



# The Daily

Statistics Canada

Friday, April 20, 2001  
For release at 8:30 a.m.

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- **Consumer Price Index, March 2001** 2  
Prices of the goods and services in the Consumer Price Index basket rose an average 2.5% in March compared with March 2000. This increase, smaller than February's rise of 2.9%, is the lowest since August 2000.
  - **Wholesale trade, February 2001** 5  
Wholesalers saw their sales fall in February as a result of the slump in the automobile sector.
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**RELEASE DATES:** April 23 to 27 13

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## MAJOR RELEASES

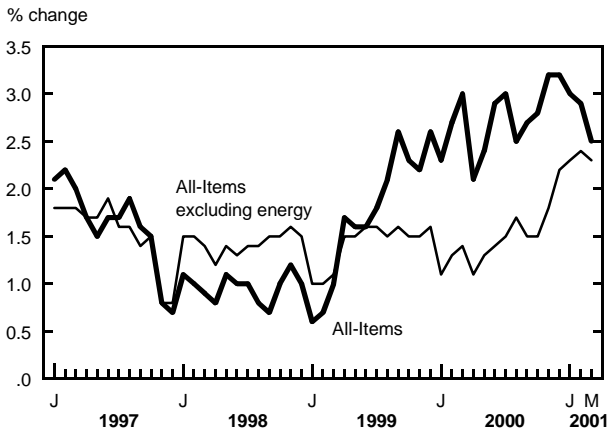
### Consumer Price Index

March 2001

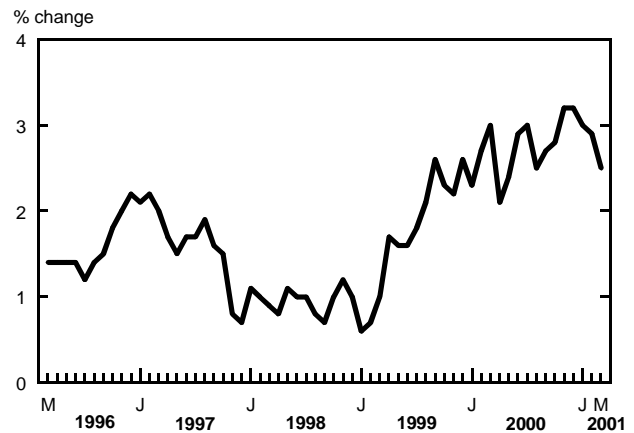
Prices of the goods and services in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket rose an average 2.5% in March compared with March 2000. This increase, smaller than February's rise of 2.9%, is the lowest since August 2000. Higher food and energy prices were responsible for almost 50% of the advance in the CPI in March; just over one-third of the annual change came from higher food prices. Excluding the impact of energy prices, the CPI rose 2.3% in March, slightly less than February's 2.4% increase.

jump in natural gas prices, an annual increase of a magnitude not previously seen for the natural gas index. A 4.2% increase in the price of fuel oil provided the remaining upward push on the index. The increase in the index for energy was moderated by price decreases for gasoline and electricity. For the first time since March 1999, the index for gasoline posted a 12-month decrease. The 3.2% decline was led by a 6.5% drop in the index for Ontario. Decreases were registered in all provinces except Prince Edward Island and British Columbia, as well as in Whitehorse and Yellowknife. The decrease in the electricity index was due primarily to the residual effects of a \$200 rebate given to BC Hydro customers in February.

**Annual change in the CPI and in the CPI excluding energy**



**Percentage change in the CPI from the same month of the previous year**



Consumers paid more in March than they did in March 2000 for many food items, particularly fresh vegetables, beef, and restaurant meals. The 23.5% annual hike in the index for fresh vegetables is partly attributable to reduced supplies and higher transportation costs. Supply gaps were caused by poor weather conditions this winter in the southwestern growing regions of the United States. Reduced supplies of beef for the retail market, partly due to herd rebuilding, led to an 18.8% rise in the beef index from March 2000 to March 2001. Restaurant meal prices rose 2.4%; table-service restaurants were the leading contributor to the increase.

