



Last Month in the Markets: March 2nd – 31st, 2026

	TSX	S&P 500	DOW	NASDAQ	ACWI	CAD/USD	GOLD (USD)	OIL (USD)	Govt CAN 10Y Yield
Month Close	32,768.04	6,528.52	46,341.51	21,590.63	978.94	71.93 ¢	\$ 4,678.60	\$ 101.38	3.469 %
month +/-	-1,571.95	-350.36	-2,636.41	-1,077.58	-77.82	-1.38 ¢	-569.30	+\$ 34.36	+0.344 pts
month +/- %	-4.58%	-5.09%	-5.38%	-4.75%	-7.36%	-1.89%	-10.85%	+51.27%	n/a
52 wk HIGH	34,545	7,002	50,513	24,020	1,058	74.16 ¢	\$ 5,586	\$ 119.48	3.628%
52 wk LOW	22,228	4,835	36,612	14,784	699	69.38 ¢	\$ 2,834	\$ 54.98	2.804%
YTD +/-	+ 3.33%	- 4.63%	- 3.58%	- 7.11%	- 3.52%	-1.32%	+ 7.77%	+76.56%	+0.037 pts
1Yr +/-	+31.51%	+16.33%	+10.33%	+24.81%	+18.35%	+3.48%	+48.51%	+41.83%	+0.504 pts

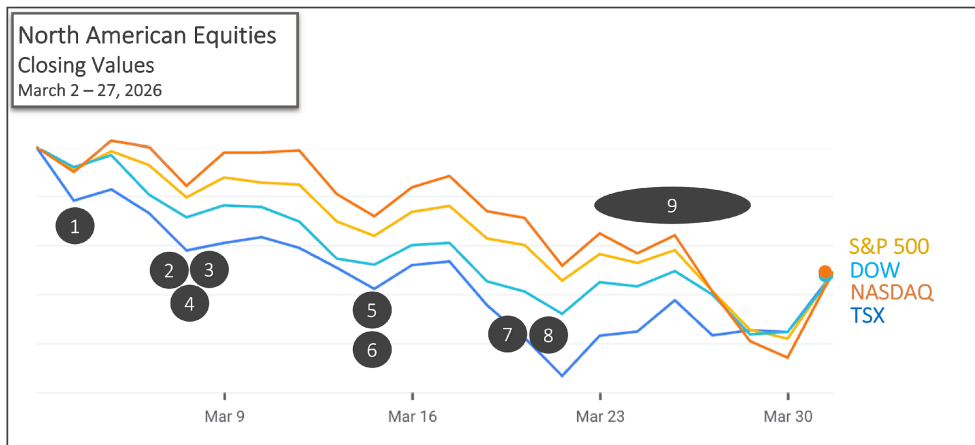
Index returns based on index value (source: Bloomberg <https://www.bloomberg.com/markets>, MSCI <https://www.msci.com/end-of-day-data-search> and ARG Inc. analysis. Price returns are reflected)

What happened in March?

Nearly every market move was controlled, or at least heavily influenced, by the U.S. attack on Iran that began at the end of February. Two days of war preceded the opening of trading on March 2nd, and the war continued unabated to the end of the month and beyond. The first three weeks of the month were a nearly continuous series of losses for North American equity indexes, where they lost between 4½ and 9%.

On March 23rd Donald Trump mentioned that discussions to end the war with Iran’s leadership were progressing well. Markets reacted immediately. Oil prices dropped more than 10%, gold fell 5%, and then equities jumped 2% after the opening bell on the 24th highlighting the relationship between uncertainty-driven commodity prices and equity values. Progress on negotiations that could reopen the Strait of Hormuz to oil shipments will greatly influence oil equity

Until a full resolution to the conflict is achieved expect the political and military uncertainty the [VIX Volatility Index](#) to maintain its high level.



[insert chart here]

(source: Bloomberg <https://www.bloomberg.com/markets> and ARG Inc. analysis)

Events that influenced markets in March included:

1. March 3rd – Quarterly U.S. corporate results remained strong

Notwithstanding the negativity of geopolitical events, a bright spot for equities was the conclusion of the fourth quarter earnings results for the S&P 500. 73% of companies exceeded their



earnings-per-share estimates and earnings growth was 14% higher, the fifth consecutive quarter of double-digit growth. [FactSet Earnings Insight](#)

2. March 6th – Oil prices rose and equities values fell

The price of oil rose more than 35% in the first week of March to close at almost \$91 USD per barrel for the [West Texas Intermediate](#) (WTI) benchmark. The rising price of oil sent corporate values downward (except for many energy and oil stocks) as increased energy prices threaten future revenue and profits. The contribution of energy price increased consumer inflation measures will likely delay, or reverse, rate cuts by the Federal Reserve, Bank of Canada and other central banks, potentially slowing economic expansion and profits.

3. March 6th – U.S. lost significant amount of employment

The loss in U.S. jobs was not able to make a positive contribution to markets. The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced in its [Employment Situation Summary](#) that “payroll edged down by 92,000 in February, and the unemployment rate changed little at 4.4 percent.” The last time that the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) delivered a significantly dissatisfying jobs report President Trump fired the lead statistician.

