

The Daily

Statistics Canada

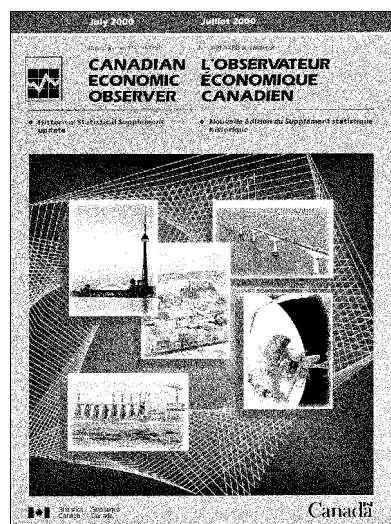
Thursday, July 20, 2000

For release at 8:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Wholesale trade, May 2000** 3
Wholesale sales rose 1.3% in May as a result of widespread increases among the sectors. Meanwhile, the value of inventories slipped 0.3%, the first decline in a year.
- **Monthly Survey of Manufacturing, May 2000** 6
After declining in April, manufacturers' shipments rebounded by 3.4% in May to \$44.8 billion, led by increases in the motor vehicle and refined petroleum and coal industries.

(continued on following page)



Canadian economic observer

July 2000

The July issue of Statistics Canada's flagship publication for economic statistics, *Canadian economic observer*, analyses current economic conditions and summarizes the major economic events that occurred in July. A separate statistical summary contains a wide range of tables and graphs on the principal economic indicators for Canada, the provinces and the major industrial nations.

The *Historical statistical supplement* is also available today, and is free to subscribers. It contains annual historical data for all series reported monthly in *Canadian economic observer*.

The July 2000 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, \$23/\$227) and *Canadian economic observer, historical statistical supplement 1999/00* (11-210-XPB, \$28) are now available. See *How to order products*. For more information, contact Cyndi Bloskie (613-951-3634; ceo@statcan.ca), Current Economic Analysis Group.



Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

Canada

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NEW PRODUCTS

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MAJOR RELEASES

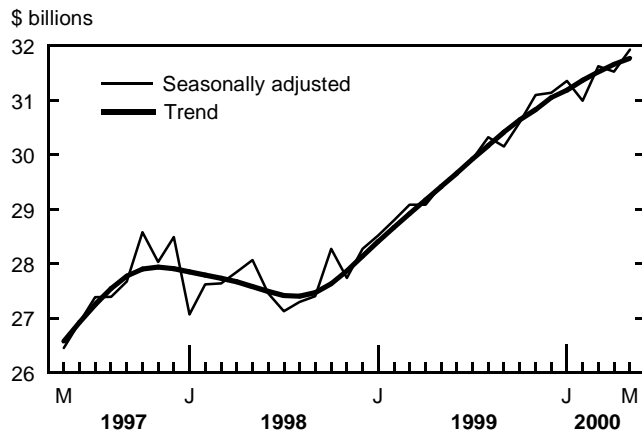
Wholesale trade

May 2000 (preliminary)

Wholesale sales rose 1.3% in May as a result of widespread increases among the sectors. Only wholesalers of apparel and dry goods lost ground. May sales were up 8.5% compared with those of May 1999. Wholesalers have been enjoying generally rising sales since mid-1998.

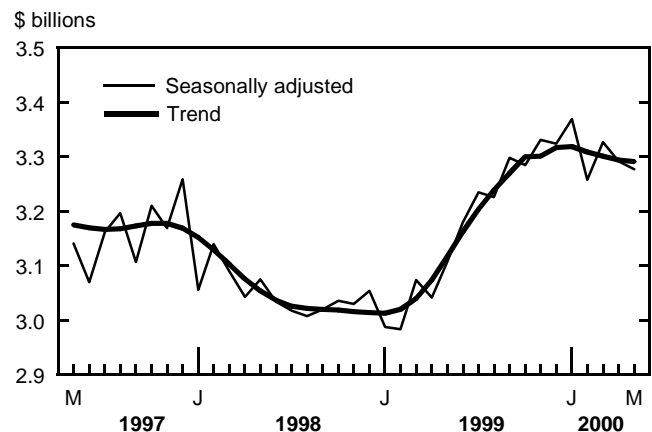
Total sales by wholesalers were \$31.9 billion in May. Wholesalers of lumber and building materials (+4.8%), and metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies (+3.9%) recovered after last month's sizable declines. The beverage, drug and tobacco products trade groups saw an increase of 4.5% in May. All other trade groups edged up slightly except for apparel and dry goods, which was off 0.3%.

