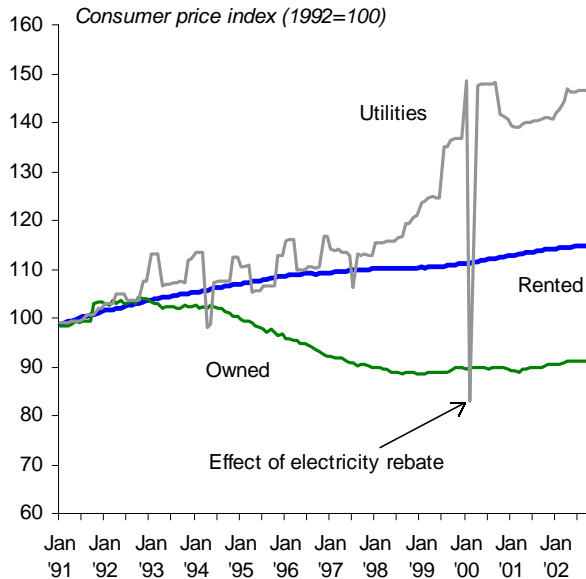


## Current Statistics ♦ October 2003

Shelter costs in the province have been rising as homeowners face bigger bills for utilities such as fuel and water



- British Columbia's all-items consumer price index (CPI) rose 2.0% during the twelve-month period ending in September. Prices for all commodity groups except clothing and footwear were higher than in September 2002. Tuition fees in BC increased 26.2%, more than in any other province. Upward pressure on the overall price level also came from energy (+6.4%). Excluding energy, BC's inflation rate would have been 1.8% in September. As has been the case throughout the year, the inflation rate in Victoria (+2.0%) was higher than in Vancouver (+1.8%).

Source: Statistics Canada

- Retail sales continued to advance in August, rising 1.6% (seasonally adjusted). Sales figures have been improving since the spring. Wholesale sales in the province remained unchanged in August.

Source: Statistics Canada

- New motor vehicle sales in the province stalled (-0.3%, seasonally adjusted) in August, as sales of North American-made

cars sputtered (-4.6%) after gaining speed (+22.9%) in the previous month. North American truck sales (+3.4%) remained robust. Dealers of overseas-manufactured vehicles fared better (total sales were up 2.6%) despite slumping (-2.0%) truck sales.

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats

- British Columbia's unemployment rate jumped 0.4 percentage points in September, rising to 9.1% (seasonally adjusted), its highest level in more than a year. The increase in the jobless rate came as employment shrank (-0.3%) while the size of the labour force continued to expand (+0.1%). BC is not the only province where unemployment rates are creeping up—the jobless rate rose in five provinces in September. Canada's unemployment rate was unchanged at 8.0%.

Source: Statistics Canada

- The number of British Columbians receiving regular employment insurance (EI) benefits increased 1.2% (seasonally adjusted) in August. Nationally, the number of beneficiaries advanced 1.0%.

Source: Statistics Canada

- BC's residential building boom continued in September, with housing starts in the province increasing 9.2% (seasonally adjusted). Starts declined 1.1% nationally.

Source: CMHC

- The cost of new housing in British Columbia's two largest cities continued to rise in August. Builders' prices for new homes in Vancouver were 3.5% higher than they had been a year earlier, while the New Housing Price Index in Victoria was up 8.4%. Both house (+7.4%) and land (+12.9%) prices increased sharply in Victoria. The increase in Vancouver was primarily driven by prices for housing (+5.0%). Land prices were only marginally higher (+1.2%) than in August 2002.

