

- Shipments slip 3.4% in February; exports down 1.1%
- Housing starts unchanged in March
- Non-residential building construction increased 3.4% in first quarter

## The Economy

- Shipments of goods produced by British Columbia manufacturers slipped (-3.4%, *seasonally adjusted*) in February, following a modest gain in January (+1.1%). Durable manufacturers saw notable declines (-5.9%) in the value of shipments, mostly due to weakness in the wood industry (-10.1%). Fabricated metals (-6.2%), non-metallic minerals (-6.4%), and transportation equipment (-7.4%) also posted significant declines. Driven by an increase in the value of paper shipments (+4.7%), non-durable goods managed to inch up (+0.3%) despite slips in other large manufacturing sectors such as chemicals (-7.7%) and food (-2.8%).

Across the nation, manufacturing shipments shrank (-2.2%) for the second consecutive month. With the exception of Newfoundland (+1.8%), shipments were down in all provinces, with Saskatchewan (-12.1%), New Brunswick (-8.4%) and PEI (-7.9%) posting the biggest declines.

*Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- Despite increases in all other major commodity groups, a 4.2% slump in forest product exports drove BC's overall exports down 1.1% (*seasonally adjusted*) in February. Industrial & consumer goods posted a 1.6% increase, followed by machinery, equipment & automobiles (+1.0%), energy (+0.4%) and agriculture & fish products (+0.3%).

Exports to the US dropped 3.2% as shipments of every major commodity except energy fell. Forest product shipments dropped (-6.9%) for the first time since August. Agriculture & fish products (-3.0%), machinery, equipment & automobiles (-1.6%) and industrial & consumer goods (-1.5%) were all lower than in January. International shipments to countries other than

the United States rose 3.1%, as exports of all commodities except energy (-1.1%), increased.

At the national level, goods exports in February decreased 3.5% following sizeable gains in recent months. Automotive (-6.5%), machinery & equipment (-5.1%) and energy (-8.0%) products were among the commodities pulling exports down in February. Canadian exports to the US fell 5.3%, while commodities sent overseas to Japan (-10.5%) and the European Union (-0.7%) were also down.

*Source: Statistics Canada & BC STATS*

- The number of housing starts in the province inched up 0.2% (*seasonally adjusted*) in March, following a considerable 18.6% jump in the previous month. Nationally, starts were up 4.0%, on the strength of robust building activity in five provinces. Increases ranged from 9.3% in Alberta to 30.5% in Nova Scotia. PEI (-63.2%) and Newfoundland (-45.5%) posted the biggest declines.

*Data Source: CMHC*

- Investment in non-residential building construction in the province increased 3.4% (*seasonally adjusted*) to \$1.2 billion in the first quarter of 2006. The investment growth was driven by spending on both commercial (+4.0%) and institutional & government (+10.1%) buildings, which offset a substantial drop in the industrial sector (-9.9%).

Non-residential building construction activity continued to increase in Victoria (+3.4%), rising to \$71 million. Abbotsford also showed growth (+9.4%, to \$44 million) in the first quarter but investment in Vancouver slipped (-0.9%, to \$666 million).

Nationally, non-residential construction expenditures grew a moderate 2.3% in the first quarter. Robust office building construction ac-

### Did you know...

45% of British Columbians say flowers are their favourite things to plant in the garden, while 33% prefer to plant fruits and vegetables *Data source: Ipsos Reid Canada*

tivity in Western Canada bolstered record growth in the commercial sector (+3.0%). The industrial (+2.1%) and institutional & government (+1.2%) components also saw increases. Provincially, Alberta recorded by far the biggest first-quarter increase in terms of dollar value, with spending rising 9.6% to \$1.4 billion. Investment in Saskatchewan increased 19.3% to \$238 million. Newfoundland (-4.0%), Nova Scotia (-7.1%) and Ontario (-0.1%) were the only provinces where non-residential building construction was down. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The cost of new housing in BC's two largest metropolitan areas continued to rise in February.** In Victoria, new housing prices were 7.0% higher than in the same month of 2005, while homebuilders in the Vancouver area received an average of 6.5% more for their projects. New housing prices in Victoria have been rising rapidly since early 2002, as the cost of both land and buildings have increased. In recent months, land prices in particular have been exerting inflationary pressure on new housing costs. In February, land value was up 15.1% in the capital city while the price for new housing climbed 3.5%. In Vancouver, on the other hand, the cost of land and houses grew at the same pace (both +6.2%) over February of last year.

