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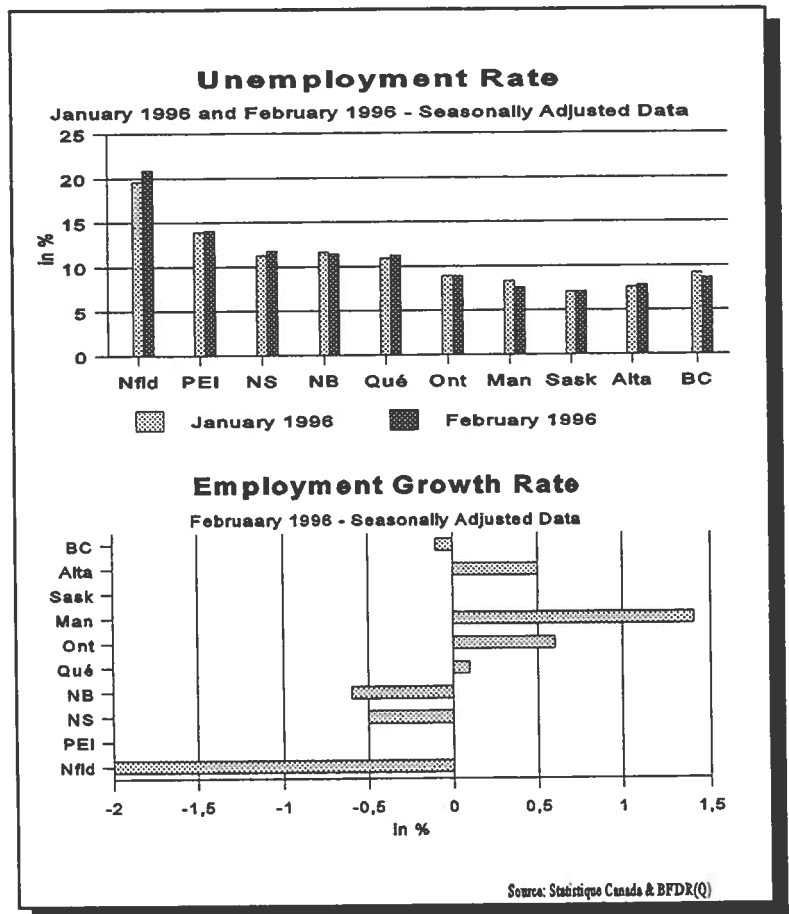
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Quebec unemployment rate rises

Seasonally adjusted data from the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey indicate a substantial increase in Quebec's unemployment rate. It climbed 0.4 percentage points in February to 11.3%. A large increase in the size of the labour force, nearly 80% made up of newly unemployed workers, was the main reason for the increase. During this period, 4,000 new workers entered the labour market, a marginal 0.1% increase, compared with January 1996. Meanwhile, Quebec was one of only four Canadian provinces to report a rising employment growth rate in February 1996.

Seasonally adjusted data also indicate that Quebec employment grew by 61,000 jobs, compared with the same month a year earlier. However, the increase resulted entirely from part-time job creation.

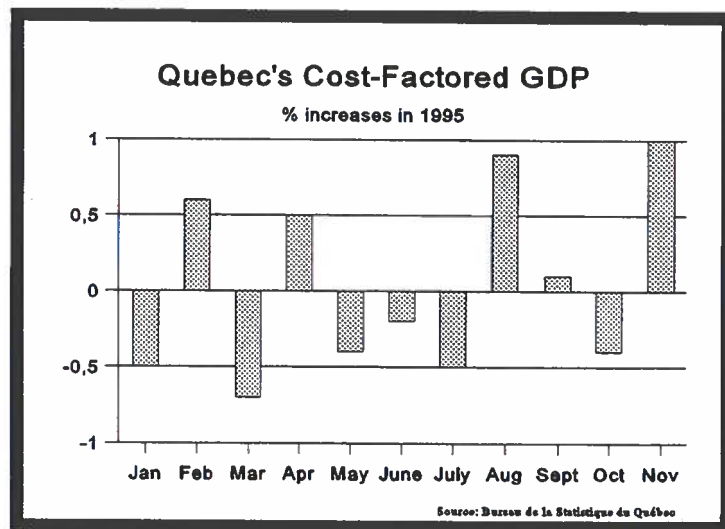


Across the country, results were quite different. The national unemployment rate remained unchanged at 9.6% between January and February 1996, and 44,000 new jobs, a 0.3% increase, were also reported. The Province of Manitoba reported the strongest employment growth in percentage terms at 1.4% or 7,000 new jobs. Ontario ranked second with a 0.6% growth rate or 31,000 new jobs.



