BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

The Economy

- **Exports of BC products were down 1.3% (seasonally adjusted) in February**. The drop in exports was the result of lower international shipments of forest products (-5.8%). Forest product exports to the US fell 1.7%, while shipments to other countries were down 11.1%. The drop in forest product exports was offset by a 4.6% increase in exports of other products.

  American markets continued to provide the main impetus for export growth in BC. Exports to the US were up 1.7% from January. However, shipments to other countries fell 6.5.

  Non-resource-based goods account for a growing share of total exports from the province. In February, more than a third (36%) of BC's total exports were derived from activities other than natural resource extraction and processing. *Source: BC STATS*

- **Retail sales in the province were flat in February, changing only marginally (+0.1%, seasonally adjusted) from January's level.** Sales were weak in most parts of the country, falling 1.1% overall. Spending was down in three of the four biggest provinces as consumers kept a tight grip on their purse strings. Quebec (-2.8%) and Ontario (-1.3%) recorded the largest declines, while spending in Alberta fell 0.5%. Nova Scotia (+3.0%) and PEI (+2.9%) were the only provinces where sales increased significantly in February. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The number of regular employment insurance (EI) recipients in British Columbia continued to decline in February, falling to 53,210 (seasonally adjusted), down 1.1% from January's level.** Nationally, the number of EI recipients rose 1.7%, as the EI rolls grew in seven regions. Ontario (+3.6%) posted the largest gain. Newfoundland (-0.8%), Alberta (-2.7%) and the territories (Yukon at -3.4% and NWT/Nunavut at -4.3%) were the only regions besides BC where the number of EI recipients fell in February.

  Source: Statistics Canada

Housing

- **The median price for a single detached house sold in the Vancouver area last year was $320,236, giving the city the seventh most expensive housing market among major North American metropolitan areas.** Housing was priciest in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the median value for single detached homes was $540,644 in Canadian funds. Honolulu ($429,200) and Orange County ($416,620) were ranked second and third. The median house price in Boston ($345,432), San Diego ($342,768) and Bergen/Passaic, New Jersey ($328,264) also exceeded Vancouver's median. Tenth-ranked Toronto ($246,000) was the only other Canadian city in the top ten list.

  Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Agriculture

- **BC greenhouses produced $74.0 million worth of tomatoes in 1999.** Tomatoes are BC's most important hothouse vegetable crop, accounting for 60% of total production ($123.7 million) in the province last year. Peppers generated another $33.4 million in revenues and cucumbers, $9.5 million. More than three-quarters of Canadian hothouse peppers are grown in BC, and the province accounts for about a quarter of all the tomatoes and cucumbers produced by Canadian greenhouses. Ontario has the country's biggest hothouse industry, with total production valued at $248.7 million in 1999, just over half of the Canadian total ($438.5 million). Last year, the value of hothouse vegetables

Report **BC goods export growth among lowest in Canada**

Did you know...
The typical UFO sighting is of a bright white or orange object seen in the night sky after 10 pm by two witnesses who watch it for between five and eight minutes.

grown in BC increased 37.4%, double the 16.3% increase at the national level. *Source: SC, Catalogue 22-201-XIB*

- **Farm and roadside sales are an important source of revenue for BC farmers, especially those on Vancouver Island.** In 1998, direct sales accounted for 44% of the revenues earned by Island farmers from field vegetable production, all of their tree fruit revenues, and 55% of their revenues from sales of berries and nuts. Roadside sales are also the most important source of revenues for Southern Interior producers of field vegetables (73%). Across the province, producers of field vegetables earned 25% of their revenues from farm and roadside sales. The shares were much smaller for tree fruit (2%) and berry and nut (7%) production. *Source: 1998 BC Horticultural Statistics Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries*

Musicians

- **According to a 1993 survey, one in five people whose main job was working as a musician also had a second job.** Another 14% were holding down three jobs. This tendency to multiple job-holding may be partly explained by the fact that musicians are not particularly well paid. In 1993, musicians earned $13,700, on average, for culture-related work. Their income from all sources was $20,300, a third lower than the $30,200 average for all employed Canadians. Self-employment is predominant in this profession. Eight in ten (78%) musicians were self-employed in 1998. *Source: SC, Catalogue 87-004-XPB*