Nationally, new housing prices were 7.0% higher in February than in the same month of 2004, as prices increased in every metropolitan area surveyed. Calgary (+22.8%) had the largest price increase of new homes for the fourth consecutive month, followed by Edmonton (+12.4%) and Winnipeg (+9.6%).

*Data Source: Statistics Canada*

### Food Retailers

- **Canadian consumers purchase more of their groceries in food stores than do their American counterparts.** Food stores in Canada still hold the largest share of consumer spending on food, while in the US, grocers are steadily losing ground to general merchandise stores.

In 2004, for every \$100.00 of food purchased by Canadian consumers, \$83.90 was spent at food stores, down only slightly from \$85.10 in 1998.

In comparison, of every US \$100.00 spent on food by American consumers in 2002, US \$70.40 went to food stores, down from US \$76.90 in 1997. In order to attract and retain their customers, food retailers have been diversifying the products sold in their stores to include more types of food as well as non-food items such as health and personal care products. *Data Source: SC Catalogue 11-621-MIE2006038*

### Post Secondary Education

- **Full-time enrolment at Canadian universities increased 12% between 1992-1993 and 2001-2002, while part-time enrolment was down 21%.** There were more women in full-time undergraduate studies as men's share of undergraduate enrolment decreased from 47% to 42% over the ten-year period. Women's enrolment at the graduate level continued to move closer to being equal to that of men.

National graduation rates for bachelor's and first professional degree programmes was 31% in 2001, with women accounting for almost 60% of all graduates. Between 1992 and 2001, the number of female university graduates increased 10%, while the number of male graduates decreased slightly by one percent. Though the gap narrowed, graduation rates for men remained higher in the physical, natural and applied sciences between 1992 and 2001, while rates in the humanities and social sciences were higher for women. *Data Source: SC, Catalogue 81-582-XIE*

*Happy Easter from all of us  
at BC Stats!*



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## The Business Gateway

Building a solid business plan or researching a business idea can be both challenging and rewarding. There is, of course, the development of the entrepreneurial idea that may come in a flash of insight or after long consideration. Whether the starting point was an invention, the strong desire to be your own boss, or anything in between, there is little argument that you need to do your homework before committing your time, energy and money to the venture.

Over the years, BC Stats has been approached by many hundreds of clients engaged in researching a business plan. In some cases we have developed standard information products that can be plucked off the shelves. In others, our depth of knowledge of the data sources can shorten your search. Sometimes we will tell you to stop looking for data that does not exist in the public domain. Generally we will be of some help.

As often as not, your inspiration and need for figures will come outside of our regular business hours. With the growing array of tools and pages on our web site, this is not necessarily a problem. While many of the pages have long existed, we recently developed a tool we call the *business gateway* to better help you self-serve. The business gateway is a web page that presents links to dozens of useful pages and sites, all organized under headings intended to speed up your search for business planning information and resources. When looking at this page you will soon realize that we have designed it from your viewpoint - as you step through the headings, subtext and links, it should read a little like your own thoughts, for example:

### My Customers Are . . .

—Other Businesses

- Sell to BC manufacturers


In this case the underlined link - Sell to BC manufacturers - takes you to the British Columbia Manufacturers' Directory site where you can search for companies based on location, industry, size, and many more characteristics.

It may be that not all the information you require is posted to our site or others that we link to. Some resources are available only at libraries or by way of purchase. BC Stats maintains a subscription site that is accessible through many public and academic libraries in the province. We also have a WebStore and service custom requests for a fee. Many basic requests and some advice are freely available from Data Services at BC Stats.

## The Business Gateway

### My Business

The place to start your research is with the classification systems that we use to delineate industries, occupations, goods (products), services, and geographic units. If there isn't a code for it, there is little chance for data in the public domain. First off, find the most appropriate industry code under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Do this using the search routine on Statistics Canada's site by clicking on our first link: What industry am I in? Note both the code and the name. Once you have these, the search for data becomes greatly simplified.

