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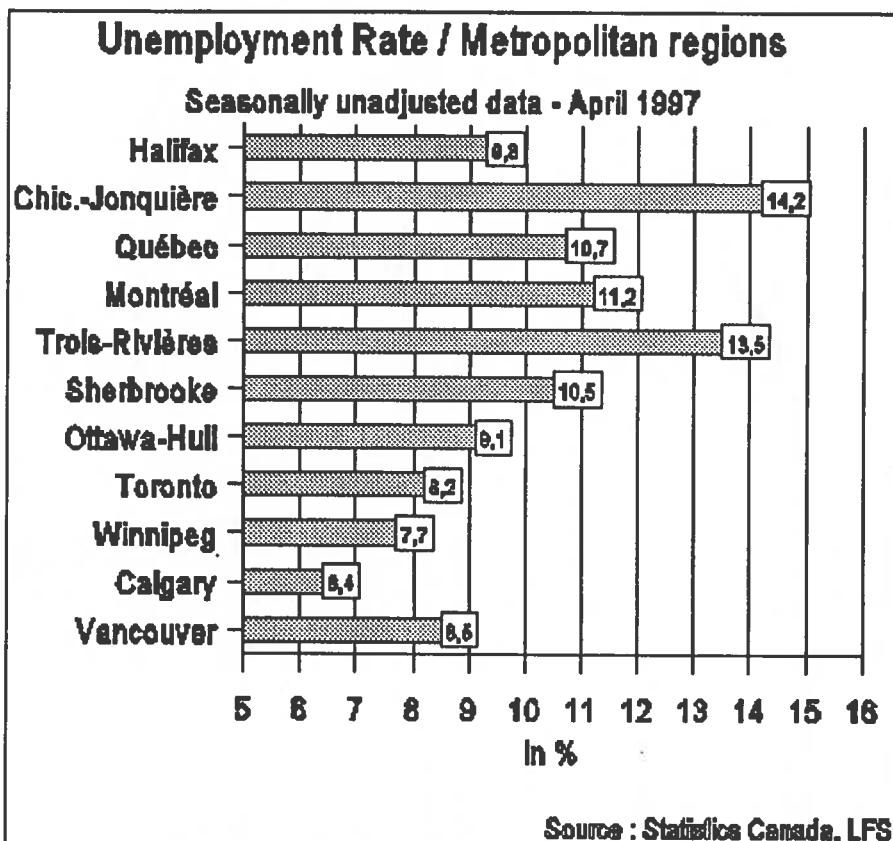
Industrie Canada
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Volume 9
Number 5
May 1997

Resurgence in the labour force

The level of employment in Quebec rose by a modest 1,000 between March 1997 and April 1997, so that the arrival of 16,000 newly unemployed job-seekers resulted in a rise in the unemployment rate, from 11.2% in March to 11.6% in April.



In the metropolitan Montreal region (three-month moving average), 7,000 new jobs were created, bringing the total gain to 44,000 since November. At the same time, the number of unemployed in the region dropped by 5,000, taking the Montreal unemployment rate down again for the fifth consecutive time, this time from 11.5% in March to 11.2% in April.

In the country as a whole, the recovery in the labour market was confirmed by the creation of 33,000 new jobs between March and April 1997. This is the sixth positive variation in the level of employment in the country in the last seven months. Most of the monthly increase may be explained by job gains in Ontario

(+ 15,000), Saskatchewan (+ 8,000) and New Brunswick (+ 7,000). However, the Canadian unemployment rate rose from 9.3% to 9.6%, one reason being the 46,000 increase in the number of unemployed during that period. As well, virtually all of the newly unemployed live in Quebec, Ontario (13,000 new unemployed) and British Columbia (15,000 new unemployed). (Statistics Canada)

Seasonally unadjusted data: 27,000 jobs created

On a seasonally unadjusted basis, some 27,000 new jobs were created in Quebec between April 1996 and April 1997, 16,000 of which were full-time jobs. This increase was driven by the manufacturing industries, with the creation of 58,000 new jobs. On the other hand, the financial services, insurance and real estate sectors (annual loss of 36,000 jobs) and the construction industry (annual loss of 16,000 jobs) were hard hit. (Statistics Canada)

LEADING ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Economic activity

After the significant growth of the end of the third quarter and the beginning of the fourth quarter, economic activity seems to have levelled off in Quebec. The real gross domestic product (GDP) at the cost of the factors fell by 0.1% from December to January.

