

- **Building permits soar 80% in June**
- **Toxic spills were up 7% in 2003**
- **Private security personnel in Canada outnumber public-sector police officers by 34%**

The Economy

- **Shipments of goods from BC manufacturers fell 1.3% (seasonally adjusted) in June.** A decline in shipments of paper (-7.3%)—the second largest manufacturing good in BC— was the primary reason for the softness in the market. Shipments of wood were essentially unchanged (-0.1%), while shipments of food edged downward (-0.6%). Partly offsetting the drop in shipments was increased flows of primary metals (+1.0%) and chemicals (+2.6%).

Across Canada, manufacturing shipments rose 1.5%, with strongest growth in Alberta (+3.3%) and Quebec (+2.9%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **There was a boom in BC construction intentions in June.** The value of building permits soared 80% (seasonally adjusted), exceeding the \$1 billion mark for the first time. This was the largest one-month increase since April 1985 (+88%).

All sectors of the construction market were buying up building permits. Industrial building permits had the highest growth (+173%), followed by residential (+80%). Permits for commercial construction rose 67%, while permits in the government/institutional sector were up 69%.

There had been three consecutive months of decline in building permits earlier this year. Between January and April permits dropped 22%. The gains posted in June easily exceeded the spring slowdown, with permits now 44% higher than they were in January.

The building boom was centered around Vancouver, where permits were up 122%—well above the BC average. In Victoria, the value of building permits was unchanged.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Construction intentions were booming at the national level as well.** Permits were up 27% in June, a monthly increase not seen since August 1989. BC had the strongest growth (+80%), followed by Manitoba (+73%) and Ontario (36%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **New housing prices continued to increase in June.** In Victoria, prices were up 9.6% compared to the same month last year—the highest inflation in metropolitan Canada. Prices showed strong growth in Vancouver as well (+4.7%).

After Victoria, the most inflationary new housing markets were in Winnipeg (+8.5%), Saskatoon (+8.0%), and Ottawa (+7.8%). The only metropolitan area that has not seen rising prices over the last year is Windsor, Ontario (0.0%). For Canada as a whole, prices were up 6.2%.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

Public Sector Debt

Net provincial government debt in BC was \$20.1 billion in 2003—\$4,864 per capita. Net debt rose 21.5% last year, the only province in Canada to record double-digit increases. Nevertheless, BC still has the second-lowest per capita debt in the country. Only Alberta, with net per capita assets of \$3,366, had lower per capita debt. The highest per capita debt was in Newfoundland (\$18,326), followed by Quebec (\$12,757).

Data Source: Statistics Canada

Note: These figures differ from the information in the provincial Public Accounts because Statistics Canada uses a broader definition of the provincial government that includes all government ministries as well as agencies such as the Workers Compensation Board that are controlled or funded by government. Other adjustments are made to Public Accounts data to

Did you know...

Six per cent of British Columbians have been tempted to smoke in the airplane washroom.

bring them in line with standards for the Financial Management System used by Statistics Canada when reporting government sector data.

Toxic spills

- **There were 3,359 toxic spills reported to the BC government in BC in 2003, up 7% from the year before.** Much of the spillage is oil, augmented by industrial chemicals and other hazardous waste.

From the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, toxic spills were increasing steadily in BC. The number of spills doubled (+97%) between 1989 and 1994. Since then, toxic spills have been edging downward gradually. Even with last year's increase, the number of spills is 12% lower than in 1994.

Data Source: Provincial Emergency Program

- **Environmental Emergency staff responded to 162 toxic spills in 2003, assessing damage and overseeing the cleanup.** This is down dramatically from the 685 spills that government officials attended in 2000 (-76%). A new policy has been put in place to respond only to toxic spills deemed "high-risk", while shifting responsibility for "medium- and low-risk" spills to industry.

Data Source: Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

Industrial chemicals

- **Canadian manufacturers produced 2.0 million metric tonnes of sulphuric acid in the first half of 2004, up 16% over the same period last year.** There were also strong gains the production of formaldehyde (+13%), xylene (+13%), benzene (+12%), and nitric acid (+10%).

Data Source: SC, Catalogue no. 46-002-XIE

The Nation

- **Canada's merchandise trade surplus rose to over \$8.6 billion in June.** Exports were up 4.4%, while imports fell 3.7% (seasonally adjusted). These patterns held across all of Canada's major trading regions. Exports were up for all principal commodities, except forestry products (-2.8%).

Data Source: Statistics Canada


- **There were nearly 63,000 police officers in Canada in 2001, up 6% from 1996.** Further, there were 84,000 private security personnel (private investigators and security guards), outnumbering public-sector police by 34%.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

- **Fifty percent of Canadians believe that smoking should not be allowed anywhere in restaurants.** This is up from 44% in 2002. As well, 34% feel that smoking should be banned in pubs and bars.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

*Infoline Issue: 04-32
August 13, 2004*

 **fax** transmission information service from **BC STATS**

 **Email** transmission information service from **BC STATS**

 also on the **Internet** at www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Apr 1/04	% change on one year ago
BC	4,177.4	1.0
Canada	31,825.4	0.9
GDP and INCOME	2003	% change on one year ago
<i>(BC - at market prices)</i>		
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
TRADE (\$ millions, seasonally adjusted)		% change on prev. month
Manufacturing Shipments - Jun	3,493	-1.3
Merchandise Exports - May	2,816	12.4
Retail Sales - May	3,882	-0.2
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX	Jun '04	12-month avg % change
<i>(all items - 1992=100)</i>		
BC	123.6	1.8
Canada	125.1	1.7
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)	Jul '04	% change on prev. month
<i>(seasonally adjusted)</i>		
Labour Force - BC	2,245	-0.2
Employed - BC	2,082	0.1
Unemployed - BC	163	-3.4
		Jun '04
Unemployment Rate - BC (percent)	7.3	7.5
Unemployment Rate - Canada (percent)	7.2	7.3
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Aug 11/04	Aug 13/03
Prime Business Rate	3.75	4.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	4.40	4.55
- 5 year	6.30	6.55
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Aug 11/04	Aug 13/03
<i>(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn \$</i>	1.3239	1.3878
<i>US \$ (reciprocal of the closing rate)</i>	0.7553	0.7206
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE	Jul '04	% change on one year ago
<i>(industrial aggregate - dollars)</i>		
BC	682.85	-0.7
Canada	678.57	2.4

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

Released this week by BC STATS

- No new releases

Next week

- Exports, June 2004