

---

## Feature Article: Regional Migration Outlook

---

### Summary

*BC STATS prepares population projections for the province as a whole as well as for various types of administrative areas within the province, such as development regions (8), regional districts (28) and local health areas (88). The projections are updated annually to reflect the most recent information on regional trends in fertility, mortality and migration, as well as specific events that could affect population growth. This article presents the major migration assumptions underlying the latest update (P.E.O.P.L.E. 24) to the sub-provincial projections.*

The short-term outlook for this projection is for continued slow economic growth, which in turn will result in reduced interprovincial migration to the province, relative to the early part of this decade. The influence of the slowdown in the Asian economies and its effect on demand in the resource sectors is having a definite impact on the economies of resource-dependent areas in this province. As a result, there will likely be some movement out of the communities that are resource-driven and into areas such as the Lower Mainland and the Capital region. Over the longer-term, it is expected that the resource sectors will recover and that people will return to these communities.

### Vancouver Island-Coast Region

This region has most of the population concentrated in its south-east corner, particularly within the Capital and Nanaimo regional districts. Most of the smaller communities in the northern portion of the region, and many in the more southerly areas as well, are heavily dependent on the forest sector. Consequently, migration patterns to these areas tend to fluctuate with

The British Columbia-level population projection 3/99 forms the control total population for P.E.O.P.L.E. 24 to which all regions must sum.<sup>1</sup> Regional migration is projected using a combination of historical trends and information on future major projects that are certain to have an impact on population. In general, the long-term (beyond five years) forecasts are based on historical trends with some very broad assumptions used to modify these trends. In the short-term, consideration is given to more specific events that will drive migration patterns. Examples are mine openings and closures, changes to the Allowable Annual Cut for various Timber Supply Areas and Tree Farm Licenses, major construction activity, or other major projects.

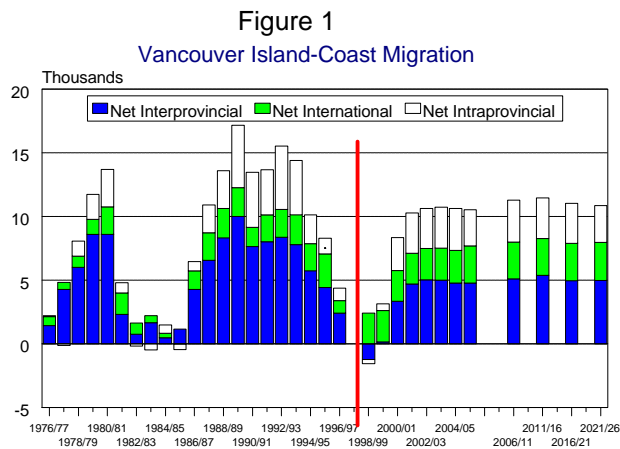
<sup>1</sup> See "Population Forecast 3/99 Technical Appendix: Forecast Assumptions," Population Section, BC Stats, Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations, Government of British Columbia March 1999.

trends in this sector. Accordingly, the short-term outlook for the northern portions of this region is for net outflows of population until conditions in the forest sector stabilize. Some of this movement will be to areas such as the Capital and Nanaimo regional districts, which means that despite a drop in the overall interprovincial migration to British Columbia, these areas will probably still have significant inflows of migrants.

Over the longer-term, it is expected that the onset of retirement for the baby boom generation will lead to somewhat larger net inflows of migrants to areas such as the Capital and Nanaimo regional districts (as well as other retirement centres such as the Okanagan). The increase in migration to these areas will likely be modest, since the elderly tend to move less than younger people. However, of those that do move, proportionately more will choose these established retirement centres and this should result in an increase in the amount

## Feature Article: Regional Migration Outlook

of migration to these areas. Within the most heavily populated areas, there will likely be some spread outward to nearby communities, particularly as housing prices escalate in the core areas. For example, in the Capital region, there will be increased growth in the Western Communities relative to the core and peninsula municipalities.

