



# Infomat

## A Weekly Review

Friday, January 30, 2004

### INSIDE

#### ◆ **SPOTLIGHT: Health**

This week's *Spotlight* is on personal health. The winter edition of *Health Reports* looks at two aspects of health that have become major problems: stress and arthritis. One study showed that stress may be a precursor of poor health, at least in some cases. The second found a strong relationship between excess weight and subsequent arthritis.

#### ◆ **Weak market for autos curbs retail sales**

Retail sales slumped for the second time in three months in November as consumers continued to steer clear of automobile dealer showrooms. Retail sales fell 0.3% to \$26.3 billion, after remaining essentially flat in October.

#### ◆ **Canadians confused about pension coverage**

Thousands of Canadian workers do not have a clear understanding of their retirement plans, and in particular, the distinction between two key retirement income programs, according to a new study.

#### **Infomat becomes an electronic product**

In follow-up to our letter last November to all subscribers, effective Tuesday, February 3, 2004 Infomat will only be available as a fully electronic product. This is the last paper issue. If you have not received an e-mail notice by February 3 confirming your subscription, or if you need help accessing the new format, please call toll free 1-877-949-9492.

### Electricity rebate helps boost inflation rate

**I**nflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index edged up in December, but it was mainly a one-time electricity rebate in Ontario a year earlier that was responsible.

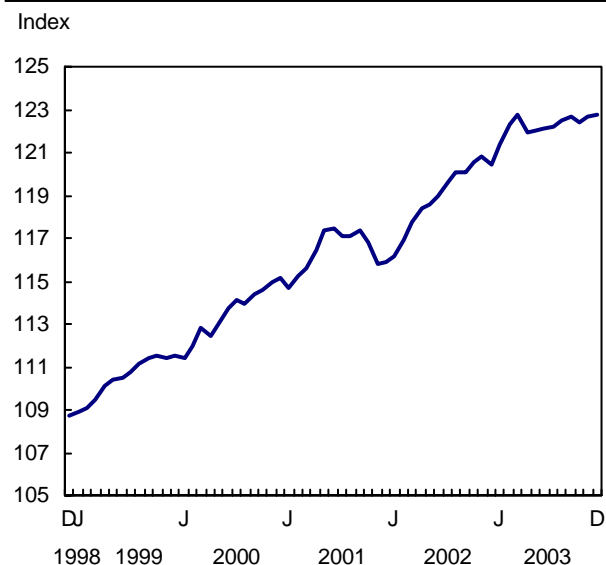
Consumers paid 2.0% more for the goods and services included in the CPI basket than they did in December 2002, up from 1.6% in November.

Most of the increase in the 12-month change was due to a refund given to many Ontario electricity consumers in December 2002. This caused the average bill in December 2003 to be significantly higher than it was a year earlier.

The CPI excluding the eight most volatile components, as defined by the Bank of Canada, rose 2.2%, compared with a 1.8% rise in November. This index was also influenced by the electricity refund.

(continued on page 2)

**The Consumer Price Index**  
(not seasonally adjusted), Canada, 1992=100



### Electricity rebate helps... (continued from page 1)

If energy were excluded, which would eliminate the impact of the refund, the CPI would have risen 1.7%. This would have been similar to the 12-month advance of 1.8% in November.

On a year-over-year basis, the electricity index jumped 18.9%, mostly because of a \$75 refund mailed to many Ontario consumers in December 2002. This refund lowered the average Ontario bill in December 2002, making the bill in December a year later 84.8% higher in comparison.

Effective December 1, 2002 electricity prices in Ontario were capped at 4.3¢ per kilowatt-hour. Legislation provided for refunds of amounts paid in excess of the limit after May 1, 2002.

Also contributing to the overall increase in the CPI were auto insurance premiums, natural gas, tuition fees, homeowners' replacement cost, cigarettes and homeowners' insurance premiums.

Lower prices for automotive vehicles and, to a lesser extent, weaker traveller accommodation and gasoline prices exerted some downward pressure on the 12-month increase.