Upturn in economic growth

According to the Bureau de la Statistique du Québec, Quebec's cost-factored Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at a monthly rate of 1.0% between October and November 1995 with most sectors reporting increased production. The manufacturing sector alone generated 40% of the GDP increase in November, a jump of 1.9%. The electric power and wholesale and retail trade sectors also posted strong growth. This was the fifth GDP increase as well as the highest monthly growth rate reported in 1995. It was also the third increase to be posted during the last four months.



If the trend continues, the GDP can be expected to increase during the last quarter of 1995. This upward surge follows decreases of 0.2% and 0.1% posted in the second and third quarters.

At the national level, Statistics Canada data indicate that the GDP increased by only 0.2% in the fourth quarter of 1995 after rates of 0.3%, -0.2% and 0.3% were posted in the first three quarters. A 3.3% growth in exports in the last quarter of 1995 was the main reason for this increase. However, growth was dampened by weak consumer demand and low public-sector spending. During 1995, the GDP as a whole increased at a rate of 2.2%. By comparison, the 1994 growth rate had been 4.6%.

(Bureau de la Statistique du Québec, 16/2/1996)

(Statistics Canada Daily, 29/2/1996)

Housing market in a free fall

The number of housing starts in Quebec urban centres of 10,000 inhabitants or more plummeted in January. A comparison of the months of January 1995 and 1996 indicates a decrease of more than 60%. The number of housing starts dropped from 1,207 in January 1995 to as few as 482 in January 1996. The apartment and single-family home categories alone represented 87% of the decrease.

To a lesser extent across Canada, sharp downturns in residential construction were also reported. In January this year, urban centres of 10,000 inhabitants or more reported 4,211 housing starts, a 37% drop compared with the same month a year earlier. (CMHC)

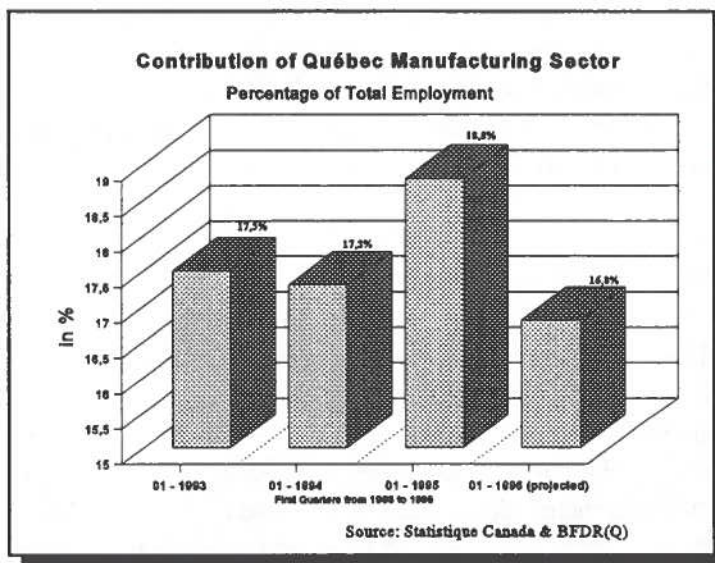
Fewer jobs in the manufacturing sector

During the first two months of 1996, Quebec's manufacturing sector reported its lowest employment level since the end of the recession. In January and February 1996, there was an average of 531,000 jobs in this sector, or 16.8% of the jobs in Quebec. This amounts to a 1.1% decrease when compared with the average rates recorded during the first quarters of 1993, 1994 and 1995.

This was probably the first decrease in the number of manufacturing sector jobs to be reported in a first quarter since 1993 (when only the first quarters of each year are compared). The employment growth

rate in this sector was 1% during the first three months of 1994 and 10% during the same period in 1995, whereas an 8.6% decrease was posted for the first quarter of 1996.

(Statistics Canada & FORD-Q)



Fall-off in retail sales

According to data provided by the Bureau de la Statistique du Québec, Quebec's 1995 retail sales fell by 1.1%, compared with 1994. The decreases follow three years of consecutive increases. Sectors where the steepest drops were reported were food and drug products and automobiles.

Across Canada, retail sales increased last year by 2.1% (in current dollars). Over half of the increase resulted from a 3.3% surge of activity in the automobile sector, where 35% of overall sales were generated in 1995. However, this was a marked slowdown when compared with 1994, a year when sales in the automobile sector increased by 10.0% over 1993.

Canadian consumers also became more cautious in the fourth quarter of 1995 and reduced their spending by 1.1%. The rate of household savings at the same time leaped 0.5 percentage points from 6.5% to 7.0%.

