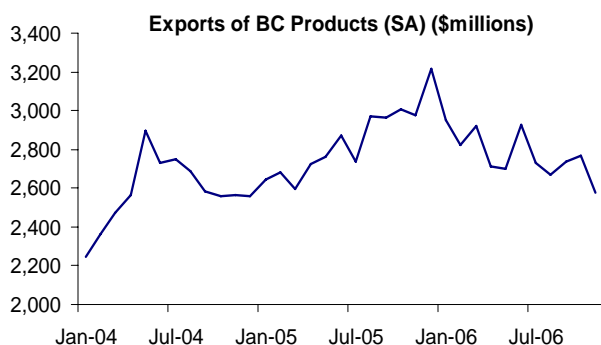


Current Statistics ♦ January 2007

- **Exports of BC products slipped 7.0% (seasonally adjusted) in November, following two consecutive months of increases.** The value of shipments was down from October across all commodity groups. Slumps in exports of energy (-13.2%) and industrial & consumer products (-11.4%) were most instrumental in driving overall exports down. However, shipments of machinery & auto equipment (-8.7%), agriculture & fish products (-2.3%), and forestry products (-1.2%) also decreased.

Exports to the US fell 3.9% mostly due to a decline in the value of forestry (-4.3%) and energy (-10.3%) shipments, although industrial & consumer products (-1.9%) and machinery & auto equipment (-1.4%) also dropped. Despite increases in the value of overseas shipments of forestry products (+3.7%), exports to destinations other than the US were also lower (-11.5%), reflecting substantial downturns across four other major commodity groups.

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats



- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities jumped 18.7% (seasonally adjusted) in November after rebounding (+29.4%) in the previous month.** Permits for residential projects were up 33.0%, while the value of permits issued for other types of buildings increased a more moderate 1.6%. Non-residential permits have shown continued volatility in 2006, and the latest increase was a

far cry from the 121.3% upsurge in October. Permits issued for industrial projects more than doubled (+108.4%) in November and institutional & government (+5.1%) projects also increased. However, planned spending on commercial projects declined (-5.4%), following a 183.4% jump in October. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Housing starts in the province ended the year on a weaker note, slipping 6.4% (seasonally adjusted) in December on the heels of a similar decrease (-7.8%) recorded in November.** Starts have been volatile over the past couple of years, as the heated pace of new housing construction of the early 2000's continued to show signs of slowing. During 2006, starts in BC advanced 5.3%, which was slightly higher than 2005's increase (+5.1%), but still well below those of twenty percent or more recorded in the first four years of the decade. *Data Source: CMHC*

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate inched up to 5.2% (seasonally adjusted) in December, as a 0.4% increase in the number of jobs (+9,900) was offset by a 0.8% jump (+18,400) in the number of people who were either working or looking for work.** The province's participation rate remained stable in the last month of 2006, with 66.2% of the working age population (15 and older) in the labour force. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

Employment in the goods sector stepped up 1.0% with the number of jobs increasing in three major industries. Employment in construction (+2.5%) and agriculture (+1.1%) continued to expand, while the number of jobs in manufacturing (+2.0%) increased for the fourth consecutive month. At the same time, there were fewer jobs in utilities (-5.1%) and other primary industries (forestry, fishing & mining) took on 7.5% fewer workers.

The service sector recorded a more moderate increase in employment (+0.3%) as job growth in some industries was offset by declines in others. Employment in public administration slipped 4.8% and there were fewer jobs in wholesale & retail trade (-1.6%) and accommodation, food & beverage service (-1.4%). However, education (+1.8%) and health & social services (+4.4%) took on significantly more workers.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- Shipments of goods manufactured in British Columbia fell 1.5% (*seasonally adjusted*) in November, following a 0.7% gain in the previous month. Producers of durable products (-0.2%) saw shipments slip slightly after having expanded (+1.4%) in October. The value of wood shipments (-0.9%) decreased as producers continued to face low prices for softwood and other wood products, while the non-metallic minerals (-7.6%) computer & electronics (-4.2%) and transportation equipment (-4.4%) industries were also down. On the other hand, BC producers of primary metals (+5.9%), machinery (+2.2%) and fabricated metal (+0.3%) fared better. On the non-durables side, shipments by manufacturers of paper (-5.8%) and plastics & rubber products (-10.4%) dropped off sharply in November. This was only partly offset by a 1.1% increase in the food industry. Overall shipments of non-durable goods declined 3.3%.

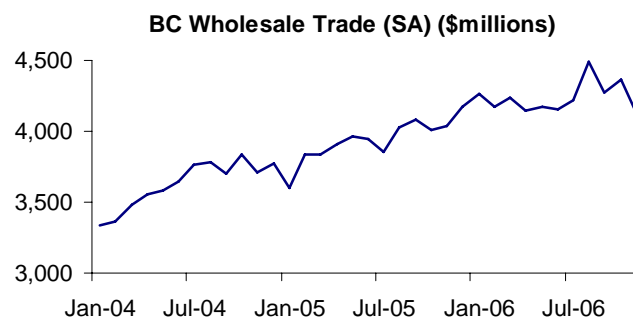
BC manufacturers did not fare as well as those in some other provinces in November. Canadian shipments were up 2.3% driven mostly by increases in Ontario (+3.7%) and Quebec (+2.0%), each of which benefited from a resurgence in the transportation equipment sector. In percentage terms, manufacturers in New Brunswick (+13.9%) saw the most notable increase, while other provinces exhibited weakness with declines ranging from 0.5% in Manitoba to 4.3% in Saskatchewan.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- Sales by wholesalers in the province continued to seesaw in November, dropping 5.3% (*seasonally adjusted*) following a 2.1% increase

in October. Canadian sales levelled (+0.1%), putting an end to a two-month slide.

Data Source: Statistics Canada



- British Columbia's annual average all-items CPI was 1.8% higher in 2006 compared to 2005. Energy and housing prices were the main contributors to BC's 2006 annual inflation. Gasoline prices rose 6.9% after a 12.2% increase the previous year, while the price of fuel oil rose 3.0% on top of a 25.7% increase the year before. The energy component overall recorded a 4.7% increase in 2006, following a 7.8% increase in 2005. The cost of owned accommodation rose 3.0% from 2005. Tuition prices rose 2.5% in 2006, after significant increases in 2003 (+23.1%), 2004 (+21.1%) and 2005 (+9.4%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- Sales by BC retailers dropped 1.5% (*seasonally adjusted*) in November, following two months of declines. However, sales were up 3.2% compared to November of 2005.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