On a monthly basis, the CPI advanced 0.1% in December, after rising 0.2% in November. Higher prices for fresh vegetables, cigarettes, air transportation and electricity contributed to the gain.

For more information, contact Rebecca McDougall (1-866-230-2248), Prices Division.

## Second consecutive decline in wholesale sales

Wholesale sales declined for the second consecutive month in November, mainly as a result of falling sales in the apparel and dry goods sector. Wholesalers sold goods and services worth \$36.5 billion, down a slight 0.1% from October.

On a year-to-date basis, wholesale sales during the first 11 months of 2003 were 3.7% higher than in the same period of 2002. However, this growth rate was much weaker than the 6.0% gain between January and November in the previous year.

Sales rose in seven of the 11 trade groups. The largest gains were in farm machinery, household goods and computer and electronic products. Sales declined 3.6% in the apparel and dry goods sector.

Measured in constant prices, the volume of sales rose 0.3% in November. Price declines in the automotive sector and the computer and electronic products sector greatly contributed to this increase in the volume of sales.

Wholesalers' inventories rose slightly in November, mainly the result of increases in inventories of computer and electronic products as well as lumber and building materials.

For more information, contact Jean Lebreux (613-951-4907), Distributive Trades Division.

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# SPOTLIGHT: Health

## Stress may be a precursor of poor health

**S**tress has become a common theme of modern life, as individuals attempt to cope with pressures at home and at work that, for many, are overwhelming. A new study has found that stress may be a precursor of poor health.

Adults who suffered high stress in 1994/95 had higher odds of developing a number of chronic conditions by 2000/01, according to the study, published in the winter edition of Statistics Canada's quarterly journal *Health Reports*.

For both sexes, these conditions included arthritis and rheumatism, back problems, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, and stomach or intestinal ulcers. For men, they also included heart disease, and for women, asthma and migraine.

These relationships suggest that, at least in some cases, stress is a precursor of poor health. Each additional stressor reported in 1994/95 led to a 6% increase in the odds of reporting a chronic condition six years later for men, and an 8% increase for women.

The analysis covered 34 various sources of stress. Of these, the most potent appeared to be chronic strains. These included troublesome situations that persist over time, such as trying to do too much at once, not having enough money, problems in marital relationships, and concerns about children.

In 1994/95, Canadians aged 18 or older reported experiencing an average of five stressors, that is, sources of stress. One out of every 10 people reported 10 sources of stress or more.

Time pressure was particularly common, with 44% of Canadians reporting they were trying to do too many things at once. Financial problems were reported by 38%, and 31% felt that others expected too much of them. One in five wanted to move, but felt it was not possible.

### Stress and arthritis: Quick glance

- Just over one-quarter of Canadian adults characterized their life as "quite stressful" or "extremely stressful" in 2000/01. About four in 10 said it was "a bit stressful".
- Women were generally more likely than men to report stress. Studies show their higher stress rates may partially stem from their nurturing role: the "cost of caring".
- In 2000/01, 19% of men and 31% of women aged 40 or over reported that they had been diagnosed with arthritis.
- One-third of men and one-half of women have arthritis by time they are 70 years old.

Women were more likely than men to report stress, and they reacted to a wider range of stressors. Women tended to report higher levels of chronic strains stemming from time constraints, others' expectations, marital relationships, children and family health.

It has been suggested that women are socially conditioned to be more responsive to others' well-being, so their higher stress rates may partially stem from this nurturing role.

Some stressors, however, affected men more than women. Men were more likely to report employment-related stress: a change in job to a worse one, a demotion or pay cut, or not having enough money, for example.

Like previous research, this study shows that levels of stress decrease with age, and increase at lower income levels.

You can read the complete article "Stress, health and the benefit of social support" in *Health Reports*, Vol. 15, No. 1, on Statistics Canada's website ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)).

For more information, contact Margot Shields (613-951-4177), Health Statistics Division.

## Obesity increases risk of arthritis

A new study has found a strong relationship between excess weight and developing arthritis.

