BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

tel (250) 387-0327
fax (250) 387-0329

Issue: **99-32** **6** Pages
August 13, 1999

All issues since 97-01 are on our website:

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Housing

- **MLS sales of existing homes in the province increased 4.9% (seasonally adjusted) between May and June.** The number of homes sold in Canada rose 3.2% during the same period. Sales were up in every province except New Brunswick (-8.5%), PEI (-5.0%) and Alberta (-2.4%). Saskatchewan (+7.9%) and Manitoba (+7.0%) posted the strongest gains.
Source: Canadian Real Estate Assocation data

- **The average price of existing homes sold in the province in June was $216,877, up from $215,045 in the same month last year.** BC has the country's highest house prices, at more than a third (35%) above the national average ($160,594). Residential prices in Ontario, the second most expensive market, averaged $175,495 in June. In the rest of the country, they ranged from $76,608 in PEI to $141,354 in NWT. *Source: Canadian Real Estate Assocation data*

- **The cost of new housing in BC continued to fall in June.** The new housing price index (NHPI was down 4.2% (relative to June 1998) in Vancouver, and fell 2.8% in Victoria. Canada's NHPI was marginally higher (+0.5%) this June than a year earlier. Calgary (+4.2%), Regina (+3.6%) and Montreal (+2.1%) have all seen significant increases in new house prices during the last year. Sudbury-Thunder Bay (-0.7%) was the only area city besides Vancouver and Victoria where prices were lower than in June 1998.
Source: Statistics Canada

- **New house prices in BC's two largest cities have been declining steadily since mid-1994.** The latest decline in the NHPI means that the cost of a typical new home in Vancouver is now 16% lower than in 1992, while prices have dropped by a total of 24% in Victoria.

  Although new house prices have changed significantly in some parts of the country (both Calgary and Regina, for example, have seen new house prices increase more than a quarter since 1992), the Canadian NHPI has stayed remarkably stable during the 1990s. Since 1991, the national NHPI has never risen above 101.8 (1992=100), or dropped below 98.1.

  It should be noted that, in addition to market conditions, new house prices reflect the type and quality of home being built. Thus, if builders shift to constructing more multi-family and fewer single-detached dwellings, as has happened in Vancouver and Victoria, this will have an effect on price levels. *Source: Statistics Canada & BC STATS*

- **Housing starts in British Columbia declined modestly (-0.7%, seasonally adjusted) in July after plunging 17.0% in the previous month.** Nationally, they were down 4.5%, reflecting weakness in three of the four largest markets. Starts fell 9.6% in Ontario, and decreased in both Alberta (-4.8%) and BC. Quebec, however, bucked the trend (+3.5%). Multiple-unit starts in the Toronto area had soared in May and June, and last month's decline represents an adjustment to a level that more closely reflects the actual demand.
Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

- **Actual (unadjusted) data show starts on multiple-family units in urban areas of BC down 46.5% from July 1998, while starts on single detached homes rose 15.7%.** Last month, construction commenced on 626 multi-family units and 798 single-family homes in BC.
Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Report **British Columbia's labour market**

Did you know...
A 1994 survey found that 95% of drivers listen to music or the news, 71% drink beverages, 66% eat, and 64% change tapes or CDs while driving. Also included in the top ten distracting activities for drivers were: reading a map (33%), talking on a cellular phone (18%),combing their hair (16%), putting on make up (14%), reading a newspaper or magazine (6%) and shaving (4%). The percentages were generally higher in the under-30 crowd.

Supply of Doctors

- **There were 7,752 active physicians in the province in 1998.** General practitioners (4,263) outnumbered specialists (3,489) in BC, but the numbers were more evenly split in most parts of the country. Nationwide, there were 28,542 GPs and 27,661 specialists practicing medicine in 1998.

  BC had the third highest physician to population ratio in the county last year. There were 193 physicians for every 100,000 people living in the province, more than in every province except Nova Scotia (196) and Quebec (211). The national average was 185. Not surprisingly, the most sparsely populated areas–NWT (92), Yukon (149) and Saskatchewan (149)–had the lowest ratios.

  Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information

- **Last year, 74 BC physicians–about 1% of the total physician supply–left the country to live abroad, while 43 returned to BC from other parts of the world, resulting in a net loss of 31 physicians to international migration.** Nationwide, 569 physicians left Canada last year, while 321 returned to the country from abroad. The outflow of physicians from Canada to other countries has remained stable at one to two percent of the physician population since the 1980s.

  The loss due to international migration from BC was more than compensated for by a net gain of 123 physicians who came here from other parts of Canada. In total, the number of physicians who hung up their shingles in the province last year exceeded those who took them down by 130. *Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information*

- **The average age of physicans in BC was 46.8 years, just under the Canadian average of 47.0 years.** Across the country, average ages ranged from 42.8 in NWT to 48.9 in PEI. As in the rest of the population, the average age of doctors has been creeping up during the 1990s. In 1993, the average physician in BC was 45.3 years old. During the same period, the average age of all British Columbians increased from 37.3 to 38.1. *Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information*

Trade with China

- **Canada imported $8.9 billion of goods from China (including Hong Kong) in 1998, with about a quarter ($2.1 billion) of these goods entering the country through BC ports.** Electrical machinery & equipment ($1.4 billion) makes up the biggest share of total imports, with clothing ($1.3 billion) and toys and games ($1.1 billion) ranked second and third. Canada also imports significant amounts of machinery ($0.8 billion) and footwear ($0.6 billion) from China.

  Although China supplies just 3.0% of total imports to Canada, it is the main source of imported feathers, down, and artificial flowers (82% of total imports); baskets (66%); umbrellas and walking sticks (62%); and leather (60%). Forty-three percent of the footwear imported into Canada comes from China, as do 37% of the clocks and watches, 35% of toys and games; and 35% of the headgear.

  China/Hong Kong is BC's third most important export market, after the US and Japan. In 1998, BC's exports to the region reached $724 million, accounting for almost 3% of total exports from the province. *Source: BC STATS*

The Nation

- **Canada's composite leading indicator rose 0.1% (seasonally adjusted) between June and July, making its smallest gain since last November.** The principal brake on growth in July was a softening of the demand for durable goods (+0.0%), which was related to a slump in auto sales. However, furniture and appliance sales (+0.4%) picked up speed as the housing index continued to boom. The housing index, a composite of housing starts and sales of existing homes, was up 1.3% in July. *Source: Statistics Canada*

highlights, Issue 99-32
August 13, 1999

August 13, 1999 *Infoline Report:*

The British Columbia labour market - second quarter 1999

Contact: Stephen Pal / (250) 952-6111
Research, Evaluation & Accountability
Min. of Advanced Education, Training & Technology

Originally published in June 1999 issue, *Labour Force Statistics.* Annual subscription: $60 + GST

Summary . . . Seasonally adjusted **employment** in British Columbia in the second quarter decreased from the first quarter of 1999 by 1.5 per cent. This is the first decrease after four consecutive quarters of employment growth. Decreases in **full-time employment** were seen for the first time in four quarters, but part-time employment has been declining modestly for the last three quarters in a row. However, the strong employment gains in the first quarter of 1999 more than offset the decreases in the second quarter of 1999, so seasonally adjusted employment for the first half of 1999 stands at 32,000 above the second half of 1998. The number of those actively looking for work in the second quarter of 1999, **the unemployed**, rose by 4,000 from the first quarter. The seasonally adjusted **unemployment rate** rose to 8.6 per cent from 8.2 per cent in the first quarter of 1999.

Employment and Unemployment Rate . . . Figure 1 provides a view of quarter to quarter changes in seasonally adjusted employment levels and the unemployment rate. Employment declined in the second quarter of 1999 for the first time since the first quarter of 1998. Four-fifths of the employment decrease in the second quarter of 1999 were experienced by women. In spite of this decrease in the latest quarter, employment had grown in each of the previous four quarters. In the second quarter of 1998, the decrease in employment was accompanied by a rise in the estimated number of unemployed persons, which pushed up the unemployment rate to 8.6 per cent from 8.2 per cent in the first quarter of 1999. All of the increase occurred for women, whose unemployment rate rose to 8.3 per cent from 7.5 per cent, while the rate for men remained at 8.8 per cent.

