

Labour Force Statistics ♦ January 2003

HIGHLIGHTS

- **B.C. employment fell by 4,300 in January, following a decrease of 2,600 in December.** This was accompanied by an even larger decrease 5,300 in the number of people looking for work (unemployed), which reduced the B.C. unemployment rate by 0.2 percentage points to 8.2 per cent.
- **B.C. employment by industry in January saw slight employment declines in both the goods and services sector.** Within services, employment gains in transportation and warehousing, retail and wholesale trade, education and accommodation, food and beverage and other services were more than offset by decreases in professional, scientific and technical services, public administration, health and social services and finance and related services.
- **Men aged 25 and over saw an employment increase of 6,900 in January, almost all of it in full-time work.** Youth age 15-24 had job losses of 7,300, and women age 25 and over lost 3,900 jobs. Overall, full-time employment rose by 1,500 and part-time employment declined by 5,800 in January.
- **Canadian seasonally-adjusted employment declined by 2,100, a relatively small amount in January from December.** Employment gains in Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland were offset by employment declines in all other provinces. A decline in the size of the Canadian labour force occurred as previously unemployed persons left the labour force, nudging down the national unemployment rate to 7.4 per cent.

Selected Statistics (SA)*	Jan. 2003	Dec. 2002	Jan. 2002
B.C. Unemployment Rate	8.2%	8.4%	8.8%
Canada Unemployment Rate	7.4%	7.5%	7.9%
B.C. Help Wanted Index - (1996=100)	85.5	86.3	96.1
B.C. Employment - Change from prev. mo.	-0.2%	-0.1%	-
B.C. Labour Force - Change from prev. mo.	-0.4%	-0.3%	-
B.C. Labour Force Participation Rate	64.8%	65.1%	64.5%

* Unless otherwise indicated, all labour force variables are seasonally adjusted.

Labour Force Statistics is a joint compilation and review by BC STATS of the Ministry of Management Services and the Accountability Branch of the Ministry of Advanced Education reflecting the results of the monthly Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Canada. For more information, call BC STATS (250) 387-0327 or the Accountability Branch (250) 952-6776.

B.C. Labour Market for Construction Trades and Other Trades Workers

Introduction . . . The Labour Force Survey provides estimates of employment and earnings data on the basis of occupation. This article focuses upon reviewing B.C. employment in two major groups of occupations (construction trades and other trades). These major groups are found within the broad occupational category (or skill type) called *trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations*. These occupations are found in a wide range of industrial sectors, with many occurring in the construction, manufacturing and various services industries. They include most of the apprenticeable trades, including all of those related to the construction industry.

Construction Trades Occupations . .

The following is a detailed list of the occupations that make up the construction trades occupations in the Labour Force Survey;

- *Plumbers, pipefitters and gas fitters*, including steamfitters and sprinkler system installers
- *Carpenters, joiners and cabinetmakers*
- *Masonry and plastering trades* including bricklayers, concrete finishers, tilesetters, plasters, drywall installers and finishers and lathers
- *Other construction trades* including roofers and shinglers, glaziers, insulators, painters and decorators and floor covering installers

Other Trades Occupations . . . This broad and diverse group comprises machining, products fabricating, assembling and repairing and other trades occupations.

- *Machinists and related occupations* including machinists and machining and tooling inspectors, tool and die makers
- *Electrical trades and telecommunication occupations* including electricians, industrial electricians, power system electricians, electrical power line and cable workers, telecommunications line and cable workers, telecommunications

installation and repair workers, cable television service and maintenance technicians.

- *Metal forming, shaping and erecting trades* including sheet metal workers, boiler-makers, structural metal and platework fabricators and fitters, ironworkers, welders and related machine operators, blacksmiths and die setters
- *Machinery and transportation equipment mechanics* including construction millwrights and industrial mechanics, heavy-duty equipment mechanics, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics, railway carmen/women, aircraft mechanics and aircraft inspectors, machine fitters, textile machinery mechanics and repairers, elevator construction and mechanics
- *Automotive service technicians*, including truck mechanics and mechanical repairers, motor vehicle body repairers
- *Other mechanics* including oil and solid fuel heating mechanics, electric appliance servicers and repairers, electrical mechanics, motorcycle and other related mechanics, other small engine and equipment mechanics
- *Upholsters, tailors, shoe repairers, jewellers and related occupations* including dress-makers, furriers and milliners, shoe repairers and shoemakers, watch repairers and related occupations
- *Stationary engineers and power station and system operators*
- *Printing press operators, commercial divers and other trades related occupations*
- *Other installers and servicers* including residential and commercial installers and servicers, waterworks and gas maintenance workers, automotive mechanical installers and servicers, pest controllers and fumigators and other repairers and servicers

Employment . . . Figure 1 shows employment in the broad occupational category of *trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations* and its major groups compared to all occupations in B.C. In 2002, employment in this broad occupational category represented 14.1 per cent of employment in B.C.