For both men and women who did not have the disease in 1994/95, the odds of developing it by 2000/01 were 60% higher among people who were obese, compared with those of acceptable weight. This finding was independent of other influences, including age, household income, daily lifting, visits to physicians and psychological distress.

Among women who were overweight, but not obese, the odds of developing arthritis were 30% higher, compared with women of acceptable weight. The elevation in odds for men who were overweight was not statistically significant.

In addition, for both men and women, each additional year of age was associated with a 4% increase in the odds of developing arthritis. Women living in households in the lowest income category also had much higher odds of developing arthritis than did women in the highest income category. No such association emerged for men.

You can read the complete article "Incident arthritis in relation to excess weight" in *Health Reports*, Vol. 15, No. 1, on Statistics Canada's website ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)).

For more information, contact Kathryn Wilkins (613-951-1769), Health Statistics Division.

## Weak market for autos curbs retail sales

**R**etail sales slumped for the second time in three months in November as consumers continued to steer clear of automobile dealer showrooms.

Retail sales fell 0.3% to \$26.3 billion, after remaining essentially flat in October. Excluding sales by motor and recreational vehicle dealers, the largest component of the automotive sector, retail sales would have increased 0.6%.

Retail sales have weakened since peaking at \$26.6 billion in August, mainly because of slumping sales by auto dealers.

In Ontario, retail sales tumbled for a fourth straight month. Ontario consumers have accounted for just over one-third of the overall decline in retail sales since August's peak.

On a year-to-date basis, retail sales for the first 11 months of 2003 were 3.3% higher than those in the same period of 2002. This was only about half the 6.3% growth rate in the first 11 months of 2002.

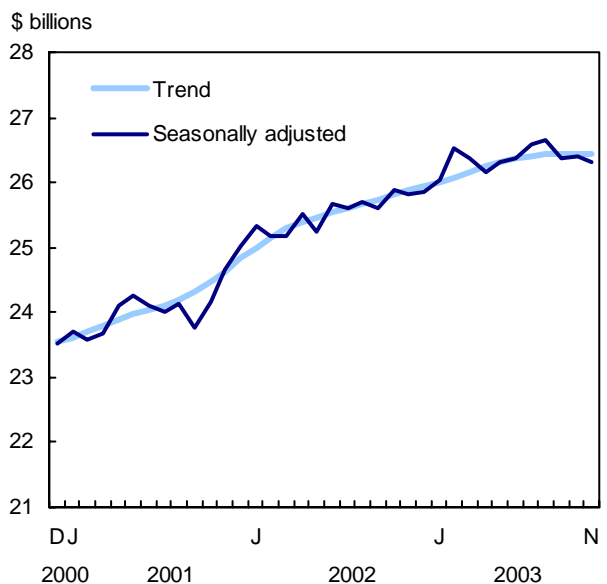
However, excluding auto sales, cumulative retail sales for the first 11 months of 2003 were up 4.5%, just under the 5.4% increase in the same period of 2002.

Motor and recreational vehicle dealers recorded just over \$6.6 billion in sales in November, their lowest level in two years and a 3.1% decline from October. Their sales in November were down 5.8% from August.

Total sales in the automotive sector, including those at car dealers, gasoline stations and parts and accessories depots, declined for a fourth consecutive month in November.

On the other hand, retailers in furniture, clothing, general merchandise and food enjoyed healthy sales gains. Despite showing half the growth rate of 2002, furniture stores led other retailers with a 6.0% cumulative sales gain in the first 11 months of 2003.

### Lower auto sales pull down retail trade in November



Drug store sales fell for only the second time so far in 2003. Consumer spending in drug stores has generally been increasing since the spring of 2000.

Retail sales increased in only four provinces: Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Manitoba had the largest percentage increase, Prince Edward Island the largest decline.

*For more information, contact Paul Gratton (613-951-3541), Distributive Trades Division.*

## Health care products lead sales gains for large retailers

Canada's large retailers posted sales gains in all major commodity groups in November, although in most cases they were small. Sales of health and personal care products again led the way.