(Bureau de la Statistique du Québec)
(Statistics Canada Daily, 29/2/1996)

Profits in foreign markets for large corporations

Profits of Canadian companies have increased substantially in recent years, but according to a study by Montrusco, companies targeting foreign markets reported much higher growth. Thus, large corporations that were listed on the TSE 300 index and active in export markets reported increased profits of over 100%, while corporations that targeted mostly internal markets reported increased profits of only 38%.
(La Presse, 2/3/1996)

Modest GDP growth in 1996

The Conference Board of Canada recently published its economic forecast for the next two years. It is expected that Quebec's cost-factored gross domestic product (GDP) will grow at a rate of 1.9% in 1996 and 1.8% in 1997 (compared to rates of 2.2% and 2.1% across Canada during the same two years). Quebec should see some growth in its employment rate, but only slight change in its unemployment rate (11.2% in 1996 and 11.1% in 1997). The organization also predicted that lower interest rates would boost Quebec's consumer spending and housing market in 1996.

(Conference Board of Canada, Provincial Outlook, Winter 1996)

Desjardins forecasts better days ahead

An increase of 0.5% in the Desjardins leading indicator between December 1995 and January 1996 suggests that the economy is strengthening across the country. The monthly increase followed more modest increases recorded in November and December 1995 and resulted largely from activity in employment and financial markets.

(Études Économiques, Desjardins, 4/3/1996)

60,000 jobs need to be filled in 1996

A preliminary study by the Société Québécoise de Développement de la Main-d'Oeuvre (SQDM) reported 30,000 vacant jobs in Quebec in 1995 and almost 60,000 to be filled in 1996. The Montreal Island administrative region accounted for 36,000, or 41% of the Quebec total, of these jobs left vacant or awaiting candidates.

(Le Soleil, 7/3/1996)

(La Presse, 17/3/1996)

2% increase in salaries

According to a survey of 300 chief executive officers of Quebec companies conducted in February by the Everest Group, small and medium-sized enterprises plan to increase salaries this year by 2.0%. Most economists say this increase should offset the expected rise in the 1996 cost of living. The survey also revealed that these same SMEs had approved pay increases of 2.5% in 1995.

(La Presse, 11/3/1996)

Air Canada to invest \$450 million

Air Canada plans to invest \$450 million by 1998. Of this sum, \$150 million will be used to buy new airplane parts and the remainder will be invested in infrastructure. (Le Devoir, 16/2/1996)

400 positions eliminated at London Life

As part of an effort to restructure its Canadian operations, London Life recently announced it would eliminate 400 positions across the country. However, it was not known what percentage of the layoffs would take place at the company's Quebec offices. (La Presse, 27/2/1996)

REGIONAL REVIEW

GREATER MONTREAL

Increased activity in the housing market

There was increased activity in the Greater Montreal region housing market in February. According to data provided by the Greater Montreal Real Estate Board, sales of residential units increased by 53% during the month. The biggest sales gains were reported in the suburbs.

(The Gazette, 7/3/1996)

\$221.4 million to transfer international flights

The transfer of international flights from Mirabel Airport to Dorval Airport will require an investment of \$221.4 million in upgrades at Dorval so that it can better accommodate international flights. The investment supplements the recently announced \$200-million project to modernize Dorval and Mirabel airports.

(La Presse, 21/2/1996)

February - a job creation month

According to seasonally adjusted data from the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, 17,000 new jobs were created in the Greater Montreal region between January and February 1996. This was by far the best performance among Canada's major urban centres. By comparison, only 1,000 new workers were added to the labour force in Toronto region and 5,000 in Vancouver. The Montreal unemployment rate between January and February 1996 remained unchanged at 10.8%, a rate 1.2% higher than the national average.

Several comparative advantages favour Montreal

A study by the Montreal Urban Community Economic Development Office recently highlighted a number of assets that favour the Montreal region over other major North American and European cities. In a document entitled *Decision Montreal*, the organization points out that Montreal places first in the categories of research and development costs and prestige office space. Moreover, it places second after, London and Stockholm, in the categories of telecommunications costs and corporate taxes.

ISLAND OF MONTRÉAL

	<i>Feb 96</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	764	753	774
<i>Unemployed</i>	115	109	136
<i>Labour force</i>	879	862	910
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	13.1	12.6	15.0

Drop in unemployment rate

Despite the loss of 10,000 jobs between February 1995 and February 1996, the Montreal Island region reported a sizeable decrease in its unemployment rate during this period, from 15.0% to 13.1%. The rate was one percentage point higher than the provincial average.