Wholesale trade gains more ground



Prince Edward Island (-0.7%) and British Columbia (-0.5%) also saw declines. British Columbia is the only province to report two consecutive monthly declines so far in the second quarter. British Columbia wholesalers did not benefit as much as did other wholesalers of lumber and construction materials in other provinces. British Columbia wholesalers have generally seen declining sales since the end of 1999, after a year of increases.

British Columbia looks for a turnaround



Among the territories, only the Northwest Territories reported a fall in wholesale sales (-9.5%). Yukon wholesalers saw a reprise this month, reporting a modest rise in sales of 0.7%. However, despite the May increase, Yukon continued to be the only region in Canada in which sales have been generally falling since late 1997.

Saskatchewan stalls, British Columbia still sidelined

Wholesalers in Saskatchewan had seen four consecutive monthly increases since the start of 2000, but this recent run came to an abrupt halt in May, when wholesale sales fell 7.8%. Despite this drop, May wholesale sales in Saskatchewan were up 11.6% over May 1999. Sales have been generally increasing since the end of 1998. The drop in May was largely due to weaker sales in the wholesaling of farm machinery, equipment and supplies, and in the wholesaling of consumer products such as household goods, and apparel and dry goods.

Lumber and building materials sector still volatile

Wholesale sales for lumber and building materials (+4.8%), and metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies (+3.9%) bounced back in May after sizable declines in April, -9.4% and -3.2%, respectively. Whereas both sectors had been seeing generally falling sales since the end of 1999, wholesalers of metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies appear to have stemmed their downward spiral since the start of spring 2000. Despite May's increase, wholesale sales of lumber and building materials were still volatile, both at home and abroad, because of several economic factors: lumber

over-production; decreasing consumption — exports of lumber fell 5.5% in May; increasing interest rates in the United States and Canada; and strikes in the Ontario construction industry.

Health and habits help wholesaler sales

Wholesale sales of beverages, drugs and tobacco products rose 4.5%. This sector has seen generally climbing sales since the autumn of 1998. Wholesalers have benefited from the demand for so-called lifestyle products, such as vitamins, herbal products and bottled water. In addition, a major factor for this month's increase was a reported strong demand from retailers for tobacco products in anticipation of a tax increase.

Monthly inventory values slip

Wholesalers reported a slight sell-off of inventories in May; the value of inventories fell 0.3% to \$42.2 billion. This decline followed 11 consecutive months of increases. The growth of inventory values had been rising over the last several years, but has generally moderated since the start of 2000. Inventories declined in five trade groups. The largest decline was reported in the motor vehicle parts and accessories group (-2.7%). Inventories in this sector have been falling since the winter, following a period of generally climbing values since the spring of 1998.

May saw the inventory-to-sales ratio fall from 1.34 in April to 1.32. After having declined since mid-1998, the ratio stabilized somewhat late in 1999. Since the start of 2000, however, the ratio has been generally falling. A lower inventory-to-sales ratio means faster turnaround which in turn could mean lower storage costs. To wholesalers, this may just be a response to the increased demand from a healthy economy. The industrial capacity utilization rate, which compares the actual output to the estimated potential output, reached 86.8% during the fourth quarter of 1999, matching the peak reached during the 1987-88 economic expansion. The May inventory-to-sales ratio of 1.32 for wholesalers suggests approximately 5.7 weeks worth of stock on hand.

