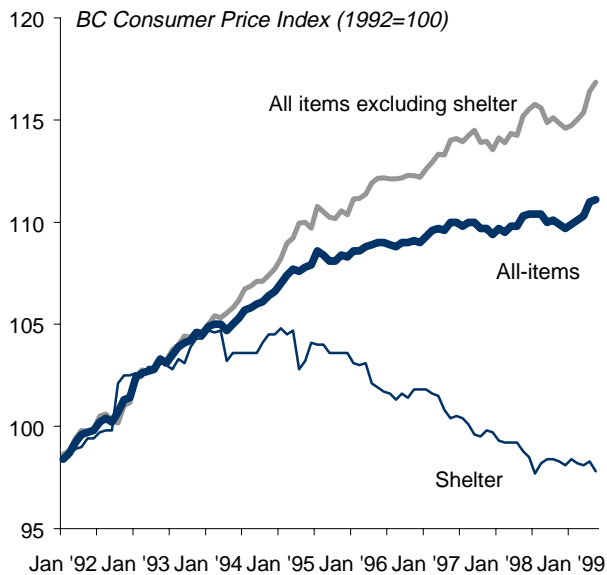


Current Statistics ♦ June 1999

BC's overall inflation rate has been very low during the last few years, largely due to declining shelter costs



- **British Columbia's consumer price index (CPI) increased 0.7% during the twelve-month period ending in May.** This brought the inflation rate back down to levels more in line with recent trends, following a spike (+1.1%) in April. The province had the second-lowest inflation rate in the country last month, after NWT (+0.6%). Canada's inflation rate was 1.6%, with rates in other regions ranging from 0.8% in PEI to 2.2% in Alberta.

Source: Statistics Canada

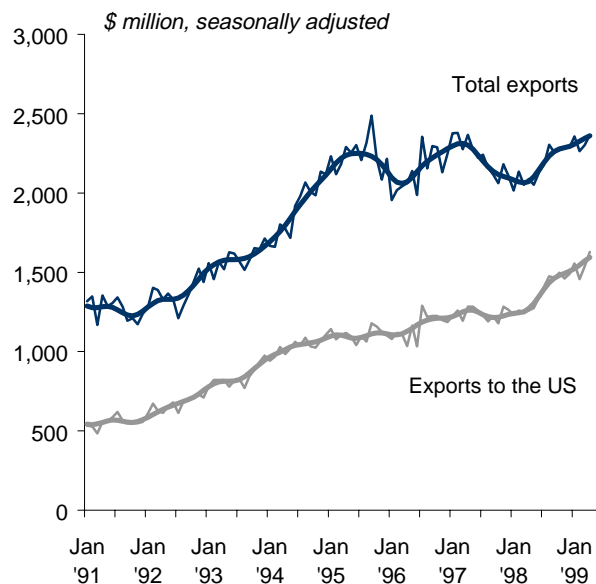
- **Lower shelter costs (-1.0%) continued to be the main reason for BC's persistently low inflation rate.** This was primarily due to an ongoing decline in the cost of owned accommodation (-2.5%), reflecting the effects of a relatively weak housing market and mortgage rates which remain virtually unchanged from the same time last year. The cost of other goods and services has been increasing at rates more similar to those in the rest of

Canada. The province's year-over-year inflation rate excluding shelter costs was 1.4% in May. The comparable figure for all of Canada was 1.8%. Source: Statistics Canada & BC STATS