In thousands; % unemployment rate

Source: LFS, Statistics Canada

Seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

Deal between CN and GEC-Alsthom will go ahead

CN's 5,000 workers across the country, members of the Canadian Automobile Workers union, voted mostly in favour of awarding \$100 million in sub-contracting work to the AMF railway shops in Point St Charles by the year 2000. This was the last of the terms and conditions to be met before the official takeover of AMF by GEC-Alsthom. The deal is expected to be finalized by the end of March.

(La Presse, 6/3/1996)

Zellers packing up and moving to Toronto

In order to centralize its administrative operations in Toronto, the Hudson Bay Company's subsidiary, Zellers, announced it will move its head office from de Maisonneuve Street in Montreal to Toronto. Some 550 jobs are at a stake, but management gave assurances that it had no plans to announce layoffs. The Hudson Bay Group also announced that its entire credit operation would be henceforth centred in Montreal and 100 new employees would be required.

(Le Soleil, 15/3/1996)

Edelman moving its head office to Montreal

The Canadian subsidiary of Edelman Public Relations Worldwide will move its current head office in Toronto to Montreal. The management team will comprise about sixty employees, of whom a large percentage will continue working out of Toronto. Expectations of renewed activity in Montreal's public relations industry were one of the reasons cited by the board of directors for its choice of Montreal.

(Le Journal de Montréal, 15/3/1996)

Molson will cut 250 jobs

Molson Breweries plans to cut 250 jobs at its Montreal facilities to counter a recent slump in sales and decentralize its operations to the regions. The cuts come shortly after Molson's decision to eliminate 165 positions in Toronto. (Le Soleil, 8/3/1996)

Bell to renovate its head office

Bell Canada recently announced that it will invest \$16 million to renovate its head office building on Beaver Hall Hill in Montreal. A call for tenders will be issued in June and work will very likely begin this summer. (Constructo, 13/2/1996)

A new cinema complex downtown

France Film Inc recently launched a project to build a complex in downtown Montreal that will house approximately twenty screening rooms. Total investment is estimated at \$25 million and work is expected to begin at the end of the construction holiday. (Constructo, Feb 13, 1996)

Significant economic spinoffs in East-End Montreal

According to a study conducted by researchers at the Université du Québec à Montreal and recently released by the Corporation de Développement de l'Est de Montréal (CDEST), significant economic spinoffs are generated by the community network in the Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve district. It has created 270 full-time and 125 part-time jobs for a total of 400 jobs. (Transcript Verbatim, 12/3/1996)

Expansion at Phoenix International Inc

Phoenix International Inc may invest approximately \$17 million to expand its laboratories in St Laurent. The work is expected to be carried out in 1996. (Constructo, 13/2/1996)

Work at TNM to begin soon

Construction work to expand the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (TNM) on St Catherine Street in Montreal will begin shortly. Among the facilities to be built are new rehearsal rooms, a sidewalk café and a new box office. The project will require an investment of \$12 million. (Constructo, 20/2/1996)

ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

	<i>Feb 96</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	66	66	64
<i>Unemployed</i>	7	7	9
<i>Labour force</i>	73	73	73
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	10.0	10.0	12.4

Sharp drop in unemployment rate

The region had an excellent month of February, in contrast to the year before. The unemployment rate fell dramatically by 2.4 percentage points and 2,000 people entered the labour market. The region ranked second in the province in terms of its employment growth rate and decreased unemployment rate.

In thousands; % unemployment rate
Source: LFS, Statistics Canada
Seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

LOWER ST LAWRENCE

	<i>Feb 96</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	78	79	73
<i>Unemployed</i>	14	12	14
<i>Labour force</i>	92	91	87
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	14.8	12.7	15.8

Unemployment rate declining

In February, 5,000 new jobs were created and the number of unemployed remained unchanged. These factors helped reduce the unemployment rate during the February 1995 to February 1996 period from 15.8% to 14.8%. Despite the decrease, unemployment in the Lower St Lawrence region is still much higher than the Quebec average, which was 12.1% in February 1996.

In thousands; % unemployment rate
Source: LFS, Statistics Canada
Seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

A good year for the Matane construction industry

The Matane construction industry posted a record performance in 1995, with \$20.2 million invested, compared with \$8.8 million in 1994. Work also began on several major projects in 1995, such as rebuilding of the Old Port and improvements at Donohue-Matane and the Carton Saint Laurent plant.

