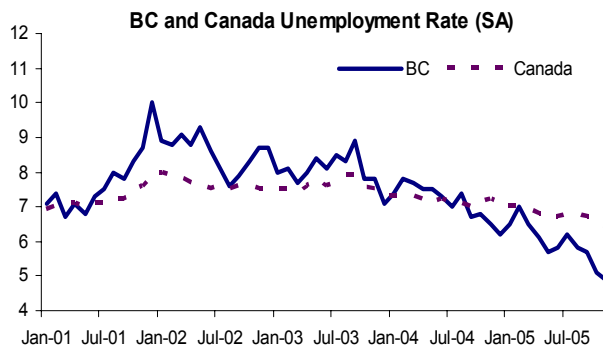


## Current Statistics ♦ December 2005

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate continued to tumble in November, dropping to 4.9% (seasonally adjusted), the lowest level since 1976 (the first year for which labour force estimates are available).** The continued improvement in the province's job market occurred despite a significant increase (+0.6%) in the size of the labour force, as employment growth (+0.8%) was more than strong enough to absorb the net addition of 14,300 people who were either working or looking for work.

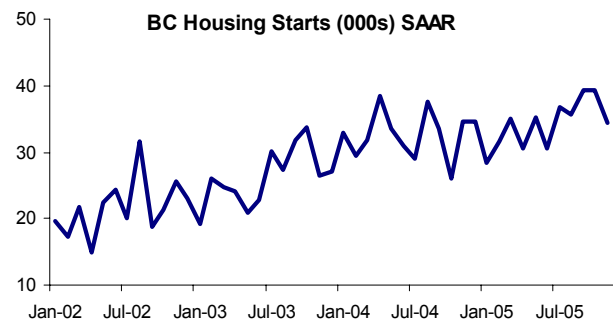


- **Full-time employment increased 1.5% in November, but there were fewer people with part-time (-1.7%) jobs.** Self-employment, a strong source of job growth in October, fell back 2.1% in November. There were 2.0% more private sector jobs, but employment in the public sector was down for the sixth month in a row. Although the unemployment rate for those aged 25 and over edged up to 4.6%, young people (aged 15-24) were less likely to be unemployed. The jobless rate in this age group dropped 1.6 percentage points, to 6.9%.

Among the regions, jobless rates were lowest in Thompson-Okanagan (4.3%, 3-month-moving average) and Mainland/Southwest (4.4%) and highest in North Coast/Nechako (6.8%). Kootenay (-2.8%) and Northeast (-4.8%) were the only regions to see a net

decline in employment, relative to the same period of 2004. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Housing starts in the province continued a downward slide in November, posting a significant 12.2% drop (seasonally adjusted) following a 0.3% decrease in October.** Nationally, starts were up 7.4% from October, on the strength of new building activity in six provinces with increases ranging from 1.5% in Quebec to 33.3% in Ontario. *Data Source: CMHC*



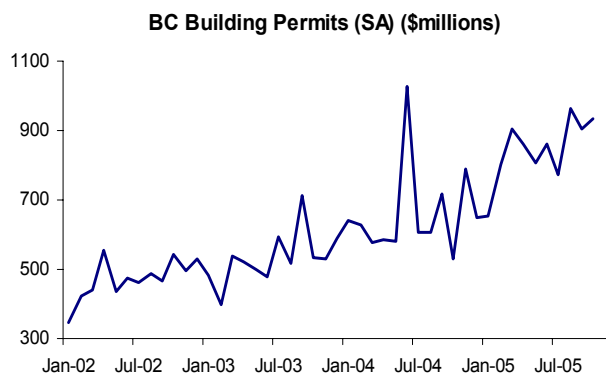
- **BC's year-over-year inflation rate climbed 2.0% in November.** High energy costs continue to be a significant factor in the rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Compared to last November, consumers paid more for fuel oil (+29.2%), piped gas (+16.1%) and gasoline (+12.7%). The CPI excluding energy increased only 1.4%.

Vancouver's CPI rose 1.8% from November 2004, while Victoria experienced higher inflation with a 2.3% increase over the same period. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The value of building permits issued by the province's municipalities in October climbed 2.9% (seasonally adjusted) over September, as residential permits increased (+7.0%) and non-residential building projects slipped downwards (-7.8%).**

In Vancouver, permits dropped 8.9% from September to October. Abbotsford (+64.9%) posted the most prominent growth of BC's census metropolitan areas; however, permits in Victoria (+33.9%) were also significantly higher than in September.

Data Source: Statistics Canada



- **Exports of BC products rose 1.4% (seasonally adjusted) in October on the strength of continued demand for BC products south of the border—shipments to the US were up (+6.8%) for a fifth straight month.** Forest product exports to the US increased significantly (+9.4%) for the first time since June, and shipments of industrial and consumer goods were also robust, while energy exports rose 5.3%. The Canadian dollar is currently at its highest level vis-à-vis the US greenback since 1992. This makes the recent expansion in exports to the US all the more noteworthy, since the growth has occurred despite the fact that BC products are becoming more costly for Americans.

Shipments to countries other than the US declined again in October, falling 8.0% after posting a marginal 0.6% drop in the previous month. Exports of industrial and consumer goods plunged (-24.8%), while overseas shipments of forest products were off 1.7%.

Data Source: Statistics Canada and BC Stats

- **Shipments of goods manufactured in British Columbia advanced 1.5% (seasonally adjusted) in October, more than enough to**

**offset September's 0.5% decline.** Although shipments by wood manufacturers were flat (+0.2%), paper (+4.4%) and food (+0.7%), the second and third largest industries in the sector, both posted gains. Prices for BC softwood lumber remained weak, down 11.3% (*unadjusted*) from October 2004 levels, and producers also received less for pulpwood chips and wood pulp, but newsprint export prices improved slightly, compared to the same month last year.

Most manufacturing industries saw shipments rise in October, in many cases offsetting (or partly offsetting) declines in the previous month. Manufacturers of primary metals (+13.5%) and computer & electronic products (+13.3%) posted double-digit increases after shipments dropped substantially in September. In the primary metals industry, this was the first increase in the value of shipments since April.



- **The number of new vehicles driven off car lots in BC (including the territories) dropped again (-3.6%) in October.** Sales remained weak in the West and in Nova Scotia, but advanced 3.3% nationally. This was largely due to a rebound in Ontario (+3.6%) and Quebec (+11.2%), where sales had slumped after "employee pricing" and other incentive programs ended. In BC, sales of North American-made vehicles slipped 7.1%, while sales of vehicles manufactured overseas were virtually unchanged (+0.4%) from the previous month.

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats