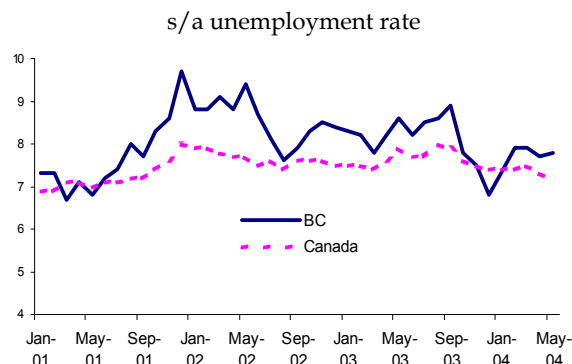


## Current Statistics ♦ June 2004

• **British Columbia's unemployment rate edged up to 7.8% (seasonally adjusted) in May, as employment gains (+0.7%) failed to keep pace with labour force growth (+0.8%).** Although the jobless rate was higher than in April, employment growth in the province was the strongest it has been since late last year.

Job growth was concentrated in the service sector, where employment increased by 15,000 people in May. Wholesale and retail trade, the largest service-sector employer, took on 1.7% more workers, while other services such as management (+5.3%), education (+4.9%) and information, culture & recreational services (+3.0%) saw a significant expansion in staffing levels. However, the transportation and warehousing industry cut back the size of its workforce 1.5%. In the goods sector, employment stalled (+0.1%) in May despite solid gains in most industries, as the number of jobs in construction fell back 2.8%.

Self-employment advanced 4.0% in May, but the number of private sector employees was virtually unchanged (+0.1%) from the previous month. Public sector employment shrank 0.5%, offsetting a similar expansion in April. There were more part-time workers (+2.6%), but full-time employment rose only modestly (+0.2%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*



• **Nationally, the unemployment rate inched down to 7.2%, as the number of people with jobs (+0.4%) increased twice as fast as the labour force (+0.2%).** BC and Ontario (+0.2 percentage points) were the only provinces where the jobless rate rose in May. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

• **Wages, salaries and benefits paid to BC workers increased 1.7% (seasonally adjusted) in the first quarter, marking the third straight quarter of solid gains in labour income.** The increase was more than double the national average (+0.8%). Alberta, where labour income advanced (+1.8%) nearly two percent for the third quarter in a row, was the only province to see similarly strong growth in the total pay packet. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

• **International exports of BC goods edged up 0.5% (seasonally adjusted) in April, despite a 10.8% drop in exports of energy products.** International shipments of industrial and consumer goods jumped 8.6%, which helped drive the growth.

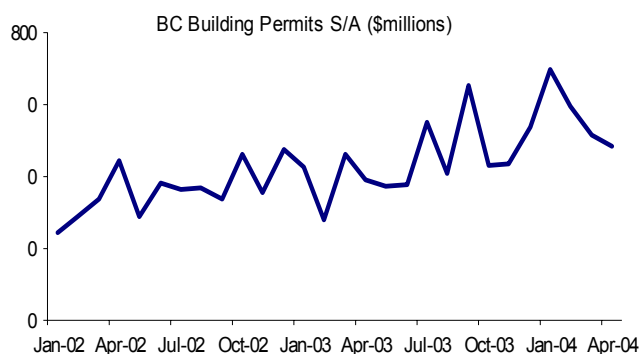
Growth in overall exports was entirely due to shipments to non-US destinations (+2.8%) as exports to the US slipped 0.7% in April. The decline was due mainly to a substantial drop in the value of exports of energy products (-10.9%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada and BC Stats*

• **Housing starts in BC dropped 16.5% (seasonally adjusted) in May, retreating after a burst of construction activity the month before.** Nationally, housing edged down slightly (-1.3%). While the Maritime provinces showed strong growth in housing starts, there was little new home construction activity in central Canada. In the West, both Alberta and BC had fewer starts than the month before. *Data Source: CMHC*

- **The value of building permits issued in BC dropped 4.1% (seasonally adjusted) in April, the third consecutive monthly decline.** The decline in residential building permits was slight (-1.6%), while non-residential permits were down 12.3%.

Nationally, building permits were up 7.8%, ranging from an increase of 44.8% in Newfoundland & Labrador to a decrease of 23.9% in Manitoba. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Non-seasonally adjusted data from across the regions of BC show that most parts of the province have seen growth in building permits over the last year.** In the first four months of 2004, compared to the same period last year, permits showed strongest growth in Mainland/Southwest (+27.8%). Similar growth was seen in the northern regions (+24.2%) and Vancouver Island (+22.6%). The Kootenay (-14.3%) and Cariboo (-19.3%) regions of central BC posted declines. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*



- **Shipments of goods manufactured in the province slipped back 0.9% (seasonally adjusted) in April, after posting solid gains (ranging from 2.0% in January to 5.6% in March) in the previous three months.** The decline in shipments was primarily due to a sharp drop (-10.4%) in the value of goods shipped by the paper industry. At the same time, BC wood producers saw shipments climb (+2.8%) for the fourth month in a row, as

housing construction activity in both Canada and the US remained robust.

Shipments by food manufacturers were weak (-2.2%) in April but producers of most other non-durable goods made solid gains. On the durables side, the primary metals (+1.6%) and metal fabricated products (+3.0%) industries increased their shipments, but producers of computers & electronics (-2.0%), machinery (-2.0%) and transportation equipment (-14.2%) did not fare well in April.

Nationally, the value of shipments rose 0.5% in April, continuing the longest string (5 months) of consecutive gains since the late 1990s. However, the increase was well short of March's 4.0% advance, as manufacturers in virtually every region posted slower growth. BC, PEI (-4.7%), Manitoba (-5.7%) and Saskatchewan (-7.8%) all lost ground in April. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **BC's CPI rose 2.5% from May 2003, the greatest increase since March 2003.** Among the provinces, Ontario recorded the highest increase at 2.8%, while Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest increase at 1.7%. Nationally, prices rose 2.5% from May 2003.

Compared to a year ago BC residents paid more for gasoline (+27.4%), tuition fees (+20.2%), fuel oil (+14.4%), and beer (+8.6%). Offsetting these increases were lower costs for fresh vegetables (-7.5%), natural gas (-6.3%), and fish and other sea food (-5.6%).

BC's Energy Index (which includes natural gas, fuel oil, electricity and gasoline) rose 5.6% from the previous month, mostly attributable to a rise in gasoline prices (+10.4%), and fuel oil prices (+7.1%). Electricity and natural gas prices remained unchanged from April. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*