(Le Soleil, 6/3/1996)

Co-operative slaughterhouse project may go ahead

Now that financing arrangements are in the final stages, it is expected the co-operative slaughterhouse project *Les Viandes de Chez-Nous* will go ahead. The project is expected to cost a total of \$1,369,000 and construction should begin in May. Of the 275 beef producers in the region, 175 are involved in the project. (La Terre de Chez-Nous, 29/2/1996 - 6/3/1996)

FTQ funding activity in the Lower St Lawrence

The Lower St Lawrence recently became the tenth administrative region in Quebec to receive investment funding from the FTQ [workers' solidarity fund]. An amount of \$6 million will be made available to help businesses start up, expand or reorganize. (Le Soleil, 2/3/1996)

CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHIANS

	Feb 96	Jan 96	Feb 95
<i>Jobs</i>	172	173	171
<i>Unemployed</i>	18	17	14
<i>Labour force</i>	190	190	185
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	9.3	9.0	7.4

Sharp increase in numbers of unemployed

Because the number of unemployed increased by a dramatic 30% between February 1995 and February 1996, the unemployment rate jumped as well, from 7.4% to 9.3%, despite the creation of 1,000 jobs. In February 1996 however, the region still posted the lowest unemployment rate of Quebec's administrative regions.

In thousands; % unemployment rate

Source: LFS, Statistics Canada

Seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

Job creation at Prévost Car Inc

The work force at Prévost Car Inc in St Claire has increased from 700 to 1,000 employees in the last two years. The firm is expanding and, since 1993, has invested \$26 million to modernize its equipment and boost productivity. Prévost Car Inc is also one of largest private-sector employers in the Chaudière-Appalachian and Quebec City regions. (Le Soleil, 19/2/1996)

110 jobs lost in St Georges

The RGR Group will close its blue-jean manufacturing plant in St Georges de Beauce in May and move its operations to Mexico. The decision will result in layoffs for 110 to 150 of the current workers. However, the company's head office will remain in the Beauce region.

(Le Soleil, 27/2/1996)

50 new jobs at Solisco in Scott Junction

The Beauce region company Solisco, which specializes in printing, recently invested \$6 million to enlarge its plant in Scott Junction and purchase a new printing press. As a result of this investment, the company has increased its work force from 150 to 200 employees. Management also expects to increase sales from \$23 million to \$40 million. (Le Soleil, 14/3/1996)

NORTH SHORE-NORTHERN QUEBEC

	<i>Feb 96</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	58	58	51
<i>Unemployed</i>	10	10	12
<i>Labour force</i>	68	68	63
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	15.2	14.7	18.8

Record month for the North Shore

Compared with February 1995, the North Shore region reported the steepest drop in its unemployment rate of all of Quebec's regions in February 1996. However, the rate is still 3.1% higher than the provincial average. At the same time during this period, 7,000 jobs were created and the number of unemployed fell by more than 16%.

In thousands; % unemployment rate

Source: LFS, Statistics Canada

Seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

Reynolds Aluminum betting on aluminum rods

Reynolds Aluminum in Baie Comeau will open a rolling mill shortly to produce aluminum rods, thereby creating 16 new jobs. Management's decision was prompted by growing demand in this sector. (Le Soleil, 13/3/1996)

ESTRIE

	Feb 96	Jan 96	Feb 95
<i>Jobs</i>	121	124	120
<i>Unemployed</i>	17	17	14
<i>Labour force</i>	138	141	134
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	12.5	12.1	10.7

3,000 more jobless

The addition of 3,000 more people to the unemployment rolls between February 1995 and February 1996 (an increase of over 20%) was the main reason for the increase in the unemployment rate from 10.7% in February 1995 to 12.5% in February 1996. The increase also coincided with the creation of 1,000 new jobs.

In thousands; % unemployment rate

Source: LFS, Statistics Canada

Seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

12.0% jobless rate

According to seasonally adjusted data, the unemployment rate in Sherbrooke between January and February 1996 increased by 0.3 percentage points to 12.0%.

Magnola Metallurgy plant in Asbestos

Magnola Metallurgy will build a magnesium manufacturing plant in Asbestos and generate 350 direct jobs. The decision will involve a \$525-million investment by the company. The company chose the site in Asbestos over another Amiante region site in East Broughton.

(Le Soleil, The Gazette, La Tribune, 23/2/1996)

Kruger Inc chooses Bromptonville site

Kruger Inc has chosen a site in Bromptonville where it may build a glossy paper manufacturing plant to supply the magazine market. The project would require an investment of \$325 million. However, the company has not yet reached a decision on whether or not it will build the plant.

