

Current Statistics ♦ June 2006

- **Farm cash receipts were 1.5% higher in the first quarter of 2006 than in the same period of 2005, reflecting higher revenues from the sale of both crop (+5.2%) and livestock (+3.1%) products.** Cattle (+39.7%) and egg (+42.1%) producers recorded significant year-over-year growth while farmers of turkeys (-25.4%) and hens & chickens (-4.1%) both received less from sales. Producers of apples (+6.0%), floriculture and nursery products (+6.9%) and potatoes (+65.1%) accounted for much of the gain in crop receipts.

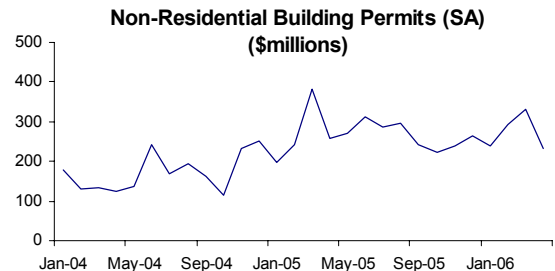
Nationally, farm cash receipts slipped 3.3% to \$9.0 billion for the first quarter of 2006, with declines in both crop (-8.0%) and livestock (-0.1%) receipts. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Wages, salaries and benefits earned by workers in the province edged up 0.2% (seasonally adjusted) in March, the fifth straight month in which there has been growth.** The increase was the smallest of any other province, with the exception of PEI (+0.1%) and well below the national average of 0.4%. New Brunswick experienced the fastest growth in labour income in March (+0.7%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **BC (+26.9%) and Alberta (+27.9%) saw the largest gains in the country in terms of investment in non-residential building construction last year.** In BC, investment was up in all three components of non-residential construction: commercial (+17.4%), industrial (+42.7%) and institutional (+44.0%). Office tower construction was behind the lion's share of growth. In Vancouver, investment in office buildings soared 45.1% to \$458 million, and in Calgary it jumped 58.1% to \$497 million. Booming conditions in Alberta were a result of rising oil prices while increased trade with Asia as well as preparations for the 2010 Olympic Games are among the factors contributing to

BC's growth. Nationally, total investment in non-residential buildings climbed 8.7% to \$31.5 billion, with significant increases in the value of commercial (+12.7%) and industrial (+20.3%) components. Spending on institutional projects such as museums, schools and hospitals slipped 4.7% in 2005. Newfoundland and Labrador (-1.2%) and Saskatchewan (-3.4%) were the only provinces to post decreases in investment in non-residential buildings in 2005.

Data Source: SC Cat.#11-621-MIE2006043



- **BC's inflation rate was the lowest in the country in May.** Alberta (+4.5%) saw the most significant average price increase followed by PEI (+3.3%) and Nova Scotia (+3.2%). Canada's inflation rate was 2.8%, due mostly to a sharp 18.6% increase in the cost of gasoline, which was the main contributing factor in a 14.1% rise in the energy index. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate edged up 0.2 percentage points in May, rising to 4.7%.** The increase in the jobless rate came as labour force growth (+0.3%) continued while the number of jobs was unchanged from April. BC and Saskatchewan were the only regions where the jobless rate increased in May. After recording the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country in April, BC's ranking slipped to third among the provinces. Both Alberta (3.4%) and Manitoba (4.2%) posted lower unemployment rates in May. However residents of BC and all three Prairie provinces

continued to benefit from robust labour market conditions, with jobless rates that were well below the national average (6.1%) in May.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

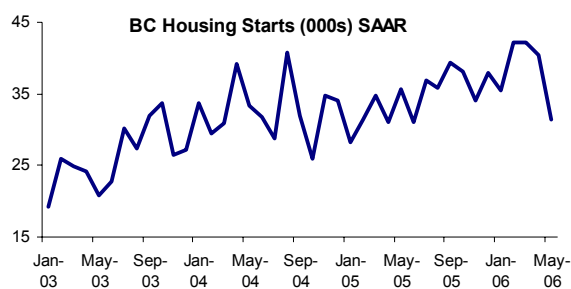
- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities fell 20.4% (seasonally adjusted) in April, the first decline in 2006.** The drop reflects a plunge in the value of permits for both the non-residential (-30.1%) and residential (-15.9%) sectors. Institutional and government projects (-47.5%) posted the steepest decline, but planned activity for the commercial (-24.4%) and industrial (-14.5%) sectors was also down. A huge increase in the value of permits in Abbotsford (+209.4%) was not enough to offset the slip in Vancouver (-35.5%), where most building activity occurs. Building intentions were also down in Victoria (-7.7%).

Nationally, permits fell 10.6%, with decreases in other provinces ranging from -2.1% in Ontario to -30.2% in Nova Scotia. Newfoundland and Labrador (+84.0%) posted the most notable increase in April.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Housing starts in BC continued to ease in May, falling 22.2% (seasonally adjusted at annual rates), the most substantial drop among the provinces.** Canadian starts were flat (-0.5%), reflecting increases in three of the four largest provinces and slowdowns in several others. Starts increased steadily in Alberta (+9.6%), Ontario (+5.8%) and Quebec (+2.7%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada



- **Shipments of goods produced by British Columbia manufacturers slipped (-2.6%, seasonally adjusted) in April, following a modest gain (+1.6%) in March.** Manufacturers of non-durable goods saw notable declines (-6.6%) in the value of shipments, mostly due to weakness in the food (-7.1%) and paper (-14.8%) industries. Driven by an increase in the wood products industry (+2.4%), durable goods managed to inch up (+0.2%) despite slips in other large manufacturing sectors such as fabricated metals (-15.6%) and non-metallic minerals (-1.3%).



- **Wholesale sales in the province slipped 2.2% (seasonally adjusted) in April, the largest decline among the provinces.** Total Canadian sales were virtually unchanged (+0.1%) from the March level, as strength in Eastern Canada was unable to offset weakness in the West. Wholesalers in seven provinces saw growth, ranging from 0.3% in both Quebec and Ontario to 7.1% in New Brunswick, while sales were down in Saskatchewan (-1.1%), Alberta (-0.5%) and BC.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Sales by retailers in the province rose 1.3% (seasonally adjusted) in April, following a 0.8% increase in March.** Retail sales were most robust in Alberta (+3.9%), Newfoundland & Labrador (+3.8%) and Saskatchewan (+3.4). PEI (-0.7%) and New Brunswick (-0.4%) were the only provinces where sales were off in April. Strong sales in the automotive sector (+3.6%) were a major factor in the overall growth in retail sales at the national level (+1.7%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada