



The Daily

Statistics Canada

Friday, February 20, 2004

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time

MAJOR RELEASES

- **Consumer Price Index, January 2004**

In January, consumers paid 1.2% more for the goods and services included in the CPI basket than they did in January 2003. This 12-month increase is a substantial drop from the 2.0% in December. However, excluding energy, the drop in the 12-month increase in the CPI was much less significant, falling from 1.7% in December to 1.5% in January.

2
- **Port activity, 2002**

Activity at Canada's ports surpassed 400 million metric tonnes in 2002, despite a second consecutive decline in international shipments. Growth in domestic shipments more than made up for the back-to-back slump in foreign cargo.

6

OTHER RELEASES

Monthly Survey of Large Retailers, 2003 and December 2003	8
Natural gas sales, December 2003	9
Steel primary forms — weekly data, week ending February 14, 2004	10
Canadian Vehicle Survey, third quarter 2003	10
Road motor vehicle registrations, 2003	10

NEW PRODUCTS

RELEASE DATES: February 23 to 27 12



MAJOR RELEASES

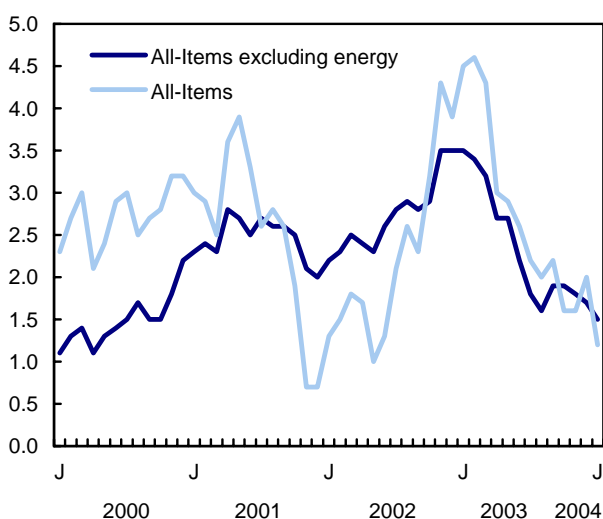
Consumer Price Index

January 2004

In January, consumers paid 1.2% more for the goods and services included in the CPI basket than they did in January 2003. This was the smallest 12-month increase since May 2002, when it was 1.0%.

Percentage change from the same month of the previous year

% change



January's 12-month increase is a substantial drop from the 2.0% in December, but closer to the 1.6% in November.

However, excluding energy, the drop in the 12-month increase in the CPI was much less significant, falling from 1.7% in December to 1.5% in January.

Energy prices were therefore primarily responsible for the large fall in the 12-month increase in the CPI from 2.0% to 1.2%. The CPI surged 0.8% from December 2002 to January 2003, mainly because of the return to normal levels for Ontario's electricity index in January 2003 after a refund was paid to customers in December 2002, and of higher gasoline and natural gas prices.

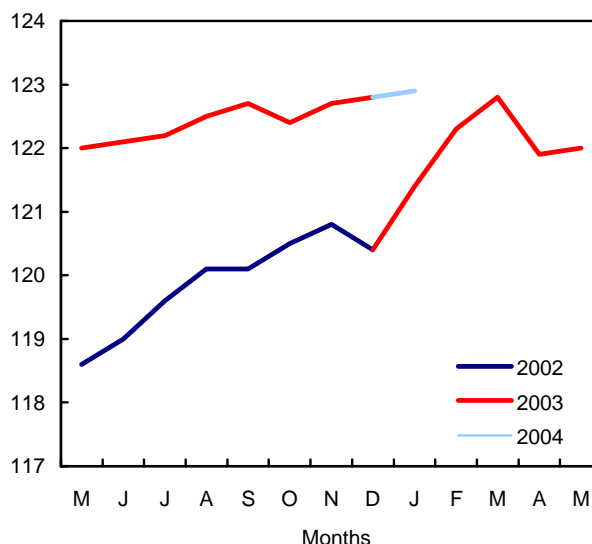
This monthly surge last year was not matched by an equivalent monthly increase this year, thus reducing the 12-month gap between January indexes compared with December indexes (base effect).