Increases in the indexes for mortgage interest cost, travel services, rent, and homeowners' replacement cost were among the other factors contributing to the 12-month increase in the All-items CPI in March. However, the indexes for air transportation, the purchase of automotive vehicles, and computer equipment and supplies exerted some downward pressure on the CPI.

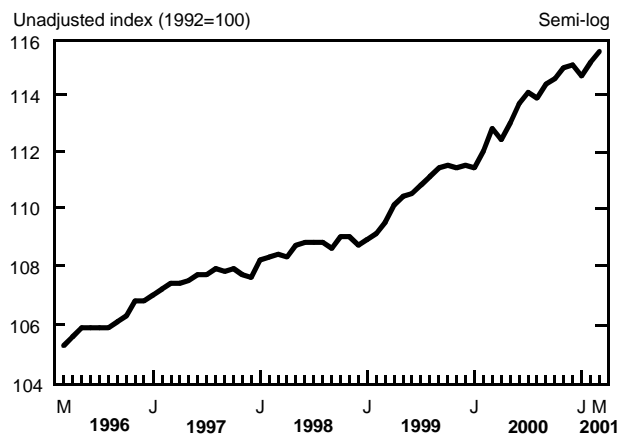
In March, the energy index was up 3.6% from March 2000, the lowest annual increase since June 1999. The greatest impact came from a 49.1%

#### Slight month-to-month rise

From February to March, the CPI rose 0.3%, down from the 0.4% rise recorded from January to February. Higher natural gas costs were the main contributor to the increase. Higher prices for electricity, clothing, meat and travel tours also exerted upward pressure on the

monthly movement of the All-items CPI. However, these advances were moderated by lower prices for gasoline, air transportation and fuel oil.

Consumer Price Index



Natural gas prices climbed 10.7% from February to March. The upward push on the index came from a 20.2% price rise in Ontario, where some distributors saw higher prices for natural gas supplies. Natural gas prices were unchanged in all other provinces except Quebec, where they fell 6.6%.

The index for electricity advanced 4.4% in March. This increase is entirely the result of the resumption of payments for BC Hydro consumers, as the unused part of the \$200 rebate offered in February only offsets part of their March bill.

Clothing prices were an average 1.8% higher in March than in February. The introduction of the new spring and summer clothing lines included price increases for certain women's and men's clothing items. Prices for women's clothing went up 2.2%, and men's clothing, 1.7%.

Meat prices rose 2.1% in March, up from the 1.2% monthly rise posted in February. This is the largest increase in meat prices since June 1990. The 4.2% advance in beef prices, combined with the 3.4% increase in pork prices, were a large part of the rise in the meat index in March.

Prices for travel tours rose 7.2% in March, after peaking at a seasonal high of 11.8% in February. This increase is in line with February-to-March increases seen in past years. The upward movement of prices was due primarily to the seasonal trend towards higher

rates for Florida destinations, which are in great demand in March.

After increasing by 0.7% from January to February, the index for gasoline prices fell 2.3% in March. Decreases were recorded in all provinces except Newfoundland, and also in Yellowknife, which showed no change. Nova Scotia posted a small rise of 0.2%.

Prices of air transportation decreased an average 10.7% in March, after advancing 4.8% in February. This decline was partly due to greater availability of seat sales on selected domestic and transborder routes.

For the third consecutive month, the index for fuel oil declined. March's monthly decrease of 3.8% was slightly less than the decreases of 4.0% in February and 4.1% in January. The March index decrease is largely the result of lower wholesale prices. Index declines were registered for all provinces except Prince Edward Island, whose index was unchanged.