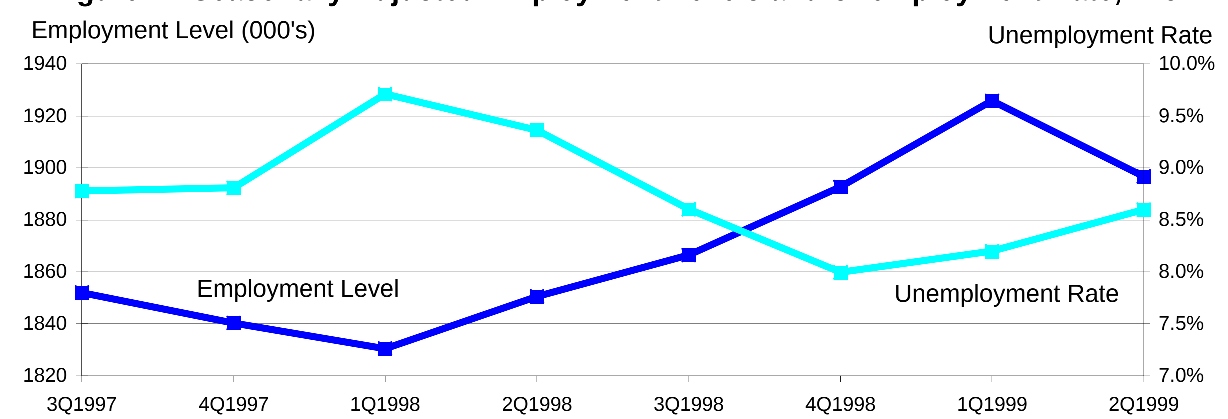


Figure 1: Seasonally Adjusted Employment Levels and Unemployment Rate, B.C.

Employment by Industry Classification . . . Figure 2 compares seasonally adjusted quarterly net changes in employment by industrial classification. The goods sector in the second quarter from the previous quarter saw a net decline of 12,000 in seasonally adjusted employment, adding to the loss of 3,000 in the first quarter of 1999. Construction and other primary (which includes logging, mining, oil & gas, and fishing) were both down, but overall manufacturing has held steady since the second quarter of 1998. In services, the second quarter of 1999 saw the first net decline in overall services employment following strong gains in each of the previous four quarters. For the latest quarter, services were down or flat in all sectors except for modest net gains in health services and retail & wholesale trade. The latter sector has continued to add net employment gains since the first quarter of 1998.

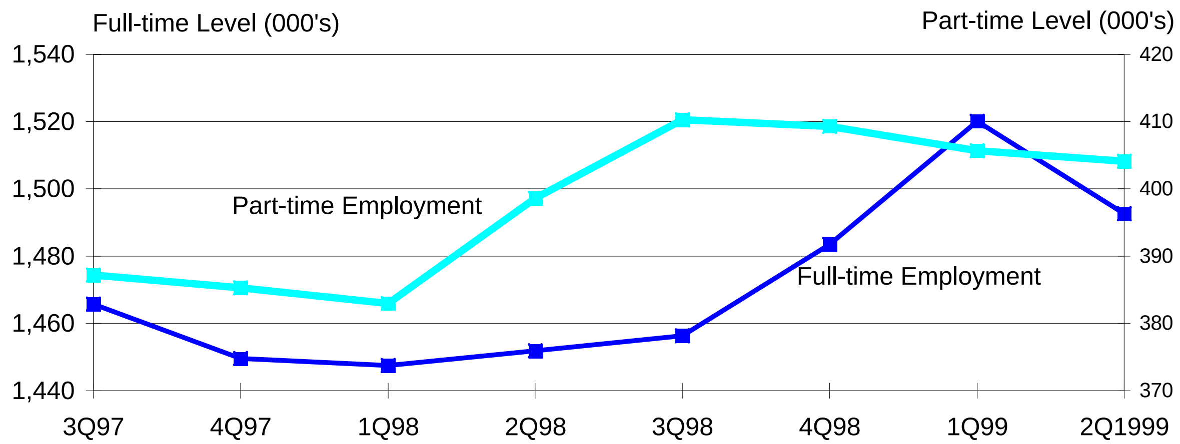
BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gems8.gov.bc.ca

Figure 2: B.C. Employment by Industrial Classification (seasonally adjusted)
(net change from previous quarter in '000's)