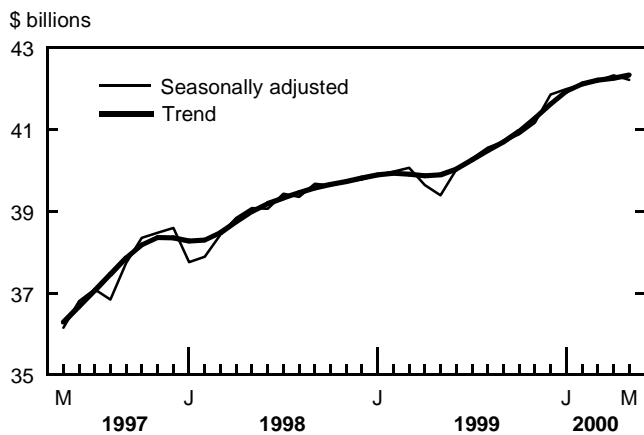
Available on CANSIM: matrices 59, 61, 648 and 649.

The May 2000 issue of *Wholesale trade* (63-008-XIB, \$14/\$140) will be available soon. See *How to order products*.

Wholesale trade estimates for June will be released on August 18.

For data or general information, contact the Client Services Unit (1-877-421-3067; 613-951-3549; wholesaleinfo@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Alexander Hays (613-951-3552; haysale@statcan.ca), Distributive Trades Division. □

Inventory values slip



Wholesale merchants' sales and inventories

	May 1999 ^r	Feb. 2000 ^r	March 2000 ^r	April 2000 ^r	May 2000 ^p	April to May 2000	May to May 2000
seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions					% change	
Sales, all trade groups	29,435	30,993	31,625	31,522	31,929	1.3	8.5
Food products	4,510	4,716	4,750	4,770	4,797	0.6	6.4
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,832	1,896	1,958	1,961	2,049	4.5	11.9
Apparel and dry goods	546	517	545	545	544	-0.3	-0.4
Household goods	816	835	863	878	881	0.3	7.9
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,560	6,137	6,209	6,251	6,266	0.2	12.7
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	1,960	2,029	2,091	2,024	2,104	3.9	7.3
Lumber and building materials	2,395	2,446	2,550	2,311	2,421	4.8	1.1
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	608	490	623	604	609	0.9	0.1
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4,263	4,777	4,877	4,868	4,911	0.9	15.2
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	3,007	2,816	2,799	2,929	2,935	0.2	-2.4
Other products	3,938	4,335	4,360	4,382	4,413	0.7	12.1
Sales by province and territory							
Newfoundland	216	225	222	226	227	0.2	4.9
Prince Edward Island	49	53	53	55	55	-0.7	11.2
Nova Scotia	573	581	577	566	574	1.4	0.2
New Brunswick	383	400	404	411	415	0.9	8.3
Quebec	6,087	6,118	6,442	6,300	6,441	2.2	5.8
Ontario	14,658	15,512	15,710	15,747	16,042	1.9	9.4
Manitoba	862	891	871	903	915	1.3	6.1
Saskatchewan	840	953	965	1,016	937	-7.8	11.6
Alberta	2,636	2,971	3,029	2,982	3,023	1.4	14.7
British Columbia	3,107	3,258	3,327	3,292	3,277	-0.5	5.5
Yukon	10	10	10	9	9	0.7	-9.6
Northwest Territories	12	18	12	13	11	-9.5	-9.0
Nunavut	2	3	2	2	3	23.1	52.2
Inventories, all trade groups	39,393	42,106	42,197	42,328	42,216	-0.3	7.2
Food products	2,761	2,821	2,856	2,795	2,837	1.5	2.8
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	2,168	2,392	2,416	2,437	2,476	1.6	14.2
Apparel and dry goods	1,220	1,140	1,101	1,060	1,072	1.1	-12.2
Household goods	1,560	1,530	1,490	1,507	1,485	-1.4	-4.8
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	5,446	6,596	6,492	6,537	6,363	-2.7	16.8
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,517	3,818	3,873	3,898	3,940	1.1	12.0
Lumber and building materials	3,633	4,045	4,066	4,097	4,025	-1.8	10.8
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,118	2,018	2,014	2,011	1,989	-1.1	-6.1
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	9,552	10,200	10,313	10,400	10,381	-0.2	8.7
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,360	2,459	2,431	2,370	2,379	0.4	0.8
Other products	5,057	5,088	5,146	5,215	5,269	1.0	4.2