Base effect

The 12-month variation in the CPI is calculated by comparing the current month's index with the index for the same month of the previous year. In the all-items index chart, the 12-month change is represented by the gap between the two curves. Thus, the 12-month variation can decrease from one month to the next merely due to the fact that the base serving as the point of comparison increased. As can be observed from the chart, the behaviour of the index in 2003 is going to be a very important factor in explaining the variations in the 12-month percentage changes up until April 2004.

All-items index

Indexes (1992=100)



The CPI rose only 0.1% on a monthly basis. Over the last six months, monthly increases have averaged 0.1%.

The all-items index excluding the eight most volatile components, as defined by the Bank of Canada, rose 1.5% from January 2003 to January 2004. This is a considerable fall from December's 2.2% increase but closer to the 1.8% of November. These variations were caused mainly by the refund paid to Ontario electricity customers in December 2002 (base effect).

Contributing factors to the 12-month increase

Significant factors contributing to the 1.2% increase in the CPI included tuition fees, automotive vehicle

insurance premiums, homeowners' replacement cost, cigarettes and homeowners' insurance premiums.

Lower prices for gasoline, traveller accommodation, automotive vehicles, along with lower prices for some fresh fruit and vegetables exerted downward pressure on the 12-month increase in the CPI.

Tuition fees, which were collected in September 2003, increased an average of 8.1%. Increases over the previous three years averaged 3.8%.

Automotive vehicle insurance premiums increased on average 4.8% from January 2003 to January 2004, while premiums for homeowners' insurance were up 11.8%.

Homeowners' replacement cost, a measure of the depreciation of a house estimated by the changes in the price of new housing (excluding land), was up 6.1%.

Cigarette prices were 10.3% higher than in January 2003. This increase was primarily due to higher provincial tobacco taxes introduced throughout the year in most provinces.

Gasoline prices were 2.5% lower than in January 2003.

Traveller accommodation prices fell 10.7% from January 2003. They have been trending down since mid-2001. In fact, price levels are now similar to those of early 1994.

The tourism industry has been affected by a number of factors over the last year, including the economic slowdown in the United States, a higher Canadian dollar, the world's instability and the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

Although automotive vehicle prices have increased 3.6% from the seven-year low reached in October 2003, they remained 0.8% lower than January 2003 levels.

Some manufacturers have recently reduced incentives and raised prices on certain models.

Lower prices for some fresh fruit and vegetables also put some downward pressure on the index. Overall fresh fruit and vegetable prices declined 6.1% from January 2003 levels.

CPI inched up in January

From December to January, the CPI inched up for a third consecutive month, increasing 0.1%. Higher prices for gasoline, non-alcoholic beverages and fuel oil exerted upward pressure on the all-items CPI.

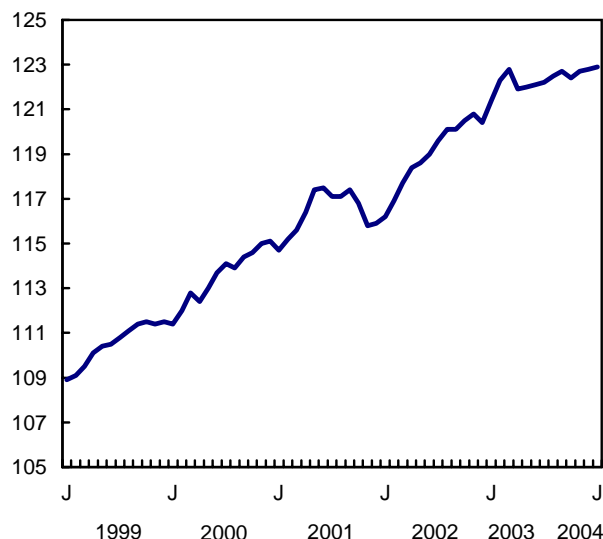
Downward pressure came from price decreases for natural gas, travel tours, air transportation, fresh fruit, sporting and athletic equipment and men's clothing.

Gasoline prices rose on average 5.7%. Price increases were widespread across provinces and ranged from 1.9% in British Columbia and Newfoundland

and Labrador to 7.8% in Alberta. Prices in Prince Edward Island, however, remained stable.

Consumer Price Index

Unadjusted Index (1992=100)



Prices for non-alcoholic beverages rose 5.9% from December to January. Increases were seen in all provinces, as prices returned to normal after holiday season promotions.

Fuel oil prices increased 10.0% in January. This follows increases of 2.3% in November and 3.3% in December. However, prices are still lower than January 2003 by 2.4%.

