

- **Unemployment rate creeps up to 8.1% in April**
- **Housing starts up 17.1% after a lacklustre March**
- **Prison sentences decline by 10% between 1997/98 and 2000/01**

Labour Force

- **The BC unemployment rate rose 0.4 percentage points to 8.1% (seasonally adjusted) in April.** This was the combined effect of a small expansion in the size of the labour force (+0.1%) and a larger decline in the number of the employed (-0.4%). The national unemployment rate also edged upward from 7.3% to 7.5%. New Brunswick was hit hardest, with a 0.5 percentage point rise in the unemployment rate, while Nova Scotia saw the largest decline in the jobless rate (down 0.7 points).

April saw a decline of 7,400 jobs in BC. Self-employment fell most sharply (-0.9%), followed by public sector employment (-0.8%) and private sector jobs (-0.1%). As well, job losses reflected a steep decline in part-time employment (-2.5%), partly offset by growth in full time work (+0.3%). *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The employment downturn was driven by weakness in the goods sector particularly agriculture and construction which registered a 2.4% decrease in employment.** Services, in contrast, showed a marginal increase of 0.2%. The strongest service industries were information, culture, and recreation (+5.9%) and professional, scientific, and technical fields (+2.1%). *Source: Statistics Canada*
- **Regionally, the unemployment rate was down in all parts of the province except the Kootenaysa region with steadily rising unemployment this year.** The Kootenay regional unemployment rate in April was 15% (non-seasonally adjusted, three-month moving average), almost twice the BC unemployment rate. Elsewhere, unemployment rates ranged from 12.5% in the Cariboo re-

gion to a low of 7.2% in the Northeast.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Employer-sponsored training in BC lags behind other regions of the country.** Only 30% of BC workers receive classroom training, the lowest proportion in Canada. Thirty-two percent of BC workers received on-the-job training—a higher incidence than in Quebec and Atlantic Canada, but lower than in Ontario and the Prairies. Overall, small firms are less likely to offer training, and low-skill, low-education workers are less likely to receive employer-sponsored training.

Source: SC, Catalogue 71-584-MPE

Housing

- **BC housing starts rose 17.1% in April (seasonally adjusted).** This is a significant improvement over March housing starts (-4.8%) and a much better performance than seen at the national level (-5.7%).

Source: Statistics Canada

- **The value of building permits issued in BC jumped by 38.3% in March.** This is the largest month-to-month increase since September 1997 (seasonally adjusted), and contrasts with the small decline (-4.4%) in the value of permits for Canada as a whole. Residential building permits (up 48.7%) largely drove the gains in BC, rather than commercial, institutional, or industrial permits (together up 10.1%). The growth of construction intentions is not spread evenly across the province: striking gains in Vancouver (60.3%) stand apart from notable decline in Victoria (-39.1%).

Source: Statistics Canada

- **The quarterly, non-seasonally adjusted building permits data tell a different story.** BC's first quarter of 2003 showed no change

Did you know...
BC produced half a million pounds of nuts in 2001.

from the first quarter of 2002. The North Coast and Nechako (north-central) development regions showed the strongest quarterly gains (up 102% and 187% respectively). Northeast (-47%), Kootenay (-35.5%), and Thompson/Okanagan (-22%) had the worst showings. Cariboo region showed comfortable gains (+31.3%), as did Vancouver Island/South Coast (+18%). *Source: Statistics Canada*

Government Finance

- **Toll revenue from the Coquihalla Highway was \$3.6 million in April 2003, an increase of 10.3% over April of last year.** Tolls amounted to \$45.4 million in fiscal year 2002/03, which is 6% more than in 2001/02. Passenger vehicles accounted for just over half (52.3%) of toll revenues.

Source: Ministry of Transportation data

- **Federal expenditures on science and technology (S&T) in BC were \$479 million in 2000/01.** BC ranks third among the provinces for federal S&T expenditures, receiving 12% of the funds distributed to the provinces/territories. Natural sciences claimed 92% of BC's federal S&T funding, with the remaining 8% going to social sciences. The federal government planned to increase funding for S&T by 3% for the year 2002/03.

Source: Statistics Canada

Liquor Distribution

- **Consumers in BC purchased over 72 million litres of alcoholic beverages in the first three months of 2003.** This represents a negligible (0.8%) increase over the same months of 2002. The total price for the first quarter beverages was \$492 million (or \$6.80 per litre). Note that these figures include some amount of de-alcoholized products

Source: BC Liquor Distribution Branch data

Criminal Justice

- **The number of adults in BC sentenced to prison fell by 10% between 1997/98 and 2000/01.** The number of conditional sentences issued grew by 55% over the same period. Conditional sentences, first introduced in Canada in 1996, allow offenders with short prison terms (less than two years) to serve

their sentence in the community under certain conditions.

