



# Bulletin

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## METRIC SYSTEM FOR CANADA?

*Before tabling in the House of Commons on January 16 a White Paper proposing that Canada adopt the metric system of measurement, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Mr. Jean-Luc Pepin, made the following statement:*

...In this paper, the Government sets out its proposed general policy for conversion to the metric system of measurement from the traditional inch-pound system. To quote from the White Paper: "The Government believes that adoption of the metric system is ultimately inevitable – and desirable – for Canada. We also consider it appropriate for the Government to assume a leading role in the planning for and in the implementation of this change."

This matter is of direct concern to all Canadians, to our industry and to all levels of government.

Today in Canada, although the metric system and units such as metres and grams are being used in many important sectors, it is the inch-pound system which predominates. In the world at large, however, the great majority of countries have already adopted the metric system or are now in the process of converting to it.

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### TIMING APPROPRIATE

The White Paper addresses itself to the importance of timing in connection with metric conversion in Canada and to the complexities involved. For example, in a modern industrial country such as ours, there will be costs associated with a move to the metric system. These costs will be offset by benefits which are expected to accrue from metrication. They will also be reduced to the extent that the change takes place over a reasonable period in relation to the real needs in the various sectors of activity in Canada. We must be aware of the possibility of incurring even greater costs if we do not start to plan now for the ultimate adoption of the metric system.

Metric units today form the accepted basis for international measurement and standardization. A country employing the metric system is, therefore, in a favorable position in an increasingly interdependent world economy. The countries of the European Common Market are long-established users of the metric system. Both Britain and Japan, two of Canada's leading trading partners, have already embarked on a changeover. The United States, our principal customer, is now conducting an extensive study of this subject.

### BENEFITS FORESEEN

As a matter of fact, just four countries – Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand – are still using the inch-pound system at this time. Canada's ability to maintain and expand its vital export trade with countries in the metric sphere will directly benefit from the move we have decided to make.

Changing to the metric system will have important benefits for the Canadian consumer. These benefits will derive principally from the inherent simplicity of the system and its convenience in general use. The ease in converting from one metric unit to another – from kilograms to grams, for example – will simplify the arithmetic in making value