Price hikes were due to stronger demand as a result of cold temperatures and higher crude oil prices. Price increases were noted in all provinces, with the strongest in Quebec (+14.4%) and Ontario (+13.7%).

After increasing in November and December, the natural gas price index decreased 9.3% in January, mostly under the pressure of price declines in Ontario.

In Ontario, utility companies have adjusted rates to reflect lower forecasted prices for the coming year and decreased the amount of a surcharge collected to recover the cost of gas purchased and stored in the spring when prices were higher.

In January 2004, the travel tours index fell 11.0%. This is a slightly larger decrease than what was observed for January in the previous four years. January decreases averaged 9.8% over those four years.

Travel tour prices are collected every year in January, February and March when they are most popular among Canadians. Of these three months, January is the month with the lowest demand. Since

January prices are directly compared with those in March of the previous year, the index usually falls in January. Travel tour prices were down 2.5% from last January's levels.

Air transportation prices fell 4.8% from December to January. Price decreases are usual in January, as the January fares are compared with high season fares in December.

The seasonally adjusted CPI increased slightly from December to January

After seasonal adjustment, the CPI rose 0.1% from December to January.

Higher seasonally adjusted indexes for transportation (+1.0%), alcoholic beverages and tobacco products (+0.6%), clothing and footwear (+0.2%), and health and personal care (+0.2%) contributed to the increase.

The indexes for food (-0.3%), shelter (-0.2%), and recreation, education and reading (-0.3%) exerted some downward pressure. The seasonally adjusted index for household operations and furnishings remained stable.

All-items excluding the eight most volatile components

The all-items index excluding the eight most volatile components, as defined by the Bank of Canada, rose 1.5% from January 2003 to January 2004. This is a considerable slowdown from December's 2.2% increase but closer to the 1.8% of November.

These variations in the 12-month percentage change were caused mainly by a base effect. A refund paid to Ontario's electricity customers, following provincial government legislation, lowered the electricity index in December 2002 to an unusually low level. December's 12-month change was bigger because the December 2003 index was compared with a temporarily low index in December 2002.

Factors that contributed significantly to the rise in the all-items index also contributed significantly to the 1.5% rise in this index. Most of the difference between the two rates of increase was the result of the exclusion of the effect of increasing cigarette prices and decreasing prices for gasoline, and for fresh fruit and vegetables.

From December to January, the all-items index excluding the eight most volatile components, as

defined by the Bank of Canada, remained unchanged. The main factor explaining the difference between the 0.1% increase in the CPI and the fact that this index remained unchanged from last month, is the exclusion of the upward pressure from higher gasoline and fuel oil prices and the effect of lower natural gas prices.

Energy

Energy prices were down 1.1% from January 2003 to January 2004. This follows a 6.7% increase the previous month.

Lower gasoline prices (-2.5%) combined with weaker fuel oil prices (-2.4%) accounted for the decrease. Higher natural gas (+1.7%) and electricity prices (+0.1%) partially offset these downward pressures.

From December to January, energy prices increased 2.0% mostly as a result of price increases for gasoline (+5.7%) and fuel oil (+10.0%). Natural gas prices decreased (-9.3%), while electricity prices remained stable.

Available on CANSIM: tables 326-0001, 326-0002, 326-0009, 326-0012 and 326-0016 to 326-0018.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2301.

More information about the concepts and use of the CPI is available online in "Your guide to the consumer price index" (www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/62-557-XIB/free.htm).

Available at 7 a.m. on our website. From the home page, choose *Today's news releases from The Daily*, then *Latest Consumer Price Index*.

The January 2004 issue of the *Consumer Price Index* (62-001-XIB, \$9/\$83; 62-001-XPB, \$12/\$111) is now available. See *How to order products*.

The February 2004 Consumer Price Index will be released on March 18, 2004.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, call Rebecca McDougall (1-866-230-2248; 613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-1539) or Ron Morency (613-951-3103), Prices Division.