The Nation

- **The longest continuous expansion in the Canadian economy since the early 1960s came to a halt in February, as GDP fell (-0.4%, seasonally adjusted) for the first time in 19 months.** The downturn in the economy was primarily due to weakness in the goods sector (-1.1%), where GDP fell in five of the seven industries. While logging (-3.1%) and fishing (-2.3%) posted the largest percentage declines, the biggest impact came from the manufacturing sector (-1.9%), which accounts for just over half of the total output of the goods sector. The slowdown in manufacturing, while broadly based, was partly due to a downturn in the automotive sector, where production dropped in response to lower auto sales. Construction activity was down 0.7%. Service industries also stalled in February, with total GDP remaining unchanged from the previous month. Both wholesale (-1.3%) and retail (-1.7%) activity ebbed but stronger performances in other industries, notably finance and insurance (+1.4%) offset this effect. *Source: Statistics Canada*

UFOs

- **UFO activity in BC's airspace appears to have increased during 1999.** There were 118 UFO sightings reported in the province last year, double the number (58) in 1998. Canadian UFO sightings were up 34%, to 259. While nearly half (46%) of the UFO sightings reported in Canada last year were in BC, strange objects were also frequently observed in the skies above Ontario (79), Yukon (20) and Alberta (19) last year. Some of the most "interesting" UFO sightings last year were in western Canada, a break from the past when eastern Canadians were the most likely to report unusual UFO sightings. On average, there are about 235 UFO sightings in Canada each year.

  Of the 259 UFO sightings reported in Canada last year, the majority were nocturnal lights (163) or disks (44). Another 37 sightings involved disks that were seen during the daytime. Alien abductions are not reported in the statistics, but there was one incident where a figure or entity was seen and seven cases where physical effects were noted. *Source: 1999 Canadian UFO Survey*

- **British Columbians are much more likely than other Canadians to report seeing unidentified flying objects.** Since 1989, 774 of the 2,579 UFO sightings reported in Canada have been in this province. It is believed that BC residents are more prone to report sightings because there is a well-publicized UFO hotline in the province. However, this does not rule out the possibility that aliens may, for some reason, be particularly fascinated by British Columbians and thus spend more time hovering in the skies above us. *Source: 1999 Canadian UFO Survey & BC STATS*

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Infoline Report: B.C. goods export growth among lowest in Canada during 1990s

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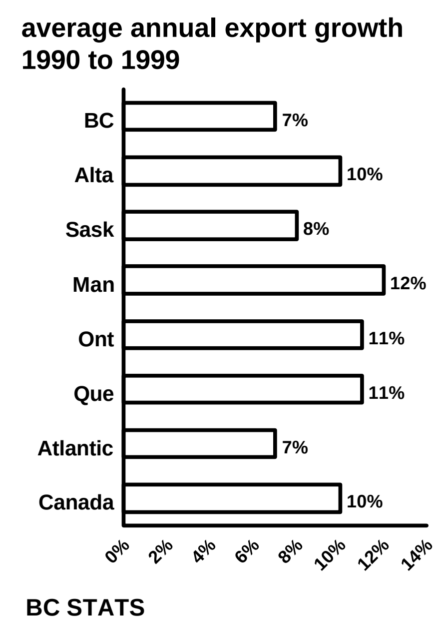
British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland were the provinces with the slowest rates of export growth in goods (as opposed to services) during the 1990s. Average annual export growth for all three was 7 per cent between 1990 and 1999. At the other end of the scale, the fastest export growth rates in Canada were 12 per cent for Manitoba and 15 per cent for Prince Edward Island. For Canada as a whole, average annual export growth was 10 per cent.

B.C. Export Growth for Goods Among Lowest In Canada



British Columbia kept up with most of Canada in exports to the United States. The average annual growth rate for British Columbia exports to the United States was 12 per cent, the same as for Canada as a whole. Fast rising exports of machinery and equipment provided an important boost for the province in cross border trade.

It has mainly been weak demand in overseas markets for resources that has caused overall British Columbia export growth to lag other provinces.

British Columbia has relied more on trade with Asia, and particularly with Japan, than the rest of Canada. Generally this has been an advantage because it has meant that British Columbia could be less dependent on a single market (the United States) than other provinces. However, Japanese economic growth has been slow since the early 1990s, limiting demand for imports of forestry and mineral products. British Columbia has been affected more than most provinces because exports to Japan have accounted for a larger portion of its total trade.

The value of British Columbia exports to Japan more or less stood still in the 1990s. But exports from other provinces continued to grow, albeit slowly. British Columbia exports to Japan averaged zero growth between 1990 and 1999, while exports from Canada as a whole grew 1 per cent. Manitoba, and the Atlantic provinces (as a group) managed 5 per cent average annual growth for exports to Japan over this period, while Ontario and Alberta both averaged 3 per cent per year.

Reasons for the relatively poor performance of British Columbia's exports to Japan include product mix and competition from other provinces.