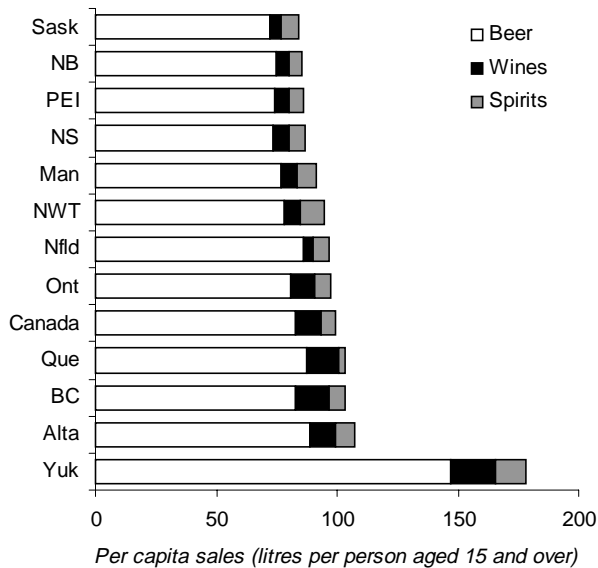
- **BC exporters continued their comeback in April.** Seasonally adjusted exports were up 2.7% from March 1999, marking the second straight monthly increase, and the sixth time in the last seven months that they have risen. The improvement was due to continued strength in exports to the US, which were up 5.9% from March. Two-thirds of BC's exports are to the United States. Although exchange rate effects were a major contributing factor to the growth in exports at the end of last year recent developments are more positive, as export growth has occurred even as the Canadian dollar has been gaining strength.

Source: BC STATS

British Columbia's exports have regained the ground lost during the last two years on the strength of booming trade with the US



On a per capita basis, British Columbians buy more wine than any other Canadians except those in the Yukon



- Alcohol sales by liquor stores, wineries and breweries in the province were among the highest in the country, when compared to the adult (15+) population, in 1997/98.** Per capita sales reached 103.5 litres, second only to those in Alberta (107.5) and Yukon (178.3). The national average was 99.2, with sales in the rest of Canada ranging from a low of 84.3 litres per adult in Saskatchewan to 103.0 in Quebec. Canadian sales were up for the first time in twelve years, but in BC, per capita sales were lower than in the previous year. The general downward trend in alcohol sales may be partly due to the proliferation of U-brews, which have made it easier for individuals to produce home-made beer and wines.

Source: Statistics Canada & BC STATS

- Beer is the drink of choice among Canadians and BC residents, accounting for about eighty percent of total sales by volume.** In BC, the average adult purchased 82.5 litres of beer from liquor stores and other outlets during 1997/98. This was virtually identical to the national average (82.8). We're more fond of wines than most Canadians, purchasing 14.0 litres per adult, well above the na-

tional average (10.7), and more than in any other region except Yukon (18.8). Quebec (13.0) was a close third. Newfoundlanders (3.8) were least likely to purchase wines.

Consumption of spirits was highest in the Prairie provinces, where average sales ranged from 7.7 litres per person in Saskatchewan to 8.0 litres in Manitoba. Most Canadians bought about twice as much wine as spirits, but residents of Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and NWT showed a preference for spirits. In BC, sales of spirits averaged 6.9 litres per adult, while the Canadian average was 5.7.

Source: Statistics Canada, Public Institutions Division

- The number of employment insurance (EI) recipients in the province decreased 1.1% (seasonally adjusted), to 66,120, in April.** There were fewer EI recipients in most parts of the country, with the number declining in eight of the twelve regions. Nationally, the number of recipients fell 1.6%, to 513,450.

Source: Statistics Canada

- Shipments of goods manufactured in BC eased back 1.3% (seasonally adjusted) between March and April.** The decline was widespread within the sector. Shipments by durable goods industries fell 2.1% despite an improvement (+1.7%) in the wood industry. The non-durables sector fared slightly better (-0.3%), largely due to gains in petroleum and coal products (+12.2%) and some clothing & textile-related industries. Paper shipments were virtually unchanged (-0.1%) from March.

Source: Statistics Canada

- Retail sales in British Columbia were up 1.3% (seasonally adjusted) in April, marking the fifth time in six months that they have risen.** Sales had reached a hiatus during the last two years, but the recent gains suggest that consumers are beginning to loosen their purse strings. BC, Yukon (+2.2%) and Saskatchewan (+1.0%) were the only regions where sales increased in April. Canadian sales were down 0.4%.

Source: Statistics Canada