



Labour Market Bulletin

British Columbia

December 2019



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of British Columbia (B.C.), including the regions of Northern B.C., Vancouver Island and Coast, Lower Mainland, Thompson–Okanagan and the Kootenays.

OVERVIEW

Between the third and the fourth quarter of 2019, employment in British Columbia (B.C.) declined by 0.3%, as gains in full-time employment (+4,100) were offset by losses in part-time employment (-11,900).¹ In the fourth quarter of 2019, employment in the public sector decreased to around 42,800 (-4,100), while employment in the private sector declined to around 1,631,400 (-3,200).² Self-employment remained relatively stable at 459,500.³

The provincial forestry sector continued to struggle through the fourth quarter of 2019. Mosaic Forest Management shutdown harvesting operations on Vancouver Island and the Coast sooner than expected, ending seasonal employment for about 2,000 contracted workers.⁴ Forest product companies Tolko and Canfor also temporarily curtailed production across the province at end of December.^{5,6} The forest product industry continues to be weakened by lower demand and prices, coupled with higher costs for fiber. In addition, Canadian softwood lumber producers are facing uncertainty, as Canada's appeal against U.S. anti-dumping measures remains unresolved.⁷ This December, the World Trade Organization's Appellate Body was reduced to one member due in part to the United States opposing any new appointments, and the Body now no longer has the minimum number of members needed to hear appeals.⁸

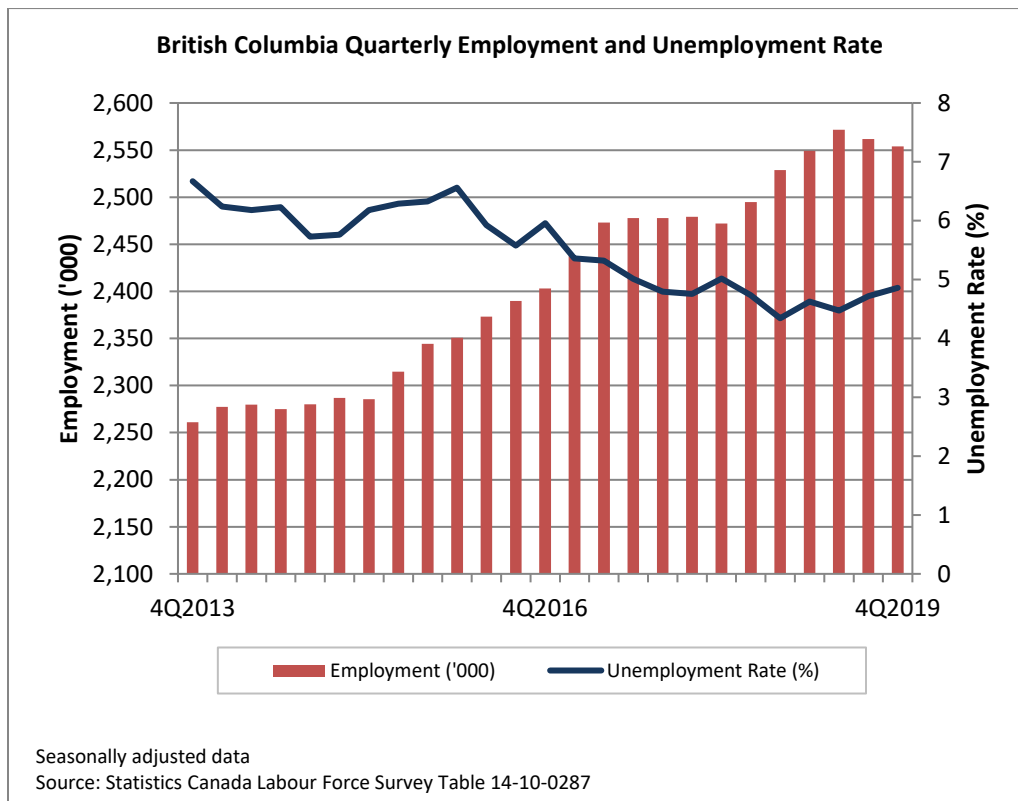
Large non-residential construction projects will contribute to B.C.'s growth in 2020, dampened primarily by modest residential construction activity and a declining forestry sector.⁹ Recent progress on the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement may provide greater certainty between B.C. and its main trading partner, the U.S..