In the 15 years between 1987 and 2002, employment grew more slowly (15.3 per cent) in this broad occupational group than the 43.6 per cent average for all occupations.

Between 1987 and 1992, construction trades occupations had strong employment growth, averaging over 45 per cent, but employment in the other trades occupations grew at only 9.3 per cent. Overall for the broad occupational category, employment growth averaged 16.4 per cent, which was just short of the 17.9 per cent average for all occupations.

During the next five years, 1992-1997, employment growth in the construction trades and other trades occupations grew much more slowly, 9.3 per cent and 5.0 per cent respectively. The overall broad occupational group grew at half the previous rate (8.2 per) compared to growth of 15.3 per cent for all occupations.

Between 1997 and 2002, there was employment declines in the construction trades and other trades occupations (down 13.8 per cent and 0.3 per cent). Employment fell by 8.4 per cent for the overall *trades, transport and equipment operator* category in B.C. This contrasted to growth of 5.6 per cent in employment for all occupations during this period.

Self-employment in 2002 within this broad occupational group was higher than the B.C. average (22.7 vs. 19.0 per cent), and is particularly high among construction contractors and construction tradespersons.

	Employment (000's)*				% Change				% Self-Employed in 2002
	1987	1992	1997	2002	1987-1992	1992-1997	1997-2002	1987-2002	
Total, all occupations	1,374.6	1,620.3	1,869.0	1,973.4	17.9%	15.3%	5.6%	43.6%	19.0%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	241.7	281.3	304.3	278.8	16.4%	8.2%	-8.4%	15.3%	22.7%
Contractors and supervisors in trades and transportation	26.3	37.3	31.8	33.7	41.8%	-14.7%	6.0%	28.1%	54.3%
Construction trades	33.1	48.4	52.9	45.6	46.2%	9.3%	-13.8%	37.8%	34.4%
Other trades occupations	80.8	88.3	92.7	92.4	9.3%	5.0%	-0.3%	14.4%	14.8%
Transport and equip. operators	66.7	68.7	75.4	74.4	3.0%	9.8%	-1.3%	11.5%	20.4%
Trades helpers, construction and transportation labourers and related occupations	34.9	38.7	51.5	32.6	10.9%	33.1%	-36.7%	-6.6%	0.3%

* The sum of the major groups may not add to the broad occupational category, due to rounding

Trades occupations in B.C. compared to other provinces. . . Figure 2 shows indexed employment growth in the construction trades and other trades groups for B.C., Ontario and Alberta. In Ontario, the 1991/92 recession hit the construction trades group hard, with declines in em-

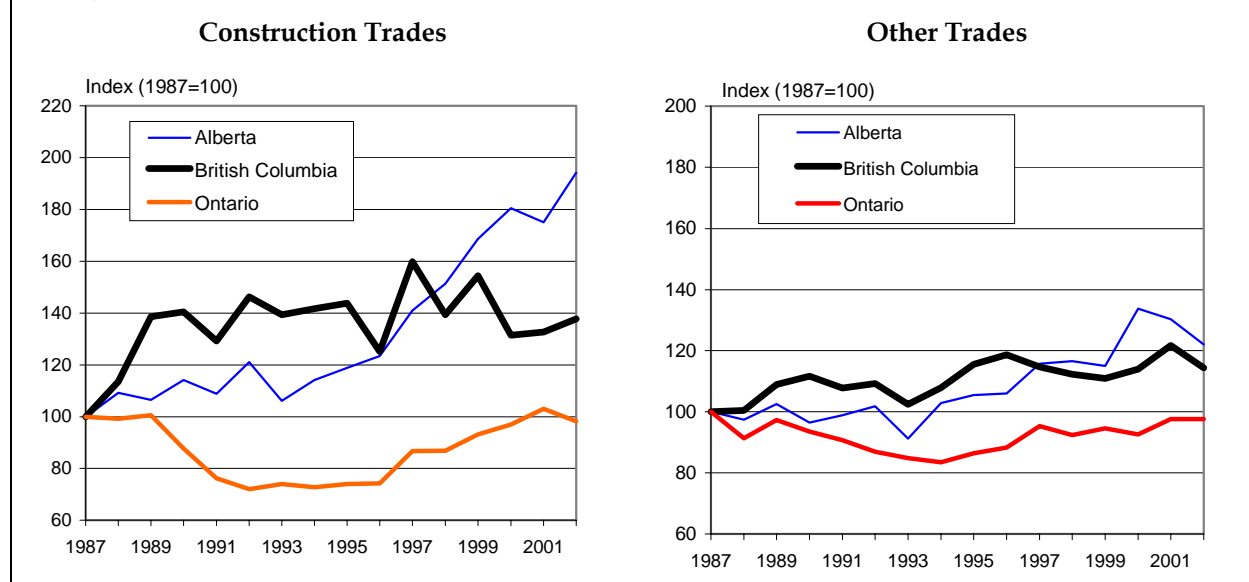
ployment between 1989 and 1992. However in B.C., construction trades employment was rising during that time period. By 2002, construction trades employment in Ontario had just barely recovered to 1987 levels while B.C. employment in construction trades grew by