This drop is mainly attributable to the declines observed in the manufacturing sector, in government services and in mining activity.

(Bureau de la statistique du Québec)

Construction and housing

Construction starts

In the urban regions of Quebec, there were 19,300 construction starts in April, a drop of 12.7% from the peak of 22,100 recorded in March. There was a decline of 7.8% in Canada between March and April 1997.

Building permits

The value of building permits rose substantially in Quebec from the fourth quarter of 1996 to the first quarter of 1997: there was an increase of 6.3% during that period, largely because of a dynamic residential market. However, the increase recorded in Quebec was lower than in the country as a whole, where there was a 12.4% increase.

On the other hand, most of the provinces experienced substantial increases. Decreases were observed only in Nova Scotia and British Columbia.

(Statistics Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC])

Retail sales

Sales by Quebec retailers continued to rise in February 1997: by 2.0% from January to February 1997, the fourth best in provincial performance after Saskatchewan (+ 2.7%), Manitoba (+ 2.5%) and Ontario (+ 2.4%). In addition, the increase in Quebec exceeded the Canadian average by 0.9 percentage points.

We would note that retail sales in Quebec rose by 12.6% between February 1996 and February 1997, compared to 7.7% for the country as a whole.

(Statistics Canada)

Consumer price index

The consumer price index (CPI) in Quebec remained stable between February and March 1997, while it fell in all the other provinces, by percentages ranging from 0.1% in Saskatchewan and British Columbia to 0.8% in Newfoundland.

The drop in the transportation and housing indexes in Quebec was compensated for by the rise in other indexes, particularly clothing. For the country as a whole, the monthly increase in the CPI was 0.2%.

(Statistics Canada)

Foreign trade

Exports

The value of Quebec exports remained stable from January to February 1997. However, the proportion of total exports going to the United States (83.7%) reached an historic peak during February.

For the first two months of the year, Quebec exports totalled \$7.6 billion, which is substantially equivalent to the situation during the corresponding period in 1996.

Imports

Quebec imports totalled \$7.2 billion during the first two months of the year, divided equally between January and February. However, that figure represents an increase of 8.1% over the corresponding period in the previous year. Crude oil, automobiles, electronic tubes and semi-conductors maintained the lead among purchases abroad. These products alone accounted for 30% of the value of Quebec imports. (Bureau de la statistique du Québec)

Labour market training agreement

The Governments of Canada and Quebec recently reached an agreement with respect to labour market training. Quebec will now be responsible for the design, delivery and management of occupational training programs in the province. The agreement also provides for the transfer of \$2.7 billion over five years and of some 1,100 federal public servants to the Government of Quebec. (Le Soleil, 22/4/97)

REGIONAL REVIEW

MONTREAL ISLAND

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	753	767	-14	741	763	-22
<i>Unemployed</i>	111	119	-8	120	115	5
<i>Labour force</i>	864	886	-22	861	878	-17
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	12.8	13.4	-0.6	14.0	13,1	0,9

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Major project in the Old Port of Montreal

The Government of Canada and the private sector will invest about \$49 million in the redevelopment of the Kind Edward dock in the Old Port of Montreal, and in developing a permanent science exposition, Expotec-Canada. The Canadian government will be the primary funder, with a \$29 million contribution. It is expected that once the work has been completed a million visitors will visit the Kind Edward dock every year.

(Le Journal de Montréal, 22/4/97)

Inno-Centre wants its firms to export

Inno-Centre, which is already skilled in assisting high-technology firms, is now planning to direct its efforts toward developing the export potential of those firms. For instance, a new program offering financing and information, among other things, will begin operation shortly, in partnership with various embassies and delegations throughout the world, banks and other economic development agencies. It is anticipated that a dozen firms could take advantage of this new service over the next year. (La Presse, 7/5/97)

UBI Soft finally sets up shop

After several weeks of discussions with government officials, the French company UBI Soft, which specializes in producing and distributing multimedia software, will finally be setting up shop in Montreal. The firm will also receive substantial financial assistance from both of the higher levels of government. Total investment might exceed \$400 million over the next ten years, and it is anticipated that more than 500 jobs will be created as a result.