□

Consumer Price Index and major components (1992=100)

	January 2004	December 2003	January 2003	December 2003 to January 2004	January 2003 to January 2004
unadjusted					
	% change				
All-items	122.9	122.8	121.4	0.1	1.2
Food	123.7	123.4	122.3	0.2	1.1
Shelter	118.7	118.8	116.2	-0.1	2.2
Household operations and furnishings	114.9	114.9	113.9	0.0	0.9
Clothing and footwear	102.3	102.5	101.6	-0.2	0.7
Transportation	142.2	140.8	141.9	1.0	0.2
Health and personal care	117.7	117.6	116.1	0.1	1.4
Recreation, education and reading	125.3	126.5	125.4	-0.9	-0.1
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products	140.8	140.1	132.0	0.5	6.7
All-items (1986=100)	157.4				
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar expressed in cents, compared to 1992	81.4	81.4	82.4		
Special aggregates					
Goods	117.9	117.6	117.9	0.3	0.0
Services	128.5	128.6	125.5	-0.1	2.4
All-items excluding food and energy	121.1	121.2	119.2	-0.1	1.6
Energy	138.9	136.2	140.4	2.0	-1.1
All-items excluding the 8 most volatile components ¹	123.5	123.5	121.7	0.0	1.5

¹ Excluded from the All-items CPI are the following eight volatile components, as defined by the Bank of Canada: fruit, fruit preparations and nuts; vegetables and vegetable preparations; mortgage interest cost; natural gas; fuel oil and other fuel; gasoline; inter-city transportation; and tobacco products and smokers' supplies. The Bank of Canada further adjusts this series to obtain their measure of core inflation, which also excludes the effect of changes in indirect taxes. For data and information on core inflation, please consult the Bank of Canada website (www.bankofcanada.ca/inflation).

Consumer Price Index by province, and for Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Iqaluit (1992=100)

	January 2004	December 2003	January 2003	December 2003 to January 2004	January 2003 to January 2004
unadjusted					
	% change				
Newfoundland and Labrador	120.9	120.3	119.7	0.5	1.0
Prince Edward Island	121.8	122.0	119.9	-0.2	1.6
Nova Scotia	123.6	123.5	123.1	0.1	0.4
New Brunswick	122.5	122.0	122.4	0.4	0.1
Quebec	119.2	118.6	117.8	0.5	1.2
Ontario	124.2	124.2	122.4	0.0	1.5
Manitoba	125.6	125.6	125.0	0.0	0.5
Saskatchewan	127.1	127.0	125.6	0.1	1.2
Alberta	129.8	129.9	128.6	-0.1	0.9
British Columbia	120.8	120.9	119.0	-0.1	1.5
Whitehorse ¹	118.9	118.9	119.7	0.0	-0.7
Yellowknife ²	118.1	118.2	118.3	-0.1	-0.2
Iqaluit (Dec. 2002=100) ³	100.0	100.5	99.9	-0.5	0.1

¹ A definition of the Whitehorse urban centre is available online (<http://stds.statcan.ca/english/sgc/1996/1996-sgc-searchalpha2.asp?criteria=6325>).

² A definition of the Yellowknife urban centre is available online (<http://stds.statcan.ca/english/sgc/1996/1996-sgc-searchalpha2.asp?criteria=6392>).

³ A definition of the Iqaluit urban centre is available online (<http://stds.statcan.ca/english/sgc/1996/1996-sgc-searchalpha2.asp?criteria=6356>).

Port activity

2002

Activity at Canada's ports surpassed 400 million metric tonnes in 2002, despite a second consecutive decline in international shipments. Growth in domestic shipments more than made up for the back-to-back slump in foreign cargo.

In total, Canadian ports handled a record 407.9 million metric tonnes of cargo in 2002, up 3.4% from 2001.

Domestic cargo rose 16.1% to 125.2 million tonnes, the highest level in a decade. It was driven by increased production in the offshore oil fields in Newfoundland and Labrador, as the Terra Nova wells came on-stream in January 2002. (Domestic cargo is handled twice by terminals — once when it is loaded, and again when unloaded.)

However, international cargo slumped 1.4% to 282.7 million tonnes, the result of lower inbound shipments of crude petroleum, coal and fuel oils. This followed a 2.3% decline in foreign shipments in 2001.

Vancouver, again the country's leading port for both bulk cargo and containerized freight, accounted for almost 16% of the nation's marine cargo. In 2002, Vancouver's port moved 63.2 million tonnes, a 12.3% decline, which was mainly the result of decreases in shipments of coal, wheat, canola and barley. The port handled nearly one-half (48%) of all containers in Canada's ports.

