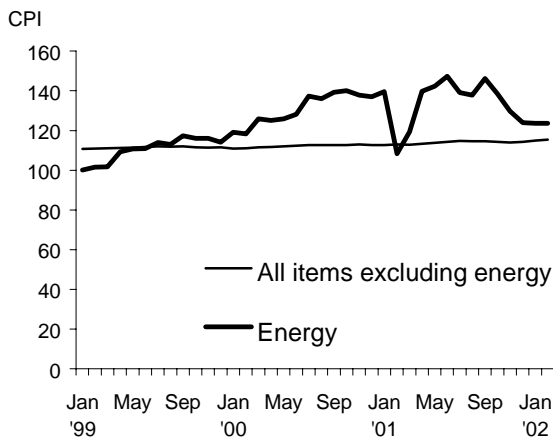


Current Statistics ♦ March 2002

- **In February, the Consumer Price Index for BC rose 2.9%, compared to the same month of 2001.** This was the highest rate of inflation in the country. Some of this apparent surge is due to BC Hydro credits of a year ago that then drove the electricity index to zero. This forced the energy price index in February 2001 down. The low energy index a year ago caused a large increase (+14.1%) in February 2002. Excluding energy, BC's inflation rate was 2.1%. Alcohol and tobacco (+6.4%) and food (+4.2%) also experienced significant price increases.

Source: Statistics Canada

Energy rebates a year ago helped force a large increase in the CPI in February



- **The number of business bankruptcies in the province jumped 4.8% in January, compared to the same month of 2001.** Consumer bankruptcies rose 4.1% to 805, up from 773 a year earlier. Business bankruptcies increased 10.8% to 103, up from 93 in January 2001. Other service industries (21) and manufacturing firms (15) had the largest number of business bankruptcies in BC. Retail trade industries, with only 10 bankrupt companies, showed the best improvement, with 13 fewer bankruptcies compared to a year earlier.

Source: Industry Canada

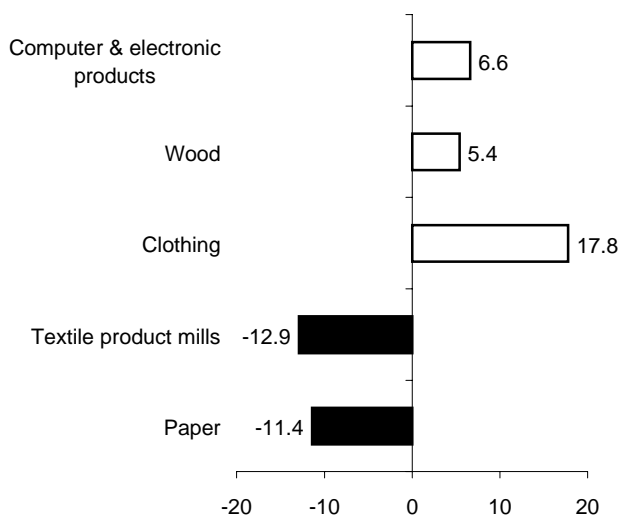
- **The number of new motor vehicles sold in the province (including the territories) rebounded with an 8.2% increase (seasonally adjusted) in January after falling 6.8% the previous month.** This was the largest increase in the country.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **In January, shipments of goods manufactured in BC rose for the first time since May 2001, albeit by only 0.3% (seasonally adjusted).** A 4.3% increase in manufacturing of durable goods offset a 5.0% drop in non-durable commodities. Shipments were up across the country, with the exception of PEI and New Brunswick (-0.1% each). Overall, Canadian shipments increased 3.1% in January. At the same time, inventories fell 0.5%, resulting in an inventory-to-shipment ratio of 1.49, the lowest since May.

Source: Statistics Canada

Growth in shipments of durable goods outweighed declines in non-durables



- **British Columbia's unemployment rate continued to fall in February.** After peaking at 9.7% (seasonally adjusted) in De-

ember, the rate fell to 8.9% in January and was down to 8.8% in February. The decline in the unemployment rate was a result of a 0.7% drop in the labour force which outweighed a 0.6% fall in employment. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **According to the Census, British Columbia's population on May 15, 2001 was 3,907,738, an increase of 4.9% from the population measured by the 1996 Census.** BC was one of only three provinces and one territory to grow faster than the national rate. Alberta (+10.3%), Ontario (+6.1%) and Nunavut (+8.1%) were all above the 4.0% growth rate for Canada as a whole. Canada's population eclipsed the 30 million mark, increasing to 30,007,094. It should be noted that these Census figures exclude a number of people who were missed on Census Day. An estimate of the net census undercount will not be available until 2003. In the 1996 Census the national net census undercount was 2.61% of the population, while the equivalent BC figure was 3.76%.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada

- **The value of exports of BC products was up 5.4% (seasonally adjusted) in January ending a slide through much of last year.** Shipments of machinery, equipment and automobiles (+23.4%) led the way, but energy exports also experienced strong growth, increasing 12.5% from December to January. Forest exports were fairly flat, rising only 0.9% in January. Exports of industrial and consumer goods fell 1.2%.

The value of exports destined for US markets (+8.5%) experienced the strongest growth since December 2000, the height of the energy boom. Exports to the US of all major categories of goods increased in January at rates ranging from +2.8% for forest products to +22.8% for machinery, equipment and automobiles.

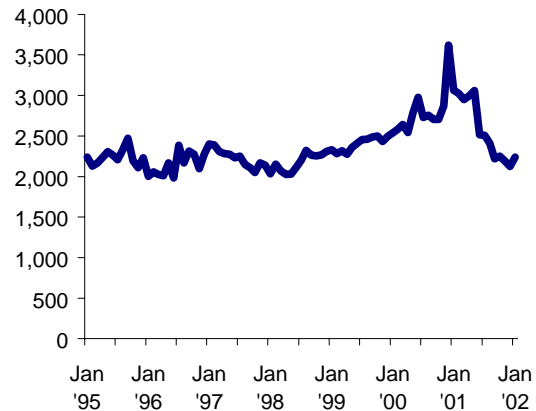
Exports of forest products (-3.3%) and industrial and consumer goods (-25.1%) to the rest of the world fell, contributing to a

2.1% overall decline in the value of exports to these destinations. Exports of machinery, equipment and automobiles to non-US destinations rebounded from a 29.7% drop in December, increasing 27.2% in January.

Source: BC Stats

Despite an increase in January, exports are still much lower than this time last year.

\$million, seasonally adjusted



- **Wholesale sales in the province jumped 3.4% in January (seasonally adjusted).** Sales in BC outpaced those of Canada as a whole, which grew only 2.0% from December to January. Only Ontario (+4.1%) and PEI (+3.8%) had wholesale sales growth larger than BC. Saskatchewan (-6.1%) experienced the largest drop in sales, retreating from a nation leading 8.9% growth in December.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Retail sales (seasonally adjusted) in British Columbia in January were unchanged from December.** The only province with lower growth was Quebec (-1.2%), a reversal from December when BC and Quebec ranked first and second in retail sales growth. Total Canadian sales were up 1.1% in January. Since the 1.7% decline in September following the events of September 11th, Canadian retail sales have increased each month.

Source: Statistics Canada