almost 40 per cent. Construction trades employment in Alberta while slow to get started, almost doubled between 1987 and 2002.

Employment in the other trades occupations group showed less fluctuation and exhibited more moderate growth than in

the construction trades during the period 1987 to 2002. While B.C. and Alberta showed modest employment growth for other trades occupations, Ontario employment for this group has failed to recover to 1987 employment levels.

Figure 2: Growth in B.C. Employment for Construction and Other Trades, Indexed (1987=100)



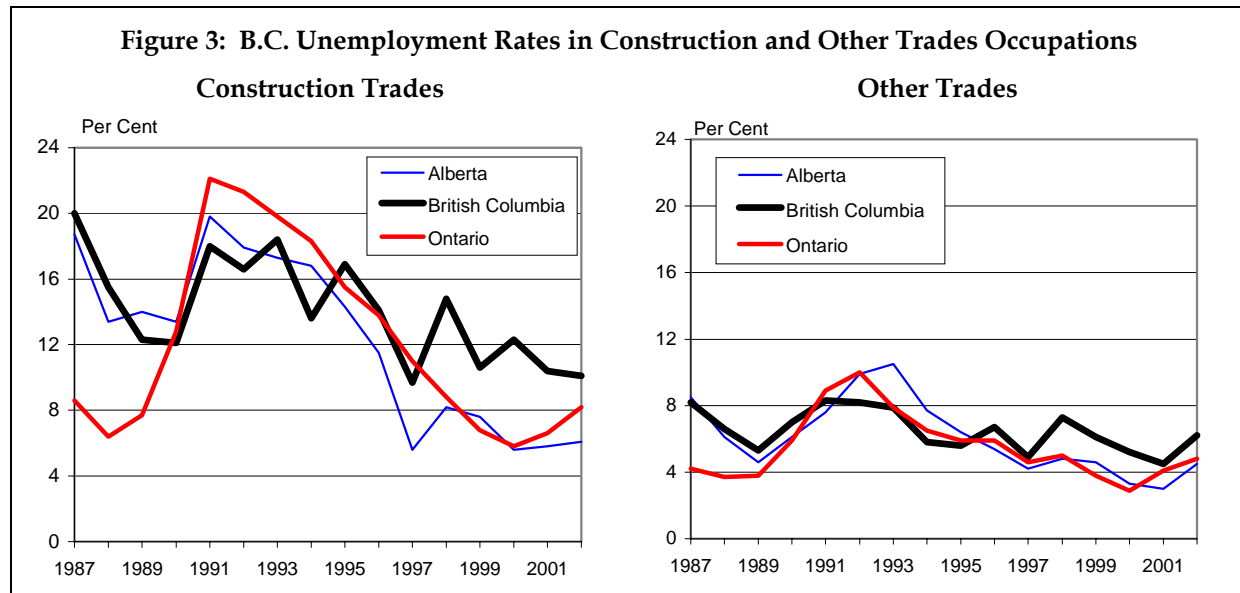
Unemployment Rates . . . As seen in Figure 3, unemployment rates have been falling in the construction trades occupations since the early 1990s in B.C., Alberta and Ontario. In 1991, the unemployment rate in construction trades in B.C. (18.0 per cent), was lower than in Alberta (19.8 per cent) and Ontario (22.1 per cent). Since then, these unemployment rates have been falling in all three provinces but the rate of decline has been greater in Ontario and Alberta than in B.C. In 2002, the construction trades unemployment rate in B.C. (10.1 per cent) was higher than Alberta (6.1 per cent) and Ontario (8.2 per cent). In 2002, the unemployment rate in construction trades in all three provinces was the lowest or near the lowest seen over the last 15 years.

