

## highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

### Labour Market

- **British Columbia ended the year with an 8.2% unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted), just slightly above the national average of 8.0% in December.** The province's unemployment rate has been falling during most of 1998, and the increase in the rate (+0.3 points, from 7.9% in November) was the first since May. A decline in the number of jobs was the reason for the upturn in BC's unemployment rate. Employment dipped 0.4% (by 8,400) between November and December. At the same time, the size of the labour force edged down slightly (-2,600), as fewer people were either working or looking for work last month.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Nationally, the unemployment rate was stable at 8.0%, as a 0.2% increase in the number of jobs was large enough to absorb the addition of 29,400 people to the labour force in December.** Unemployment rates were unchanged (at 9.9% and 6.9%, respectively) in Quebec and Ontario, but the rate edged up in most other provinces. Alberta (-0.5 points, to 5.7%) and Nova Scotia (-0.4 points, to 10.6%) were the only exceptions. *Source: Statistics Canada*
- **Vancouver's unemployment rate dipped slightly, falling from 6.9% (seasonally adjusted, 3-month moving average) in November to 6.7% last month.** However, in Victoria (the only other BC city for which seasonally adjusted unemployment rates are available), the rate rose from 7.6% to 7.9%. *Source: Statistics Canada*
- **Among the regions, the labour market situation was mixed.** Unemployment rates (unadjusted, 3-month moving averages) re-

mained below December 1997 levels in Vancouver Island/Coast (8.9%) and Mainland/Southwest (6.5%), while rates were virtually unchanged in North Coast/Nechako (10.0%) and Thompson/Okanagan (7.5%). However, Kootenay's unemployment rate (12.1%) rose for the tenth straight month, and the rate continued to climb in Cariboo (15.8%). Cariboo's unemployment rate has stayed at or above 13.6% since the beginning of 1998.

Northeast BC, which had enjoyed record-low unemployment rates, is beginning to show the effects of a slowdown in the oil patch. The region's unemployment rate rose for the fourth time since August, increasing to 4.4% in December. Despite this, Northeast continued to enjoy one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Employment in British Columbia increased 1.2%, to an annual average of 1,860,400, during 1998.** Job growth in the province continued to be largely due to gains in part-time employment. Of the 22,700 additional jobs (annual average) in the province last year, 15,900 (+4.1%) involved part-time employment while 6,900 (+0.5%) were full-time jobs. Seven out of every ten net new jobs in BC last year were part-time. An increase in part-time employment was also responsible for most of the job growth during 1997. Just over a fifth (21.5%) of British Columbians with jobs worked part-time last year. *Source: Statistics Canada*
- **At the national level, the number of jobs increased 2.8%, to an annual average of 14.3 million, during 1998.** The net increase in jobs was mainly due to growth in full-time employment (+3.1%). The number of part-time jobs rose more moderately (+1.3%). Among the

### **Did you know...**

**There are an estimated 30 billion honeybees at work in Canada, most of them on the Prairies. Canada's honey production was valued at \$70 million in 1996, while the work of bees in pollinating certain crops is estimated to be worth an additional \$500 million. Up to a third of Canadian honey is exported to the United States.**

provinces, Alberta (+3.9%) and Ontario (+3.7%) recorded the strongest employment growth in the country. PEI (+0.7%) and Saskatchewan (+0.9%) had the weakest job growth. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **British Columbia's help-wanted index edged up slightly between November and December, increasing from 117 (1996=100, seasonally adjusted) to 118.** BC was one of only four provinces where the help-wanted index rose. Nova Scotia (+7 points, to 153) and Ontario (+3 points, to 156) recorded the strongest growth, while Alberta (-5 points, to 136) saw the largest decline. The Canadian help-wanted index was 2 points higher than in November, at 146.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

### **Wages and Salaries**

- **Wages and salaries (excluding benefits) paid to BC workers rose 0.3% (seasonally adjusted) between September and October.** Wages were up 0.7% at the national level, with the strongest gains posted in eastern Canada. Nova Scotia (+1.6%) led the regions, followed by Yukon (+1.2%) and Newfoundland (+1.0%). The three western provinces—Alberta (+0.5%), Saskatchewan (+0.4%) and BC (+0.3%)—recorded the lowest wage growth in the country.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

### **Bankruptcies**

- **There were 601 consumer bankruptcies registered in BC in October, compared to 604 in the same month of 1997, a decrease of 0.5%.** Consumer bankruptcies have been falling in most parts of the country, decreasing 16.0% overall.

Year-to-date, the number of consumer bankruptcies in the province was down 3.5% from the first ten months of 1997. Nationally, consumer bankruptcies fell 13.0%, with the largest decreases observed in Yukon (-33.3%) and Alberta (-19.1%). Six of the twelve regions posted double-digit declines. However, consumer bankruptcies were up sharply in Nova Scotia (+48.9%) and Newfoundland (+13.5%).

*Source: Industry Canada*

- **Consumer bankruptcy registrations in the province appear to have resumed a more normal pattern.** Consumer bankruptcies had fallen early in the year, in anticipation of a change in exemption levels for personal property. Following the adoption of the new provisions on May 1<sup>st</sup>, bankruptcies in BC rose sharply in both May and June. Since August, however, the number of bankruptcy registrations has been below 1997 levels, suggesting that the large increase in bankruptcy filings earlier in the year was a temporary aberration.

*Source: BC STATS & Industry Canada*

- **Business bankruptcies in the province remained above 1997 levels in October.** There were 76 business bankruptcies recorded in October, compared to 66 in the same month of 1997. The number of business bankruptcies registered in the province has remained above 1997 levels since May. During the first ten months of last year, there were 832 bankruptcies recorded in the province, compared to 743 in the same period of 1997. Nationally, the number of business bankruptcies was down 13.0% year-to-date.

*Source: Industry Canada*

### **Cruise Ship Activity**

- **During the 1998 cruising season (March to October), 294 vessels visited the port of Vancouver.** While the number of vessels stopping in Vancouver was down slightly from the previous year (when 298 vessels visited the port), they carried more passengers—873,102, up from 816,537 in 1997. Almost all of these passengers either joined or left their cruise ship in the city.

Since the beginning of the decade, cruise ship traffic through Vancouver has more than doubled. In 1991, there were 423,928 passengers, travelling on 256 vessels, who visited the port.

*Source: Vancouver Port Corporation*

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Research, Evaluation and Accountability

Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology

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**1. Introduction . . .** Last month's article [Infoline Report 98-48 dated December 4, 1998] reviewed data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey that captured post-secondary education participation in programs for credit. This household survey data includes estimates of participation in post-secondary programs that include university level programs, college level trade/vocational and career/technical programs, and other career programs, including students both at public or private post-secondary institutions. This article expands upon the overall trends noted in last month's article, by providing further breakdowns of categories or types of post-secondary participants between provinces. All the historical data reviewed below covers the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter period from 1976 to 1997, and focuses on individuals aged 18 to 24.

**2. Challenges in Interpreting Categories of Post-Secondary Education from the Labour Force Survey . . .** Statistics Canada provides three main categories of post-secondary participants - "university", "college/CEGEP" and "other". Based on responses to two key questions in the survey on the type of program they are undertaking and the name of the institution they are attending, a respondent who is engaged in a post-secondary program for credit is placed in one of these 3 categories. For the first two categories this is fairly self-evident. For example, a person in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a bachelor degree program at U.B.C. would fall under "university", while someone in a two year business diploma program at a community college would fall under "college/CEGEP".

The "other" category is more challenging to interpret and is defined by Statistics Canada to include those in secretarial schools, barber schools, hairdressing schools, and computer training, mainly at private post-secondary providers. However, this does lead to instances where this categorization could be a challenge for coding purposes and subsequent interpretation. In some cases the categorization

depends to a large extent upon the discretion of the interviewer and respondent, and is sensitive to inconsistencies in either interpreting responses or the degree of detail in the responses. Based on discussions with Statistics Canada, it was determined that, ideally, those in private post-secondary programs not covered by those in the "other" category are included in the totals for the "college/CEGEP" category. For example, those in an accounting program at a private post-secondary business administration college should appear in the "college/CEGEP" group. This article does not examine the participation and enrolments associated with this "other" category, chiefly because it is relatively small and our key purpose is to provide some comparisons between provinces for the "college/CEGEP" and "university" categories.

An important consideration in comparing college or university participation by persons aged 18 to 24 between provinces is acknowledgment of systemic differences in post-secondary systems between provinces. For example, in B.C. there are three main flexible avenues through which a university degree can be earned. First, a student can earn their undergraduate degree at a university from start to finish. Alternatively, most of the community colleges and university-colleges offer university transfer programs, where students can complete the first one or two years of a bachelor degree, and then transfer the credits to a university for completion. More recently, students have a third option of earning a degree entirely from a provincial university-college. Such students, it can be argued, are in a practical sense university-level students taking university-level programs outside of a university. Turning to data from the Labour Force Survey on post-secondary education participation, students in this third group and possibly some university transfer students may be appearing in Statistics Canada's "university" category."

In Ontario, for the most part, the college and university sectors are considered two separate entities, with community colleges being seen as

distinct alternatives to universities, resulting in little in the way of a formal relationship between the two. In contrast, colleges and universities in B.C. have embraced the benefits to students of laddering and strong articulation of credits.

Finally, it should be noted the college system in Quebec is unique within Canada, with a relatively large proportion of high-school graduates attending “colleges d’enseignement general et professionnel” (CEGEP’s). This has the impact of resulting in relatively high “college/CEGEP” participation rates for Quebec relative to other provinces. After completing high school in grade 11, students in Quebec enroll in CEGEP’s for one or two years prior to entering either university or the labour force. CEGEP’s are very different from the public community colleges in other provinces which primarily offer post-secondary programs.

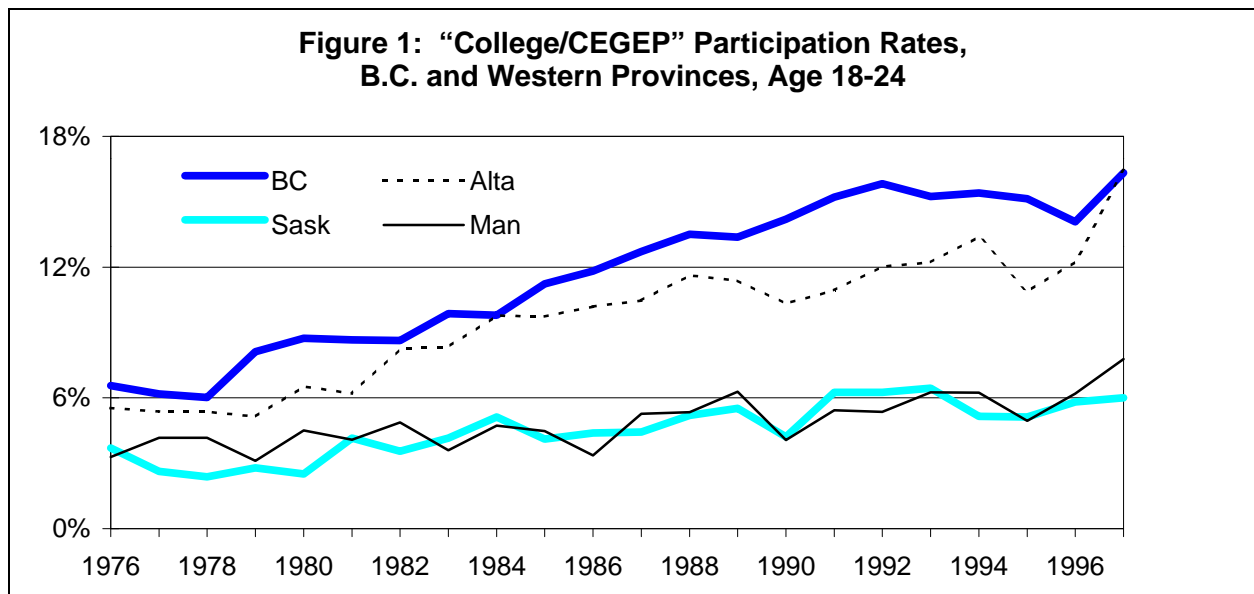
### 3. “College/CEGEP” Participation Rates . . .

In looking at inter-provincial differences in post-secondary participation rates, it is interesting to

look separately at the “university” and “college/CEGEP” categories provided by Statistics Canada. However, when examining the household survey data it is important to keep the nuances for these defined categories in mind.

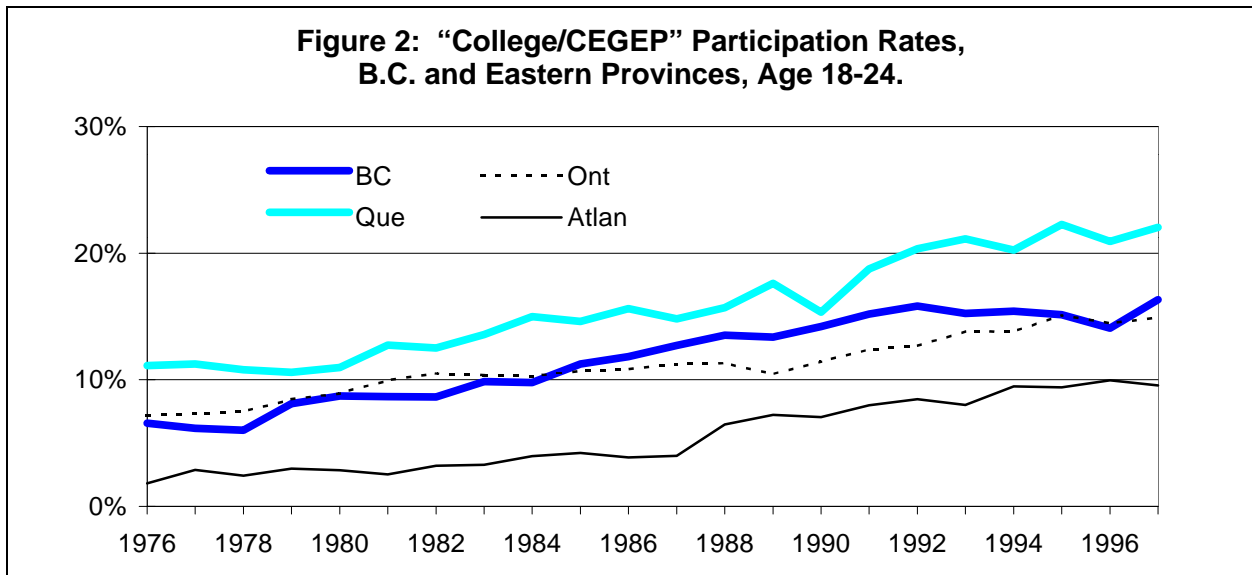
Other than B.C., the only other provinces to offer what is considered by Statistics Canada to be university transfer programs (in any significant numbers) are Alberta and Quebec.

In Figure 1, “college/CEGEP” participation rates for those aged 18 to 24 are presented for B.C. and the other 3 western provinces. The most apparent trend is the widening gap between both B.C. and Alberta rates and the rates of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Both B.C. and Alberta experienced steady and significant growth in their “college” participation rates between 1976 and 1997, while Manitoba and Saskatchewan experienced only slight increases in participation.