(Le Soleil, Le Devoir, La Presse, Le Journal de Montréal, 18/4/97)

ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	63	64	-1	63	65	-2
<i>Unemployed</i>	12	8	4	11	7	4
<i>Labour force</i>	75	72	3	74	72	2
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	16.5	10.9	5.6	14.9	10.4	4.5

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

A more dynamic mining sector in 1997

Despite some recent closings, the mining sector should be the spearhead of investment growth in Abitibi/Temiscamingue. In fact, a 5.7% increase in capital investment is anticipated in the region in 1997. However, if the mining sector is excluded, that figure would show a drop of about 11.7%.

(Les Affaires, 12/4/97)

LOWER ST-LAWRENCE

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	71	77	-6	72	78	-6
<i>Unemployed</i>	19	13	6	19	13	6
<i>Labour force</i>	90	90	0	91	91	0
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	20.9	14.6	6.3	20.8	14.3	6.5

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Premier Tech moves ahead

The firm Premier Tech will be kicking off its *Mobilisateur* research and development program in June. That program, which will call for several dozen researchers to be hired, should create about 300 jobs and bring investment of \$25 million. Premier Tech already employs 230 employees in Rivière-du-Loup.

Both of the higher levels of government will have a financial involvement in this project. The federal government, through the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec), will contribute \$4 million, while the Quebec government will contribute \$8 million.
(Le Soleil, 20/4/97)

Norcast hopes to increase production

The Norcast foundry, which employs about 228 people in its two plants in Mont-Joli, and which specializes in manufacturing steel products, is hoping to establish a third plant worth \$10 million in order to increase its production capacity. The reason underlying this project is the heated competition that Norcast is facing on foreign markets. If the new plant were to be established, it could help to create some 50 new jobs. However, the future production site has not yet been decided. Mont-Joli is apparently on the list, but the United States seems to have the lead in this race.
(CJBR AM 900, Rimouski, 28/4/97)

A cloud over the head of 30 employees at Produits forestiers Alliance

In Ville Dégelis, Produits forestiers Alliance is planning to cancel a shift and lay off about 30 of its 115 workers, apparently because of difficulties in obtaining supplies of wood. However, the employees' union and management are currently discussing alternative solutions, in order to preserve the jobs.
(Le Soleil, 28/4/97)

Matane being considered for a call centre for high tech firms

A consortium of Quebec high technology firms, composed of ETI (Experts en traitement de l'information) Montréal, Teknor and RBA, is apparently very interested in establishing an international call centre in Matane that would have a value of \$1.5 million. The centre's role would be to respond to demand from the 30 or so clients that make up the consortium world-wide. If the feasibility studies, the results of which should be known in mid-June, are conclusive, the centre could open at the end of the year, and 30 jobs would then be created.

At the same time, the consortium is not ruling out the possibility of building a new plant in eastern Quebec for assembling electronic equipment. However, at this point, the process is still being studied.
(Le Soleil, 7/5/97)

CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHES

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	174	173	1	175	172	3
<i>Unemployed</i>	17	16	1	17	17	0
<i>Labour force</i>	191	189	2	192	189	3
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	8.9	8.6	0.3	8.7	9.0	-0.3

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Les Industries Davie on the verge of snagging a major contract

Les Industries Davie, a subsidiary of Dominion Bridge formerly known as MIL Davie, is apparently about to reach an agreement with Maritima for major work to be done on a drilling platform, a contract that would be worth \$84 million. If all goes well, the platform would be brought to Lévis during the summer. In addition, the Lévis yard is in line for another contract to build two drilling platforms for Maritime and a Dutch company. That contract would be worth nearly \$200 million. However, a Dutch yard is also in the running.

Les Industries Davie is currently involved in building a ferry worth \$38 million, for the Société des traversiers du Québec. About 600 employees are working at the south shore yard in Quebec City, which is the most jobs it has had in a long time.