Exports to Japan
1990 to 1999 Annual Growth

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	*average annual growth*
BC	NA	-13%	2%	20%	14%	20%	-5%	-6%	-24%	-6%	*0%*
Alta	NA	-4%	2%	9%	9%	38%	-10%	4%	-21%	-5%	*3%*
Sask	NA	-8%	7%	1%	0%	32%	-4%	18%	-23%	-5%	*2%*
Man	NA	-22%	8%	8%	31%	5%	11%	20%	-7%	-6%	*5%*
Ont	NA	-36%	33%	-16%	10%	37%	-11%	19%	-18%	10%	*3%*
Que	NA	2%	-12%	19%	21%	15%	-3%	14%	-36%	-2%	*2%*
Atlantic	NA	-15%	15%	32%	19%	41%	-24%	-17%	-9%	6%	*5%*
Canada	NA	-13%	5%	14%	14%	25%	-8%	-1%	-22%	-3%	*1%*

BC STATS

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British Columbia's exports fell further and more persistently than other provinces', partly because they were (and still are) so heavily concentrated in forest and mineral commodities. Demand for these products is particularly sensitive to the economic cycle, so that exports fell off very sharply as Asian economies collapsed in 1996 and 1997.

Another reason British Columbia exports to Japan stood still in the 1990s, is that other provinces were winning a larger share from British Columbia suppliers to Japanese markets for imported resource products. Between 1990 and 1999, the British Columbia produced share of Japanese imports from Canada fell from 98 per cent to 94 per cent for solid wood products; from 74 per cent to 68 per cent for coal; and from 77 per cent to 60 per cent for pulp. Overall, British Columbia exports of all products to Japan shrank from 57 per cent of the Canadian total in 1990, to 52 per cent in 1999.

Heavy reliance on resource products has also damaged British Columbia exports to Europe. But again, this was not the only factor at play. Weakness in world markets for resource products during the late 1990s accelerated a decline in British Columbia exports to Europe that was already underway. Demand for resource products from British Columbia has withered over most of the 1990s as Europe has acquired access to resource supplies from eastern Europe and from within its own expanding membership.

In European markets, as in Japan, British Columbia's exports fared worse during the 1990s than those of other provinces. Average annual growth in British Columbia exports to the European Union was minus 1 per cent between 1990 and 1999. This compared to positive growth of 15 per cent for Alberta and 17 per cent for Saskatchewan. Exports to the European Union from Canada as a whole grew at an average annual rate of 3 per cent.

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fax transmission information service from **BC STATS**

also on the Internet at www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jan 1/00	% change on one year ago
BC	4,043.7	0.9
Canada	30,606.7	0.9
GDP and INCOME		% change on
(BC - at market prices)	1998	one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	110,948	-0.2
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	99,708	0.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	24,908	-0.8
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	15,969	-1.6
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Feb	3,339	14.0
Merchandise Exports (raw) Feb	2,397	13.6
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Feb	2,900	5.3
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Mar '00	one year ago
BC	112.3	1.8
Canada	112.8	3.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Mar '00	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,094	0.6
Employed - BC	1,947	2.4
Unemployed - BC	147	-18.1
		Mar '99
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	7.0	8.6
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	6.8	7.9
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Apr 26/00	Apr 28/99
Prime Business Rate	7.00	6.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	7.70	6.30
- 5 year	8.35	6.95
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Apr 26/00	Apr 28/99
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4756	1.4765
US $ *(reciprocal of the closing rate)*	0.6779	0.6782
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Mar '00	one year ago
BC	630.34	1.8
Canada	606.52	2.9

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics
For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bank-banque-canada.ca/english/wfsgen.htm

Electoral District Profiles

BC STATS has just published a detailed review of the Provincial Electoral Districts (PED) that will be contested for the first time in the next general election. The new PEDs are the result of a rebalancing of the districts, proposed by the *Electoral Boundaries Commission* in June of 1999, and subsequently adopted by the Legislature. Four new ridings were added to bring the total to 79.

Provincial Electoral District Profiles, March 2000, organises the results of the 1996 Census within the new provincial ridings. A graphic profile page for each PED compares various census characteristics between the riding and the province. Sixty-two data tables reveal how groups of characterisitcs compare across all the ridings. Notes, maps, a glossary and an index help to make the information accessible. The spiral-bound and tab divided printed edition is a handy reference document that may easlily be slipped into a briefcase.

The entire publication, including additional tables not published in the book, may be found on our Internet site. See the first item under **Popular Topics** on the left side of our home page. Users require Acrobat to view and print the charts. The tabular data is available in CSV format for downloading.

Printed copies are $60, plus tax.

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Released this week by BC STATS

- Exports, February 2000
- Business Indicators, April 2000
- Current Statistics, April 2000

Next week

- Quarterly Regional Statistics, First Quarter 2000