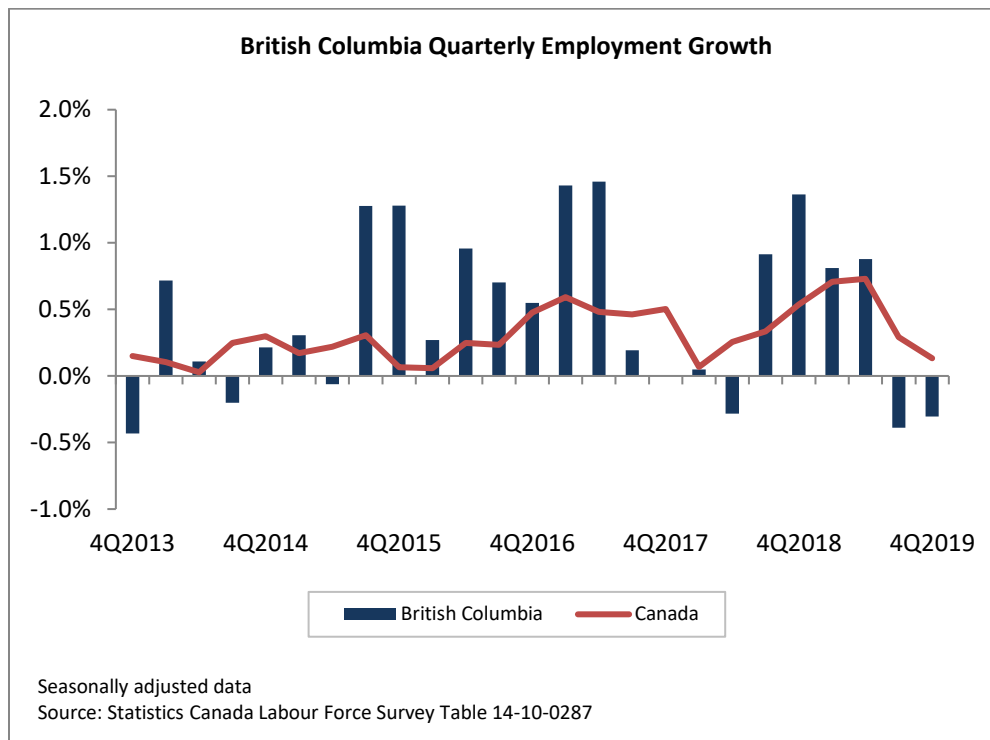
British Columbia Quarterly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally adjusted data	4th Quarter 2019	3rd Quarter 2019	4th Quarter 2018	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	4,129.0	4,108.1	4,054.4	20.9	0.5	74.6	1.8
Labour Force ('000)	2,684.3	2,688.3	2,643.5	-4.0	-0.1	40.8	1.5
Employment ('000)	2,553.8	2,561.6	2,528.7	-7.8	-0.3	25.1	1.0
Full-Time ('000)	2,005.3	2,001.2	1,975.4	4.1	0.2	29.9	1.5
Part-Time ('000)	548.5	560.4	553.3	-11.9	-2.1	-4.8	-0.9
Unemployment ('000)	130.5	126.8	114.8	3.7	2.9	15.7	13.7
Unemployment Rate (%)	4.9	4.7	4.3	0.2	-	0.6	-
Participation Rate (%)	65.0	65.4	65.2	-0.4	-	-0.2	-
Employment Rate (%)	61.9	62.4	62.4	-0.5	-	-0.5	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087





On a quarter-over-quarter basis, the unemployment rate for B.C.’s youth (ages 15-24 years) remained relatively unchanged at 9.1% while that of those aged 25 years and older increased to 4.2%. Year over year, B.C.’s youth unemployment rate is up 1.2 percentage points, whereas the unemployment rate for the 25+ age group increased by 0.5 percentage points.¹⁰