**Note:** The government of British Columbia provided BC Hydro customers with a \$200 credit on their February 2001 electricity bill. For total bills that were smaller than the credited amount, the unused credit was applied to the next payment. As the average electricity bill for February in British Columbia was less than \$200, the average consumer did not have to make any payment. As a consequence, the index for electricity for British Columbia fell to 0.0 in February. The index series (1992=100) is re-established to the level reflecting the resumption of payments in March 2001. It is not meaningful, however, to calculate a percentage change comparing any subsequent period to the index of February 2001, as it means dividing by zero.

**Available on CANSIM: tables 3260001, 3260003, 3260004 and 3260010 and matrices 9940-9956.**

With the release of CANSIM II, users can now obtain the same data as in CANSIM, but in a table format that is easier to use and more clearly presented.

Available at 7 a.m. on Statistics Canada's Web site ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)).

The March 2001 issue of the *Consumer Price Index* (62-001-XIB, \$8/\$77; 62-001-XPB, \$11/\$103) is now available. See *How to order products*.

April's Consumer Price Index will be released on May 17.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, call (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-1539; [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca)) or Joanne Moreau (613-951-7130), Prices Division. □

**Consumer Price Index and major components**  
(1992=100)

	March 2001	February 2001	March 2000	February 2001 to March 2001	March 2000 to March 2001
Not seasonally adjusted					
	Not seasonally adjusted				% change
<b>All-items</b>	<b>115.6</b>	<b>115.2</b>	<b>112.8</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>
Food	116.6	115.6	111.1	0.9	5.0
Shelter	111.9	110.8	107.5	1.0	4.1
Household operations and furnishings	111.3	111.0	109.7	0.3	1.5
Clothing and footwear	107.9	106.5	106.5	1.3	1.3
Transportation	130.1	131.5	131.1	-1.1	-0.8
Health and personal care	113.5	113.6	111.0	-0.1	2.3
Recreation, education and reading	123.5	122.9	120.8	0.5	2.2
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	99.4	99.4	96.7	0.0	2.8
Goods	113.5	112.7	110.9	0.7	2.3
Services	118.1	118.1	115.1	0.0	2.6
All-items excluding food and energy	113.5	113.4	111.6	0.1	1.7
Energy	131.6	129.9	127.0	1.3	3.6
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared to 1992	86.5	86.8	88.7		
All-items (1986=100)	148.1				

**Consumer Price Index for the provinces, Whitehorse and Yellowknife**  
(1992=100)

	March 2001	February 2001	March 2000	February to March 2001	March 2000 to March 2001
Not seasonally adjusted					
	Not seasonally adjusted				% change
Newfoundland	114.4	114.5	113.0	-0.1	1.2
Prince Edward Island	113.3	113.2	110.3	0.1	2.7
Nova Scotia	115.6	115.5	113.5	0.1	1.9
New Brunswick	114.1	113.8	112.2	0.3	1.7
Quebec	112.7	112.4	110.0	0.3	2.5
Ontario	117.3	116.6	113.7	0.6	3.2
Manitoba	120.7	120.5	117.4	0.2	2.8
Saskatchewan	118.8	118.9	115.8	-0.1	2.6
Alberta	118.7	118.8	115.8	-0.1	2.5
British Columbia	113.3	112.6	112.3	0.6	0.9
Whitehorse	116.1	116.0	113.3	0.1	2.5
Yellowknife	111.9	112.2	110.4	-0.3	1.4

## Wholesale trade

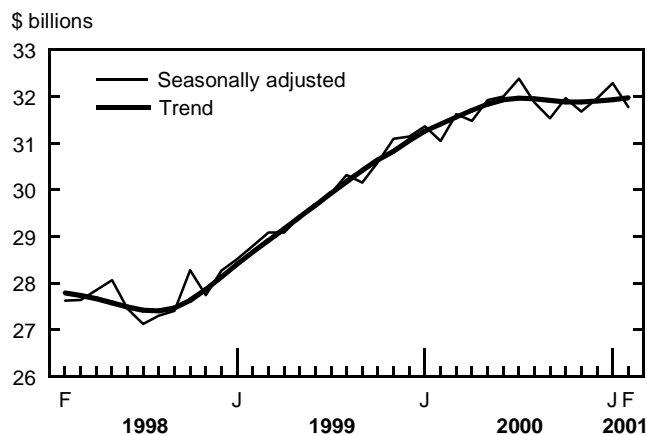
February 2001 (preliminary)