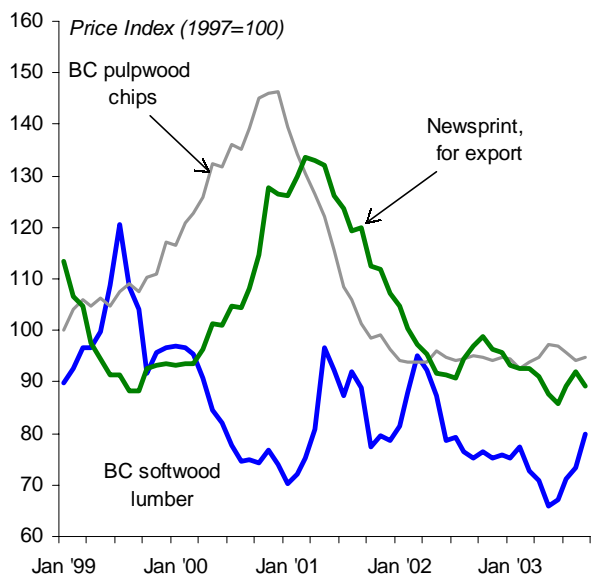
Source: Statistics Canada

- **Non-residential building construction in the province continued to slump in the third quarter, falling 3.6% (seasonally adjusted).** Industrial (-10.8%), commercial (-3.7%) and institutional & government (-0.4%) spending all declined. The decline was largely due to the Vancouver market, where investment was down 7.1% from the second quarter level. Spending on non-residential buildings in Victoria climbed 3.1%, and in Abbotsford the increase was 2.6%. *Source: Statistics Canada*

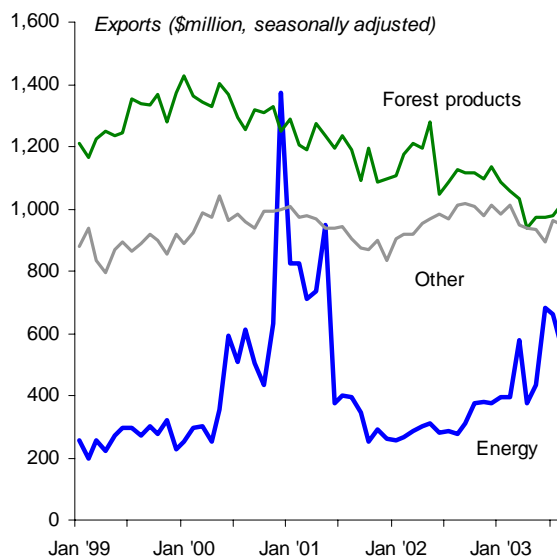
- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities plunged (-17.6%, seasonally adjusted) in September, after soaring (+25.9%) in the previous month.** Building intentions in both the residential (-14.3%) and non-residential (-23.9%) sectors were down significantly. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **There were 684 consumer bankruptcies recorded in the province in August.** This was down substantially (-14.2%) from the same month last year, when the number was 797. Sixty-one BC firms, with total liabilities of \$41 million, were registered as bankrupt in August. Construction (11), retail trade (10), and accommodation and food services (9) recorded the largest number of bankruptcies. *Source: Industry Canada*

*Although softwood lumber prices are rising, prices for other forest products remain weak*



*Forest product exports rose in August, but exports of other commodities were down*



- **Shipments of goods manufactured in the province continued to expand in August, increasing (+1.6%, seasonally adjusted) for the second month in a row.** The forest sector was responsible for much of the growth, as both wood (+2.3%) and paper (+3.8%) shipments advanced. BC softwood lumber prices have begun to rise, partly because of supply concerns. This has helped boost the value of shipments by wood manufacturers. However, prices for paper products are softening. Overall, the value of non-durable goods shipped by BC manufacturers was up 2.6%, while producers of durable goods posted a smaller, but still significant, 0.9% increase. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Exports of BC products slumped (-3.3%, seasonally adjusted) in August, despite a 4.4% increase in the value of forest products exported to the US and overseas.** Overall, international shipments of all other types of commodities declined in August. Energy exports were off 17.1%. Exports to the US dropped (-6.3%), largely due to the energy sector, where exports were down significantly (-23.6%). BC's shipments to other destinations advanced 4.3%, reflecting gains in exports of both energy (+27.3%) and forest (+6.2%) products. *Source: Statistics Canada & BC STATS*