British Columbia Quarterly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally adjusted data	4th Quarter 2019 (%)	3rd Quarter 2019 (%)	4th Quarter 2018 (%)	Quarterly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
	Total	4.9	4.7	4.3	0.2
25 years and over	4.2	4.0	3.7	0.2	0.5
Men - 25 years and over	4.2	3.7	3.2	0.5	1.0
Women - 25 years and over	4.2	4.3	4.4	-0.1	-0.2
15 to 24 years	9.1	9.2	7.9	-0.1	1.2
Men - 15 to 24 years	9.9	10.7	8.7	-0.8	1.2
Women - 15 to 24 years	8.3	7.7	7.3	0.6	1.0

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

Labour Market Indicators for Indigenous People

In the fourth quarter of 2019, the total population aged 15+ in British Columbia was 4.1 million. The Indigenous population living off-reserve accounted for 4.4% of that, or 181,100 people. Employment among the Indigenous population in British Columbia increased significantly to 110,900, representing an increase of 6,200 positions (+5.9%) compared to the same time last year. The increase is attributable to growth in part-time positions (+7,100 or +36.8%).

The unemployment rate among Indigenous people was 7.3% in the fourth quarter of 2019, having decreased by 0.9 percentage points (pp) from the previous year. The unemployment rate among the non-Indigenous population increased year-over-year to 4.5% (+0.5pp). Between the fourth quarter of 2018 and the fourth quarter of 2019, the participation rate among the Indigenous population grew to 66.1% (+0.6pp) and decreased for the non-Indigenous population to 64.7% (-0.3pp). The employment rate of Indigenous people increased year-over-year to 61.2% (+1.1pp), while among the non-Indigenous population it decreased to 61.8% (-0.6pp).

British Columbia - Labour Market Indicators for Indigenous People

3-month moving averages Seasonally unadjusted data	Indigenous		Yearly variation (Indigenous)		Non-Indigenous		Yearly variation (non-Indigenous)	
	Q4 2019	Q4 2018	number	%	Q4 2019	Q4 2018	number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	181.1	174.2	6.9	4.0	3,947.9	3,880.1	67.8	1.7
Labour Force ('000)	119.6	114.1	5.5	4.8	2,555.2	2,521.6	33.6	1.3
Employment ('000)	110.9	104.7	6.2	5.9	2,439.0	2,421.3	17.7	0.7
Full-Time ('000)	84.4	85.4	-1.0	-1.2	1,909.2	1,873.6	35.6	1.9
Part-Time ('000)	26.4	19.3	7.1	36.8	529.8	547.7	-17.9	-3.3
Unemployment ('000)	8.7	9.4	-0.7	-7.4	116.2	100.4	15.8	15.7
Unemployment Rate (%)	7.3	8.2	-0.9	-	4.5	4.0	0.5	-
Participation Rate (%)	66.1	65.5	0.6	-	64.7	65.0	-0.3	-
Employment Rate (%)	61.2	60.1	1.1	-	61.8	62.4	-0.6	-

Notes: The Labour Force Survey excludes those living on-reserve.

Estimates are based on three-month moving averages.

Totals may not add due to rounding.

Totals may be different from other tables due to adjustments done to indigenous statistics in the Labour Force Survey.

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – ESDC custom table

Earlier this month, the estimated \$3 billion Senákw residential development project in Vancouver was approved by the Squamish First Nation.¹¹ At least 11 towers, including 6,000 housing units will be built in partnership with Vancouver-based Westbank Development Corp. on nearly 12 acres of reserve land. The towers could be built between 55 to 60 stories high, and would be taller than any other building in Vancouver. Between 150 to 200 units will be allocated to members of the Squamish Nation who will also receive preferential pricing.¹² The land will be leased for 120 years and be exempt from provincial rent controls, B.C.'s foreign-buyer tax, and the speculation tax that applies to all other homeowners in Metro Vancouver. Construction is expected to begin by 2021.

