RELEASES

Retail trade

March 1995 (preliminary)

Cash registers remained quiet in March as retail sales declined for a third consecutive month. Sales decreased 0.7% to \$17.5 billion after a 0.3% decline in February. In a context of high interest rates and uncertainty in the job market, consumers held back on purchases.

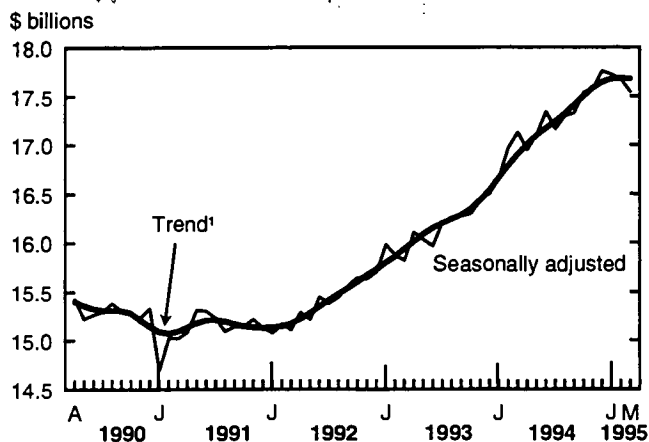
The weak 1995 trend in retail trade contrasts with the general growth observed from early 1992 to November 1994.

Note to readers

This release presents seasonally adjusted data, which facilitate comparisons by removing the effects of seasonal variations and differences in the number of trading days.

prices influenced consumers to reduce their spending on motor vehicles. Sales by new and used motor vehicle dealers declined 0.9% in March after a 1.2% drop in February; the number of new motor vehicles sold fell 1.7% in March.

Cash registers were quiet in March



Data prior to 1991 have been adjusted to remove the Federal Sales Tax to be comparable to January 1991 and subsequent data.

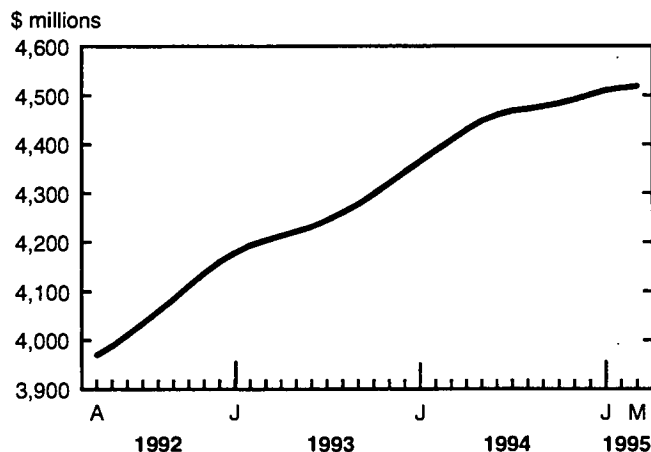
¹ Trend represents smoothed seasonally adjusted data.

The March weakness came from all sectors, especially the automotive, food and clothing sectors. The decline was widespread geographically. Only the Yukon and Northwest Territories reported higher sales. Sales in Manitoba and British Columbia remained unchanged.

Automotive, food and clothing retailers dominated the decline

Sales in the automotive sector (includes new and used car dealers, gasoline service stations, and parts, accessories and services outlets) dropped 0.8%, the third consecutive monthly decline. Low consumer confidence, high interest rates and higher new car

Food sector sales have slowed in recent months¹

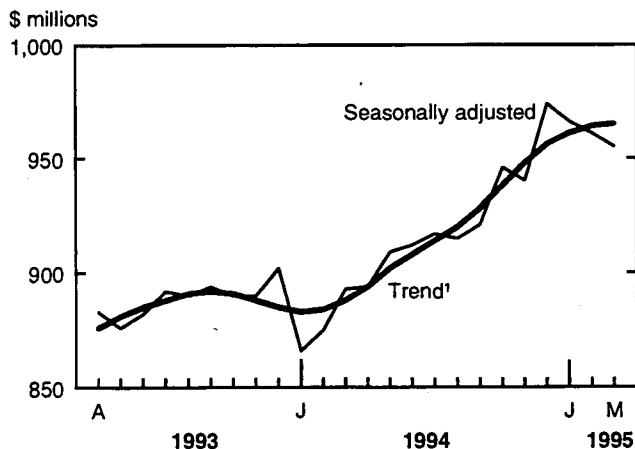


¹ The short-term trend represents a moving average of the data.

