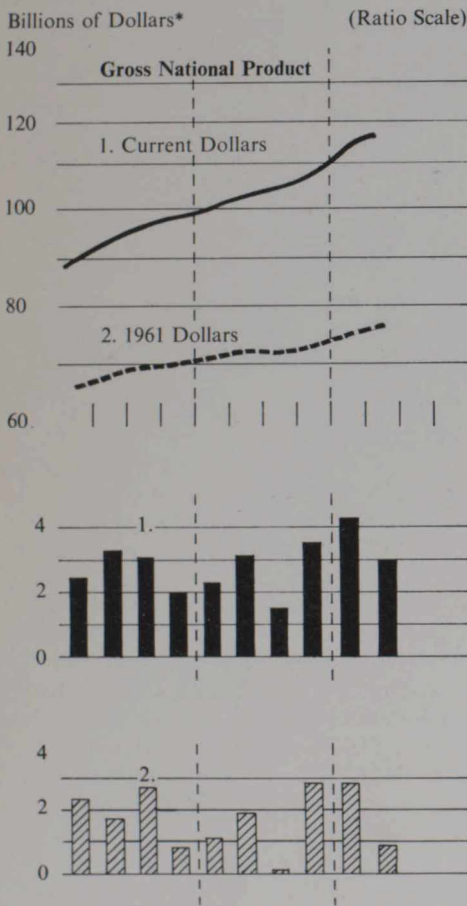


and the spreading energy crisis casts a cloud over otherwise strong prospects for the future, Statistics Canada reported at mid-December.



The Gross National Product – the total of all the country's private and public spending for goods and services – rose only four-tenths of 1% after allowance for inflation. Total real growth for the entire first nine months of this year was 7.2% above the corresponding period of 1972, about in line with 1973 forecasts of the Canadian Government.

### Minimum wage

The minimum hourly wage in British Columbia rose in December to \$2.25 from \$2 for employees aged 18 and over and to \$1.85 from \$1.60 for those 17 and under.

The minimum wage increased to \$2 an hour from \$1.50 on December 3, 1972, as the first in a three-stage increase by the province's New Democratic Party Government. The next increase will come June 3,

1974, when the wage paid to those 18 or over will rise to \$2.50 an hour and for those 17 and under it will rise to \$2.10.

Ontario announced in November that the province's minimum wage will rise to \$2 an hour on January 1 from \$1.80.

### Pensions

The basic old age security pension in Canada will rise in January to \$108.14 from \$105.30, the Health and Welfare Department has announced.

The maximum guaranteed income supplement for a single person or married person whose spouse is not a pensioner will rise to \$75.85 from \$73.86. Added to the basic old age pension this payment will produce a monthly total of \$183.99.

The maximum supplement for a married couple if both are pensioners will go to \$67.37 from \$65.60. Added to the basic pension, it means each pensioner will receive \$175.51, a couple \$351.02.

The department estimates that in January more than 1,855,000 persons will be receiving old age security payments and of that number some 1,072,000 will be receiving the supplementary payments.

The increases result from passage in Parliament of bill C-219 on 6 September 1973 which provides for quarterly increases in the old age security pensions and the guaranteed income supplement based upon cost of living increases.

Parliament has also approved legislation raising the family allowance, paid universally without regard to income, from an average of C\$12 monthly per dependent child up to 18 years of age to an average of C\$20 monthly, effective 1 January 1974.

### Inflation

Canada's inflation, although the steepest in 22 years, was only about average in a world of sharply rising living costs, for the first nine months of 1973.

Eleven of the 24 nations in the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) had larger consumer price increases over the 12-month period up to last September than Canada's 8.3%, and four countries fared worse in August than Canada's unusually large 1.3% jump that month.

A report by the OECD said Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Portugal, Spain and Turkey all had bigger increases in living costs than Canada over the year prior to

September. In August, when Canada's 1.3% price increase marked the greatest single monthly rise in the country since 1951, even larger increases were reported in the U.S. with 1.8%, Japan 1.4, Finland 2.0 and Spain 1.6%.

While the measurements of living costs are not precisely the same in the various countries, "there are a lot more similarities than difference," said an official of Statistics Canada. The report also showed that Canada's average consumer price rise of 2.7% per year from 1960 to 1970 was tied with Germany for the third-lowest record of the 24 OECD nations, with only Greece and Luxembourg reporting lower figures of 2.1 and 2.6% respectively.

From the enviable position of having the lowest rise in living costs (2.9%) of the group in 1971, Canada moved to fourth lowest in 1972. At September 1973 Canada stood squarely in the middle with 11 nations reporting greater inflation in the 12 months dating back from August, eleven slower and one – Switzerland – tied. ♦