These large retailers, who account for about 28% of total annual retail sales, sold \$8.2 billion worth of goods in November, up 2.6% from November 2002. On a year-to-date basis, sales during the first 11 months of 2003 were 4.5% higher than they were in the same period of 2002.

Large retailers sold \$761 million in health and personal care products, up 6.5% from November 2002. This resulted from continued strength in the sale of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, including vitamins, herbal remedies and other health supplements.

In contrast, sales of sporting and leisure goods and furniture, home furnishings and electronics were mixed, while sales of food and clothing were rose only slightly.

Sales of sporting and leisure good sales rose 4.1%, aided by a significant improvement in the sales of pre-recorded CDs, DVDs, and video and audio tapes.

*For more information, contact Elton Cryderman (613-951-0669), Distributive Trades Division.*

## Canadians confused about pension coverage

**T**housands of Canadian workers do not have a clear understanding of their retirement plans, and in particular, the distinction between two key retirement income programs, according to a new study.

In 2001, an estimated 390,000 full-time permanent employees in the private sector, or 4% of the total, thought they had a retirement plan, but in reality did not, the study showed. They were working in firms that offered neither a registered pension plan (RPP) nor a group registered retirement savings plan (RRSP).

The corresponding proportion was twice as high among immigrants who arrived in 1991 or later. Among these immigrants, 9% reported, contrary to their employer, that they had at least one retirement plan.

An RPP is an employer-sponsored pension plan to which the company must contribute by law. A group RRSP is simply a collection of individual accounts set up through the employer. The employer may or may not contribute to it.

The poorer knowledge of retirement plans among recent immigrants can be explained only partially by their lower seniority, and their under-representation in large establishments and in unionized jobs, where the incidence of misinformation appears to be minimal. Even after controlling for these factors, at least 70% of the difference between recent immigrants and Canadian-born workers remains.

In contrast, university graduates, unionized workers, workers in large establishments and those employed in finance and insurance, and communication and other utilities better understood their coverage in an employer-sponsored retirement plan.

Among workers who reported having a group RRSP but were in firms that did not have one, fully two-thirds had an employer that offered a registered pension plan (RPP) to at least part of the workforce. This suggests that many workers confuse group RRSPs with RPPs.

At the end of 2001, about 5.5 million employees, representing 40% of all employees, including those in the public sector, had an RPP in their job. This was down from 45% a decade earlier.

### Employees reporting a retirement plan in their job

	'000	%
<b>Employees in private sector</b>	<b>11,605</b>	<b>...</b>
<b>Report participating in a group RRSP</b>	<b>2,079</b>	<b>100.0</b>
In firms offering group RRSPs to some employees	1,570	75.5
In firms offering no group RRSPs	509	24.5
Offering RPPs to all full-time permanent employees	327	15.7
Offering RPPs to some employees	20	1.0
Offering no RPPs	162	7.8
<b>Report participating in a RPP</b>	<b>4,440</b>	<b>100.0</b>
In firms offering group RPPs to some employees	3,707	83.5
In firms offering no RPPs	732	16.5
Offering group RRSPs to all full-time permanent employees	364	8.2
Offering group RRSPs to some employees	45	1.0
Offering no group RRSPs	323	7.3

Source: Workplace and Employee Survey, 2001.

The report noted that about one-third of families in which the main breadwinner was age 45 to 64 had not saved enough to replace two-thirds of their income at retirement, which is viewed as what's needed to avoid a drop in living standards after retirement.

In total, Canadians had accumulated an estimated \$1.15 trillion in the three main retirement programs - RPPs, RRSPs, and the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans (C/QPP) - by the end of 2001.

This was almost double the level of \$593.6 billion in 1990, when measured in constant (inflation-adjusted) dollars. Of the total assets in 2001, 69% were in RPPs, 25% in RRSPs (individual and group), and about 6% in the C/QPP.

You can read the article "Retirement plan awareness" in the January 2004 online edition of *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Vol. 5, no. 1, on Statistics Canada's website ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)).

For more information, contact René Morissette (613-951-3608), Business and Labour Market Analysis Division.