	<p><b>BC STATS</b>   <b>Search</b>   <b>Webstore</b></p>	<p>A-Z Index ▶   Help ?</p>						
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<p><b>Writing a Business Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Our business planning guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Lots of good info on our site</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Small business BC's FAQ page</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Our small business page</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Compare to industry norms</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Resources for business on the BC site</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Resources for business on the federal site</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Consumer Trends Report</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Learn about various coding schemes</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Business Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Our weekly synopsis</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Some of our periodicals will be useful</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Our small business quarterly</a> is in our store</li> <li>• <a href="#">Our free community summary</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Our regional economic periodical</a> is in our store</li> <li>• <a href="#">Major projects provide a significant local boost</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>My Products Are...</b></p> <p>—Classified as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Canadian export codes (Statistics Canada)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Canadian import codes (CBSA)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">U.S. export codes</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">U.S. import codes</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Standard classification of goods (Statistics Canada)</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>My Workers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Our labour and income page</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">An overview of the labour market</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Our earnings periodical</a> is for subscribers or single issue purchasers</li> <li>• <a href="#">Our employment periodical</a> is for subscribers or single issue purchasers</li> </ul> <p><b>Didn't find it here?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">We service requests for a fee</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Talk to us, or email us</a></li> </ul>						
<p style="text-align: right;">↑ <b>Top</b></p>								
<p style="text-align: center;">COPYRIGHT   DISCLAIMER   PRIVACY   ACCESSIBILITY</p>								

Numbers of business establishments by industry and region provide some indication of saturation. Summary figures are posted at our link: [How many similar firms are there?](#)

The most current review of profitability, balance sheet and financial ratios comes from the small business profiles that can be found, by detailed industry for several years and provinces, through our link: [Compare to industry norms.](#)

### **Writing a Business Plan**

The single most important element for success is a proper, current plan that is the basis for operations. The random pursuit of opportunity relies on luck, which sooner or later fails.

[Our business planning guide](#) has a numbers focus—coding schemes, data and information resources. There are links to other informative sites including ones that simplify start-up and filing requirements - the technical and legal side of getting into and staying in business.

### **Business Environment**

While mindful execution of the plan is central to success, it is essential to be constantly on watch for external shocks. These may be positive or negative and the difference may depend upon your reaction. Some are temporary, while others more permanently alter business conditions. Some arise dramatically and others form so incrementally that they are sometimes missed from the plan.

We have a number of reports and publications to help keep you abreast of conditions in British Columbia and its regions. [Our weekly synopsis](#), *Infoline*, is the most widely read document we produce and can form part of any basic news kit for business leaders.

### **My Customers Are . . .**

Successful businesses understand and anticipate their customers. They pitch for maximum penetration in each market segment and analyze the demographics of current and potential customer groups. If sales are not keeping pace with growth in the market place, then you are losing ground - whether to changing market demand or more nimble competition - and need to address the problem.

The [Consumer Trends Report](#) and [Spending patterns](#) look at consumer behaviour. [Demographic details for neighbourhoods, communities and regions](#) takes you to our census pages. Our small area population projections will tell you [what areas are growing the fastest](#) so that you can get out in front of the growth curve or anticipate a flat or falling market.

If your receipts are augmented by visitors then there is some useful information on [our tourism page](#). Knowing [annual and seasonal expenditure patterns](#) can help you manage the tourism-related part of your business.

We can help you sell to [BC manufacturers](#) or look for foreign buyers. There is also a section on [doing business with the BC government](#), [local governments in BC](#) or the [federal government](#).

### **My Products Are . . .** – Classified as

Knowing the correct product classification for your goods will greatly ease the search for production, export and import figures.

### **My Suppliers Are . . .**

We can help you [find local suppliers](#) which should help pare transportation and inventory costs. Our on-line directory makes it easy to narrow your search right down to your own community.

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### **My Business Thrives on . . .**

When you know just what invigorates your business it may be possible to sleuth out hot spots that should figure into your expansion plans. We have set out a dozen links by way of example. If you want more, or something else, there is the internet or you could contact Data Services at BC Stats.