Spending in the food sector declined 1.0% in March, offsetting the 0.5% gain in February 1995. Retail food sales, an important contributor to total retail growth since early 1992, have grown at a slower rate since mid-1994.

Sales in the clothing sector declined 1.5% in March, the first decrease in five months. Three of the sector's four components decreased: women's clothing stores (-0.6%), other clothing stores (-1.7%) and men's clothing stores (-7.8%). The decline in men's clothing stores coincided with recent store closures. Partly offsetting these decreases was a 3.2% sales gain by shoe stores, after a 4.0% increase in February.

Furniture sector remains weak



¹ The short-term trend represents a moving average of the data.

Higher interest rates helped stall demand for big ticket items in the furniture sector. Sales of furniture retailers declined for a third consecutive month in March (-0.6%). A weak housing market also drove sales down. The resale housing market fell to its lowest level in 11 years in March, and housing starts dropped to their lowest level since 1982.

Sales were sluggish in most provinces

Eight of the provinces recorded monthly decreases in sales. The largest drops in dollars terms were in Ontario (-0.9%) and Alberta (-1.3%). Ontario's decline was only the second since June 1994 and followed no growth in February.

Despite the decline in Ontario and the unchanged level in British Columbia, these two provinces had

the highest year-over-year sales increases (+5.4% and +9.2% respectively). Manitoba also reported an increase, a 1.7% gain over March 1994.

First quarter 1995

Retail sales increased a slight 0.1% in the first quarter of 1995. The gain was weaker than the increases in the second, third and fourth quarters of 1994 (+1.3%, +0.8% and +2.1% respectively). Of the five sectors reporting higher sales in the first quarter of 1995, the clothing and general merchandise sectors were the main contributors to the growth. Partly offsetting the gains were lower sales by the automotive and drug sectors.

Early indications of April sales

Early indications of April sales are mixed. Compared with April 1994, department stores sales were up, but the number of new motor vehicles sold was down. Employment in trade increased 0.5% from March 1995. In the United States, retail sales decreased 0.4% in April after a 1.1% increase in March.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 2299, 2398-2417 and 2420.

The March 1995 issue of *Retail trade* (63-005, \$20/\$200) will be available the second week of June. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact John Svab (613-951-3549). For analytical information, contact Pierre Desjardins (613-951-9682), Retail Trade Section, Industry Division. □