Marine traffic increases south of the border

Shipments between Canada and the United States accounted for about 40% of all international cargo handled by Canadian ports in 2002.

Marine traffic to and from the United States increased 5.9% to 114.3 million tonnes in 2002. This was driven by a 17.5% gain in cargo shipped to the United States. Inbound cargo from the United States fell 9.7%.

The growth in US-bound cargo was driven by substantial gains in shipments of crude petroleum, a reflection of the increased production of the Newfoundland offshore oil fields.

Most other major bulk commodities shipped to the United States in 2002 also showed strong increases, in particular gasoline and aviation turbine fuel, and iron ores and concentrates. Salt destined for Great Lakes ports in the United States was the only major commodity incurring decreased shipping activity.

Coal shipments accounted for over 45% of all inbound shipments from the United States in 2002. These declined 14.3% in 2002, following a 10.1% gain

in 2001. Ports at Nanticoke, Courtright and Port Credit were hardest hit by this decline.

Fuel oil from Atlantic and Gulf ports in the United States dropped 16.3% in 2002. Hardest hit were the ports of Montréal/Contrecoeur, Saint John and Halifax.

Ships registered in Canada handled 44% of the Canada-US cargo in 2002, down from 50% in 2001. Canadian-flag ships were especially dominant on the Great lakes, with 89% of the cargo exchanged with US Great Lakes ports.

US-flag ships carried 9% of all Canada-US cargo, down from 10% in 2001. Foreign-flag ships carried the remaining 47%.

Saint John the second busiest port

Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada's second busiest port, handled 25.2 million tonnes of cargo in 2002, a 3.2% increase. The gain occurred despite a plunge in inbound shipments of fuel oils from the US Atlantic and Gulf region, and the Central America and Antilles region. This was offset by strong growth in other bulk commodities, such as crude petroleum, gasoline and aviation turbine fuels and potash.

Sept-Îles (including Pointe-Noire) handled 20.0 million tonnes in 2002, virtually unchanged from 2001. A gain in international cargo was due mainly to higher shipments of iron ores and concentrates to the United States. Domestic cargo handled at Sept-Îles/Pointe-Noire declined mainly as a result of a strong drop in shipments of iron ores and concentrates to Hamilton.

The port of Montréal (including Contrecoeur) handled 18.3 million tonnes of cargo, down 2.9%, mainly because of fewer shipments of fuel oils, wheat and fertilizers, excluding potash. The number of international containers handled by the port rose 6.6%.

The port of Québec (including Lévis) handled 17.9 million tonnes, up 17.7%. International cargo accounted for nearly 81% of the total. Foreign cargo rose in the wake of higher inbound shipments of crude petroleum from Africa and Europe and increased tonnage of iron ores and concentrates arriving from Brazil and transhipped through Québec to US Great Lakes.

The total tonnage handled at the port of Halifax fell 7.6% to 12.9 million tonnes. International cargo, which accounted for 81.5% of the total cargo, was down because of lower receipts of crude petroleum from Europe and South America.

Hamilton handled 11.7 million tonnes of marine cargo, up 10.4%. Its international traffic rose as a result of increased inbound shipments of iron ores and concentrates from the US Great Lakes region, and

inbound iron and steel, mainly from South America and Europe. Hamilton's inbound coal shipments from the United States were down 7.9%.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers, including related surveys, 2751 and 2791.

The 2002 issue of *Shipping in Canada* (54-205-XIE, \$43) will be available soon. See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Jean-Robert Larocque (1-866-500-8400; fax: 613-951-0009; transportationstatistics@statcan.ca), Transportation Division.

