

- The number of EI beneficiaries in BC dropped 2.6% in April
- 20% of British Columbians needing elective surgery reported difficulties getting service in 2003
- Canadian GDP edged up 0.1% in April

## The Economy

- **The number of people in British Columbia receiving regular employment insurance (EI) benefits dropped 2.6% (seasonally adjusted) in April, to 59,880 individuals.** This represents only 35% of the unemployed in April. Effective EI coverage has fallen several percentage points this year, down from 39% of the unemployed in January.

Nationally, there was a 0.4% increase in the number of EI beneficiaries. Saskatchewan saw the largest increase with the number of beneficiaries climbing 7.4%, which was more than enough to restore the number of claimants to the level recorded prior to a 6.4% decline experienced in March. Quebec was responsible for the largest portion of the jump in recipients across the country, adding over 2,000 EI beneficiaries, an increase of 1.1%.

On a year-over-year basis, the number of British Columbians receiving regular benefits has dropped 8.8% (unadjusted for seasonal variation), which translates to over 6,000 people. Virtually all those dropping out of the EI program in British Columbia were men (97%).

*Data Source: Statistics Canada*

## Health

- **According to the Health Services Access Survey, British Columbians have comparatively little difficulty seeking out health care treatment from general practitioners, nurses, and non-specialist services.** However, patients in BC reported higher than average difficulty obtaining specialist treatment and non-emergency surgeries.

Only 12% of people seeking routine health care treatment reported difficulty receiving services,

significantly below the national average of 16%. Some 21% reported troubles obtaining treatment for minor health problems—again below the Canadian average (24%).

However, 20% of those needing elective surgery reported difficulties, the highest rate in the country and far above the 13% national average. Similarly, 26% had difficulty obtaining specialist health services.

About 24% of British Columbia patients needing non-emergency surgeries had to wait longer than three months and a further 33% had to wait between one and three months. This compares to a national average of only 17% that had to wait longer than three months, although a higher percentage of all Canadians (42%) were in the one-to-three-month wait list. The median waiting time for non-emergency surgeries was 4.3 weeks in British Columbia, which was identical to the Canadian median waiting time.

*Data Source: SC, Catalogue no. 82-575-XIE, Access to Health Care Services in Canada, 2003*

## Movie Theatres and Drive-Ins

- **There was a slight dip in attendance at movie theatres and drive-ins in British Columbia as annual per-capita attendance fell from 4.2 visits in 2000/01 to 4.1 in 2002/03.** A net closure of 18 venues may have contributed to the decrease. Despite the advent of multi-screen theatres, the number of screens available to moviegoers in British Columbia declined by 57 in the two-year period between surveys. A significant price increase may also have led to the drop in attendance.

However, despite the waning attendance, per-capita theatre visits in British Columbia remain above the national average of 4.0. At 5.0 visits

### Did you know...

51% of Canadians have taken a cell phone with them on vacation.

12% have vacationed with a laptop.

per person, Alberta leads the country, while Newfoundland and Labrador residents are the least likely to be seen in a theatre, with only 2.5 visits per person. However, this is up from 1.4 visits per person in 2000/01.

Despite falling attendance, revenues from admission receipts at theatres and drive-ins in BC are up substantially (+9.5%). Concessions and other revenues also increased, rising 7.8% for a combined revenue jump of 9.0%.

*Data Source: SC, Catalogue no. 87F0009XIE*

### Tourism

- **Total tourism expenditures in Canada (seasonally adjusted at 1997 prices) climbed 0.8% in the first quarter.** Both non-resident (+0.8%) and domestic (+0.9%) spending on tourism increased compared to the fourth quarter of 2004.

The most significant contributor to the rise in expenditures was the transportation sector with a 1.4% increase in demand by both international travellers as well as Canadian residents. Expenditures on accommodation slipped 0.4%, while food and beverage services experienced a 0.4% increase.

*Data Source: Statistics Canada*

### The Nation

- **Canadian GDP (at basic prices in 1997 chained dollars, seasonally adjusted) edged up 0.1% in April, led by strong growth in goods-producing industries (+0.3%).** The strongest growth occurred in the mining and oil and gas extraction industry, where high prices for oil and gas induced an increase in oil and gas exploration and pushed GDP up 1.7% over the value recorded in March. The utilities sector also experienced robust growth, expanding 1.3% in April.