Between 1987 and 2002, unemployment rates in the other trades occupations were considerably lower than construction trades occupations. In 2002, the other trades occu-

pations unemployment rate fell below the overall provincial unemployment rate in each province. A lower-than-average and declining unemployment rate are two signs of a potential tightening in the supply of available workers in these occupations.

Average Hourly Earnings . . . A look at Figure 4 shows currently available data for average hourly wage rates in the construction trades and other trades occupations in three provinces.

Between 1997 and 2002, Alberta had the lowest hourly average wage rates in both construction and other trades groups but saw the fastest growth in wages in that time period. Alberta's average hourly wages rose in the construction trades group by 20.4 per cent and in the other trades group by 21.7 per cent and went a long way toward closing the wage gap between Alberta

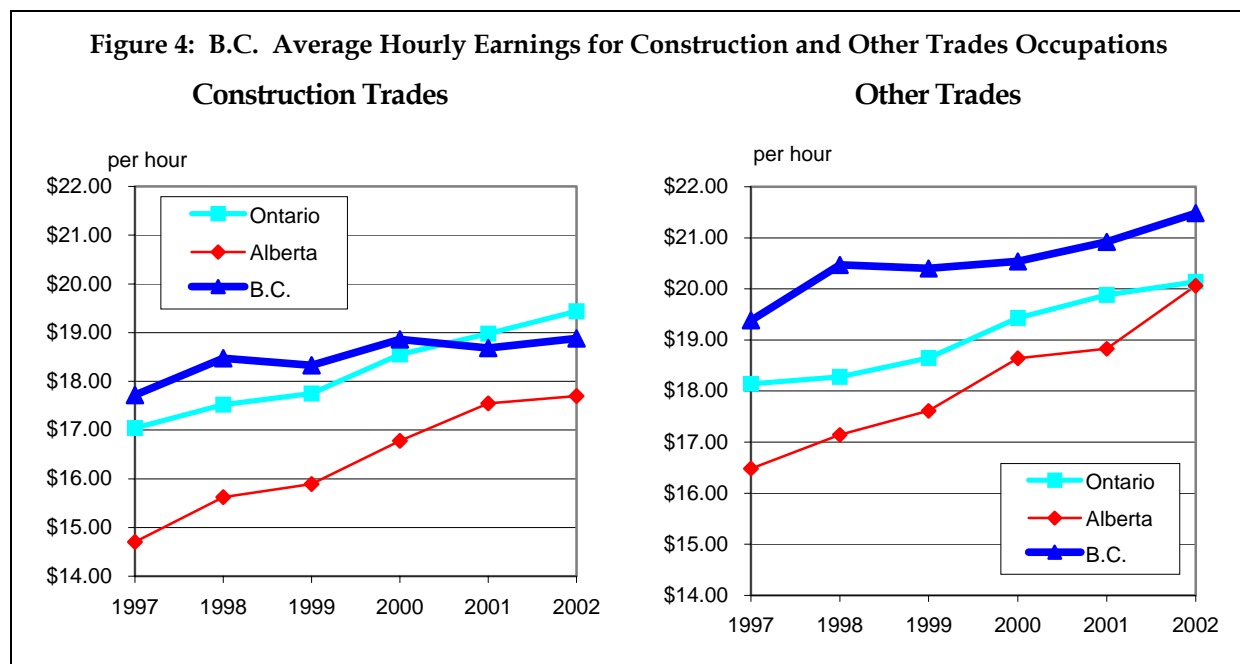


and the other two provinces depicted.

In 1997, B.C. had higher average hourly wages in both the construction trades and other trades group than the other two provinces, but in the construction trades group, due to more modest wage growth, Ontario average wages have exceeded B.C. average wages since 2001.

Compared to average hourly wages for total occupations by province in 2002, wages in both groups of trades occupations are gen-

erally higher. A notable exception is Alberta where the average hourly wage in 2002 for construction trades was lower than the all-occupation average for that province. The stronger pace of growth in wage rates in the construction trades and the other trades group in Ontario and Alberta suggest a relative tightening of demand and supply for skilled trades workers in those two provinces over the last five years.



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