Retail sales

	March 1994	December 1994 ^r	January 1995 ^r	February 1995 ^r	March 1995 ^p	February 1995 to March 1995	March 1994 to March 1995
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions					% change	
Food	4,434	4,556	4,518	4,539	4,495	-1.0	1.4
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,140	4,216	4,164	4,190	4,142	-1.1	0.1
All other food stores	294	340	354	349	353	1.0	20.1
Drug and patent medicine stores	1,009	993	996	987	982	-0.5	-2.7
Clothing	991	1,078	1,080	1,098	1,082	-1.5	9.2
Shoe stores	143	149	143	149	154	3.2	7.7
Men's clothing stores	153	137	140	147	135	-7.8	-11.8
Women's clothing stores	326	359	358	353	351	-0.6	7.6
Other clothing stores	369	433	439	450	442	-1.7	19.8
Furniture	893	974	966	961	955	-0.6	7.0
Household furniture and appliance stores	702	782	772	767	761	-0.9	8.3
Household furnishings stores	190	191	194	194	195	0.3	2.3
Automotive	6,044	6,341	6,273	6,239	6,189	-0.8	2.4
Motor vehicle and recreational vehicle dealers	3,886	4,139	4,125	4,074	4,037	-0.9	3.9
Gasoline service stations	1,180	1,184	1,136	1,179	1,175	-0.4	-0.5
Automotive parts, accessories and services	978	1,018	1,012	986	978	-0.8	0.0
General merchandise stores	1,836	1,837	1,855	1,855	1,851	-0.2	0.8
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	1,928	1,986	2,042	1,997	1,992	-0.2	3.3
Other semi-durable goods stores	585	598	596	589	594	0.9	1.5
Other durable goods stores	471	468	488	476	483	1.4	2.6
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	872	920	957	932	915	-1.8	4.9
Total, retail sales	17,134	17,765	17,730	17,676	17,547	-0.7	2.4
Total excluding motor vehicle and recreational vehicle dealers	13,249	13,626	13,605	13,602	13,510	-0.7	2.0
Department store type merchandise	5,785	5,949	5,982	5,966	5,947	-0.3	2.8
Newfoundland	284	286	285	287	285	-0.6	0.5
Prince Edward Island	73	73	74	74	73	-1.3	0.2
Nova Scotia	553	545	542	541	532	-1.7	-3.9
New Brunswick	413	420	409	411	407	-1.0	-1.5
Quebec	4,201	4,262	4,234	4,150	4,134	-0.4	-1.6
Ontario	6,262	6,609	6,655	6,658	6,600	-0.9	5.4
Manitoba	586	595	586	595	595	0.0	1.7
Saskatchewan	512	532	533	532	512	-3.6	0.1
Alberta	1,858	1,854	1,817	1,821	1,798	-1.3	-3.3
British Columbia	2,336	2,530	2,538	2,550	2,551	0.0	9.2
Yukon	18	18	17	18	18	0.7	1.3
Northwest Territories	38	40	41	41	41	0.8	6.7

^p Preliminary figures.

^r Revised figures.

Retail sales

	March 1994	February 1995 ^r	March 1995 ^p	March 1994 to March 1995
	unadjusted			
	\$ millions			% change
Food	4,360	4,020	4,485	2.9
Supermarkets and grocery stores	4,082	3,728	4,152	1.7
All other food stores	279	292	333	19.6
Drug and patent medicine stores	999	891	984	-1.6
Clothing	822	680	887	7.9
Shoe stores	115	88	124	7.8
Men's clothing stores	117	87	103	-12.3
Women's clothing stores	280	223	295	5.1
Other clothing stores	310	282	366	18.0
Furniture	818	733	872	6.6
Household furniture and appliance stores	646	585	694	7.4
Household furnishings stores	172	148	179	3.6
Automotive	6,222	5,054	6,409	3.0
Motor vehicle and recreational vehicle dealers	4,197	3,272	4,379	4.3
Gasoline service stations	1,125	1,038	1,130	0.5
Automotive parts, accessories and services	900	745	901	0.0
General merchandise stores	1,582	1,280	1,606	1.5
Retail stores not elsewhere classified	1,605	1,445	1,658	3.3
Other semi-durable goods stores	472	416	471	-0.2
Other durable goods stores	370	337	386	4.4
All other retail stores not elsewhere classified	762	692	800	5.0
Total, retail sales	16,409	14,103	16,901	3.0
Total excluding motor vehicle and recreational vehicle dealers	12,212	10,831	12,522	2.5
Department store type merchandise	5,064	4,337	5,206	2.8
Newfoundland	265	220	271	2.1
Prince Edward Island	64	56	65	0.9
Nova Scotia	518	420	507	-2.0
New Brunswick	389	322	383	-1.4
Quebec	4,049	3,237	4,019	-0.7
Ontario	5,957	5,341	6,300	5.8
Manitoba	562	481	572	1.8
Saskatchewan	493	429	496	0.6
Alberta	1,792	1,451	1,733	-3.3
British Columbia	2,268	2,099	2,498	10.2
Yukon	16	13	16	5.3
Northwest Territories	37	33	40	7.9

^p Preliminary figures.

^r Revised figures.

OTHER RELEASES

Sales of natural gas

March 1995 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 6 824 951 thousand cubic metres in March, up 7.5% from March 1994. Colder than normal weather throughout Western Canada resulted in higher sales to the residential (+4.3%) and commercial (+2.0%) sectors. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) increased 12.3%, largely due to increased use of natural gas by electric utilities and the chemical industry.