Wholesalers saw their sales fall in February as a result of the slump in the automobile sector, which accounts for about 17% of wholesale activity. Total wholesale sales fell to \$31.8 billion, down 1.6% from January. If not for the sharp decline in motor vehicles, parts and accessories (-10.2%), wholesales sales would have risen a modest 0.3%. Increases were reported in 7 of the 11 trade groups. Wholesalers have seen their sales level off since mid-2000, after a period of generally rising sales starting mid-1998.

Other sectors to fall in February were computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery (-4.4%), apparel and dry goods (-2.6%) and the other products category (-1.0%) which includes seeds and other farm products, newsprint and sporting goods.

Sectors to report notable increases were beverage, drug and tobacco products (+5.7%), farm machinery, equipment and supplies (+2.9%), and lumber and building materials (+1.3%). Food products bounced back in February, rising 1.0%.

### Wholesale sales generally flat since mid-2000



### Wholesalers of motor vehicles, parts and accessories hit the wall

After seeing a healthy rise in sales last month, wholesalers of motor vehicles, parts and accessories hit the wall in February, dropping 10.2%. February also saw lower manufacturing shipments as well as imports and exports of automobile products. Motor vehicle wholesalers were affected by production cutbacks and lower demand in both the United States and Canada. Wholesale sales of motor vehicles, parts

#### Note to readers

At the end of each calendar year, seasonally adjusted monthly estimates of wholesale sales are revised to equal the sum of the unadjusted estimates. Revised seasonally adjusted sales data are presented this month for the 2000 calendar year. These revisions are now available on CANSIM or on request from the Client Services Unit, Distributive Trades Division.

and accessories have been generally falling since the spring of 2000. Prior to then, wholesale sales had been climbing since mid-1998.

Nor could wholesalers of computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery escape the volatility that is affecting their sector; it lost 4.4% in February. Slowing demand for personal computers, telecommunications equipment and their associated components contributed to this decline. Despite February's drop, wholesale sales have been generally advancing since the start of 2000. Before then, wholesale sales within the computer and electronic sector were generally volatile as they reacted to external forces, such as the Asian crisis in 1997, the Taiwan earthquake in 1999 and Y2K.

### Wholesalers of beverage, drug and tobacco products recover

Following January's drop in sales, wholesalers of beverage, drug and tobacco products saw their sales recover by a healthy 5.7% in February. The wholesaling of beverages, and toiletries and preparations were the main contributors to the increase this month. Wholesalers in this trade group have seen their sales generally rise since late 1998.

### Wholesalers in New Brunswick bounce back in February

After six consecutive months of falling sales, wholesalers in New Brunswick reported an increase in February (+6.5%). Wholesalers in 8 of the 11 trade groups reported increased sales. Strong sales were prominent in three sectors: computers and electronics; industrial and other machinery; and metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment. Wholesale sales in New Brunswick have been generally dropping since the spring of 2000 following rising sales since late 1998.

Elsewhere in the Atlantic provinces, lower wholesale sales were reported in Prince Edward Island (-4.2%), Nova Scotia (-2.3%) and Newfoundland (-1.6%). In many sectors, wholesalers reported that the severe winter weather that battered this region dampened their February sales. In addition, Prince Edward Island food product wholesalers, a segment that represents almost 38% of the wholesale activity on the

island, reported that the trade dispute about potatoes continues to affect their sales.