### **Open a New Location!**

The risk of opening a new location can be reduced by making informed choices.

You might look first at what areas are growing fastest. Each year, BC Stats projects population and households for areas in British Columbia. Shouldn't you be using the same quality data that the health and education ministries rely on?

Perhaps you are looking for concentrations of particular demographic characteristics in your new location. We can map data for you to pinpoint areas that deserve a more rigorous examination of demographic details and Data Services can provide detailed profiles of any area in the province.

### **My Workers**

Our labour and income page highlights earnings and labour market information available through BC Stats.

### **Didn't find it here?**

If your requirements go beyond our web site or complimentary service, we service requests for a fee. You can also search our wider web site. When you want to talk to us, or email us you have direct access to our individual phone numbers and email addresses for every person in the organization. However, initial contact should be made with Data Services:

**(250) 387-0327**

**bc.stats@gov.bc.ca**

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 fax transmission information service from **BC STATS**

 Email transmission information service from **BC STATS**

 also on the **Internet** at [www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca)



## BC at a glance . . .

<b>POPULATION (thousands)</b>	Jan 1/05	% change on one year ago
BC	4,279.5	1.3
Canada	32,422.9	1.0
<b>GDP and INCOME</b>	2004	% change on one year ago
<i>(BC - at market prices)</i>		
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$ millions)	157,241	7.7
GDP (\$ 1997 millions)	139,205	4.0
GDP (\$ 1997 per Capita)	33,129	2.8
Personal Disposable Income (\$ 1997 per Capita)	20,182	1.4
<b>TRADE (\$ millions, seasonally adjusted)</b>		% change on prev. month
Manufacturing Shipments - Feb	3,706	-3.4
Merchandise Exports - Feb	3,007	-1.1
Retail Sales - Jan	4,339	2.4
<b>CONSUMER PRICE INDEX</b>	Feb '06	12-month avg % change
<i>(all items - 1992=100)</i>		
BC	125.8	1.9
Canada	128.6	2.3
<b>LABOUR FORCE (thousands)</b>	Mar '06	% change on prev. month
<i>(seasonally adjusted)</i>		
Labour Force - BC	2,291	0.2
Employed - BC	2,189	0.6
Unemployed - BC	102	-6.8
		Feb '06
Unemployment Rate - BC (percent)	4.4	4.8
Unemployment Rate - Canada (percent)	6.3	6.4
<b>INTEREST RATES (percent)</b>	Apr 12/06	Apr 13/05
Prime Business Rate	5.50	4.25
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.15	5.05
- 5 year	6.60	6.25
<b>US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE</b>	Apr 12/06	Apr 13/05
<i>(avg. noon spot rate)</i> Cdn \$	1.1478	1.2368
US \$ <i>(reciprocal of the closing rate)</i>	0.8724	0.8074
<b>AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE</b>	Mar '06	% change on one year ago
<i>(industrial aggregate - dollars)</i>		
BC	718.33	2.9
Canada	721.41	3.7

### SOURCES:

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

## 2006 Census

Count yourself in on May 16, 2006!

[www.census2006.ca](http://www.census2006.ca)

## Manufacturers' Directory 2006

550 pages

Sources, leads, opportunity – whatever you make of it – the 2006 Directory is packed full of current information on more than 4,300 firms operating in British Columbia.

\$45 plus taxes. Order now.

Tel: (250) 387-0359

FAX: (250) 387-0380

Searchable on-line at [www.made-in-bc.ca](http://www.made-in-bc.ca)

## 2006 British Columbia Manufacturers' Directory

[www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/pubs/pr\\_bcnd.asp](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/pubs/pr_bcnd.asp)

## Socio-Economic Profiles & Indices 2005

Updated annually, this body of work provides a coherent and relatively comprehensive measurement of social stressors at sub-provincial areas. Charts, tables and, within the indices, consolidated rankings, make the information broadly accessible.

[www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/sep/index.asp](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/sep/index.asp)

### Released this week by BC STATS

- Tourism Sector Monitor, March 2006

### Next week

- Exports, February 2006
- Consumer Price Index, March 2006