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.



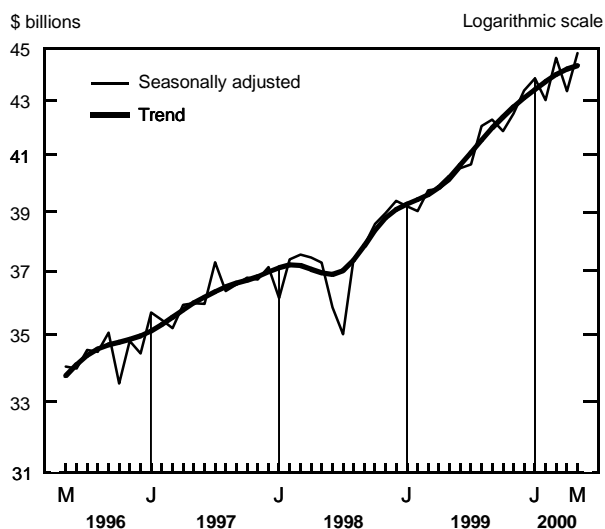
Monthly Survey of Manufacturing

May 2000

After declining in April, manufacturers' shipments rebounded by 3.4% in May to \$44.8 billion, led by recoveries in the motor vehicle and refined petroleum and coal industries.

Manufacturers' shipments have been unusually volatile over the last four months; large increases in March and May were preceded by strong declines in February and April. The monthly fluctuations were most pronounced in the automotive sector from February through May, but the volatility has affected a majority of industries in each of the months. The strong upward trend that began in the summer of 1998 has flattened in recent months as a result of the declines in shipments that occurred in February and April. Manufacturers' shipments have increased 3.3% since the beginning of 2000 and were 11.9% higher than in May 1999.

Manufacturers' shipments continued to be volatile



Unfilled orders continued to decline in May, but inventories increased for the sixteenth consecutive month.

Manufacturers record widespread increases

Manufacturers' shipments in May increased in 18 of the 22 major groups, representing 94.9% of the total

Note to readers

Unfilled orders are a stock of orders that will contribute to future shipments assuming the orders are not cancelled.

New orders represent orders received whether shipped in the current month or not. They are measured as the sum of shipments for the current month plus the change in unfilled orders. Some people interpret new orders as orders that will lead to future demand. This is inappropriate, because the "new orders" variable includes orders that have already been shipped. The month-to-month change in new orders may be volatile, particularly if the previous month's change in unfilled orders is large in relation to the current month's change.

Not all orders will be translated into Canadian factory shipments because portions of large contracts can be subcontracted out to manufacturers in other countries.

value of shipments. Excluding the automotive sector, manufacturers' shipments increased 3.0%.

Shipments in the motor vehicle industry (+5.2%) led the recovery, as manufacturers boosted production of light vehicles. The refined petroleum and coal industry (+9.7%) also increased strongly, as prices rebounded 3.1% in May after falling 5.8% in April.

The electrical and electronics products industry (+4.3%) increased for the fourth consecutive month, largely owing to increased shipments in the telecommunications industry. Shipments in the electrical and electronic products industry have expanded rapidly; they were 36.1% higher in May than in May 1999.

More modest monthly gains were observed in machinery (+7.8%) and primary metals (+4.7) in May following declines in both industries in April.