This December, the Government of B.C. announced that it is working with the Tsilhqot'in Nation and Taseko mines, in an attempt to resolve an ongoing dispute over the proposed New Prosperity gold and copper mine near Williams Lake.¹³ As part of an agreement to enter talks, both parties have agreed to pause certain litigation and regulation matters in an attempt to find a long-term resolution. In support of the discussions, the Province agreed to a one-year extension to an environmental assessment certificate issued.¹⁴

At the time of writing this report, opposition of the Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline by members of the Wet'suwet'en First nation and their supporters continues. For now, work continues on other sections of the \$40 billion pipe line; however, work near Houston has come to a standstill.¹⁵ The project has received approval 20 Indigenous nations along the route of the pipeline.¹⁶

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Compared to the fourth quarter of 2018, this quarter B.C.'s **goods** producing sector employment declined to 476,600 (-27,300), due in part to significant job losses in forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas (-9,800), manufacturing (-9,700), and construction (-7,900). In fact, employment decreased in all goods producing sectors, except for agriculture (+2,300).¹⁷

This year, sawmill production curtailments and closures across the province affected thousands of British Columbians in the **forestry** industry. The sector is grappling with weaker export demand, lower lumber prices, ongoing U.S. softwood lumber tariffs, and timber supply constraints. As a result, pressure on rural communities that rely on this industry persist as the lack the economic diversification provides few alternative employment opportunities. At this time, the Government of B.C. is currently providing supports and resources to help affected workers within the Interior.^{18,19,20}

Quarter-over-quarter, employment within the **construction** industry remained relatively unchanged. Despite a slight decline (-0.3%),²¹ large non-residential construction projects, such as BC Hydro's Site C hydroelectric dam, have continued to support the industry. Looking forward, the sector will benefit from the provincial government's announcement in October for several roadway **construction** projects, including \$104.6 million funding to build a new two-lane highway and bridge crossing Halfway River as part of the BC Hydro's Site C hydroelectric project.²²

In addition, the provincial government continues to pursue its goal of 114,000 new affordable homes over the coming decade. Several housing projects have begun in the fourth quarter, and will support affordable rental housing, and Indigenous housing.^{23,24}

Year-over-year, B.C.'s **services** sector employment increased to 2,077,200 (+52,400) due in part to growth in trade (+24,200), public administration (+17,000), and educational services (+16,200).²⁵ However, while most industries grew, there were modest losses in healthcare and social assistance (-15,900), and transportation and warehousing (-1,100).²⁶

In spite of a modest decline in **health care and social assistance** employment in the fourth quarter (-4,100), the Government of B.C. continues to invest in the sector. A new urgent and primary care centre in Vernon last November.²⁷ And, a new urgent and primary care centre recently opened in Kelowna, with another planned for Victoria.^{28,29} Looking forward, the Government of B.C. announced that it will provide approximately \$3.64 million over the next two years to create 418 new health care assistant seats at 14 post-secondary institutions. The additional funding is to ensure that B.C.'s aging population continues to receive supports with long-term care.³⁰

British Columbia Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally adjusted data ('000)	4th Quarter 2019	3rd Quarter 2019	4th Quarter 2018	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	2,553.8	2,561.6	2,528.7	-7.8	-0.3	25.1	1.0
Goods-producing sector	476.6	481.1	503.9	-4.5	-0.9	-27.3	-5.4
Agriculture	27.3	26.3	25.0	1.0	3.8	2.3	9.2
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	41.2	42.4	51.0	-1.2	-2.8	-9.8	-19.2
Utilities	11.5	11.8	13.7	-0.3	-2.5	-2.2	-16.1
Construction	235.2	236.0	243.1	-0.8	-0.3	-7.9	-3.2
Manufacturing	161.4	164.7	171.1	-3.3	-2.0	-9.7	-5.7
Services-producing sector	2,077.2	2,080.4	2,024.8	-3.2	-0.2	52.4	2.6
Trade	394.2	393.8	370.0	0.4	0.1	24.2	6.5
Transportation and warehousing	139.1	136.7	140.7	2.4	1.8	-1.6	-1.1
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	165.5	160.6	152.6	4.9	3.1	12.9	8.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	222.9	223.4	216.9	-0.5	-0.2	6.0	2.8
Business, building and other support services	106.7	111.5	105.9	-4.8	-4.3	0.8	0.8
Educational services	185.0	186.8	168.8	-1.8	-1.0	16.2	9.6
Health care and social assistance	308.1	312.2	324.0	-4.1	-1.3	-15.9	-4.9
Information, culture and recreation	122.0	133.3	128.0	-11.3	-8.5	-6.0	-4.7
Accommodation and food services	197.4	186.4	192.2	11.0	5.9	5.2	2.7
Other services	114.5	119.8	120.8	-5.3	-4.4	-6.3	-5.2
Public administration	121.9	116.1	104.9	5.8	5.0	17.0	16.2