4. March 6th – Canadian trade diplomacy continued to protect our economy

Prime Minister Mark Carney pursued trade agreements with more reliable partners, which does not include the United States. Deals were struck with India, Australia and Japan, and further bilateral economic integration is being negotiated. [CBC and Carney trade deals](#)

5. March 13th – U.S. economy slowed down in Q4 2025

U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew just 0.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025 according to the Commerce Department’s latest revision. The government shutdown was a large contributor to slower economic growth. For the full year of 2025, GDP grew 2.1 percent. [CNBC and GDP](#)

6. March 13th – Canadian employment dropped dramatically

Canada’s [Labour Force Survey](#) showed that employment declined by 84,000 in February, and the unemployment rate rose 0.2% to 6.7%. Employment fell in goods and services producing industries by 28,000 and 56,000, respectively.

7. March 13th – U.S. Consumer inflation in January stayed below 3% . . . for now

The Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that U.S. Federal Reserve’s preferred inflation indicator, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index (PCE), increased 2.8 percent on a year-over-year basis in January. Core PCE, which excludes food and energy, increased by 3.1 percent. These figures are consistent with December’s levels. Unfortunately, the rise in energy prices since the war began was not reflected in these figures. [BEA PCE release](#)

8. March 18th – North American interest rates remained unchanged

The Bank of Canada’s overnight rate held steady and has been 2.25% since October 29th, when the Bank reduced rates by ¼ percent. Canadian consumer inflation slowed in February, but Tiff Macklin’s announcement stated, “the sharp increase in global energy prices has led to increases in gasoline price, and this will push up total inflation in the coming months.” [BoC release](#)

The U.S. Federal Reserve maintained its federal funds rate in the range of 3½ to 3¾ percent after lowering it ¼ percent (75 basis points) from September to December 2025. Fed Chair Powell stated,



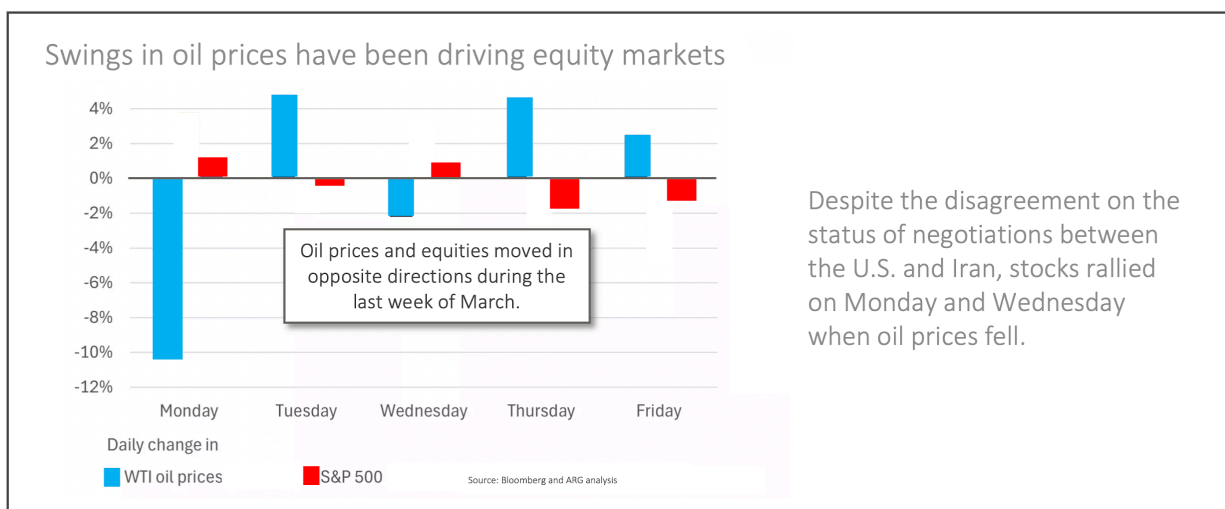
“near-term inflation expectations have risen in recent weeks, likely reflecting the substantial rise in oil prices caused by supply disruptions in the Middle East.” The Fed’s Summary of Economic Projections indicated that inflation predictions have been increased since December. [FOMC meeting info](#)

9. March 19th – European Central Bank followed suit

The Governing Council of the ECB kept its interest rates unchanged, too. Europe’s consumer inflation has been close to 2% for a year, “but higher energy prices due to the war in the Middle East will drive inflation above our 2% target in the short term.” [ECB summary](#)

10. March 23rd to 27th – Oil prices and U.S. equities inversely related

During the last full week of March, oil and equities moved in opposite directions; as oil rose, equities fell and as prices fell, equities rose. On Monday, President Trump declared that progress had been achieved to negotiate an end to the war and oil prices plummeted, and equities jumped.



The largest influence on markets was the expanding conflict centred in Iran. Nearly twenty countries are directly involved, including NATO-member Turkey which could draw in many more.

What’s ahead for April and beyond?

February end

On April 1st, Donald Trump delivered a 20-minute primetime address on the Iran war. His remarks were immediately interpreted by commodities traders, and the price of oil rose 10% further illustrating the close connections among geopolitics, military action, the Strait of Hormuz and commodity prices.

[Oil prices following national address](#)