The conditional sentence is still not widely used, however. Among adult offenders sentenced to the corrections system, 13% received a conditional sentence in 2000/01; 47% were sentenced to probation, and 39% were incarcerated.

Females sentenced to corrections are more likely than men to receive a conditional sentence (16% vs. 12%). Incarceration is much less common for women sentenced to corrections (22%) than for men (40%). Aboriginals are a little more likely to be imprisoned (41%) than non-aboriginals (38%), though there are no significant differences between their chances of receiving a conditional sentence.

Source: SC, Catalogue 85-560-XIE

The Nation

- **Women made up 54% of doctors and dentists and 48% of business and financial professionals in Canada in 2002.** Much occupational segregation remains, however. Only 21% of professionals in natural science, engineering and mathematics, and 25% of senior managers, are women. Women are over-represented among clerks and other administrators (75%), and under-represented among traditional blue-collar occupations such as manufacturing (30%) or transportation, trades, and construction (7%).

There are also notable differences in work arrangements between men and women. Women account for only one-third (35%) of self-employed workers and a full two-thirds (69%) of part-time workers. Among part-time employees, 15% of women and 1% of men gave "caring for children" as their reason for working part-time. *Source: SC, Catalogue 89-F013-XIE*

- **Canada's stocks of grain and oilseeds have fallen markedly from previous years, reflecting recurrent drought in the Western provinces.** On-farm inventories dropped by 32% over the year ending March 2003.

Source: Statistics Canada

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Stay-at-Home Workers

A significant percentage of the Canadian labour force works out of their home. In 2001, 8% of all Canadian workers worked at home.¹ The advent of the Internet, e-mail and other telecommunication technology has enabled employees from a variety of industries, as well as self-employed individuals, to opt for working out of their own homes where previously that option did not exist.

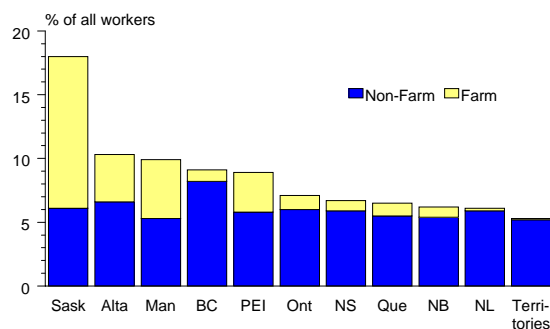
There are advantages and disadvantages to working out of the home. Advantages to the worker include reductions in expenses including food and transportation, less time commuting, and a greater ability to balance work and family responsibilities. For the employer there are also advantages. Generally, employees that work at home are more productive and less prone to absenteeism. Also, overhead costs are reduced for the employer.

Disadvantages to the employer include communication and co-ordination issues, lack of supervisory control and problems with information security. For the employee, working at home may make them feel isolated and result in fewer social ties. It also leads to fewer "networking" opportunities, which may result in fewer prospects for career advancement.

In British Columbia, the percentage of the labour force working from home is 9.1%, ahead of the Canadian average, but ranking fourth behind the three Prairie Provinces. The prevalence of farmers in these provinces is the reason why they have more stay-at-home workers. If farmers are excluded, BC is the province with the largest percentage of the labour force working out of their homes.

¹ All figures are from the 2001 Census. To be classified as someone who works at home, one must have worked at home most of the time. Those who work at home only sometimes are not included in the Census definition of home-based workers.

BC ranks fourth behind the three Prairie Provinces in terms of percentage of the labour force working at home, but is ranked first when farmers are excluded



Some of the variation between provinces can be explained by the difference in the types of industries and occupations that are dominant within each province. In addition to farming, there are certain occupations that are more suited to working from home than others. For some industries, such as many of those in manufacturing, for example, there is a requirement for the employee to be physically present at a job site. It is simply not feasible for an employee to assemble a vehicle, for example, in their home.

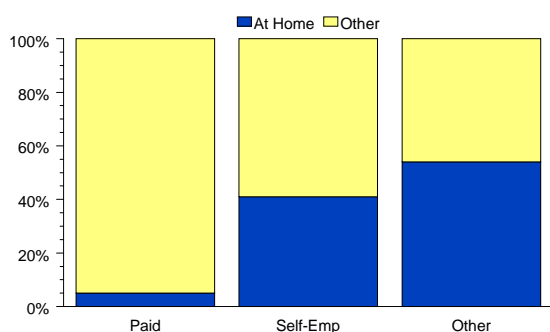
On the other hand, many professional occupations do offer portability and this is reflected in the relatively high percentage of workers in these fields that are operating out of their homes. In British Columbia, 24% of those in the professional, scientific and technical services industries worked at home in 2001 and 23% of those in the real estate, rental and leasing sector did the same. Accommodation and food services (3%), utilities (2%) and public administration (3%) industries were at the other end of the scale.

Other factors that make a significant impact on whether or not a person works at home are how many hours they work and their class of employment. People who work part-time (15%) are twice as likely to work from their homes com-

pared to those that work full-time (7%). In BC, self-employed (41%) and unpaid family workers (54%) have a far greater incidence of working from home compared to those people who are paid employees (5%). At least part of the reason for this is due to the nature of occupations that self-employed workers are engaged in. Many are in a line of work that is more conducive to working at home, such as business consultants, writers or other artists and so on.

The incidence of working at home increases progressively with age. In particular, those people who are 65 and over are more than twice as likely to be working at home compared to any other age group. In BC, 36% of those in the labour force aged 65 and over worked out of their home, compared to only 8% of all other workers.

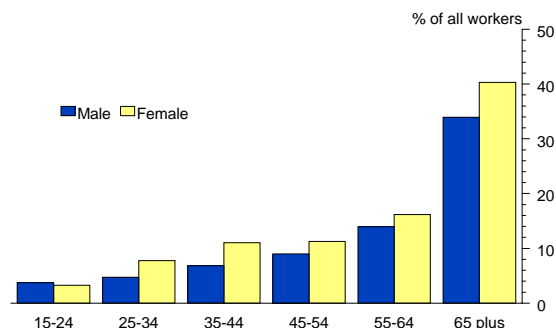
Self-employed and unpaid family workers are much more likely to work at home compared to paid employees



The percentage of the labour force that is self-employed in BC is about 10%, compared to 8% nationally, which is likely part of the reason why a greater portion of BC's non-farm workers work at home compared to other provinces.

There are significant age and gender differences between home-based workers and those working away from home as well. Women (10%) are more likely to work at home compared to men (8%). Part of this may be due to greater child-rearing responsibilities.

The incidence of working at home increases with age



Although, unfortunately, the Census definition of home workers is only consistent over the last two censuses making comparisons over time difficult, there is evidence from other surveys that the tendency toward working at home has increased significantly over the last couple of decades. Even between the 1996 and 2001 censuses, the percentage of home-based workers in BC rose from 8.8% to 9.1%. As technological advances relating to communications continue to be made, it is likely that this trend will continue and more people will choose to work out of their homes.

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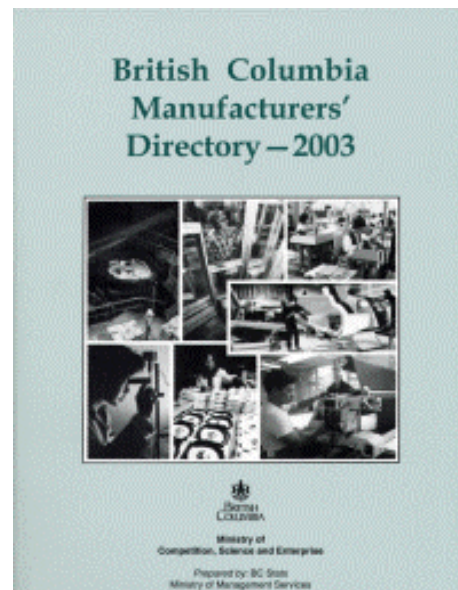
BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jan 1/03	% change on one year ago
BC	4,155.8	0.8
Canada	31,499.6	0.8
GDP and INCOME	2002 Prelim.	% change on one year ago
<i>(BC - at market prices)</i>		
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$ millions)	134,365	2.7
GDP (\$ 1997 millions)	126,141	1.8
GDP (\$ 1997 per Capita)	30,459	0.8
Personal Disposable Income (\$ 1997 per Capita)	19,445	-0.2
TRADE (\$ millions, seasonally adjusted)		% change on prev. month
Manufacturing Shipments - Feb	2,860	-1.0
Merchandise Exports - Feb	2,592	3.3
Retail Sales - Feb	3,468	0.6
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX	12-month avg	% change
<i>(all items - 1992=100)</i>	Mar '03	
BC	120.6	2.6
Canada	122.8	3.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)	Apr '03	% change on prev. month
<i>(seasonally adjusted)</i>		
Labour Force - BC	2,190	0.1
Employed - BC	2,012	-0.4
Unemployed - BC	177	5.5
		Mar '03
Unemployment Rate - BC (percent)	8.1	7.7
Unemployment Rate - Canada (percent)	7.5	7.3
INTEREST RATES (percent)	May 7/03	May 8/02
Prime Business Rate	5.00	4.00
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	5.35	5.40
- 5 year	6.50	7.45
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	May 7/03	May 8/02
<i>(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn \$</i>	1.4009	1.5705
<i>US \$ (reciprocal of the closing rate)</i>	0.7156	0.6364
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE	Apr '03	% change on one year ago
<i>(industrial aggregate - dollars)</i>		
BC	680.37	1.8
Canada	659.75	1.4

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, } Statistics
 Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Canada
 Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics
 For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bankofcanada.ca

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