

Metric conversion near completion

Metric conversion of retail food scales started simultaneously in 21 cities across Canada in January. It will progressively extend to the rest of the country within the next two years according to schedules established by local industry committees in different areas.

Canada Canada
metric métrique



The metric system is now a fact of life in Canada: weather information, road signs, gasoline, automobiles, drugs, chemicals, beverages, textiles, prepackaged items in food stores, and many other items are now measured in metric units such as degrees Celsius, litres, metres and grams.

The selling of individually-weighted food items in metric units and the conversion of retail food scales marks the virtual completion of metric conversion for Canadian consumers.

By the end of 1983 metric units will be used by the majority of Canadians for all normal commercial and legal purposes.

Scales changed

Advertising and selling food weighed in stores — such as fresh meat and produce, cheese, fish, nuts, candy, confections etc. — and the scales used to weigh these products are controlled by weights and measures regulations.

In 1977 Parliament passed the Statute Law (Metric Conversion) Amendment Act, giving the Canadian government authority to regulate the conversion of retail food scales. Regulations under the Weights and Measures Act were published on August 7, 1981 and are now law. The contents of the regulations were based on industry and consumer recommendations and were designed to ensure that conversion was fair and equitable to both retailers and consumers.

Information, including price conversion tables, signs, pamphlets and handbooks, will be provided by Metric Commission Canada, which is responsible for the change to metric, to assist both con-

sumers and retailers during the change-over.

Benefits

For the most part metric conversion to date has progressed without any major problems.

The conversion of many items has created benefits for consumers and retailers. For example, metric packaging of prepackaged items means fewer package sizes which results in easier comparison shopping for consumers and more orderly shelf-stocking and reduced inventory requirements for the retailer. In addition because it takes less time, energy and money to produce, distribute and maintain control over a reduced number of package sizes there are greater savings for manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers.

Increased public awareness of the metric changes has been a major concern to many industries which have already converted to the metric system. The Metric Commission has established a number of public awareness committees in many sectors to help in the conversion process in industrial sectors. They attempt to provide correct information to the public on the changes in the industry, to close the information gap between the sector planning level and employees in the various sectors across Canada and to improve the professional communications network through such means as industry trade magazines.

Wheat to China

Canada will provide the People's Republic of China with \$2 million worth of wheat as emergency relief in two disaster-ridden provinces.

The food aid is in direct response to an appeal made by the People's Republic of China to the United Nations World Food Program, which estimates the emergency food needs of China to be about \$450-460 million.

Two provinces, Hubei and Hebei were both hit hard by natural disasters in 1980: Hubei is suffering the effects of the worst flooding in 26 years, while Hebei has had the worst drought in 37 years. The two provinces are predominantly agricultural with a total population of more than 95 million.

Canada's food aid to China is the first bilateral aid project between the two countries since China was given official aid-recipient status last June.

Immigration changes for domestics

The federal government has announced new measures to assist foreign domestics working in Canada to gain permanent resident status. Foreign domestics currently employed in Canada on a temporary basis and new entrants coming to Canada will be assisted by the new measures.

The measures follow an extensive federal review of the policy on foreign domestics. Policy changes were announced last spring to improve conditions of foreign domestics and to encourage a greater number of qualified domestic workers to enter the country as permanent residents (landed immigrants).

Domestic workers currently in Canada who have been here two years, and who wish to be considered for permanent resident status, will be given the opportunity of gaining that status from within the country when their employment authorizations are due for renewal.

Assessment will be made by immigration officers, and those who have achieved a potential for self-sufficiency will be advised that they can make application for permanent resident status from within Canada. Those not yet sufficiently established or who have been here for less than two years will be given the opportunity for upgrading their skills to the point where they also can be considered for permanent resident status.

In future, new entrants coming to Canada as domestic workers will be selected on the basis of their personal suitability and demonstrated ability to undertake training or upgrading here which will help them become self-sufficient. At the end of the second year, an immigration officer will make a formal assessment of the worker's progress, with a view to determining whether landing action can be initiated.

Training for new entrants, for those currently here less than two years, or for those not yet sufficiently established in Canada, will be provided under terms set out in employer-worker contracts. Canadian employers will be required to provide a certain amount of free time each week for training or upgrading.

Employers will also be asked to contribute towards the cost of training during the time of study. Canada Employment Centres will provide counselling and guidance to domestic workers taking into account their interests and background.