

Current Statistics ♦ May 2007

- **British Columbia's economy expanded 3.6% in 2006, marking a fifth straight year of solid economic growth.** Alberta, which posted a substantial 6.8% increase in gross domestic product (GDP \$1997, chained) was the only province that grew faster than British Columbia. The Canadian economy grew 2.7% last year.

GDP increased faster than the population, and real (\$1997, chained) GDP per capita rose 2.3%, to \$34,971 in 2006. Although this was lower than the national average (\$36,463), BC has made some gains in recent years, and the gap in per capita GDP (relative to Canada) is shrinking.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Exports of BC products expanded (+4.0%, seasonally adjusted) in March, marking the first monthly gain of 2007.** The export growth was bolstered by a jump in the value of forestry (+6.7%) products along with increased exports of industrial & consumer goods (+5.2%). Machinery, equipment & automotive (+2.1%) and agriculture & fishing (+3.8%) exports were also up but international energy shipments inched down (-0.5%). US-bound exports climbed 3.2%, largely due to higher forestry (+6.7%) and industrial (+6.3%) product shipments. Exports to other destinations advanced 5.3%, reflecting upturns across all major commodity groups.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate increased half a percentage point to 4.4% (seasonally adjusted) in April as employment in the province shrank (-0.7%) for the first time since November.** The job losses were concentrated in the service sector (-1.1%), with the biggest declines seen in education (-2.6%), finance, insurance & real estate (-2.7%), health care (-2.8%) and accommodation & food services (-3.5%).

In the goods sector, employment was up 0.5% as construction (+1.6%), utilities (+6.1%) and forestry, fishing & mining (+8.6%) were all hiring workers. However, manufacturing employed 1.6% fewer people than in March.

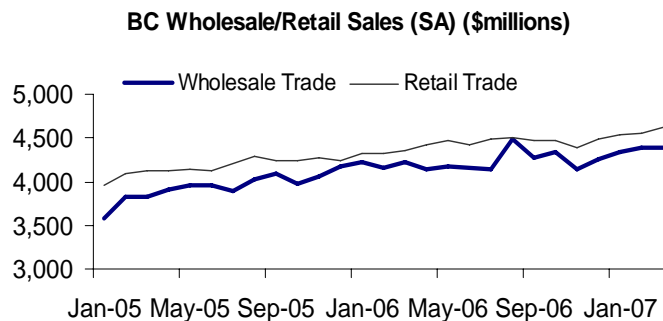
Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Women (-1.4%) felt the effects of April's job losses more than men (-0.2%).** Public sector employment was down 1.2%, while private sector employment slipped 0.6%, and the ranks of the self-employed fell back 0.8%. The number of part-time jobs in the province shrank 3.6% but full-time employment was unchanged from March. The unemployment rate for young workers (aged 15 to 25) rose 0.3 percentage points, to 7.6%, while the jobless rate for workers aged 25 and over jumped from 3.2% to 3.8%.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Retail sales in the province advanced 1.4% (seasonally adjusted) in March, marking the fourth straight monthly gain.** The increase reflected strength in the furniture, household furnishings & electronics (+4.1%) sector. Automotive retailers posted a 2.5% gain, which was driven by sales at gas stations (+6.3%), where increases were partly due to higher prices at the pump. Retailers of clothing & accessories posted a modest 1.2% increase, but general merchandisers (+0.5%) and food retailers (+0.4%) made only marginal gains.

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats



- **Wholesale sales in BC were unchanged (+0.0% seasonally adjusted) in March.** Wholesalers of machinery & equipment, motor vehicles, building supplies, food and pharmaceuticals posted increases, but other wholesalers did not fare as well. Nationally, wholesale sales were up 1.9%, with increases recorded in every province except BC and New Brunswick (-1.9%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities increased sharply (+25.5% seasonally adjusted) in March, reversing a similar decline in February (-22.0%).** Permits for residential projects were up 41.6%, while permits for other types of buildings increased a more moderate 1.4%. Planned spending on institutional & government projects surged (+68.3%), but permits for commercial (-8.3%) and industrial (-17.7%) projects declined. The value of permits more than doubled in Kelowna (+169.8%) and Victoria (+108.4%) and was also higher in Vancouver (+20.9%), while building intentions in Abbotsford (-57.2%) eased.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Housing starts in BC slowed in April, falling 2.7% (seasonally adjusted).** Canadian starts edged down (-1.0%), reflecting slowdowns in three of the four largest provinces. Starts slipped in BC, Alberta (-4.5%) and Quebec (-5.2%), but were up 7.9% in Ontario.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **British Columbia's year-over-year inflation rate eased to 1.9% in April, down from 2.2% in March.** The increase in the cost of energy products (+1.8%) was much slower than in the previous month (+5.4%). Excluding energy, the overall increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 1.9%.

Transportation costs were up 2.3%, with prices for private (+2.5%) transport increasing more than the cost of public transportation (+1.3%). Although gasoline prices rose in April (+3.0%), the rate of increase was down substantially from that seen in March (+10.1%). Consumers continued to pay more for fuel oil (+2.8%) and piped gas (+1.3%).

However, they paid less for electricity (-1.2%) and maintaining and repairing a home (-4.1%), and this helped moderate inflation in the cost of shelter (+1.5%). Food prices climbed 4.1%, pushed up by the soaring cost of fresh fruits (+15.0%) and vegetables (+16.0%). Consumers in the province saw some relief as prices for household furnishings (-1.3%) and clothing (-0.7%) were both down from April of last year.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Shipments by British Columbia manufacturers advanced 1.5% (seasonally adjusted) in March, mirroring February's (-1.5%) decline.** The province's two largest manufacturing industries saw mixed results. Shipments by manufacturers of wood products inched down 0.2%, while paper producers posted a 1.6% increase. The non-durables total rose (+3.4%) as increases in the paper and chemical (+6.2%) industries offset declines in food (-2.5%) and some other non-durable goods manufacturing. On the durables (-0.1%) side, producers of transportation equipment (+12.2%) and machinery (+3.6%) saw the most noticeable gains, nearly managing to outweigh downturns in the wood, primary metals (-9.9%) and computer & electronics (-2.0%) industries.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Production at BC sawmills was 9.1% lower in March than in the same month of 2006.** Mills in coastal regions of the province posted a particularly large decline (-27.0%), but production from Interior mills (-6.0%) was also down. Canadian production was off 12.0%, as volume decreased in most of the big lumber-producing provinces.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