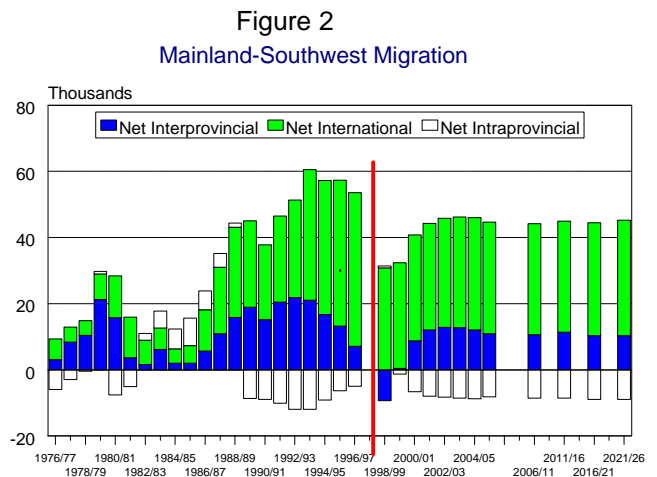


### Mainland-Southwest Region

This is the most populous region in the province and receives the bulk of immigrants and interprovincial in-migrants. Over half of net interprovincial migrants to British Columbia and almost 90 percent of net international migrants to the province choose to settle in the Mainland-Southwest region. Conversely, in terms of intraprovincial migration, or migration within the province, there are generally more people moving out of the area than are moving in. In the past, when the resource sectors were in a downturn, intraprovincial outflows from the Lower Mainland have tended to decline as a result of weaker economic opportunity in the rest of the province. The short-term outlook is that current tightening in the resource sectors will lead to intraprovincial outflows from resource-dependent communities and into the Lower Mainland

similar to what happened in the mid-eighties, but likely not with the same severity. This will ensure that net migration levels to this region will remain high despite significantly lower net interprovincial migration to the province.

Over the longer-term, the distribution of growth in the Mainland-Southwest region will be influenced by the implementation of the *Livable Region Strategic Plan* for the Greater Vancouver Regional District. This plan proposes a “growth concentration area” comprised of Burnaby, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Port Coquitlam, New Westminster, Vancouver, North Surrey, and North Delta. The plan is to concentrate growth in these areas and to reduce traffic congestion by locating jobs near where people live. The patterns of growth will depend largely on the timing of transportation projects such as the proposed Skytrain lines. The longer-term outlook is for reduced growth rates for areas outside the growth concentration area, but as long as migration to the province continues to be strong, all areas within this region will continue to experience growth.



---

## Feature Article: Regional Migration Outlook

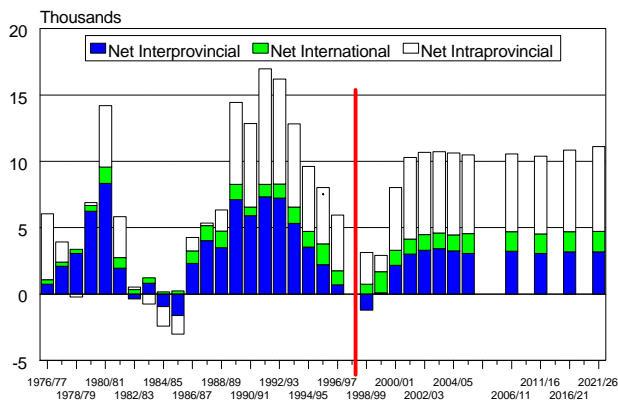
---

### Thompson-Okanagan Region

The slowdown in the resource sectors will cause a drop in migration for this region for the next couple of years. This region has a strong dependence on forestry, and activities in that sector will have an effect on migration flows to the area. Mining is also an important economic driver, and the closure of four mines in the last few years will contribute to a reduction in migration to this region in the short-term.<sup>1</sup>

Conversely, there could be an increase in migration around 2005 when baby boomers begin to retire. This area is a popular retirement centre, and the increase in the proportion of retirees in the population will benefit this region. Over the longer-term, this area can expect to receive strong migration growth, on average, with the economic cycle in the resource sectors exerting some influence on the magnitude of migration flows.

Figure 3  
Thompson-Okanagan Migration



---

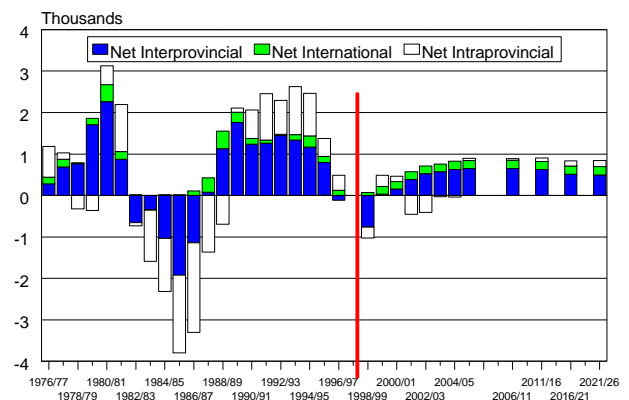
<sup>1</sup> This projection assumes that the current closure of the Highland Valley mine is temporary and will have few migration effects. The effect on net migration to the area will only occur following the permanent closure of the mine some time after 2010.