## Employment Insurance: Fourth consecutive drop

The estimated number of Canadians (adjusted for seasonality) receiving regular Employment Insurance benefits in November was 571,310, down 1.4% from October.

While this was the fourth consecutive monthly decline, the number was still 3.8% higher than in November 2002. Nova Scotia, Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon have all shown continuous decreases for at least the past three months.

At the national level, the recent downward trend follows steady increases in the number of regular beneficiaries observed during the first half of 2003.

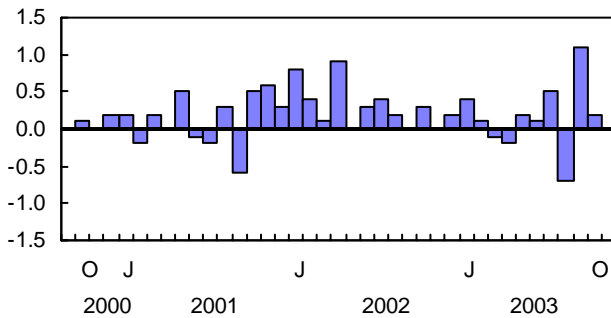
Also on a seasonally adjusted basis, regular benefit payments in November totalled \$752.6 million, while the number of people making initial and renewal claims was 243,590.

For more information, contact Gilles Groleau (613-951-4091), Labour Statistics Division.

## Current trends

### Gross domestic product

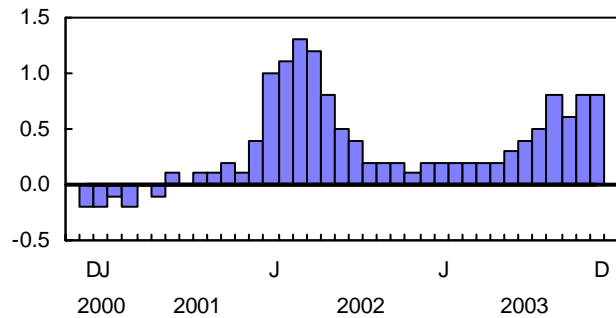
% change, previous month



Total economic activity increased 0.2% in October, after a 1.1% increase in September.

### Composite Index

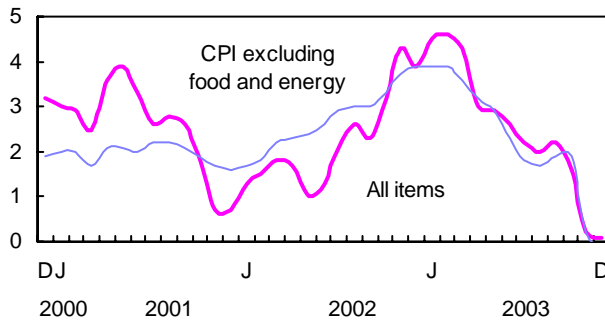
% change, previous month



The leading indicator grew 0.8% in December after rising 0.8% in November.

### Consumer Price Index

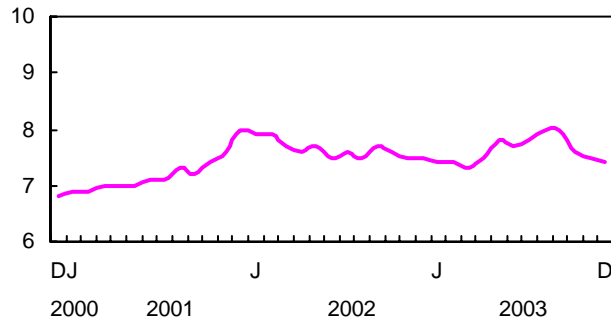
% change, previous month



Consumer prices for goods and services were 0.1% higher in December than they were a month earlier. Excluding food and energy, prices fell 0.2%.

