



labour data

BCGEU Research and Campaigns

July 2010

A summary of labour-related statistics compiled by RCC from various sources, including Statistics Canada, BC Stats, the Ministry of Labour & Citizens' Services, and the B.C. Labour Relations Board.

EMPLOYMENT

While Canada's jobless rate fell to 7.9% in June (its lowest rate in a year), the rate of unemployment in B.C. rose for the second time in as many months to 7.8% (from 7.5% in May).¹ The CBC reported that this is the first time since February 2005 that B.C.'s unemployment rate has been virtually equal to the national rate.

Unemployment rate (%) – June 2010

British Columbia				Canada
Overall	Women	Men	Youth (15-24 yrs)	Overall
7.8	6.8	8.7	14.7	7.9

According to BC Stats, the rise in the jobless rate in B.C. was the result of more people looking for work; the expansion of the province's labour force (0.6%) outpaced the growth in jobs (0.3%). B.C. gained 6,400 jobs in June; full-time jobs rose (+13,200), while part-time jobs fell (-6,800).

Overall during the first quarter of 2010:

- The unemployment rate inched down 0.2% and the number of unemployed British Columbians fell 1.6%.
- An average of 196,000 British Columbians were unemployed and looking for work; nearly twice the number in late 2007, when the unemployment rate in B.C. was at a thirty-year low.
- The number of regular EI beneficiaries started falling, after peaking in the third quarter of 2009. But this decline is not entirely due to better labour market conditions. Some EI claimants may no longer be eligible for payments.
- According to government data (not seasonally adjusted), the number of British Columbians receiving temporary income assistance continued to climb, reaching 60,749 in March – the highest level since August 2003.

➤ REGIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (3-month moving average, unadjusted):

The unemployment rate in Vancouver remained unchanged in June (7.6%), while Victoria's dropped slightly to 5.4%.

¹ Employment data is seasonally adjusted, unless otherwise indicated.

Across the province:

- The unemployment rate was highest in the North Coast & Nechako region (11.4%, down from 12.4% in May).
- The unemployment rate was lowest in the Vancouver Island/Coast region (5.5%, down from 5.8%).
- Unemployment rates ranged from 7.1% in the Cariboo to 8.2% in the Thompson-Okanagan region.

INFLATION

Inflation in B.C. in June was at 0.5%.² A jump in the cost of electricity (+21.7%) accounted for much of the increase and pushed overall energy prices higher (+6.8%).

CPI – Consumer Price Index (June 2009 to June 2010, all items)

Canada	British Columbia	Vancouver	Victoria
1.0	0.5	1.1	0.1

At the national level, inflation in June was at 1.0%, the lowest it has been since November 2009.

WAGES

The latest BC Stats data (June 2010) put the average hourly wage in B.C. at \$22.89, an increase of 4.2% over the last year.³ For the same time period, StatsCan put the national average hourly wage at \$22.27, a 1.7% increase over last year.

According to StatsCan (June 2010), on average, men in B.C. earn \$4.26 per hour more than women, and unionized employees average \$5.16 more per hour than non-union employees.

In its latest quarterly information, the BC Bargaining Database reports that the average first-year increase for contract settlements in B.C. in the first quarter of 2010 was 1.04% (1.01% for public sector, 1.76% for private sector). The all-industry average first-year increase for the latest 12 months (second quarter 2009 to first quarter 2010) was 1.67%. Note that these numbers take into account first-year increases negotiated retroactively for 2008 and 2009.

CERTIFICATIONS

The B.C. Labour Relations Board reports seven certifications granted in B.C. in June, covering 277 employees, most in health and social services. Similarly, almost half of the certification applications granted during the first quarter of 2010 (6 out of 15, covering 218 employees) were also in health and social services.

² Inflation data is not seasonally adjusted.

³ Wage data is unadjusted.

Certification applications granted, by industry (1st Quarter 2010)

Industry	Applications	
	Applications granted	# of employees
Accommodation, Food & Beverage Services	0	0
Construction	2	66
Educational Services	1	16
Government Services	1	4
Health and Social Services	6	218
Manufacturing	1	9
Retail Trade	1	23
Transportation and Storage	1	4
Other Services	2	7
Total	15	347

ECONOMIC FORECASTING

Major Canadian banks are forecasting 3.5 to 3.9% growth in real gross domestic product (GDP) in B.C. in 2010, and slightly lower levels of growth in 2011.

Real GDP growth (%) - Forecasts

	British Columbia		Canada	
	2010	2011	2010	2011
RBC	3.5	3.3	3.6	3.5
TD	3.8	2.5	3.6	2.5
CIBC	3.5	2.9	3.3	2.5
BMO	3.9	3.8	3.3	3.0

Despite these forecasts, the economic mood remains cautious. According to BC Stats, although "there were many positive economic signs in the first quarter [of 2010], it is too early to say that we are out of the woods" on the economy:

Some analysts are predicting that there may be a double-dip recession in the US, and with financial markets in some European countries showing considerable signs of stress, the global economic situation remains very uncertain. Some recently-released data from south of the border is far from encouraging, and there are also indications of slower growth in some of the Canadian data....With uncertain economic conditions in some key markets for BC products, the province, together with the rest of Canada, could be in for a somewhat bumpy ride during the next few months (BC Stats, Business Indicators, June 2010).