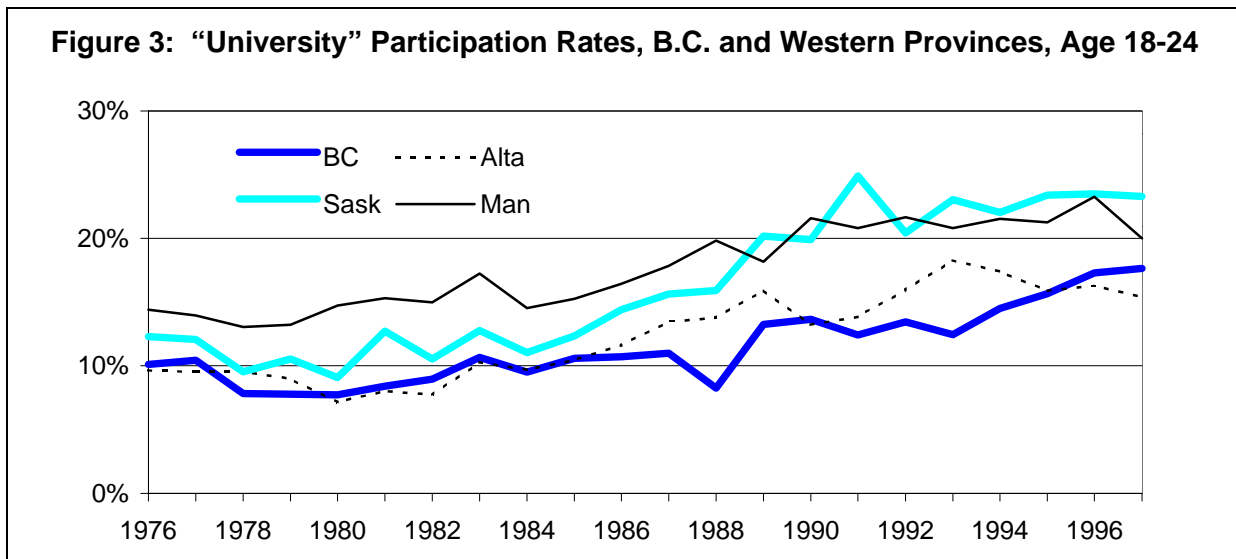
Similar to the comparison with the western provinces, B.C. stands out in Figure 2 as having seen higher than average “college” participation rates compared to Atlantic provinces or Ontario, but remain lower than in Quebec. “College” participation rate movements in B.C. relative to the eastern provinces are less dramatic and have grown at

about the same rate since 1976. In Figure 2 we see that B.C.’s participation rate for those aged 18 to 24 compares favourably with Ontario’s, exceeding it since 1984 with only one exception in 1996. The college participation rate in the Atlantic provinces has continued to remain well below that in B.C.



**"University" Participation Rates. . .** Unlike college participation, B.C. has generally been lower in "university" participation rates for persons aged 18 to 24 compared to the other three western provinces, with rates consistently below those of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. More recently, B.C. compares

closely with Alberta in "university" participation based on the Labour Force Survey estimates reviewed here by Statistics Canada. Note that since 1993, participation rates for the other three western provinces leveled off or declined while B.C.'s "university" participation rate continued to increase.