On the services side, consumer demand for new housing continued to affect the finance, insurance and real estate sector, driving GDP up 0.4% in April to just under \$210 billion, which is over a fifth of the nation's total GDP.

GDP for health care and social assistance tumbled 1.0% due mainly to public sector strikes in British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador. The strike by 43,000 health care workers

in British Columbia led to the cancellation of thousands of surgeries and ten times as many diagnostic procedures, which dampened output in the sector.

Other service sectors that saw large declines in April include arts, entertainment and recreation (-1.3%), accommodation and food services (-1.3%) and retail trade (-0.9%). Fewer tourists resulted in the drop in accommodation and food, while lower motor vehicle sales hampered the retail trade sector.

*Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Canadian manufacturers' prices climbed 5.5% in May compared to the same month a year earlier, the largest year-over-year increase since October 1995.** Significant inflation in petroleum and coal (+26.5%), lumber and other wood (+27.1%), primary metal (+17.1%) and metal fabricated products (+6.9%) contributed to the surging prices.

On a monthly basis, the all-items Industry Product Price Index (IPPI) surged 1.5% in May with a significant portion of the increase due to higher prices for petroleum and coal products (+9.9%). The index excluding petroleum and coal rose 0.8%, indicating these energy products were responsible for about half the overall jump.


High demand for lumber and wood products as a result of robust construction activity, combined with low inventories, helped drive up prices of those goods 2.0%. Primary metal prices eased off 1.9% as the cost of nickel, copper and aluminum slipped. The exchange rate was the main reason for a 1.8% boost in the price of motor vehicles and other transport equipment.

*Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Raw materials prices surged 2.9% in May, driven mainly by a 6.2% jump in the price of mineral fuels.** Crude oil was a large part of the boost in the cost of mineral fuel as high demand combined with low inventories to drive prices up 7.8%. The raw material price index excluding mineral fuels inched up only 0.1%.

*Data Source: Statistics Canada*

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## BC at a glance . . .

<b>POPULATION (thousands)</b>	Apr 1/04	% change on one year ago
BC	4,177.4	1.0
Canada	31,825.4	0.9
<b>GDP and INCOME</b>		% change on one year ago
<i>(BC - at market prices)</i>	2003	
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$ millions)	142,418	5.1
GDP (\$ 1997 millions)	130,914	2.2
GDP (\$ 1997 per Capita)	31,572	1.4
Personal Disposable Income (\$ 1997 per Capita)	19,495	-0.4
<b>TRADE (\$ millions, seasonally adjusted)</b>		% change on prev. month
Manufacturing Shipments - Apr	3,389	-0.9
Merchandise Exports - Apr	2,464	0.5
Retail Sales - Mar	3,613	2.1
<b>CONSUMER PRICE INDEX</b>		12-month avg % change
<i>(all items - 1992=100)</i>	May '04	
BC	123.4	1.7
Canada	125.0	1.7
<b>LABOUR FORCE (thousands)</b>		% change on prev. month
<i>(seasonally adjusted)</i>	May '04	
Labour Force - BC	2,227	0.8
Employed - BC	2,053	0.7
Unemployed - BC	174	1.3
		Apr '04
Unemployment Rate - BC (percent)	7.8	7.7
Unemployment Rate - Canada (percent)	7.2	7.3
<b>INTEREST RATES (percent)</b>	Jun 30/04	Jul 1/03
Prime Business Rate	3.75	5.00
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	4.70	4.65
- 5 year	6.70	6.10
<b>US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE</b>	Jun 30/04	Jul 1/03
<i>(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn \$</i>	1.3404	1.3363
<i>US \$ (reciprocal of the closing rate)</i>	0.7497	0.7488
<b>AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE</b>		% change on one year ago
<i>(industrial aggregate - dollars)</i>	May '04	
BC	671.73	-1.8
Canada	680.24	2.6

### 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](http://www.bankofcanada.ca)

### Released this week by BC STATS

- Business Indicators, June 2004

### Next week

- Major Projects Inventory, June 2004