(Le Soleil, 18/4/97)

Production of calcium aluminate to start in June

Mazarin plans to start production of calcium aluminate in June at its Alumica plant in Thetford Mines. In the beginning, there will be 25 employees working at the plant. Calcium aluminate is an increasingly popular product, particularly among steel-works, to the point that Mazarin believes that within four or five years the new mineral should produce as much revenue for it as asbestos.

(Le Soleil, 21/4/97)

Federal subsidies in Beauce

The federal government has agreed to pay subsidies of nearly \$2 million in the Beauce region, divided among three different projects. \$1.4 million will be allocated to establishing a small and medium-sized business development centre in Saint-Georges and a business centre in Beauceville, while \$800,000 will be injected for infrastructure work in Beauceville.

(CBV AM 980, 19/4/97)

NORTH SHORE/NOTHERN QUEBEC

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	53	57	-4	52	57	-5
<i>Unemployed</i>	11	11	0	11	11	0
<i>Labour force</i>	64	68	-4	63	68	-5
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	16.6	15.8	0.8	16.8	15.4	1.4

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

IOC pellet plant may reopen

The IOC mining firm is seriously examining the possibility of reopening its pellet plant in Sept-Îles, which would result in the creation of 200 jobs and investment of \$100 million. The pellet plant had to cease operations in 1981, nine years after it opened.

(Le Soleil, 24/4/97)

Silicium project in Port-Cartier postponed

Ressources Vogues will be delaying its plan to establish a silicium plant in Port-Cartier for a year. The apparent reason for the delay is demands by potential partners for further analyses, to confirm the reserves and purity of the silica vein near Fermont. In addition, the Quebec ministère de l'Environnement et de la Faune (MEF) has not completed its environmental analysis of the project, and this could result in further delays.

We would recall that this project, which could involve investment of up to \$130 million, should create about 100 new jobs.

(Le Soleil, 30/4/97)

Rise in logging royalties hurts Boisaco

The Boisaco sawmill in Sacré-Coeur, which employs 600 workers, has been put in serious jeopardy by the decision of the Quebec government to raise its logging royalties. According to the firm's management, if the current situation were to continue, complete closing of the sawmill might have to be considered.

(Le Soleil, 29/4/97)

Donohue preparing to abolish a number of positions

The Donahue paper mill is considering doing away with a number of positions at its Baie-Comeau plant because of the cessation of some activities and because of technological changes. Although no figures have yet been officially released, it is likely that about 40 positions will be affected. Some of these positions are currently vacant and the other cuts could be made through a retirement plan.

(Objectif Plein Jour, 12/4/97)

EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	119	118	1	121	121	0
<i>Unemployed</i>	15	13	2	14	16	-2
<i>Labour force</i>	134	131	3	135	137	-2
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	11.3	10.1	1.2	10.6	11.6	-1.0

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

\$100 million expansion considered for Tafisa

Tafisa, a company specializing in the manufacture of particleboard, is examining the possibility of undertaking an expansion at its Lac-Mégantic plant. If the plan goes ahead, it could result in investment of \$100 million, and production could start at the end of next year.

(Constructo, 29/4/97)

Expansion planned in Coaticook

A Coaticook firm, Cuisine Cabico, will be expanding and increasing its production capacity through a \$2 million investment plan. Municipal authorities will contribute upwards of \$1 million for constructing a building to meet the firm's needs, while the firm will lay out the same amount to purchase the equipment needed. Work on the new building should start in the next few weeks. About sixty new jobs should be created by this project.

(CHLT AM 630, 18/4/97)

New concrete plant in Asbestos

Béton Asbestos is planning to open facilities in the Asbestos industrial park in the near future, bringing about \$2 million in investment and creating a dozen new jobs. Béton Asbestos will at first be counting on the local market, which the firm considers to be promising.