Canada's top 20 ports by tonnage handled

	Domestic			International			Total		
	2001	2002	2001 to 2002	2001	2002	2001 to 2002	2001	2002	2001 to 2002
	'000 tonnes		% change	'000 tonnes		% change	'000 tonnes		% change
Vancouver	1 660	1 516	-8.7	70 334	61 642	-12.4	71 994	63 158	-12.3
Come-By-Chance	4 600	14 184	208.3	10 936	19 956	82.5	15 537	34 141	119.7
Saint John	2 069	3 280	58.5	22 392	21 956	-1.9	24 461	25 236	3.2
Sept-Îles/Pointe-Noire	4 606	4 049	-12.1	15 367	16 051	4.4	19 973	20 100	0.6
Montréal/Contrecoeur	3 328	3 607	8.4	15 543	14 710	-5.4	18 870	18 317	-2.9
Québec/Lévis	3 256	3 478	6.8	11 911	14 374	20.7	15 168	17 852	17.7
Port-Cartier	3 253	3 844	18.2	11 499	12 356	7.5	14 752	16 200	9.8
Port Hawkesbury	737	581	-21.2	20 791	15 264	-26.6	21 528	15 845	-26.4
Nanticoke	1 087	1 648	51.6	14 380	13 020	-9.5	15 467	14 668	-5.2
Newfoundland Offshore	5 162	13 462	160.8	2 286	570	-75.1	7 448	14 032	88.4
Halifax	2 698	2 385	-11.6	11 245	10 498	-6.6	13 944	12 883	-7.6
Fraser River	7 900	7 864	-0.5	3 562	4 668	31.1	11 462	12 533	9.3
Hamilton	6 257	5 923	-5.3	4 349	5 785	33.0	10 606	11 709	10.4
Thunder Bay	5 686	4 961	-12.7	3 398	3 267	-3.8	9 083	8 228	-9.4
Howe Sound	5 599	6 287	12.3	173	515	198.1	5 772	6 802	17.9
North Arm Fraser River	4 665	5 188	11.2	2	7	296.4	4 666	5 195	11.3
Sault-Ste-Marie	731	810	10.8	4 028	4 099	1.8	4 759	4 909	3.1
Sorel	3 157	2 665	-15.6	2 097	2 114	0.8	5 254	4 779	-9.0
Windsor Ontario	2 068	2 209	6.8	2 649	2 397	-9.5	4 717	4 606	-2.3
Port-Alfred	139	61	-56.0	4 142	4 467	7.8	4 281	4 529	5.8
Sub-total	68 659	88 003	28.2	231 084	227 718	-1.5	299 743	315 721	5.3
Other Ports	39 183	37 211	-5.0	55 775	55 016	-1.4	94 958	92 227	-2.9
Total	107 842	125 214	16.1	286 859	282 734	-1.4	394 701	407 948	3.4



OTHER RELEASES

Monthly Survey of Large Retailers

2003 and December 2003

Sales for large retailers grew at a slower rate in 2003 than in previous years.

Total sales increased 4.5% in 2003, after seeing stronger growth of 6.1% in 2002 and annual gains of 5.6% in 2001 and 2000. The group of large retailers saw sales rise in all major commodity groups for 2003, with increases ranging from 1.0% to 9.6%.

Sales reached \$10.6 billion in December, up 4.4% from December 2002.

Annual sales by commodity for the group of large retailers

	2002	2003	2002 to 2003	2002	2003
	unadjusted			share of sales	
	\$ millions		% change	%	
Commodity					
Food and beverages	27,448	28,571	4.1	32.1	32.0
Health and personal care products	7,683	8,422	9.6	9.0	9.4
Clothing, footwear and accessories	15,901	16,057	1.0	18.6	18.0
Furniture, home furnishings and electronics	12,869	13,503	4.9	15.1	15.1
Housewares	3,939	4,111	4.4	4.6	4.6
Hardware, lawn and garden products	3,316	3,485	5.1	3.9	3.9
Sporting and leisure goods	4,467	4,709	5.4	5.2	5.3
All other goods and services	9,789	10,356	5.8	11.5	11.6
Total	85,412	89,215	4.5	100	100

Of the major commodity groups, clothing, footwear and accessories (+1.0%) had the weakest sales growth in 2003. This was partly attributable to a 1.8% price drop for clothing and footwear compared with 2002. For the first time since this survey began in 1997, sales of women's apparel and accessories did not grow at a faster rate than men's. Sales were flat for both men's and women's clothing and accessories in 2003. However, sales growth for girl's clothing continued to be stronger than boy's, growing at a rate of 1.8% while boy's dropped 2.1%.

In 2003, sales of health and personal care products increased 9.6% from 2002, the strongest increase amongst the major commodity groups. Except for 2000, this group has led annual sales increases since the survey started in 1997, the result of large retailers continuing to expand into the pharmaceutical market.

Prescription and non-prescription drug sales (+13.3%) led the increases in health and personal care products, and accounted for almost two-thirds of its growth in 2003. The remaining one-third of the growth was almost completely due to increased sales of other toiletries and personal care products (excluding cosmetics and fragrances).