The largest offsetting decrease occurred in the beverage industries (-3.5%) and was focussed in the soft drink industry.

Shipments by province and territory

	April 2000	May 2000	April to May 2000
seasonally adjusted			
	\$ millions		% change
Newfoundland	176	191	8.3
Prince Edward Island	77	74	-4.3
Nova Scotia	678	709	4.6
New Brunswick	896	858	-4.2
Quebec	10,439	10,895	4.4
Ontario	23,150	23,819	2.9
Manitoba	912	952	4.3
Saskatchewan	579	595	2.7
Alberta	3,188	3,438	7.9
British Columbia	3,240	3,275	1.1
Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut	5	5	1.6

Manufacturers' shipments increased in eight provinces and the territories.

Unfilled orders continued to drop

Manufacturers' backlog of unfilled orders decreased 1.3% in May to \$52.9 billion. Unfilled orders peaked in December 1999, and have declined in each of the subsequent months.



The largest decrease at the major group level was in the electrical and electronic products (-7.7%) industry.

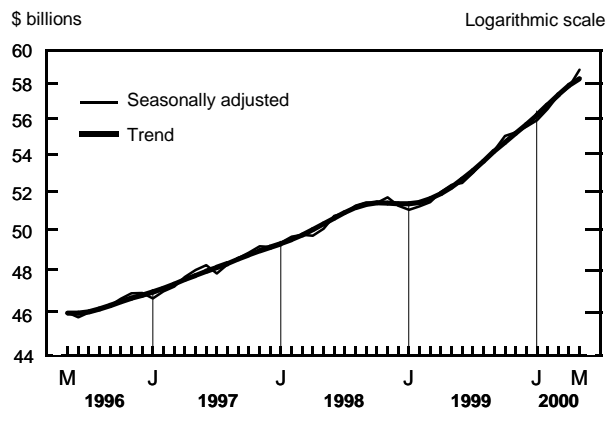
The largest offsetting movement was in the aircraft and parts (+1.9%) industry.

Inventories rose for the sixteenth consecutive month

Manufacturers' inventories rose 1.8% in May to \$58.8 billion — the sixteenth consecutive monthly increase. Manufacturers' inventories have grown 6.0% since the beginning of the year and were 12.4% higher than the May 1999 level.

In order of magnitude of dollar value, the major contributors to the May increase were the aircraft and aircraft parts (+5.6%), refined petroleum and coal (+8.0%), and electrical and electronic (+2.0%) industries.

Manufacturers continued to accumulate inventories



The main offsetting decreases in inventories were in the chemical and chemical products (-0.7%) and beverages (-1.6%) industries.

The inventory-to-shipments ratio fell back slightly in May to 1.31 from 1.33 in April. April's ratio was inventory-to-shipments the highest since November 1998.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 9550-9555, 9558, 9559, 9562-9565, 9568-9579, and 9581-9595.

The May 2000 issue of the *Monthly Survey of Manufacturing* (31-001-XPB, \$20/\$196) will be available soon. See *How to order products*.

Data for shipments by province in greater detail than normally published may be available on request. For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Guy Sabourin (613-951-3508; sabguy@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. □