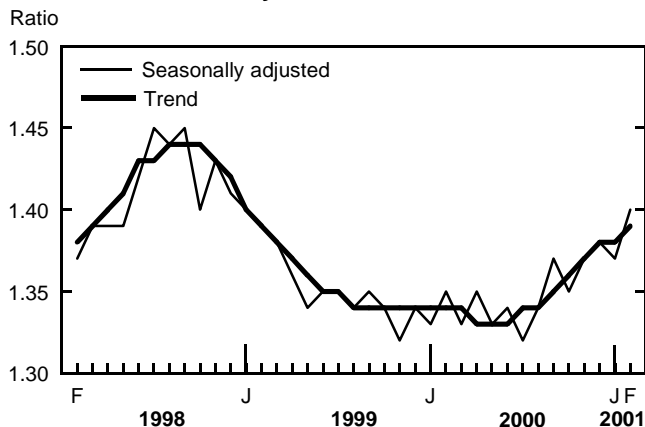
### Wholesalers in British Columbia report healthy sales

British Columbia wholesalers reported their second consecutive monthly increase in February (+1.4%). Contributing to this increase were healthy wholesale sales in lumber and building materials, and in metals, hardware, plumbing and heating, two key sectors with strong links to housing and renovation. February was only the second time since the summer of 1999 that wholesalers in this province reported back-to-back monthly increases. Wholesale sales in British Columbia were generally falling during 2000. Prior to then, sales had been mainly on the rise since early 1999.

### Wholesalers accumulate inventories

Wholesale inventories rose slightly to \$44.3 billion in February (+0.2%). Faced with flattening sales, wholesalers continued to accumulate inventory. The inventory-to-sales ratio rose from 1.37 in January to 1.40 in February. The ratio has been climbing since mid-2000, after a period of general stability starting in mid-1999, when the ratio was about 1.34.

Inventory-to-sales ratio rose



Available on CANSIM: tables 810001 and 810002 and matrices 59, 61, 648 and 649.

With the release of CANSIM II, users can now obtain the same data as in CANSIM, but in a table format that is easier to use and more clearly presented.

The February 2001 issue of *Wholesale trade* (63-008-XIB, \$14/\$140) will be available soon. See *How to order products*.

Wholesale trade estimates for March will be released May 18.