### Kootenay Region

Mining, and coal mining in particular, is the main economic driver in this region. There are five large coal mines in the region, plus the Sullivan lead-zinc mine. The Sullivan mine at Kimberley is scheduled to close in 2001, and this will have a significant effect on the population of that community and the surrounding area. It is expected that net in-migration to this area will slow around that time. There are some major hydroelectric projects either underway or planned for the near future that could boost the population of this region, at least for the short-term.

Over the longer-term, depletion of reserves at the coal mines may cause some outflows of population, but there are other deposits that could be developed and a lot will depend on whether or not the demand is there to justify the investment in infrastructure. Overall, it is expected that this region will receive net inflows of migrants throughout most of the projection, possibly beginning to wane late in the projection as the coal mines begin to deplete their reserves. There will likely be a net outflow over the first year of the projection due to the slump in the resource sectors.

Figure 4  
Kootenay Migration

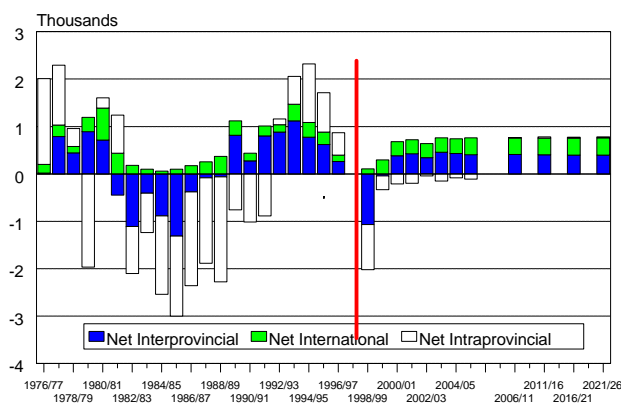


## Feature Article: Regional Migration Outlook

### Cariboo Region

This region has recently experienced uncharacteristically large inflows of migrants, but with low metal prices, which have affected the viability of some mines in the region, and the downturn in the forest sector, it is expected that net migration to this area will slow. The Cariboo is home to a large number of sawmills and pulp mills and as such, is highly dependent on the fortunes of the forest industry. It is expected that migration to this area will slow considerably over the short-term until the resource sectors begin to recover, with some net migration outflows for at least the next couple of years. There are some significant mineral deposits that will bring people into the area once they are developed, but until metal prices improve, it is unlikely that any new mines will be constructed. Over the longer-term, the outlook is for relatively strong positive net inflows, on average.

Figure 5  
Cariboo Migration

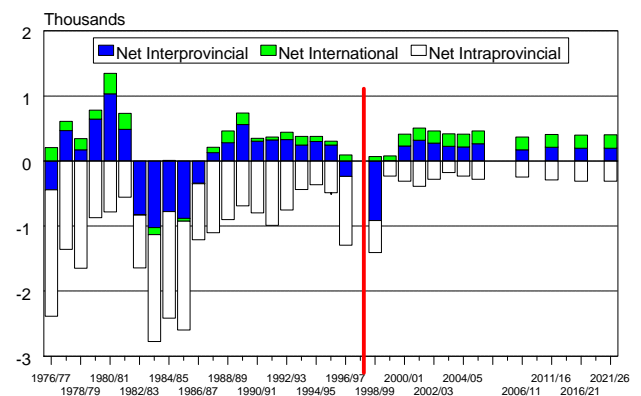


### North Coast Region

This region has traditionally experienced net outflows of migrants, but with the major projects planned for the region, it is expected that there will be small net inflows of migrants over the longer-term. The Kitimat-Terrace area, in particular, should gain

from one of the planned projects. The agreement between Alcan and the provincial government concerning compensation for the cancellation of the Kemano Completion project should result in the expansion of the aluminum smelter at Kitimat. This project should result in net inflows of people to the region as the employment base is expanded. In addition to direct employment at the smelter, there will be significant indirect and induced employment as well, which should benefit Terrace as well as Kitimat. There are also several mineral deposits in this region that will likely be future mine sites, and this will create employment and bring people into the area as well.