Shipments, inventories and orders in all manufacturing industries

	Shipments		Inventories		Unfilled orders		New orders		Inventories-to-shipments ratio
	seasonally adjusted								
	\$ millions	% change	\$ millions	% change	\$ millions	% change	\$ millions	% change	
May 1999	40,057	0.7	52,331	0.7	51,439	0.5	40,322	2.8	1.31
June 1999	40,501	1.1	52,427	0.2	51,461	0.0	40,523	0.5	1.29
July 1999	40,639	0.3	52,988	1.1	51,825	0.7	41,003	1.2	1.30
August 1999	42,028	3.4	53,574	1.1	52,502	1.3	42,705	4.2	1.27
September 1999	42,266	0.6	54,189	1.1	53,468	1.8	43,233	1.2	1.28
October 1999	41,839	-1.0	54,998	1.5	54,288	1.5	42,658	-1.3	1.31
November 1999	42,491	1.6	55,200	0.4	54,071	-0.4	42,274	-0.9	1.30
December 1999	43,359	2.0	55,520	0.6	54,938	1.6	44,227	4.6	1.28
January 2000	43,834	1.1	55,876	0.6	54,393	-1.0	43,288	-2.1	1.27
February 2000	43,003	-1.9	56,516	1.1	53,889	-0.9	42,500	-1.8	1.31
March 2000	44,628	3.8	57,343	1.5	53,716	-0.3	44,454	4.6	1.28
April 2000	43,340	-2.9	57,797	0.8	53,585	-0.2	43,209	-2.8	1.33
May 2000	44,810	3.4	58,826	1.8	52,865	-1.3	44,090	2.0	1.31

Manufacturing industries except motor vehicles, parts and accessories

	Shipments		Inventories		Unfilled orders		New orders	
	seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions	% change	\$ millions	% change	\$ millions	% change	\$ millions	% change
May 1999	31,596	0.5	49,509	0.7	45,071	1.2	32,140	3.2
June 1999	31,872	0.9	49,648	0.3	44,948	-0.3	31,749	-1.2
July 1999	32,227	1.1	50,006	0.7	45,344	0.9	32,623	2.8
August 1999	32,693	1.4	50,642	1.3	45,925	1.3	33,274	2.0
September 1999	33,122	1.3	51,236	1.2	46,175	0.5	33,371	0.3
October 1999	33,085	-0.1	51,754	1.0	46,922	1.6	33,832	1.4
November 1999	33,827	2.2	52,079	0.6	47,207	0.6	34,113	0.8
December 1999	34,391	1.7	52,402	0.6	48,602	3.0	35,786	4.9
January 2000	34,985	1.7	52,776	0.7	48,735	0.3	35,118	-1.9
February 2000	34,584	-1.1	53,384	1.2	48,924	0.4	34,774	-1.0
March 2000	35,745	3.4	54,145	1.4	49,442	1.1	36,262	4.3
April 2000	34,965	-2.2	54,614	0.9	48,971	-1.0	34,494	-4.9
May 2000	36,031	3.0	55,558	1.7	48,494	-1.0	35,554	3.1

OTHER RELEASES

New release date for Employment Insurance

May 2000 (preliminary)

Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada have uncovered an error in the calculation of the number of beneficiaries of Employment Insurance. This error affected the beneficiaries file from January 1997 to April 2000. Consequently, the departments have agreed to correct the error and conduct a historical revision to correct the data series dating back to January 1997.

The regular monthly Employment Insurance release containing preliminary data for May 2000 has been delayed. The release, scheduled for today, has been postponed to Friday, July 28.

For the next few months, data on the number of beneficiaries in the monthly Employment Insurance release will be aggregated only at the provincial level and will be unadjusted for seasonal trends. These data series will not be available on CANSIM.

However, the data series on claims received and allowed, benefit payments and weeks paid, which are correct, will continue to appear in both *The Daily* and on CANSIM as regularly scheduled following July 28.

For more information, contact Justin Lacroix (613-951-0775; fax: 613-951-4087; labour@statcan.ca), Labour Statistics Division. ■

Natural gas sales

May 2000 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 4 806 million cubic metres in May, up 6.0% over May 1999. Colder than normal temperatures throughout most of Canada resulted in higher sales to the residential (+9.3%) and commercial (+3.6%) sectors. Use by the industrial sector (including direct sales) rose 5.7% over May 1999. This increase was due to higher demand for natural gas by electric utilities and the chemical industry.

Year-to-date sales were up 5.6% over the same period in 1999. Industrial sector sales (including direct sales) posted a 9.2% increase over the same period of 1999. Consumption by the residential sector rose 1.6%, while use by the commercial sector showed a marginal drop of 0.3%.