### Unemployment rate

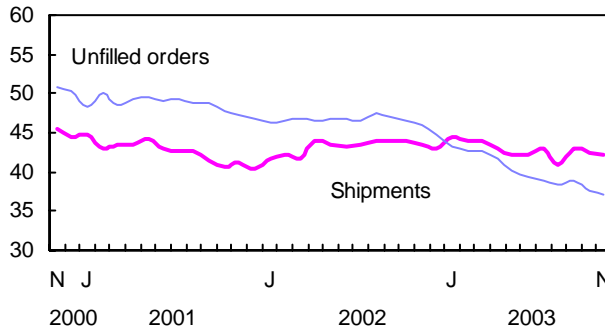
%



In December, the unemployment rate fell to 7.4%.

### Manufacturing

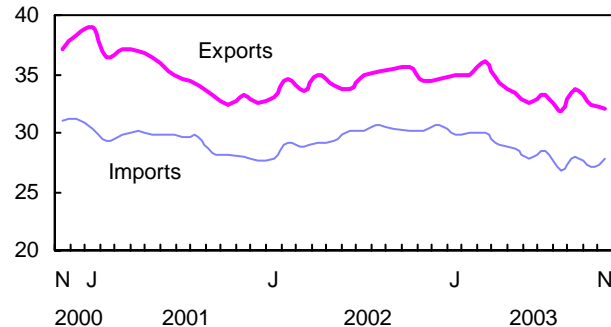
\$ billions



Manufacturers' shipments fell 0.5% in November to \$42.2 billion. The backlog of unfilled orders decreased 0.8% to \$37.2 billion.

### Merchandise trade

\$ billions



In November, exports fell 1.1% to \$32.1 billion. Imports increased 1.7% to \$27.8 billion.

Note: All series are seasonally adjusted except the Consumer Price Index.



## Latest statistics

	Period	Level	Change, previous period	Change, previous year
<b>GENERAL</b>				
Gross domestic product (\$ billions, 1997) <sup>1</sup>	October	1,020.7	0.2%	1.8%
Composite Index (1992=100)	November	186.9	0.8%	4.2%
Operating profits of enterprises (\$ billions)	Q3 2003	41.6	3.7%	11.3%
Capacity utilization rate (%) <sup>2</sup>	Q2 2003	82.5	-1.2†	-1.1†
<b>DOMESTIC DEMAND</b>				
Retail trade (\$ billions)	November*	26.3	-0.3%	1.9%
New motor vehicle sales (thousands of units)	November	131.1	-3.2%	-7.3%
Wholesale trade (\$ billions)	November*	36.5	-0.1%	1.5%
<b>LABOUR</b>				
Employment (millions)	December	15.9	0.3%	1.7%
Unemployment rate (%)	December	7.4	-0.1†	-0.1†
Participation rate (%)	December	67.7	0.1†	0.2†
Average weekly earnings (\$)	October	694.14	0.3%	1.2%
Regular Employment Insurance beneficiaries (in thousands)	November*	571.3	-1.4%	3.8%
<b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</b>				
Merchandise exports (\$ billions)	November	32.1	-1.1%	-6.7%
Merchandise imports (\$ billions)	November	27.8	1.7%	-7.6%
Merchandise trade balance (all figures in \$ billions)	November	4.3	-0.8	0.0
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>				
Shipments (\$ billions)	November	42.2	-0.5%	-2.7%
New orders (\$ billions)	November	41.9	1.0%	-2.6%
Unfilled orders (\$ billions)	November	37.2	-0.8%	-19.2%
Inventory/shipments ratio	November	1.42	0.01	-0.03
<b>PRICES</b>				
Consumer Price Index (1992=100)	December*	122.8	0.1%	2.0%
Industrial Product Price Index (1997=100)	November	104.4	-0.4%	-4.0%
Raw Materials Price Index (1997=100)	November	110.3	1.5%	-3.2%
New Housing Price Index (1992=100)	November	119.2	0.7%	5.0%

**Note:** All series are seasonally adjusted with the exception of the price indexes.

\* new this week

† percentage point

<sup>1</sup> 1997 replaces 1992 as the base year used in determining prices for gross domestic product by industry. Also, valuation has been changed from factor cost to basic prices.