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

**Wholesale merchants' sales and inventories**

	February 2000 <sup>r</sup>	November 2000 <sup>r</sup>	December 2000 <sup>r</sup>	January 2001 <sup>r</sup>	February 2001 <sup>p</sup>	January to February 2001	February 2000 to February 2001
Seasonally adjusted							
	\$ millions					% change	
<b>Sales, all trade groups</b>	<b>31,045</b>	<b>31,676</b>	<b>31,951</b>	<b>32,282</b>	<b>31,766</b>	<b>-1.6</b>	<b>2.3</b>
Food products	4,722	5,124	5,282	5,145	5,194	1.0	10.0
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	1,870	2,135	2,195	2,137	2,258	5.7	20.7
Apparel and dry goods	525	575	552	573	558	-2.6	6.3
Household goods	819	878	866	888	891	0.4	8.9
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	6,209	5,680	5,642	5,860	5,264	-10.2	-15.2
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	2,017	1,998	2,037	2,032	2,055	1.1	1.9
Lumber and building materials	2,426	2,371	2,307	2,332	2,362	1.3	-2.6
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	484	599	583	592	609	2.9	25.8
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	4,776	5,036	4,942	5,024	5,054	0.6	5.8
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,858	2,808	3,035	3,068	2,933	-4.4	2.6
Other products	4,340	4,473	4,510	4,631	4,587	-1.0	5.7
<b>Sales by province and territory</b>							
Newfoundland	224	227	229	232	228	-1.6	1.9
Prince Edward Island	54	52	51	52	50	-4.2	-8.2
Nova Scotia	586	570	586	571	558	-2.3	-4.7
New Brunswick	394	393	390	379	403	6.5	2.3
Quebec	6,122	6,669	6,720	6,759	6,736	-0.3	10.0
Ontario	15,591	15,601	15,838	15,976	15,488	-3.1	-0.7
Manitoba	893	885	940	962	926	-3.7	3.7
Saskatchewan	967	940	923	968	932	-3.7	-3.6
Alberta	2,959	3,111	3,111	3,177	3,190	0.4	7.8
British Columbia	3,226	3,201	3,133	3,176	3,219	1.4	-0.2
Yukon	9	10	10	11	13	18.3	34.2
Northwest Territories	17	15	15	16	20	22.3	15.5
Nunavut	2	3	3	3	3	-9.1	17.8
<b>Inventories, all trade groups</b>	<b>42,065</b>	<b>43,483</b>	<b>43,977</b>	<b>44,247</b>	<b>44,328</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Food products	2,805	2,941	2,944	3,038	3,076	1.3	9.7
Beverage, drug and tobacco products	2,387	2,707	2,694	2,680	2,736	2.1	14.6
Apparel and dry goods	1,140	1,135	1,143	1,127	1,135	0.7	-0.4
Household goods	1,523	1,615	1,667	1,672	1,699	1.6	11.6
Motor vehicles, parts and accessories	6,575	6,505	6,803	6,894	6,959	0.9	5.8
Metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies	3,831	4,050	4,029	4,021	4,002	-0.5	4.4
Lumber and building materials	4,051	4,065	4,108	4,062	4,023	-1.0	-0.7
Farm machinery, equipment and supplies	2,017	1,862	1,872	1,883	1,885	0.1	-6.6
Industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies	10,194	10,960	11,074	11,077	11,136	0.5	9.2
Computers, packaged software and other electronic machinery	2,468	2,235	2,179	2,243	2,155	-4.0	-12.7
Other products	5,074	5,408	5,465	5,550	5,522	-0.5	8.8

<sup>r</sup> Revised figures.

<sup>p</sup> Preliminary figures.



## OTHER RELEASES

### Natural gas sales

February 2001 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 7 825 million cubic metres in February, down 5.5% from February 2000. All three sectors (residential, commercial and industrial) recorded lower sales. Warmer-than-normal weather, particularly in Ontario, resulted in lower sales to the residential (-4.7%) and commercial (-1.6%) sectors. Sales to the industrial sector (including direct sales) fell 7.3% compared with February 2000, largely because of lower demand for natural gas by electric utilities.

Year-to-date sales dropped 7.9% from the same period in 2000. Sales to the residential (-5.4%) and commercial (-4.3%) sectors decreased due to milder weather in January and February. Decreased demand by the industrial sector (including direct sales) led to a 10.4% decline compared with the same period of 2000.

### Natural gas sales

	Feb. 2001 <sup>P</sup>	Feb. 2000	Feb. 2000 to Feb. 2001
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
<b>Natural gas sales</b>	<b>7 825 268</b>	<b>8 285 062</b>	<b>-5.5</b>
Residential	2 117 262	2 222 830	-4.7
Commercial	1 493 253	1 517 612	-1.6
Industrial	1 778 009	1 895 440	-7.3
Direct	2 436 744	2 649 180	
	Year-to-date		
	2001 <sup>P</sup>	2000	2000 to 2001
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
<b>Natural gas sales</b>	<b>15 863 614</b>	<b>17 230 098</b>	<b>-7.9</b>
Residential	4 410 283	4 664 163	-5.4
Commercial	3 086 261	3 224 302	-4.3
Industrial	3 425 911	3 965 852	-10.4
Direct	4 941 159	5 375 781	

<sup>P</sup> Preliminary figures.

### Available on CANSIM: tables 1290002-1290004 and matrices 1052-1055.

With the release of CANSIM II, users can now obtain the same data as in CANSIM, but in a table format that is easier to use and more clearly presented.