Figure 6  
North Coast Migration



On the negative side, there will also be some mine closures during the projection period, and this could result in some net outflows of population, at least for the areas most directly affected. In the short-term, the downturn in the resource sectors will hurt this area and cause net outflows of population. The downturn in the forest sector, combined with declining fish stocks and poor metal prices will likely contribute to net population outflows in the short-term. Over the longer-term, however, the expectation is for net inflows of people due to

---

## Feature Article: Regional Migration Outlook

---

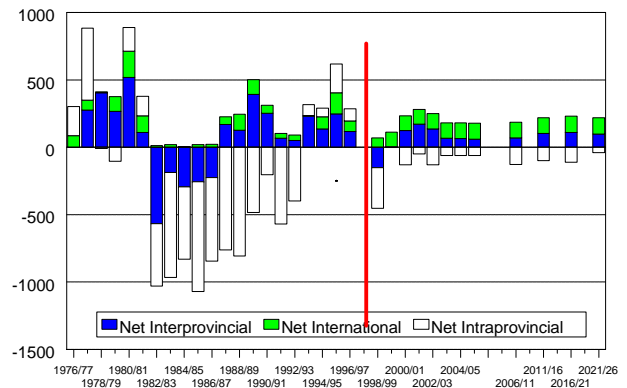
the major projects that are planned for the area.

### Nechako Region

Most of the population lies in the Bulkley Valley, in the southern portion of this region. Mining plays an important role in migration patterns to the area. Not only is the region mineral rich, but Smithers is also one of the main supply and service points for mineral exploration and development in northern British Columbia, which means many of the benefits from mines in remote northern areas accrue to Smithers and the surrounding area. Currently metal prices have hit bottom, and this will likely hamper the development of new mines, which means it may be a couple of years before this area will see the benefits of new mine employment. However, over the longer-term it is likely that developments in the mining industry will be a significant driver of in-migration.

In addition to mining, the forest sector will also be a main determinant of migration levels to the region. Recently, the Allowable Annual Cut of the Cassiar Timber Supply Area was increased threefold. If this timber is harvested, it could mean a significant economic boost for the northern portion of the Nechako region. The improved access resulting from new logging roads could lead to further discoveries of mineral deposits and the development of new communities. This region has traditionally lost population due to migration, but with the potential of the resource sectors, it is expected that there will be net inflows of migrants over the long-term.

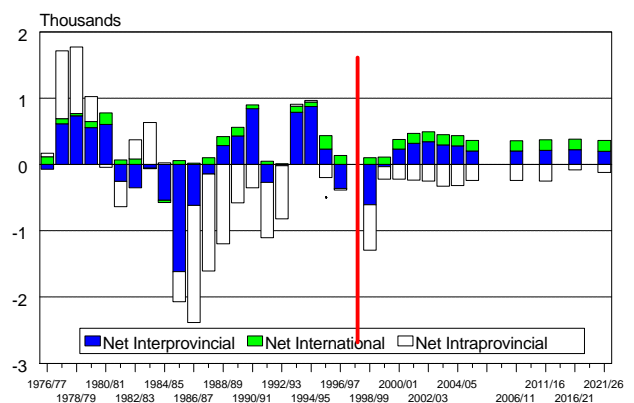
Figure 7  
Nechako Migration



### Northeast Region

The Northeast region has benefited from a booming oil and gas sector and this is expected to continue for some time. This region has traditionally had a net loss of migrants, but more recently, the activity in the resource sectors has brought more people into the area than have left the area. This trend of net in-migration to the area is expected to continue through the long-term as oil and gas exploration and other energy projects continue to provide employment in the region.

Figure 8  
Northeast Migration



---

## Feature Article: Regional Migration Outlook

---

Layoffs at the two coal mines due to volume reductions in shipments to Japan will affect migration in the short-term and there will be some population outflows as a result, but other than this one time set-back, the outlook is for net inflows of migrants over most of the projection period.

The projections for the total population of each region are available on the BC STATS' web site (<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca>), while the detailed age/gender projections can be purchased from BC STATS in either printed or electronic form.

### Recent Feature Articles

Jun	1995	Seasonal Patterns of Migration
Sep	1995	Regional Interprovincial Migration
Dec	1995	What is Happening to Interprovincial Migration?
Apr	1996	B.C. Migration - Outlook for 1996
Jun	1996	Migration and Housing Demand
Sep	1996	Regional Migration
Dec	1996	Retirement in B.C.
Mar	1997	B.C. Migration - Outlook for 1997
Jun	1997	Indian Reserves in British Columbia
Sep	1997	Where do the Young and Old Live?
Jan	1998	Migration and Housing Demand
Mar	1998	B.C. Migration - Outlook for 1998
Jun	1998	Mobility and Migration between 1991 and 1996
Sep	1998	How many people were missed in the Census?
Dec	1998	Where We Work and How We Get There.
Apr	1999	B.C. Migration – Outlook for 1999