	1Q98	*2Q98*	*3Q98*	*4Q98*	*1Q99*	*2Q99*	*Employment Level 2Q99 (000's)*
Goods Sector	**-0.3**	**-19.3**	**-11.5**	**8.7**	**-2.7**	**-11.8**	**385.7**
Agriculture	0.7	-0.4	-4.7	-1.2	2.7	3.3	30.1
Other primary	-2.6	-3.6	-3.6	0.4	-0.3	-4.3	43.2
Utilities	-0.1	1.5	1.5	-1.7	-2.7	0.9	10.9
Construction	1	-8.8	-5.7	10.8	-3.5	-10.6	109.5
Manufacturing	0.8	-8.1	0.9	0.8	0.7	-0.9	192.1
Service Sector	**-4.1**	**39.4**	**27.4**	**17.3**	**35.9**	**-17.3**	**1,510.9**
Trade	-8.4	22.5	7.9	3.6	4.2	5.5	321.1
Transportation & warehousing	-2.7	-0.6	4	12.9	0.7	-3.1	111.4
Finance, insur. & real estate	-0.2	-2.6	-3.7	7.2	4.8	-1.4	117.7
Prof. scientific & technical	-8.1	8.5	7.4	-1.0	-1.2	-8.0	126.9
Management, administrative	8.1	4.8	0.8	-5.3	-2.8	0.3	62.2
Education services	4.9	1.6	-0.8	9.7	-2.9	-2.4	123.1
Health & social assistance	1.8	7.3	10.5	0.5	-7.1	6.0	206.6
Information, culture & rec.	-6.9	-4.7	2.7	-8.0	6.6	-3.2	88.5
Accommodation & food	3.1	-11.3	4.4	8.8	9.6	-7.1	156.4
Other services	0.4	6.7	-9.0	0.8	19.8	-3.0	106.7
Public administration	4	7.3	3.2	-12.1	4.2	-0.8	90.3

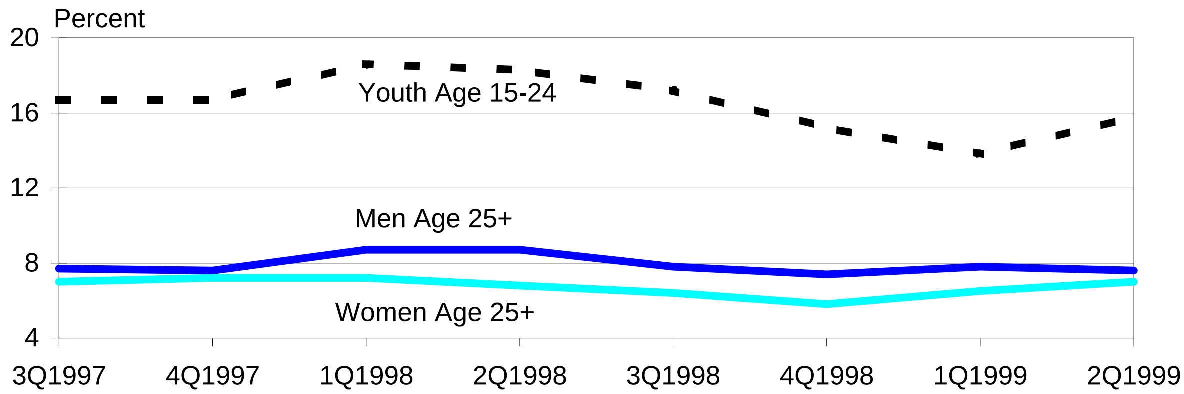
Full and Part-time Employment . . . Figure 3 shows quarterly seasonally adjusted full-time and part-time employment levels in B.C. Seasonally adjusted full-time employment in the second quarter of 1998 fell by 28,000, partially offsetting the consecutive net gains of 27,000 in the fourth quarter of 1998 and 37,000 in the first quarter of 1999. Most of the decrease in full-time employment in the second quarter was felt by women (down 23,000). Overall part-time employment remained little changed in the second quarter of 1999, following very modest net declines in both the fourth quarter of 1998 and first quarter of 1999.