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0355, formerly CANSIM 282-0088

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

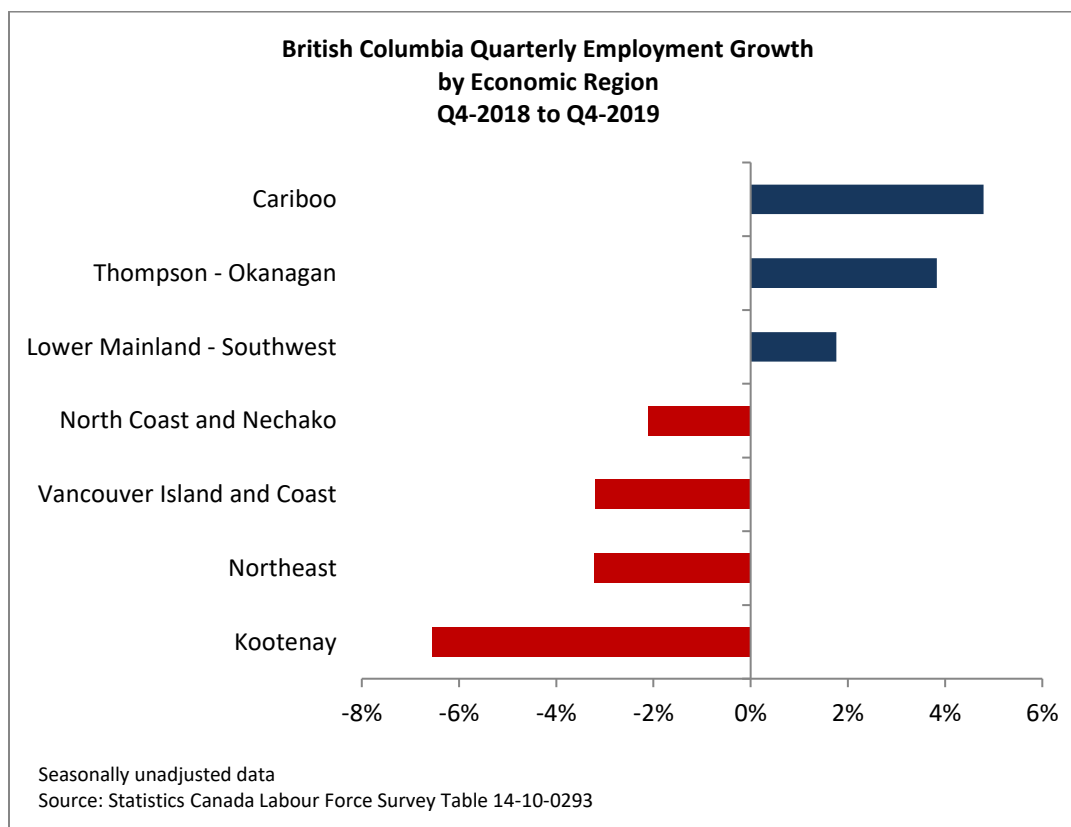
Since the fourth quarter of 2018, employment growth has varied across B.C., ranging from a modest increase in the Lower Mainland-Southwest (+28,900), to considerable job losses on Vancouver Island and Coast (-12,500). Over the same period, the unemployment rates grew in all the regions.³¹

