

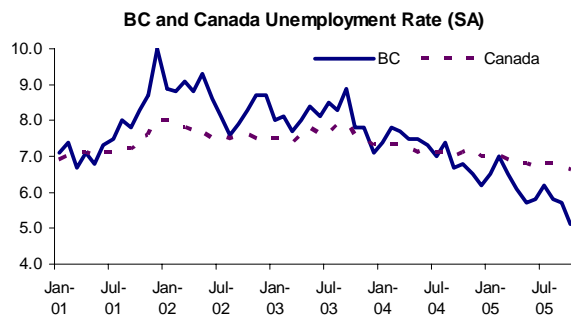
Current Statistics ♦ November 2005

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate fell 0.6 percentage points to 5.1% (seasonally adjusted) in October, its lowest level in at least 30 years.** A significant jump in employment (+0.7%) pushed the unemployment rate down despite a slight boost in the labour force (+0.1%).

The service sector continues to drive the expansion in jobs. While the goods sector experienced a 0.4% drop in employment between September and October, service jobs climbed 1.0%. Strong growth in the workforce of wholesale and retail trade (+5.9%) and information, culture and recreation (+3.3%) industries helped offset significant declines in employment in educational services (-7.2%) and public administration (-4.3%).

BC's manufacturing sector shed about 3,200 jobs in October, a drop of 1.6%. A slump in construction employment (-1.2%) also contributed to the decline in jobs in the goods sector. Strong employment growth in the primary industries such as forestry, fishing and mining (+5.9%) and agriculture (+2.8%) were not enough to offset the losses in manufacturing and construction.

Data Source: Statistics Canada



- **Unemployment rates dropped in most regions of the province, with the exception of North**

Coast/Nechako, where the jobless rate climbed to 6.0% (3-month-moving average, unadjusted) and Northeast, where it was unchanged. The 4.4% rate recorded in Northeast was the lowest in the province, while North/Coast Nechako's 6.0% was the highest. October was the sixth consecutive month where all regions of the province had single-digit unemployment rates. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **British Columbia's economy grew 4.0% in 2004, outpacing every other province except Alberta, where GDP advanced 4.3%.** Preliminary estimates released by Statistics Canada in April had shown BC at the front of the pack. Economic growth was considerably stronger than the Canadian average of 2.9%. Growth rates in other provinces ranged from +1.4% in Nova Scotia to +3.4% in Saskatchewan. Newfoundland (-1.4%) was the only province where real GDP declined in 2004.

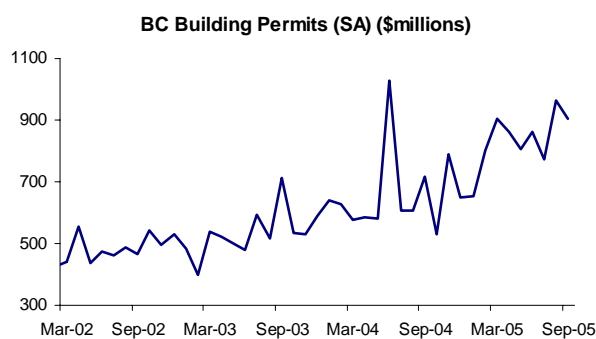
On a per capita basis, real GDP in the province was the fourth highest in the country, at \$33,129. Alberta (\$42,386) and Ontario (\$37,883) were the only provinces where per capita GDP was higher than the national average (\$35,167).

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Housing starts in the province continued to see-saw in October, posting a 0.3% drop (seasonally adjusted) after increasing 10.1% in September.** Canadian starts were down 10.0%, with new building activity slowing in virtually every region of the country. Alberta and Saskatchewan (both at -18.9%) posted the biggest declines. Ontario (-15.1%) and two of the four Atlantic provinces also saw double-digit decreases. The slowdown in Quebec (-9.3%) was not as severe, but helped pull the national total down. *Data Source: CMHC*

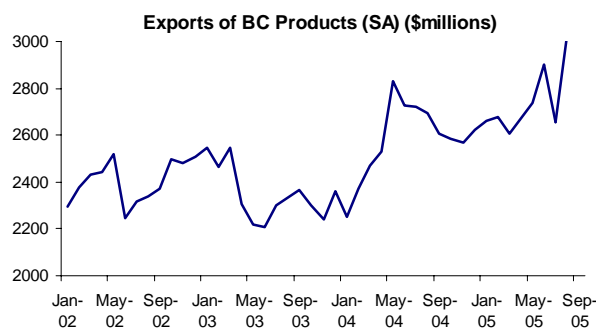
• **Some urban areas of BC showed prominent increases in housing starts (*unadjusted*) in October.** Starts in urban BC were up 40.0% over October 2004, on the strength of Vancouver's 74.5% increase (to 2,009 units), the highest in 25 years. Multiple starts (+121.2%) in Vancouver more than doubled, offsetting a slight drop (-0.9%) in single starts. Prince George (+47.1%) also recorded a significant rise in new projects. However, Victoria (-30.5%) saw a decline in both single (-1.1%) and multiple (-58.2%) starts. Kelowna (-33.8%) and Abbotsford (-44.4%) also recorded notable decreases. *Data Source: CMHC*

• **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities dropped (-6.1% *seasonally adjusted*) in September, ending its two-month upsurge.** The increase was largely due to a downturn in planned activity in the non-residential sector (-18.5%), but residential permits also dropped (-0.5%) slightly. Permits jumped in the Vancouver area (+6.9%) and in Victoria (+23.7%). Abbotsford (-23.5%) posted a significant decline. Canadian permits also retreated (-5.3%) in September with a small (+3.2%) increase in the value of planned residential projects failing to offset the significant drop (-17.1%) in non-residential permits. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*



• **BC origin exports climbed 1.7% (*seasonally adjusted*) in September, mainly on the strength of rising exports of energy (+4.8%) and industrial and consumer goods (+6.5%).** The overall increase was due to a 2.9% jump in exports to the United States, as shipments to

other destinations edged down 0.2%. Soaring prices for energy products in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita drove up the value of exports of those goods to the US (+13.6%), which fuelled the overall increase, as all other major commodity groups saw a decline in exports to the US. *Data Source: BC Stats*



• **Compared to last October, BC's Consumer Price Index rose 2.3%.** BC consumers paid more for fuel oil (+35.9%), gasoline (+18.3%), piped gas (+16.1%), property taxes (+6.3%), local and commuter public transportation (+5.6%), footwear (+5.3%), and coffee and tea (+4.5%). Offsetting these increases were lower prices for fresh fruit (-6.4%), clothing and footwear (-2.4%), and electricity (-1.9%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

• **Wholesale sales in BC edged up 0.7% (*seasonally adjusted*) in September.** All provinces west of Ontario and the territories posted gains, and although BC's performance was the weakest of these, it reinforced August's revised 4.1% growth. For Canada as a whole, sales edged down 0.1% in September as weakness in Ontario (-1.6%) was sufficient to overshadow western strength and gains in Quebec (+0.9%). Nova Scotia (+1.8%) was the only bright spot in the Atlantic region as Prince Edward Island (-24.0%), Newfoundland and Labrador (-0.7%) and New Brunswick (-1.0%) all experienced falling sales. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*