(La Tribune, 24/4/97)

GASPÉ/MAGDALEN ISLANDS

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	30	26	4	30	27	3
<i>Unemployed</i>	10	7	3	10	7	3
<i>Labour force</i>	40	33	7	40	34	6
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	25.2	21.2	4.0	24.7	20.2	4.5

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

A new ferry for the islanders

The Government of Canada recently announced that it was purchasing the Irish ferry *Isle of Inishmore* to replace the decrepit *Lucy Maud Montgomery*, which is now 35 years old. Ottawa has released a \$30 million envelope that will be used to purchase the ferry, at a cost of about \$20 million, and for rebuilding and adapting the dock.
(Le Soleil, 25/4/97)

LANAUDIÈRE

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	187	162	25	186	165	21
<i>Unemployed</i>	21	28	-7	22	26	-4
<i>Labour force</i>	208	190	18	208	191	17
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	10.1	14.8	-4.7	10.5	13.5	-3.0

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Record job creation in April

On a seasonally unadjusted basis, the Lanaudière region last month became the leader in job creation. Between April 1996 and April 1997, 25,000 new jobs were created, and the number of unemployed fell by 7,000. This meant that the unemployment rate dropped from 14.8% to 10.1%.
(Statistics Canada)

LAURENTIANS

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	201	214	-13	202	213	-11
<i>Unemployed</i>	31	24	7	32	27	5
<i>Labour force</i>	232	238	-6	234	240	-6
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	13.5	10.2	3.3	13.6	11.2	2.4

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

The region loses 14,000 jobs

Unlike its neighbouring region, Lanaudière, the Laurentians labour market experienced some setbacks in April. No fewer than 14,000 jobs were lost within its borders between April 1996 and April 1997, and this, combined with the arrival of 7,000 newly unemployed on the labour market, raised the unemployment rate from 10.2% to 13.5% between those two periods. This was the fourth highest rise in the unemployment rate in all the administrative regions of Quebec, after the Lower St. Lawrence, Abitibi/Temiscamingue and Gaspé/Magdalen Islands.
(Statistics Canada)

LAVAL

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	170	153	17	167	154	13
<i>Unemployed</i>	27	20	7	24	30	-6
<i>Labour force</i>	197	173	24	191	184	7
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	13.6	11.6	2.0	12.4	10.1	2.3

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

More jobs and more unemployed in Laval

The unemployment rate in Laval rose by 2 percentage points between April 1996 and April 1997, despite the fact that 17,000 new jobs were created during that period. The addition of 7,000 newly unemployed to the labour force cancelled out the anticipated effects of recent job creation on the unemployment rate. However, the rise in the employment/population ratio was the second highest (+ 5.4%) of all the administrative regions of Quebec, with the ratio being 61.4% in April. With this leap forward, the region is now laying claim to the highest employment rate in Quebec.
 (Statistics Canada)

MAURICIE/BOIS-FRANCS

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	197	192	5	194	192	2
<i>Unemployed</i>	28	30	-2	31	29	2
<i>Labour force</i>	225	222	3	225	221	4
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	12.4	13.4	-1.0	13.8	13.0	0.8

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Megatech Électro to expand in Grand-Mère

The Société de développement économique de Grand-Mère (SODÉGM) will invest \$1 million to carry out a major expansion of the Jacques-Marchand industrial complex and to enable Megatech Électro to expand. There should be a significant economic impact on the region: in addition to the 30 or so construction workers who should be mobilized while the work is being done, Megatech Électro plans to hire 80 new workers once the new premises are available.
 (Le Nouvelliste, 1/5/97)

30 new jobs at Entreprises Modernes

Entreprises Modernes, which specializes in the manufacture of cupboard doors and furniture components, will receive a \$300,000 investment from the Fonds régional de solidarité Mauricie/Bois-Francs (FTQ),

which will enable it to increase its production and also to consolidate its existing 52 jobs and create about 20 more. This expansion is attributable to the meteoric growth of this firm, particularly on foreign markets where it does more than 85% of its business.

(La Nouvelle Victoriaville, 30/3/97)

MONTÉRÉGIE

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	614	603	11	607	604	3
<i>Unemployed</i>	70	73	-3	70	72	-2
<i>Labour force</i>	684	676	8	677	676	1
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	10.2	10.7	-0.5	10.4	10.6	-0.2

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Centre frigorifique to expand

The Centre frigorifique Montérégie, which is located in Sainte-Julie, may be receiving nearly \$7 million in investments over three years. A major expansion is to be undertaken in three phases, the first of which could start this summer.