<sup>2</sup> Calculation of the rates of capacity use is now based on the 1997 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), which has replaced the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

## Infomat

### A weekly review

Published by the Official Release Unit, Communications Division,  
Statistics Canada, 10th floor, R.H. Coats Bldg., Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6.

Editor-in-Chief: John Flanders  
Editor: Mireille Desrosiers

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## Products released from January 22 to 28, 2004

SUBJECT AREA Title of product	Period	Catalogue number	Price (\$) (issue/subscription)
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>			
Cereals and Oilseeds Review	November 2003	22-007-XIB	12/120
Cereals and Oilseeds Review	November 2003	22-007-XPB	17/160
<b>BALANCE OF PAYMENTS AND FINANCIAL FLOWS</b>			
Canada's International Transactions in Securities	November 2003	67-002-XIE	15/142
<b>CENSUS OPERATIONS</b>			
Languages, 2001 Census Technical Report	2001	92-383-XIE	Free
Mobility and Migration, 2001 Census Technical Report	2001	92-384-XIE	Free
<b>CURRENT ECONOMIC ANALYSIS</b>			
Canadian Economic Observer	January 2004	11-010-XIB	19/182
Canadian Economic Observer	January 2004	11-010-XPB	25/243
<b>DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES</b>			
Retail Trade	November 2003	63-005-XIB	18/166
Wholesale Trade	November 2003	63-008-XIB	15/150
<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>			
Postal Codes by Federal Ridings (1996 Representation Order) File, Reference guide	June 2003	92F0028GIE	Free
Postal Codes by Federal Ridings (1996 Representation Order) File – Update, 2001 Census	June 2003	92F0028UDB	500
Postal Code Conversion File, Reference Guide	June 2003	92F0153GIE	Free
Postal Code Conversion File – Update	June 2003	92F0153UCE	1,500
<b>HOUSING, FAMILY AND SOCIAL STATISTICS</b>			
Days of Our Lives: Time Use and Transitions Over the Life Course: The Time of Our Lives: Juggling Work and Leisure Over the Life Cycle	1998	89-584-MIE2004004	Free
<b>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</b>			
Imports by Commodity	November 2003	65-007-XMB	40/387
Imports by Commodity	November 2003	65-007-XPB	84/828
<b>LABOUR AND HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS ANALYSIS</b>			
Perspectives on Labour and Income	January 2004	75-001-XIE	6/52
<b>MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY</b>			
Asphalt Roofing	December 2003	45-001-XIB	6/51
Mineral Wool Including Fibrous Glass Insulation	December 2003	44-004-XIB	6/51
Monthly Survey of Manufacturing	November 2003	31-001-XIE	17/158
Particleboard, Oriented Strandboard and Fibreboard	November 2003	36-003-XIB	6/51
Primary Iron and Steel	November 2003	41-001-XIB	6/51
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>			
Survey Methodology	December 2003	12-001-XPB	30/58
<b>PRICES</b>			
The Consumer Price Index	December 2003	62-001-XIB	9/83
The Consumer Price Index	December 2003	62-001-XPB	12/111
<b>SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND ELECTRONIC INFORMATION</b>			
Estimation of Research and Development Expenditures in the Higher Education Sector	2001-2002	88F0006XIE2004002	Free
Estimates of Canadian Research and Development Expenditures, Canada	1992 to 2003	88F0006XIE2004003	Free
Quarterly Telecommunications Statistics	Q3 2003	56-002-XIE	23/43
Science Statistics: Estimation of Research and Development Expenditures in the Higher Education Sector	2001-2002	88-001-XIE	7/64
Science Statistics: Total Spending on Research and Development in Canada	1990 to 2003	88-001-XIE	7/64
The Many Guises of Innovation: What We Have Learnt and Where We Are Heading	2003	88F0006XIE2004004	Free
<b>SERVICE INDUSTRIES</b>			
Restaurant, Caterer and Tavern Statistics	November 2003	63-011-XIE	7/59
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>			
Monthly Railway Carloadings	November 2003	52-001-XIE	9/83

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