Figure 3: B.C. Quarterly Full-time and Part-time Employment Levels seasonally adjusted



Unemployment . . . The B.C. seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the second quarter of 1999 rose to 8.6 per cent from 8.2 per cent in the first quarter, yet remains well below the 9.7 per cent level seen in the first quarter of 1998. Looking at Figure 5, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for men aged 25+ in the second quarter of 1999 was 7.6 per cent, down 0.2 percentage points from the first quarter of 1999. The unemployment rate for women aged 25+ rose to 7.0 per cent, up 0.5 percentage points from the first quarter of 1999. For youth overall, their unemployment rate rose to 15.8 per cent, yet this remains below the 17 per cent level where it stood above for the first three quarters of 1998. Most of the rise in the youth unemployment rate in the second quarter was felt by young women, yet their unemployment rate of 15.1 per cent still remains below the 16.2 per cent level for young men.

Figure 4: B.C. Quarterly Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates



Regional . . . Above average actual employment growth for the first half of 1999 from the same period in 1998 was seen in the large Vancouver Island-Coast and Lower Mainland-Southwest regions, boosting their respective employment to population ratios. Actual average employment levels declined in the Cariboo, North Coast/Nechako and Northeast regions, likely reflecting their higher concentrations in the other primary and resource manufacturing sectors. Unemployment rates fell in all regions except the Thompson-Okanagan and the Northeast (yet for the latter, the jump in unemployment rate likely reflects variability of estimated size of unemployed persons for this small region). Regional results suggest strength in the large urban areas which have a higher concentration of service sector employment.

Figure 5: Regional Labour Market Changes, Actual

Development Regions	Employment (000's)			Unemployment Rate			Employment/Pop. Ratio		
	1st Half 1998	1st Half 1999	Change	1st Half 1998	1st Half 1999	Change	1st Half 1998	1st Half 1999	Change
Vancouver Island/Coast	316.8	331.0	4.5%	10.8%	8.6%	-2.2%	54.9%	57.4%	2.4%
Lower Mainland/S.W.	1067.0	1117.9	4.8%	9.4%	7.9%	-1.5%	59.1%	61.1%	2.0%
Thompson/Okanagan	209.3	211.6	1.1%	9.2%	10.8%	1.6%	54.9%	55.1%	0.2%
Kootenay	67.0	69.7	3.9%	12.7%	10.2%	-2.5%	55.3%	57.2%	2.0%
Cariboo	80.3	78.5	-2.3%	14.5%	13.8%	-0.7%	62.9%	60.8%	-2.1%
North Coast/Nechako	48.9	48.0	-1.9%	10.3%	9.2%	-1.1%	61.1%	59.6%	-1.5%
Northeast	33.7	32.7	-3.3%	3.2%	8.5%	5.4%	66.0%	63.8%	-2.3%
B.C. Avg above	**1823.2**	**1889.1**	**3.6%**	**9.9%**	**8.8%**	**-1.1%**	**58.0%**	**59.6%**	**1.5%**

Infoline

August 13, 1999

fax transmission information service from **BC STATS**

also on the Internet at http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Apr 1/99	% change on one year ago
BC	4,028.3	0.7
Canada	30,482.9	0.9
GDP and INCOME		
(BC - at market prices)	1997	% change on one year ago
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
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) May	3,001	14.8
Merchandise Exports (raw) May	2,355	13.6
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) May	2,757	-0.5
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		
(all items - 1992=100)	Jun '99	% change on one year ago
BC	111.5	1.0
Canada	110.5	1.6
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		
(seasonally adjusted)	Jul '99	% change on one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,058	0.9
Employed - BC	1,881	1.2
Unemployed - BC	178	-2.6
		Jul '98
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.6	8.9
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	7.7	8.4
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Aug 11/99	Aug 12/98
Prime Business Rate	6.25	6.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	7.25	6.75
- 5 year	8.05	7.15
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Aug 11/99	Aug 12/98
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4907	1.5150
US $ *(reciprocal of the closing rate)*	0.6724	0.6582
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	May '99	% change on one year ago
BC	622.77	1.3
Canada	605.83	0.3

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bank-banque-canada.ca/english/wfsgen.htm

Released this week by BC STATS

- —

Next week

- Consumer Price Index, July 1999
- Exports, June 1999

BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9V1

Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gems8.gov.bc.ca