The "other goods and services" category posted an increase of 5.8% from 2002. The driving force behind this increase was a 12.3% rise in automotive fuel, oil and additive sales. However, the price of gasoline was up 6.4% at the pump, which pushed up the value of sales. The other mover in this category was pet food sales, which were up 10.7% from 2002.

Sales of sporting and leisure goods posted above average sales growth for the group of large retailers in 2003, increasing 5.4% from 2002. Sporting goods increased more than 5.0% in 2003, as did leisure goods. Consumer spending on pre-recorded CDs, DVDs, video and audio tapes jumped during the final two months, pushing annual growth up 5.7%, despite declining sales for a good part of 2003. Sporting good sales growth was distributed throughout a number of commodities, including hunting, camping and fishing, team sports (such as hockey, baseball and soccer), and ski and snowboard equipment and accessories.

Sales by commodity for the group of large retailers

	November 2003 ^r	December 2002	December 2003 ^p	December 2002 to December 2003
	unadjusted			
	\$ millions			% change
Commodity				
Food and beverages	2,393	2,601	2,706	4.0
Health and personal care products	763	848	917	8.1
Clothing, footwear and accessories	1,636	2,263	2,296	1.4
Furniture, home furnishings and electronics	1,375	1,903	1,991	4.6
Housewares	362	447	461	3.1
Hardware, lawn and garden products	231	265	294	10.6
Sporting and leisure goods	546	851	923	8.4
All other goods and services	960	997	1,035	3.7
Total	8,266	10,177	10,622	4.4

^r Revised figures.

^p Preliminary figures.

In December, hardware, lawn and garden products posted the largest year-over-year sales increase for

the group of large retailers (+10.6%). Sales of sporting and leisure goods and health and personal care products were also strong. The remaining commodity groups posted small to moderate increases from December 2002.

Hardware, lawn and garden product sales surged in the final month of 2003. Outdoor power equipment sales almost doubled compared with December 2002, and accounted for over one-third of the growth in this commodity group. Sales of lawn and garden related products, which includes items such as real Christmas trees, were also up strongly for large retailers in December.

The sporting and leisure goods category ended the year on a high note, increasing sales by 8.4% in December on a year-over-year basis. Pre-recorded CDs, DVDs, video and audio tape sales were up 13.2% from December 2002. Sales were likely aided by recent releases of a number of blockbuster hits, as well as distributors attempting to combat music piracy by luring consumers back through lower CD prices.

Sales of health and personal care products were generally strong, although flat sales of cosmetics and fragrances pulled down the category somewhat. Drug sales (which include prescription and over-the-counter drugs as well as vitamins and herbal remedies) continued a year long trend of strong growth, up 14.0% from December 2002 for the group of large retailers.

Note: This survey includes large retailers mainly in the food, clothing, home furnishings, electronics, sporting goods, and general merchandise sectors. These retailers represent approximately 28% of total annual retail sales, or 38% excluding recreational and motor vehicle dealers.

All data in this release are unadjusted for seasonality and all percentages are year-over-year changes.

Available on CANSIM: table 080-0009.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5027.

A data table is also available in the *Canadian statistics* module of our website.

For general information or to order data, contact Client Services (1-877-421-3067; 613-951-3549; retailinfo@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Elton Cryderman (613-951-0669), Distributive Trades Division. ■

Natural gas sales

December 2003 (preliminary)

Natural gas sales totalled 8 012 million cubic metres in December, up 2.8% from December 2002. Colder-than-normal weather conditions for the regions west of Ontario contributed to the 2.2% increase in sales in the residential sector. The industrial (including direct sales) sector showed an increase in sales of 5.1%. In contrast, the commercial sector had a slight sales decline of 1.4%.

Year-to-date sales at the end of December were up 1.9% from the same period of 2002. Both the residential (+4.3%) and commercial (+3.6%) sectors posted solid gains. Use of natural gas by the industrial sector (including direct sales) showed a small gain of 0.4% this year.