British Columbia Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

Seasonally unadjusted data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	4th Quarter 2019 ('000)	4th Quarter 2018 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	4th Quarter 2019 (%)	4th Quarter 2018 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
British Columbia	2,550.2	2,527.6	0.9	4.7	4.1	0.6
Economic Regions						
Vancouver Island and Coast	378.3	390.8	-3.2	4.6	3.6	1.0
Lower Mainland - Southwest	1,670.5	1,641.6	1.8	4.5	4.2	0.3
Thompson - Okanagan	270.9	260.9	3.8	5.0	4.7	0.3
Kootenay	71.2	76.2	-6.6	4.2	3.1	1.1
Cariboo	78.7	75.1	4.8	6.8	5.3	1.5
North Coast and Nechako	41.7	42.6	-2.1	3.9	3.8	0.1
Northeast	39.0	40.3	-3.2	5.1	4.7	0.4

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0293, formerly CANSIM 282-0122



Employment decreased by 3.2% to 378,300 (-12,500) in **Vancouver Island and Coast**, while the unemployment rate increased to 4.6% between the final quarter of 2018 and the final quarter of 2019.³² The forestry sector within the region has essentially collapsed, as the strike between roughly 3,000 employees and Western Forest Products remain ongoing.

Compared to last year's fourth quarter, employment in **Lower Mainland - Southwest** increased by 1.8% to 1,670,500 (+28,900).³³ In particular, the region's construction sector is performing well with a variety of ongoing projects, including construction of a new \$700 million wastewater treatment plant in the North Shore,³⁴ some affordable rental home projects,^{35,36} and the ongoing construction of Amazon's new office space in downtown Vancouver.³⁷

Looking forward, construction will help drive employment in the region, as the City of Vancouver approved the rezoning of the new St. Paul's Hospital, with construction expected to begin in late 2020.³⁸ In addition, the provincial government announced the \$1.38 billion Pattullo Bridge replacement project, which is scheduled for completion in 2023.³⁹

In the past year, employment in **Thompson-Okanagan** increased by 3.8% to 270,900 (+10,000), and the unemployment rate increased slightly to 5.0%.⁴⁰ The region's forestry industry faces challenges as Kelowna's Tolko mill was permanently closed January 2020. Despite the downturn for region's forest product manufacturers, it's economy remains robust. Over the coming months Rogers Communications is spending \$16.5 million to enhance its wireless network in Kelowna, West Kelowna, and Westbank First Nation. The investment includes the construction of new towers and upgrades to existing cell sites.⁴¹ Looking forward, construction of the new District Wine Village in Oliver is set to begin in spring 2020. The venue will allow 16 small-batch wine, beer, cider, and spirit producers to have their own production facility and tasting room.⁴²

Across the **Kootenay** region, the unemployment rate increased to 4.2% and the employment decreased by 6.6% to 71,200 (-5,000) compared to the same quarter last year.⁴³ The job losses were predominantly within the services sector, particularly in healthcare and social assistance. Compared to other regions within the province, employment in the Kootenay's goods sector remained steady. And while the rest of the province's forestry industry has declined, Kalesnikoff Lumber's mass timber manufacturing facility is undergoing a \$35 million expansion due to its focus on pre-fabricated engineered building products.⁴⁴

Between the final quarter of 2018 and the final quarter of 2019, employment across the **Cariboo** increased by 4.8% to 78,700 and unemployment rate increased to 6.8% due in part to more people joining the labour force.⁴⁵ Despite the region's overall growth, employment within forestry and manufacturing sectors declined.⁴⁶ In the fourth quarter, Tolko Industries Ltd. further reduced its operating capacity at its Soda Creek Division in Williams Lake as around 150 employees transitioned to a three-day work week.⁴⁷

Between the final quarter of 2018 and the final quarter of 2019, employment within **Northeast** declined slightly by 3.2% to 39,000, and the unemployment rate increased to 5.1%.⁴⁸ Employment within the region is likely to increase in the coming months as several energy construction projects have been announced. Tourmaline Oil plans to spend \$1.7 billion on gas exploration and development in the Northeast over the next five years. And Calima Energy received approval from the BC Oil & Gas Commission to construct a production facility at its Montney pad location.^{49,50} The increase in proposed project activity work has led to the B.C. government to

invest in several infrastructure projects, such as the nearly \$105 million Highway 29 realignment and bridge replacement project, and the \$6.5 million stabilization work along Highway 97.^{51,52}

Note: In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.

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For information on the Labour Force Survey, please visit the Statistics Canada Web site at: www.statcan.gc.ca

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