(Constructo, 25/4/97)

OUTAOUAIS

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	144	147	-3	144	146	-2
<i>Unemployed</i>	18	18	0	19	18	1
<i>Labour force</i>	162	165	-3	163	164	-1
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	11.3	11.0	0.3	11.8	10.9	0.9

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

All of the Outaouais is invited to a major economic forum

The principal political and economic leaders of the Outaouais were recently invited to a major socio-economic summit, to be called Forum Outaouais 2000. About 200 people will attend, to discuss the broad directions that are desirable for the region for the next few years in terms of the economy, jobs and urban development.

(CBOF FM 90,7, 19/4/97)

QUEBEC CITY

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	281	290	-9	280	285	-5
<i>Unemployed</i>	39	41	-2	40	41	-1
<i>Labour force</i>	320	331	-11	320	326	-6
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	12.1	12.3	-0.2	12.6	12.7	-0.1

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
 Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Unemployment rate continues to fall in Quebec City

From March to April 1997, the number of unemployed in the metropolitan Quebec City region dropped by 1,000, while the number of jobs remained relatively stable. The effect of this was that the unemployment rate fell from 11.0% to 10.7%. This is the fifth decline in the unemployment rate in the metropolitan Quebec City region in the last six months.
 (Statistics Canada)

Canadelle reopening becomes increasingly likely

The Quebec government recently expressed its support for the promoter who is hoping to put the Canadelle plant in Ville Vanier back into operation. This could result in public funding, conditional on the promoter assembling \$1 to \$2 million in funds. In peak periods, the women's lingerie plant could employ as many as 240 women workers.
 (Le Soleil, 6/4/97)

Groupe Berclain to create 30 new jobs

The Groupe Berclain, which is located in Sainte-Foy and specializes in designing software for use in planning and synchronizing manufacturing operations, has announced that it intends to hire 30 new skilled workers, bringing the firm's total work force to more than 120. These new hirings stem from the decision by the firm's head office, Baan, to make the Group a centre of international expertise in software research and development.

The firm has in fact been experiencing meteoric growth. According to its management, its revenue could grow by 150% over the year, and this would suggest that new jobs may be created.
 (Le Journal de Québec, 3/5/97)

SAGUENAY/LAC-ST-JEAN

	<i>April 97</i>	<i>April 96</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>1997 (cumul.)</i>	<i>1996 (cumul.)</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	111	112	-1	110	111	-1
<i>Unemployed</i>	20	20	0	22	20	2
<i>Labour force</i>	131	132	-1	132	131	1
<i>Unempmt. rate</i>	15.4	14.8	0.6	16.5	15.2	1.3

In thousands, unemployment rate and variation in percentages
Seasonally unadjusted data, three-month moving average
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Unemployment declines in Chicoutimi-Jonquière

In the metropolitan Chicoutimi-Jonquière region, the creation of 1,000 jobs, combined with the departure of about the same number of unemployed from the labour force, meant that the unemployment rate declined from 15.3% in March 1997 to 14.2% in April. This was the second consecutive decrease in the unemployment rate in the region, after the peak of 16.6% reached in January and February of this year. (Statistics Canada)

No decision before next year for the Alma aluminum plant

Alcan will not make a decision before the beginning of next year as to whether a new aluminum plant will be established in Alma; this would be a \$1 billion project.

The firm is remaining cautious after a difficult year in 1996, characterized by weak demand and prices. However, Alcan is counting on 3% growth in demand and steadier prices in 1997. (La Presse, 25/4/97)

\$12.5 million to preserve jobs at Abitibi-Price

It appears likely that about 120 of the 177 jobs slated to disappear at the Abitibi-Price paper mill will be saved, thanks to new investments totalling nearly \$12.5 million over five years by the mill, workers, the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre (SQDM) and the provincial government.

We would recall that the paper mill, which plans to build a new thermo-mechanical pulp plant, was considering cutting those jobs, which will be superfluous when the new technology becomes operational. The new moneys being injected will therefore be used to improve the retirement program and to bring the eligibility age down to 56 from 58, and at the same time to offer a training program for other employees so that they can continue working at the plant. (Le Soleil, 3/5/97)

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Last update : June 27, 1997

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