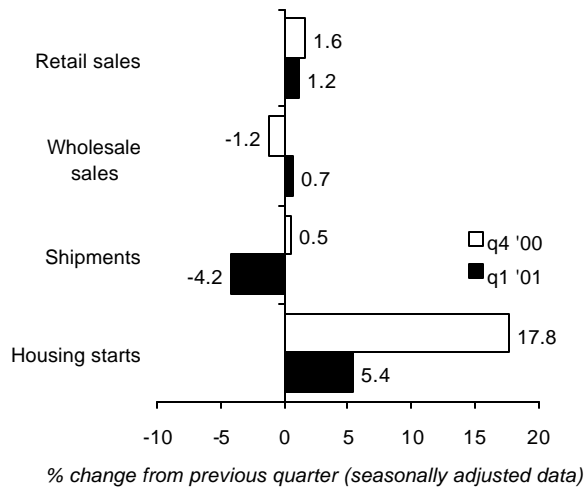


## Current Statistics ♦ May 2001

**The economy gave mixed signals in the first quarter of 2001**



- **Wholesale sales in British Columbia made modest gains (+0.8%) in March (seasonally adjusted), increasing for the third consecutive month.** The automotive sector saw strong growth in wholesale sales, and sales of industrial and other machinery, equipment and supplies, and metals, hardware, plumbing and heating equipment and supplies also performed well.  
*Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Sales of wholesale goods in the province were up slightly (+0.7%, seasonally adjusted) in the first quarter of 2001 compared to the fourth quarter of the previous year.** This was the first quarterly increase since the end of 1999. Wholesale sales also rose nationally (+0.7%), as gains were posted in all provinces except Prince Edward Island (-5.6%) and Nova Scotia (-4.1%).  
*Source: Statistics Canada*

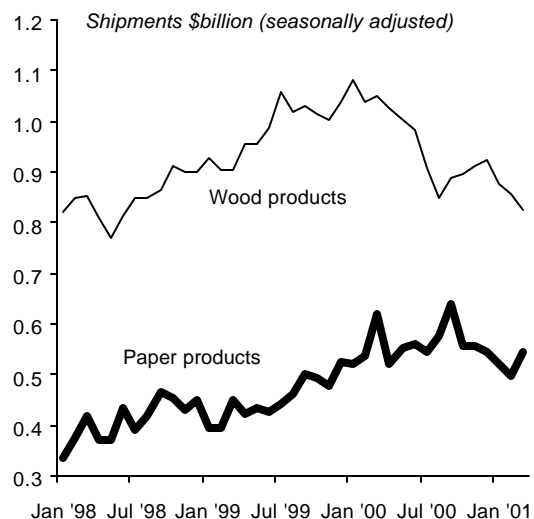
- **Retail sales in British Columbia slipped (-0.6%, seasonally adjusted) in March, falling to \$3.1 billion.** The decline was the second since the beginning of the year, as retail sales continued to seesaw.

Among the regions, Nova Scotia and Northwest Territories were the top performers in March, both achieving gains of 4.1%. Newfoundland saw a healthy 3.1% increase, while Alberta (+1.8%) and PEI (+1.3%) posted smaller gains. Sales were flat or fell in the rest of the country.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Despite the declining sales seen by BC retailers in February and March, retail sales were up 1.2% (seasonally adjusted) in the first quarter of this year, compared to the last three months of 2000.** This was the third consecutive quarter in which an increase has been posted, and put retail sales at their highest level since the end of 1999. First quarter sales were up all across the country, except Nova Scotia (-0.4%) and Yukon (-0.3%). Nationally, sales rose 1.1%, reaching \$71.1 billion.  
*Source: Statistics Canada*

**Shipments of paper products rose in March while wood products fell for the fifth month**



- **Manufacturing shipments in BC fell 4.2% (seasonally adjusted) in the first three months of this year compared to the fourth quarter of 2000.** This followed a small increase between the last two quarters of 2000. BC's declines were mirrored across the country, except in the combined territories (+4.7%), Nova Scotia (+2.3%), Alberta (+1.8%) and Manitoba (+0.1%). Nationally shipments decreased 3.6%.

BC shipments of durable goods fell 6.3% over the first part of this year, following a 3.1% increase in the previous quarter. Declines were posted in all the major groups. The largest industry, wood products manufacturing, saw shipments fall 6.4%. Decreases were also seen in computer and electronic products (-15.2%) and machinery manufacturing (-7.4%).

On the non-durable goods side, shipments fell 1.2%. The decline was largely due to a fall in the largest industry in this sector, paper manufacturing (-5.7%), which was partly offset by an increase in the second largest industry, food (+5.0%). Decreased shipments were also seen in leather and allied industries (-13.5%), clothing (-10.1%) and printing and related activities (-4.9%). *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Housing starts in British Columbia were up 19.0% (seasonally adjusted) in April, ending 2 months of decline.** Starts in urban areas of the province rose 21.0%, reflecting high levels of activity in multiple unit construction. *Source: Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation*
- **Housing starts in BC increased strongly in the last quarter of 2000 (+17.8%, seasonally adjusted) and the first quarter of this year (+5.4%).** Across the country, five provinces including BC experienced a rise in starts in the first three months of this year, compared to the previous quarter. The largest increases were seen in Quebec (+10.8%), followed by Nova Scotia (+8.8%), Ontario (+6.3%) and New Brunswick (+3.6%). Nationally, housing starts rose 5.6%.  
*Source: Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation*

### **BC housing starts rose in the last quarter of 2000 and the first of 2001**



- **Exports from British Columbia grew 9.5% in March compared to the same month in 2000.** Energy products were the driving force behind the increase, jumping 178%. Exports of machinery and equipment (+16.5%) also saw increases. Automobile product exports had the biggest fall (-36.7%) from their March 2000 levels. Industrial goods (-16.4%) and forestry products (-12.7%) also declined.

British Columbia's export growth in March (compared to March 2000) ranked fourth across Canada, behind Alberta (+27.8%), New Brunswick (+24.4%), and Nova Scotia (+12.1%). Total Canadian exports rose 1.6%.  
*Source: Statistics Canada*

- **British Columbia saw large gains in exports in the first quarter of 2001 (+15.2%).** These gains were largely attributed to a huge increase in exports of energy products, up 192% from the first quarter of 2000. Machinery and equipment exports (+17.4%) also climbed. Automotive exports have slumped in the first quarter of 2001, down 33.2% from first quarter 2000 levels. Exports of forestry products (-12.5%), and consumer goods (-6.7%) also declined. *Source: Statistics Canada*