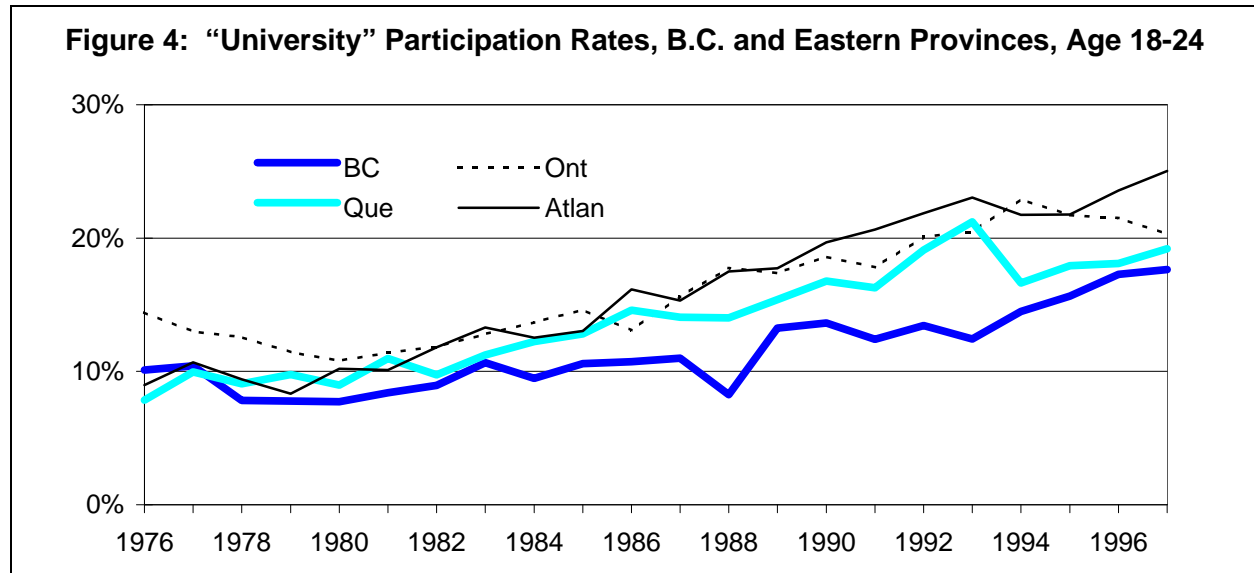
In Figure 4, university participation rates for those aged 18 to 24 in B.C. are compared with the eastern provinces. During the last half of the 1980's and early 1990's, B.C. had considerably lower university participation


rates than the eastern provinces. However, with the more recent decline in university participation rates in Ontario and the leveling off of rates in Quebec, this gap has narrowed between Canada's three largest provinces by 1997. In the

Atlantic provinces, university participation rates increased at a relatively rapid pace compared with B.C. and the other eastern provinces, with particularly strong growth from 1983 to 1993. The Atlantic provinces have a relatively less

developed community college system than most other provinces. This contrasts to their relatively large university system (especially in Nova Scotia) in relation to their population base.

**Figure 4: "University" Participation Rates, B.C. and Eastern Provinces, Age 18-24**



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## BC at a glance . . .

<b>POPULATION (thousands)</b>		
	Oct 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	4,021.3	0.9
Canada	30,381.1	0.9
<b>GDP and INCOME</b>		
	1997	% change on one year ago
<i>(BC - at market prices)</i>		
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$ millions)	109,347	3.3
GDP (\$ 1992 millions)	98,201	2.2
GDP (\$ 1992 per Capita)	24,775	0.1
Personal Disposable Income (\$ 1992 per Capita)	16,340	-2.3
<b>TRADE (\$ millions)</b>		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Oct	2,925	5.1
Merchandise Exports (raw) Oct	2,251	6.3
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Oct	2,735	-3.3
<b>CONSUMER PRICE INDEX</b>		
	Nov '98	% change on one year ago
<i>(all items - 1992=100)</i>		
BC	109.9	0.2
Canada	109.0	1.2
<b>LABOUR FORCE (thousands)</b>		
	Dec '98	% change on one year ago
<i>(seasonally adjusted)</i>		
Labour Force - BC	2,063	2.6
Employed - BC	1,895	3.1
Unemployed - BC	168	-3.0
		Dec '97
Unemployment Rate - BC (percent)	8.2	8.6
Unemployment Rate - Canada (percent)	8.0	8.6
<b>INTEREST RATES (percent)</b>		
	Jan 6/99	Jan 7/98
Prime Business Rate	6.75	6.00
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.20	6.65
- 5 year	6.60	7.05
<b>US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE</b>		
	Jan 6/99	Jan 7/98
<i>(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn \$</i>		
	1.5103	1.4302
<i>US \$ (reciprocal of above rate)</i>		
	0.6621	0.6992
<b>AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS</b>		
	Oct '98	% change on one year ago
<i>(industrial aggregate - dollars)</i>		
BC	623.55	1.5
Canada	608.83	2.0
<b>SOURCES:</b>		
Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings	} Statistics Canada	
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates:	Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics	

### Released this week by BC STATS

- Exports, October 1998 [released Dec 24/98]
- No subscription releases this week

### Next week

- Labour Force Statistics, December 1998