(La Presse, 14/3/1996)

Banner year at Shermag Inc

Shermag Inc in Sherbrooke recently released third-quarter production figures reflecting the company's excellent financial performance. The company chalked up \$48.5 million in gross sales, an increase of \$8.7 million over the same period a year earlier. The company also posted gross profits of \$3,799,000 on December 31, 1995. The 1995 profits were a hefty increase of more than 80%, compared with 1994.

(La Tribune, 16/2/1996)

Intermodal terminal to handle rail/highway freight may be built in Sherbrooke

The Société de Développement Économique de la Région Sherbrookoise (SDERS) [Sherbrooke region economic development corporation] is currently working on a project to build an intermodal terminal in Sherbrooke to handle rail/highway freight. The project, involving a potential investment of \$4 million, would be a major addition to Sherbrooke's transportation infrastructure. SDERS, which is expected to hire consultants to study the project's technical aspects, is currently discussing the use of rail lines with CN and CP. (La Tribune, 14/3/1996)

GASPÉ/MAGDALEN ISLANDS

	Feb 96	Jan 96	Feb 95
<i>Jobs</i>	27	28	28
<i>Unemployed</i>	6	7	7
<i>Labour force</i>	33	35	35
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	19.3	18.9	20.4

Unemployment rate still hovering at 20%

Despite a decrease of almost a percentage point between February 1995 and February 1996, the unemployment rate for the Gaspé/Magdalen Islands region is still by far the highest in Quebec. During the same period, the number of unemployed and the number of people with jobs fell by 1,000.

In thousands; % unemployment rate
Source: LFS, Statistics Canada
Seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

\$310-million cement works

If government environmental regulatory bodies approve the project and the required funding can be raised, Cimbec Canada Inc may invest \$310 million to build a cement works in Port Daniel. The project would create 100 direct jobs and probably a similar number in related areas. Construction should begin early in 1997. (Le Soleil, 16/2/1996)

Co-operative slaughterhouse for Gaspé being studied

A project to build a co-operative slaughterhouse in the region will be examined in a feasibility study recently commissioned by the Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA) in Gaspé. The study's findings should be known in May. (La Terre de Chez-Nous, 29/2/1996 - 6/3/1996)

LANAUDIÈRE

	<i>Feb 96</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	166	169	155
<i>Unemployed</i>	25	22	21
<i>Labour force</i>	191	191	176
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	13,2	11,3	12,1

In thousands; unemployment rate in %

Source: LFS, Statistics Canada

Non-seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

Unemployment rate climbs sharply

The rate of unemployment in the Lanaudière region rose dramatically in February 1996 compared to the same month last year. This increase came at a time when 11,000 jobs were created, the third highest per capita increase in Quebec.

Strike ends at Bridgestone-Firestone

The 733 employees of Bridgestone-Firestone's Joliette plant have agreed to end the union-management labour dispute by voting in favour of management's proposals, despite instructions receiving from their union. This ends a strike that has lasted more than six months and struck a severe blow at the economy of Joliette. (La Presse, 4/3/96)

LAURENTIANS

	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	212	210	182
<i>Unemployed</i>	27	28	29
<i>Labour force</i>	239	238	211
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	11.3	11.7	13.5

In thousands; unemployment rate in %

Source: LFS, Statistics Canada

Non-seasonally adjusted date, three-month moving average

Employment growth accelerates

With the creation of 30,000 jobs between February 1995 and February 1996, the region leads Quebec in terms of employment growth. In addition, the rate of unemployment dropped sharply, by 2.2%, the third best performance in Quebec.

St Thérèse hard hit

The labour dispute at the Kenworth truck plant in St Thérèse, which has been going on for nearly seven months, has had serious consequences for the economy of the region. The 734 striking workers are receiving only \$175 a week from their union and the state of negotiations does not at present suggest that there will be a settlement in the short term. The strike is taking place during a very difficult period for the North American new truck market.

In addition, the GM plant located near the Kenworth facility does not plan an early recall of the 1,400 workers laid off in October because of a drop in orders.

(Le Journal de Montréal, 24/02/96)

LAVAL

	Feb 96	Jan 96	Feb 95
<i>Jobs</i>	155	158	170
<i>Unemployed</i>	16	15	22
<i>Labour force</i>	171	173	192
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	9.4	8.5	11.2

Unemployment down

The departure of 6,000 persons from the ranks of the unemployed between February 1995 and February 1996, combined with an 11% decline in the labour force, caused a 1.8% drop in the unemployment rate. This decrease was accompanied by a loss of 15,000 jobs during the same period.