Natural gas sales

	December 2003 ^P	December 2002	December 2002 to December 2003
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Natural gas sales	8 011 837	7 794 621	2.8
Residential	2 310 161	2 260 391	2.2
Commercial	1 751 562	1 776 052	-1.4
Industrial	1 970 191	1 930 413	5.1
Direct	1 979 923	1 827 765	
	year-to-date		
	2003 ^P	2002	2002 to 2003
	thousands of cubic metres		% change
Natural gas sales	72 979 376	71 597 323	1.9
Residential	17 737 648	17 002 530	4.3
Commercial	13 573 245	13 097 505	3.6
Industrial	20 455 857	19 234 353	0.4
Direct	21 212 626	22 262 935	

^P Preliminary figures.

Available on CANSIM: tables 129-0001 to 129-0004.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2149.

For general information or to order data, contact the dissemination officer (1-866-873-8789; 613-951-9497; energ@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Pierre Després (613-951-3579; pierre.despres@statcan.ca) or Lloyd Cundell (613-951-7346; lloyd.cundell@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Steel primary forms — weekly data

Week ending February 14, 2004 (preliminary)

Steel primary forms production for the week ending February 14 totalled 303 357 metric tonnes, up 10.8% from 273 711 tonnes a week earlier but down 0.3% from 304 368 tonnes in the same week of 2003.

The year-to-date total as of February 14 was 1 897 658 tonnes, down 2.2% from 1 939 499 tonnes in the same period of 2003.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2131.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact the dissemination officer (1-866-873-8789; 613-951-9497; manufact@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

Canadian Vehicle Survey

Third quarter 2003

Vehicles covered in the Canadian Vehicle Survey travelled an estimated 91.1 billion kilometres in the third quarter of 2003. Among them, vehicles weighing less than 4 500 kilograms (and not used as a bus) travelled 84.1 billion kilometres, or 92% of the total for the quarter.

The survey measures the activity of all on-road vehicles registered in Canada with the exception of some vehicles such as motorcycles, construction equipment and road maintenance equipment.

Estimates of total vehicle-kilometres are available by province and territory. Estimates of passenger-kilometres are available by province only.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2749.

The third quarter 2003 issue of *The Canadian Vehicle Survey* (53F0004XIE, free) is now available online. From the *Our products and services* page, under *Browse our Internet publications*, choose *Free*, then *Transport and warehousing*.

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

release, contact Client Services (1-866-500-8400; transportationstatistics@statcan.ca), Transportation Division. ■

Road motor vehicle registrations

2003 (preliminary)

A total of 18.9 million road motor vehicles were registered in Canada in 2003.

Of this total, 17.8 million (94%) were passenger cars and light vehicles such as pickup trucks and minivans. The remainder consisted of 79,900 buses, 373,400 motorcycles and mopeds, and 660,400 truck tractors and trucks (weighing at least 4 500 kg).

In addition to these road motor vehicles, 4.3 million trailers and 1.5 million off-road, construction and farm vehicles were also registered.

Provincial data are available on an annual and quarterly basis, enabling users to analyse seasonal variation.

Note: These data are not comparable with the motor vehicle registrations prior to 1999. Although the data still come from provincial and territorial governments, vehicle counts were tabulated from registration files used by the Canadian Vehicle Survey. A standardized methodology was applied to the files, providing more consistent results across jurisdictions.

Available on CANSIM: table 405-0004.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2747.

Annual data for 2003 are now available free in a table on our website. From the *Canadian statistics* page, choose *Communication, transportation and trade*, then *Transportation* and finally *Motor vehicle registrations, the provinces and territories*. Quarterly data are available upon request.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Client Services (1-866-500-8400; transportationstatistics@statcan.ca), Transportation Division. ■

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 or -XDE are electronic versions on diskette and -XCB or -XCE are electronic versions on compact disc.

RELEASE DATES: FEBRUARY 23 TO 27

(Release dates are subject to change.)

Release date	Title	Reference period
23	Juristat: Trends in drug offences and the role of alcohol and drugs in crime	1977–2002
23	Study: ICT gap between small and large companies	2000 to 2002
24	Characteristics of international travellers	Third quarter 2003
24	Farm cash receipts	Fourth quarter 2003
24	Employment Insurance	December 2003
25	International travel account	Fourth quarter 2003
25	Quarterly financial statistics for enterprises	Fourth quarter 2003
25	Private and public investment in Canada	Intentions 2004
26	Balance of international payments	Fourth quarter 2003
26	Retail trade	December 2003
26	Wholesale trade	December 2003
26	Employment, earnings and hours	December 2003
27	Gross domestic product by industry	December 2003
27	National economic and financial accounts	Fourth quarter 2003