

Current Statistics ♦ August 2005

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate jumped to 6.2% (seasonally adjusted) in July.** The increase came after two months in which the rate was at a near 25-year low (5.7% in May and 5.8% in June). BC's unemployment rate remains low by historical standards. It has been below the national average in all but two months since July 2004—the first time since the mid-1990s that this has occurred.

Employment was virtually unchanged from the previous month. At the same time, the labour force expanded (+0.4%), pushing the unemployment rate up as many of the new entrants were unable to find work.

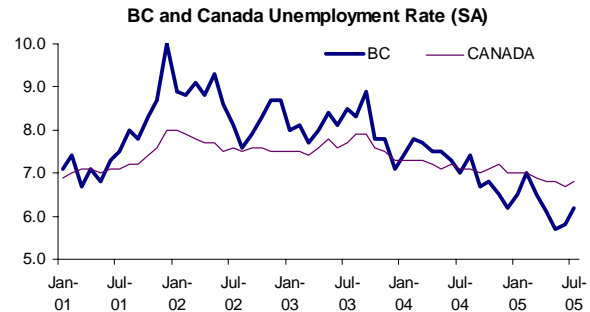
Victoria's unemployment rate was just 3.9%, about two-thirds the provincial average. The jobless rates in Abbotsford (5.1%) and Vancouver (6.4%) were slightly higher.

- The Canadian unemployment rate inched up 0.1 percentage point to 6.8% in July. As was the case in BC, employment growth stalled (0.0%) while the number of people who were either working or looking for work increased (+0.1%). Alberta continued to experience the lowest unemployment rate (3.6%) in the country. Manitoba (4.7%) and Saskatchewan (4.7%) also posted unemployment rates that were considerably lower than the national average. BC was the only other province where the jobless rate was significantly lower than the Canadian average.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- Self-employment remained a significant source of new jobs in the province, with the number rising 4.7%, enough to offset a drop in the number of public (-1.1%) and private (-1.2%) sector employees. Full-time employment increased 1.4% in July, but there were fewer people with part-time work (-5.4%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada



- **Exports of BC products increased 7.7% (seasonally adjusted) in June, as international shipments of energy (+37.1%), agriculture and fish (+8.9%) and industrial and consumer (+4.0%) products rose substantially.** Forest product exports edged up 0.3%, ending a three-month-long decline. US-bound exports advanced 7.3%.

Nationally the value of exports increased 1.8% between May and June, but shipments to the US were marginally lower (-0.3%). However, shipments to Japan (+9.8%), the European Union (+10.4%), and other OECD countries (+31.4%) increased significantly.

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats



- **Housing starts in the province continued to seesaw in July, increasing 16.1% (seasonally adjusted) after posting a similar decline (-13.4%) in June.** Canadian starts were flat (+0.4%), as July was a relatively slow month for

builders in many parts of the country. Starts were down in Ontario (-8.8%), most of Atlantic Canada, and Saskatchewan (-32.6%). Nova Scotia (+20.0%), Manitoba (+17.6%) and BC were the only provinces where the number of housing starts increased significantly in July.

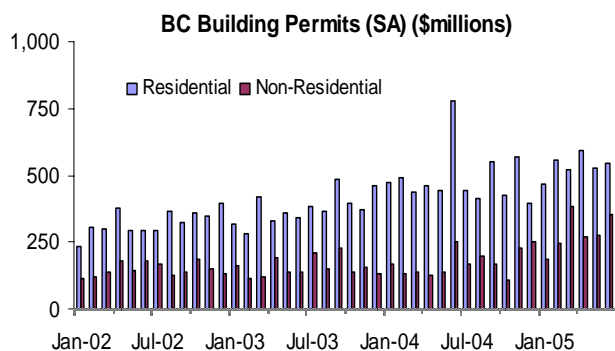
Data Source: CMHC

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities rose 11.7% (*seasonally adjusted*) in June, ending a two-month-long downturn.** The increase was largely due to planned activity in the non-residential sector (+28.5%), but residential permits were also up (+2.9%) slightly. Permits for industrial buildings more than doubled (+123.5%) in June, with smaller increases in the value of permits issued for commercial (+12.2%) and institutional and government (+34.8%) projects.

Although permits were up in June, the increase was localized in the Vancouver area, where permits jumped 32.7%. Victoria (-31.2%) and Abbotsford (-23.5%) posted significant declines, as did the rest of the province. Vancouver accounted for more than sixty percent of the total value of building permits issued in June.

Canadian permits edged up 1.5%, as slowdowns in Ontario (-1.2%), Alberta (-5.8%), and three other provinces offset strong growth in other parts of the country.

Data Source: Statistics Canada



- **Shipments of goods manufactured in the province slipped back 0.8% (*seasonally adjusted*) in June, after posting a solid gain (+2.0%) in the previous month.** The decline in shipments was primarily due to a drop (-1.8%) in the value of goods shipped by manufacturers of durables, especially wood (-3.5%) and machinery (-10.0%) producers.

On the non-durables side, BC's paper manufacturing industry saw shipments rise 1.6% in June, following a strong rebound (+3.9%) in May. Shipments by food (-1.9%) and beverage and tobacco (-1.7%) manufacturers were weak, but producers of most other non-durable goods made solid gains. Besides paper producers, manufacturers of leather and allied (+4.4%) and plastics and rubber (+3.3%) products recorded higher shipments.

On the durables side, only the computer and electronics (+11.9%) and miscellaneous (+28.3%) products industries increased their shipments. Producers of non-metallic minerals (-2.3%), primary metals (-1.4%), fabricated metals (-2.2%), and transportation equipment (-1.6%) did not fare well in June.

Nationally, the value of shipments rose 0.5% in June, posting a quick recovery from the slight dip (-0.3%) in May. Shipments increased in six provinces, with Ontario (+0.2%) and Quebec (+0.7%) posting moderate gains. Besides BC (-0.8%), PEI (-4.2%), Manitoba (-2.0%) and Saskatchewan (-2.3%) all lost ground in June.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Wholesale sales in the province edged down in June, falling 0.3% (*seasonally adjusted*) from the May level.** For Canada as a whole, sales rose 0.5%, due to strong sales in Quebec (+1.8%), Ontario (+0.9%), and New Brunswick (+1.0%). Saskatchewan (-7.2%) and Alberta (-0.7%) were the only provinces with weaker wholesale sales than BC.

Data Source: Statistics Canada