In thousands; unemployment rate in %
Source: LFS, Statistics Canada
Non-seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

MAURICIE/BOIS-FRANCS

	Feb 96	Jan 96	Feb 95
<i>Jobs</i>	191	191	201
<i>Unemployed</i>	28	24	27
<i>Labour force</i>	219	215	228
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	13.0	11.3	11.7

Employment down sharply

The Mauricie/Bois-Francs region experienced the second highest per capita decline in the level of employment between February 1995 and February 1996, with the loss of 10,000 positions. At the same time, the region's rate of unemployment rose by 1.3% and the number of unemployed by 3.7%.

In thousands; unemployment rate in %
Source: LFS, Statistics Canada
Non-seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

Labour market in Trois Rivières region holds firm

Half the new entrants to the Trois Rivières job market in February found jobs. The unemployment rate nonetheless rose slightly, by .3% over the previous month, to stand at 10.8%.

Trois Rivières leads Atlanta

The City of Trois Rivières is currently competing with Atlanta for the construction of what will be the only high tech paper coating centre in North America. Trois Rivières promoters are, moreover, a few months ahead of their US rival in drawing up their plans. Such a centre would call for an investment of \$30 million and lead to the creation of 12 to 15 high technology jobs.

(Le Soleil, 9/3/96)

MONTÉRÉGIE

	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	604	609	585
<i>Unemployed</i>	71	70	73
<i>Labour force</i>	675	679	658
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	10.5	10.3	11.0

Decline in unemployment rate

In February 1996, the Montérégie continued to post one of the lowest rates of unemployment among Quebec administrative regions. The rate even fell by .5% between February 1995 and February 1996. At 10.5%, the current rate for the region is 1.5% below the provincial average.

In thousands; unemployment rate in %
source: LFS, Statistics Canada
Non-seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

1,300 layoffs at GM's Boisbriand plant

A shortage of parts caused by strikes at the two General Motors (GM) brake plants in the United States has caused a shutdown of activities at the company's Boisbriand facility and resulted in the layoff of 1,300 of its 1,500 workers. In addition to its plant in the Montérégie, GM has also closed two other plants in Canada.

(Le Soleil, 12/3/96)

Activities could resume in St Jean sur Richelieu

The one hundred workers who lost their jobs following the bankruptcy of the Textiles Monterey plant in St Jean sur Richelieu, have formed a co-operative and submitted an offer to purchase to the trustee in charge of disposal of the assets, in the hope of restarting the firm's activities. The current offer to purchase is \$5.5 millions.

(Le Devoir, 2/3/96)

Stelco-McMaster plans to increase exports

Stelco-McMaster of Contrecoeur plans to invest some \$30 million by the year 2000 to increase production capacity by 40%. The firm hopes to be able to increase the share of its production earmarked for export from 16% to 40%. Its target markets are mainly in such South American countries as Chili, Brazil and Argentina. (Le Devoir, 16/2/96)

Hoechst Marion Roussel to close its doors

Hoechst Marion Roussel Ltd's Varennes plant, specializing in the production of pharmaceuticals, will cease operations completely within two years, with a loss of 42 jobs. The closing is part of a wide-ranging plan to reduce the number of plants operated by the company worldwide by half. (The Gazette, 23/2/96)

Montréal Youth Centre to expand

An estimated \$17 million of work will soon be carried out to expand the Montréal Youth Centre in Chambly. Construction should begin in April and be completed by the fall. (Constructo, 13/2/96)

Imax theatre to open in Brossard

Beginning in March, work estimated at nearly \$10 million will begin on construction of an Imax Theatre in Brossard. The complex will be located on the site of the Champlain Mall. (Constructo, 20/2/96)

OUTAOUAIS

	Feb 96	Jan 96	Feb 95
<i>Jobs</i>	147	146	150
<i>Unemployed</i>	18	18	19
<i>Labour force</i>	165	164	169
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	10.9	10.8	11.1

Little change in February

There was very little change in the labour market in the Outaouais between February 1995 and February 1996. The rate of unemployment fell by .2%, to 10.9%, while employment and the number of unemployed declined by 2% and 5.3% respectively.

In thousands; unemployment rate in %
Source: LFS, Statistics Canada
Non-seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

QUÉBEC CITY

	<i>Feb 96</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	282	284	269
<i>Unemployed</i>	42	39	38
<i>Labour force</i>	324	323	307
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	12.9	12.2	12.4

Employment up in Quebec City

The unemployment rate increased (on an annual basis) by .5%, despite the creation of 13,000 jobs. In addition, the number of unemployed shot up by over 10% during this period.

In thousands; unemployment rate in %
Source: LFS, Statistics Canada
Non-seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

Unemployment up in Quebec City CMA

Job stability, combined with an increase of nearly 8% in the number of unemployed, helped to push the 10.7% January unemployment rate up to 11.2% in February 1996 in the census metropolitan area of Quebec City. This rate places the region 1.6% above the Canadian average.