Natural gas sales

	May 2000 ^P	May 1999	May 1999 to May 2000
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Natural gas sales	4 806 319	4 532 961	6.0
Residential	824 607	754 219	9.3
Commercial	559 189	539 565	3.6
Industrial	1 585 457	1 632 160	5.7
Direct	1 837 066	1 607 017	
	year-to-date		
	2000 ^P	1999	1999 to 2000
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Natural gas sales	35 410 840	33 539 737	5.6
Residential	8 640 841	8 502 321	1.6
Commercial	5 965 387	5 981 048	-0.3
Industrial	9 135 597	9 092 662	9.2
Direct	11 669 015	9 963 706	

^P Preliminary figures.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 1052-1055.

The May 2000 issue of *Natural gas transportation and distribution* (55-002-XIB, \$13 / \$125) will be available in August. See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Gary Smallbridge (613-951-3567; smalgar@statcan.ca) or Tom Lewis (613-951-3596; talewis@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Steel primary forms

Week ending July 15, 2000 (preliminary)

Steel primary forms production for the week ending July 15 totalled 321 250 tonnes, up 5.2% from 305 310 tonnes a week earlier and up 11.7% from 287 595 tonnes in the same week of 1999. The year-to-date total at the end of the reference week was 9 195 182 tonnes, a 6.3% increase compared with 8 649 255 tonnes for the same period in 1999.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact

Julie Mayer (613-951-4924; majejul@statcan.ca),
Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Pulpwood and wood residue statistics

May 2000

Pulpwood receipts in May totalled 1 290 462 cubic metres, up 8.2% from 1 192 332 cubic metres in May 1999. Wood residue receipts rose 13.2%, from 6 489 367 cubic metres in May 1999 to 7 344 870 cubic metres in May 2000. Consumption of pulpwood and wood residue totalled 9 492 521 cubic metres, up 8.4% from 8 757 279 cubic metres in May 1999.

The closing inventory of pulpwood and wood residue increased 1.6% to 13 514 130 cubic metres, up from 13 305 815 cubic metres in May 1999. The 1999 data were revised.

Available on CANSIM: matrix 54.

The May 2000 issue of *Pulpwood and wood residue statistics* (25-001-XIB, \$6/\$55) is now available. See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Sara Breen (613-951-3521; sara.breen@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Refined petroleum products

May 2000 (preliminary)

Data on the production, inventories and domestic sales of refined petroleum products are now available for May. Other selected data about these products are also available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Eleonore Harding (613-951-5708; hardele@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Stocks of frozen poultry meat

July 1, 2000 (preliminary)

Data for stocks of frozen poultry meat in cold storage on July 1 are now available.

Available on CANSIM: matrices 5675-5677.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Sandra Gielfeldt (613-951-2505) or Gilles Beaudry (613-951-6480), Agriculture Division. ■

NEW PRODUCTS

Canadian economic observer, July 2000
Catalogue number 11-010-XPB (\$23/\$227).

Canadian economic observer, historical
statistical supplement, 1999/00
Catalogue number 11-210-XPB (\$28).

Agriculture economic statistics — updates,
June 2000
Catalogue number 21-603-UPE (\$26/\$52).

Pulpwood and wood residue statistics, May 2000
Catalogue number 25-001-XIB (\$6/\$55).

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Statistics Canada

Thursday, June 9, 1997
For release at 9:30 a.m.

MAJOR RELEASES



- **Urban transit, 1990** 2
Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1996, about 40 million Canadians took an average of about 40 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.
- **Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1990** 4
Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was relatively weak, despite the rapid improvement in employment and slow economic growth during the year.

OTHER RELEASES

- **Manufactured trade, May 1997** 3
- **Short-term Expectations Survey** 3
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- **EQB production, April 1997** 12

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

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Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

Catalogue 11-001E.

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Editor: Tom Vradenburg (613-951-1103, vradtom@statcan.ca)

Head of Official Release: Madeleine Simard (613-951-1088), simamad@statcan.ca

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