Year-to-date sales to the end of March 1995 dropped 1.8% from the same period in 1994. Sales to the residential (-9.0%) and commercial (-9.0%) sectors decreased due to milder weather in January and February 1995. Industrial sector sales (including direct sales) maintained their strong growth, increasing 8.3% from the same period last year.

Sales of natural gas

	March 1995 ^P	March 1994	March 1994 to March 1995
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Total	6 824 951	6 349 438	7.5
Residential	1 993 315	1 910 999	4.3
Commercial	1 507 526	1 477 534	2.0
Industrial	2 229 494	2 143 908	12.3
Direct	1 094 616	816 997	

	January to March 1995 ^P	January to March 1994	January-March 1994 to January-March 1995
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Total	21 480 118	21 873 128	-1.8
Residential	6 692 557	7 356 195	-9.0
Commercial	4 933 625	5 420 675	-9.0
Industrial	6 716 193	6 626 147	8.3
Direct	3 137 743	2 470 111	

^P Preliminary figures.**Available on CANSIM: matrices 1052-1055.**

The March 1995 issue of *Gas utilities* (55-002, \$14/\$140) will be available the third week of June. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact Gerry O'Connor (613-951-3563), Energy Section, Industry Division.

Construction union wage rate index

April 1995

The construction union wage rate index (including supplements) for Canada remained unchanged in April 1995 at March's level of 136.8. On a year-over-year basis, the composite index increased 1.8% to 136.8 from 134.4 in April 1994.

Construction union wage rates and indexes (1986=100) comprise union wage rates for 16 trades in 22 metropolitan areas (including the basic rate and rates that include selected supplementary payments) and indexes for cities where a majority of trades are covered by collective agreements.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 956, 958 and 2033-2038.

The second quarter 1995 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007, \$19/\$76) will be available in September. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact Paul-Roméo Danis (613-951-3350, fax: 613-951-2848), Client Services Unit, Prices Division.

Selected financial indexes

April 1995

April 1995 figures are now available for the selected financial indexes (1986=100).

Available on CANSIM: matrix 2031.

The second quarter 1995 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007, \$19/\$76) will be available in September. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact Paul-Roméo Danis (613-951-3350, fax: 613-951-2848), Client Services Unit, Prices Division.

Telephone statistics

March 1995

The 13 major telephone systems reported monthly revenues of \$1,168.0 million in March, down 2.4% from March 1994.

Operating expenses totalled \$901.2 million, up 0.2% from March 1994. Net operating revenues totalled \$266.7 million, a decrease of 10.6% from March 1994.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 355.

The March 1995 issue of *Telephone statistics* (56-002, \$9/\$90) will be released shortly. See "How to order publications".

For further information on this release, contact J.R. Slattery (613-951-2205), Services, Science and Technology Division. ■


Average prices of selected farm inputs

April 1995

Average prices of selected farm inputs for April 1995 are now available by geographic region.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 550-582.

For further information on this release, contact the Information and Current Analysis Unit (613-951-9606), Prices Division. ■

	
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PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

Touriscope: International travel, advance information, March 1995

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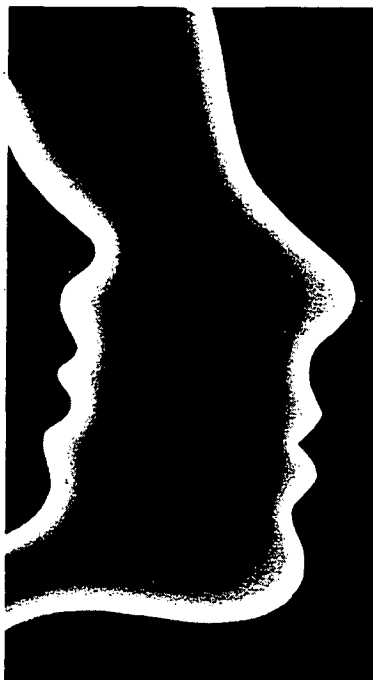
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RELEASE DATES

Week of May 23-26
(Release dates are subject to change.)

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23	Wholesale trade	March 1995
24	Consumer price index	April 1995
25	Canada's international transactions in securities	March 1995
26	Industrial product price index	April 1995
26	Raw materials price index	April 1995



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