Public sector slows down

According to a study conducted by the Government Industries Table of GRAPPE (Grand réseau des acteurs et promoteurs du partenariat économique), 10,000 public sector jobs will disappear between March 1993 and March 1997 in the Greater Quebec City region. Québec. Over 6,000 positions have already been eliminated, and 4,000 more are expected to disappear over the next 12 months. Half of these 4,000 jobs will be in the health and education sector.

(Le Soleil)

Major work at Laval University

Laval University plans to carry out a major renovation and refitting project this year, at a cost of tens of millions of dollars. The work includes expansion of the Adrien Pouliot Building, which will call for an investment of \$32.5 million. Work will also be carried out on the Palais-Prince Building and the health science sector. A major fund-raising campaign and extensive participation by the Quebec government will help to finance the investment.

(Constructo, 13/2/96)

Alcatel leaves Toronto for Ville Vanier

The multinational Alcatel, located in Toronto, will transfer its manufacturing operations to Ville Vanier, near Quebec City. Over half a million dollars worth of expansion has so far been required. In all, the operation will create about 40 jobs and enable the Ville Vanier plant to double its production capacity.
(Le Journal de Québec, 15/3/96)

FORD-Q supports high technology in Quebec City

The Institute of Magnesium Technology (IMT) of Quebec City will receive \$2.2 million in assistance from the Federal Office of Regional Development - Quebec (FORD-Q) toward an \$8.7 million project to set up a dozen new research projects. The IMT is also considering hiring about 40 new researchers within the next three years. FORD-Q has also granted \$385,000 in assistance over three years to the Geomatics Development Centre, which opened last year. The money will go mainly toward the creation of suitable facilities and to stimulate the growth of this sector on international markets.
(Le Soleil, 12/2/96)

(Le Journal de Québec, 12/2/96)

St Laurent Cement may close

The future of the St Laurent Cement plant in Beauport is far from certain in the medium term. A market study has highlighted sluggish demand compared to the production capacity of the firm's two plants, the second of which is located in Joliette. To overcome this obstacle, the Beauport plant will have to reduce its production costs by 25% and turn to export markets if it is to survive.
(Le Soleil, 15/3/96)

(Le Soleil, 15/3/96)

\$10 million for education in Val Bélair

The Jeune-Lorette School Board will soon have a new high school with a capacity of 750 students. Construction of the school will require an investment of \$10 million, largely from the Quebec government.
(Constructo, 13/2/96)

(Constructo, 13/2/96)

Quebec City ranks high as world tourist destination

The American tourist magazine *Condé Nast Traveler*, aimed at wealthy travellers, recently published a list of cities praised by its readers. Quebec City made a very fine showing, standing 17th in the world and third in Canada, behind Vancouver and Victoria. Its original culture, unique ambiance and fine cuisine were particularly well received by readers.
(Le Soleil, 10/3/96)

(Le Soleil, 10/3/96)

Valcartier receives \$70 million

The Department of National Defence has decided to invest \$70 million to build a Support Centre for the training of militia at the Valcartier military base. The centre will include a summer camp, a technical support complex and a 350-bed dormitory for reservists. Work will continue until June 1998, and 175 workers will be employed during the construction period.

(Le Soleil, 14/3/96)

SAGUENAY/LAC ST JEAN

	<i>Feb 96</i>	<i>Jan 96</i>	<i>Feb 95</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	111	111	105
<i>Unemployed</i>	20	20	18
<i>Labour force</i>	131	131	123
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	15.4	15.5	14.9

Unemployment rate climbs

The unemployment rate in the Saguenay/Lac St Jean region rose by .5% between February 1995 and February 1996. This increase places the region just behind the Gaspé/Magdalen Islands as the regions with the highest unemployment rate. Despite this increase, some 6,000 new jobs were created during this period.

In thousands; unemployment rate in %

Source: LFS, Statistics Canada

Non-seasonally adjusted data, three-month moving average

1 000 new jobs in the Chicoutimi/Jonquière region

Seasonally adjusted data indicate that 1,000 new jobs were created in the Chicoutimi-Jonquière region between January and February 1996, lowering the unemployment rate from 14.6% to 14.3% between these two months.

Jonquière High Technology Centre receives assistance

The Jonquière High Technology Centre (CHTJ) will receive \$300 000 in financial assistance from the Federal Office of Regional Development - Quebec to support its activities in the areas of research, development and business start-up. The CHTJ's operating budget will be \$2.2 million for the next three years.

(Le Quotidien, 23/2/96)

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