The February 2001 issue of *Natural gas transportation and distribution* (55-002-XIB, \$13/\$125) will be available in May. See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Gary Smalldridge (613-951-3567; [gary.smalldridge@statcan.ca](mailto:gary.smalldridge@statcan.ca)), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

### Monthly railway carloadings

February 2001

The freight loaded by railways during February totalled 18.9 million metric tonnes (excluding intermodal traffic). This represented a decrease of 9.5% compared with February 2000. The intermodal tonnage, made up of containers on flatcars and trailers on flatcars, was 1.7 million tonnes, down 2.9% compared with the same period in 2000.

### Available on CANSIM: table 4040002 and matrices 1418, 1419 and 1430.

With the release of CANSIM II, users can now obtain the same data as in CANSIM, but in a table format that is easier to use and more clearly presented.

The February 2001 issue of *Railway carloadings (monthly)* (52-001-XIE, \$8/\$77) 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 J.R. Larocque (613-951-2486; fax: 613-951-0009; [larocque@statcan.ca](mailto:larocque@statcan.ca)), Transportation Division. ■

### Industrial monitor on CD-ROM: Temporary suspension

Statistics Canada is temporarily suspending the publication *Industrial monitor on CD-ROM*, the last issue of which was March 2001.

This will allow a revision of the product's structure to the North American Standard Industrial Classification System (NAICS) from the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC).

Much of the *Industrial monitor's* underlying data is classified according to the 1980 SIC, and is no longer available. In the coming months, Statistics Canada will implement the NAICS industrial classification structure, make other changes and expand the content.

For more information, contact Yolande Chantigny (1-800-887-4623; 613-951-9163; fax: 613-951-3688;



*imad@statcan.ca*), Industry Measures and Analysis Division, or your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre (1-800-263-1136). ■

### **Stocks of frozen poultry meat**

April 1, 2001 (preliminary)

Data for stocks of frozen poultry meat on April 1 are now available.

**Available on CANSIM: tables 30023 and 30024 and matrices 5675-5677.**

With the release of CANSIM II, users can now obtain the same data as in CANSIM, but in a table format that is easier to use and more clearly presented.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Sandra Giefeldt (613-951-2505), or Gilles Beaudry (613-951-7128), (*gilles.beaudry@statcan.ca*), Agriculture Division. ■

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## NEW PRODUCTS

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**Infomat — A weekly review**, April 20, 2001  
Catalogue number **11-002-XIE** (\$3/\$109).

**Infomat — A weekly review**, April 20, 2001  
Catalogue number **11-002-XPE** (\$4/\$145).

**Refined petroleum products**, January 2001  
Catalogue number **45-004-XIB** (\$16/\$155).

**Refined petroleum products**, January 2001  
Catalogue number **45-004-XPB** (\$21/\$206).

**Railway carloadings**, February 2001, Vol. 78, no. 2  
Catalogue number **52-001-XIE** (\$8/\$77).

**Industry price indexes**, February 2001  
Catalogue number **62-011-XPB** (\$22/\$217).

**All prices are in Canadian dollars and exclude sales tax. Additional shipping charges apply for delivery outside Canada.**

Catalogue numbers with an -XIB or an -XIE extension are Internet versions; those with -XMB or -XME are microfiche; -XPB or -XPE are paper versions; -XDB are electronic versions on diskette and -XCD are electronic versions on compact disc.

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Catalogue 11-001E (P) en français 11-001E/11-001E-FR



Statistics Canada

Thursday, June 5, 1997  
For release at 8:30 a.m.



**MAJOR RELEASES**

- **Urban transit, 1995** 2  
Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are taking it less and less. In 1996, about 1.6 billion trips, an average of about 4.5 per person, were taken on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.
- **Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1996** 4  
Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was relatively weak again in 1996, accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth during the year.

**OTHER RELEASES**

- **Help-wanted index, May 1997** 3
- **Short-term Expectations Survey** 8
- **Steel primary forms, season ending May 31, 1997** 12
- **Egg production, April 1997** 13

**PUBLICATIONS RELEASED** 11

### Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

Catalogue 11-001E.

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