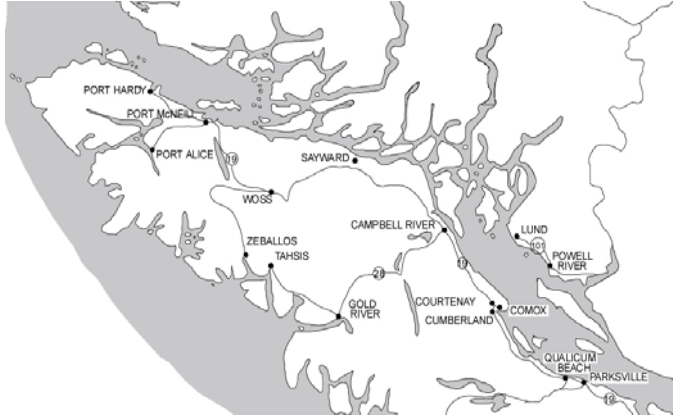


coastal Chronicle

A Coastal Community Labour Market Report

Fall 2007



Regional Summary

With contributors from **The Career Centre**, Parksville/Qualicum Beach, **The Job Shop**, Comox Valley, **Career Link**, Powell River and **North Island Employment**, Campbell River, this newsletter covers the labour market trends from the mid east to north Vancouver Island and the upper Sunshine Coast. Although these regions are located on the coast, where ferries and rain are often topics of conversation, they each have their unique economies and business trends. Our goal is to provide current information to keep job seekers and business abreast of the local labour market in these areas.

What's in this issue:

- ◆ Parksville/Qualicum Beach
- ◆ Comox Valley
- ◆ Powell River Region
- ◆ Campbell River and North Vancouver Island

Introduction to the Communities

Parksville/Qualicum Beach area

Parksville is the hub for businesses and services in School District 69, in an area of Vancouver Island referred to as the "mid-island." Located about 73 kilometres (45 miles) south of Courtenay, Parksville (pop. 26,513) is the largest centre in the district. Surrounding communities are: Qualicum Beach (pop. 8,502), Lighthouse Country (Bowser, North Qualicum), French Creek, Coombs, Errington, and Nanoose Bay. The mild climate, small



town lifestyle, relatively low real estate prices, and access to abundant outdoor activities, including excellent beaches, attract many new residents every month. The labour market consists of small businesses, (many of which are home-based) retail sales, social, educa-

tional, health and emergency services. Recently, construction and development have created employment, and, of course, tourism and hospitality from a large sector of this labour market. In addition, top-notch communication systems are in place in the community, attracting new businesses in the growing technology sector. For more information on the Parksville area see the City of Parksville 2007 Community Profile on the Career Centre Website www.careercentre.org under Features

Economic Indicators March to August 2007 PARKSVILLE/QUALICUM

Parksville/Qualicum Region Population (2006 Census) 35,015

Number of job postings at The Career Centre	828
Top jobs posted at The Career Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Childcare and Home Support Workers ◆ Labourers ◆ Chefs and Cooks
Average real estate unit sales per month	78
Average sale price of a home	\$375,049
# of new Parksville business licences issued (May—August)	41
# of commercial & institutional building permits issued in Parksville	22 - Total Value = \$23,797,715
# of Residential building permits issued in Parksville	43 - Total Value = \$18,755,589

General Trends – PARKSVILLE/QUALICUM

Some quick tidbits on the general trends we are seeing in Parksville/Qualicum:

- ◆ The number of job postings advertised on the Career Centre website has tripled in the last three years from 395 in 2003 to 1137 in 2007 and the year is not finished.
- ◆ Labour and customer service positions top the list of job postings. This is not surprising due to the amount of development of new resort and seniors facilities in our area.
- ◆ Employers in the Parksville/Qualicum area are starting to respond to the shortage of qualified workers and are advertising perks and benefits in their job postings.
- ◆ Employer forums focused on retention and employee relations are being well attended in our area.
- ◆ The age of the majority of clients visiting The Career Centre is 20-29 with 46-55 being the next biggest group. The 46-55 group relates to what we are seeing in the news about our aging population.
- ◆ The demand for health care workers has increased and this is the focus of the Community Spotlight.



Community Spotlight – PARKSVILLE/QUALICUM

The Greying of Parksville/Qualicum Beach

Recently the **Parksville Qualicum News** reported that the new 2006 census data released July 17, 2007 revealed that Parksville and Qualicum Beach have the oldest citizens in Canada. *“While Qualicum Beach retains its title as the oldest community in Canada (about four in 10 persons are over 65) Parksville runs a close second and is now the mid-size urban centre with the highest proportion of very elderly citizens (aged 80 and over).”*

The demographics in our area certainly affect our local labour market. Business

is recognizing the retirement trend in our area and at the moment a new residential care facility is being built in Parksville. This new facility is planned to open by the summer of 2008 and it will have 140 residential care beds and 30 assisted living units. Two more care facilities are also being proposed to be built in the near future. With all this development the demand for health care workers in Parksville is sure to increase. Recently three clients of the Career Centre found employment immediately after they finished their Residential Care Atten-

dant training. Other spin off businesses that are popping up to support our older citizens are physiotherapy clinics, personal services, drugstores and health food stores.



Comox Valley

The Comox Valley is located on the east coast of Vancouver Island and covers 1725.6 square kilometres. The area is bounded by Strathcona Park in the west, Mud Bay in the south, Oyster River in the north and includes Denman and Hornby Islands. According to the 2006 Census, the area's population is 62,934, with approximately 60% of people living in three major communities: Courtenay (pop. 22,553), Comox (pop. 13,008) and Cumberland (pop. 2,881), while the re-

maining 40% live in rural areas. The region was settled in the late 1800s through farming, mining and forestry. Today, the mainstays of the local economy are retail and wholesale trade, health and social services, accommodation and food service, agriculture, forestry and fishing, and educational services. The recent expansion of the Comox Valley Airport, relatively inexpensive real estate, attraction to a healthy lifestyle and retirement of baby boomers are all contributing to a steady popu-

lation growth of 1.8% per year over the last 5 years (the BC average is 1.2%). As a result, construction, real estate and services supporting these industries are all experiencing strong growth. The area is seeing considerable activity in personal services, such as alternative healthcare, wellness and pet care. There is also steady growth in agriculture, particularly in organic and specialty crops, value-added products and agri-tourism.

Economic Indicators March to August 2007 COMOX VALLEY

Comox Valley Region Population (2006 Census) 62,934

Number of job postings at The Job Shop	683 Average monthly postings 114
Main types of jobs posted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Trades ◆ Trades Labourers ◆ Landscaping ◆ Commercial and residential cleaning
Average real estate unit sales per month	111
Average sale price of a home	\$328,497
# of new business licences issued in City of Courtenay	140
# of commercial building permits Jan—June only	70 Total Value = \$24,091,948
# of residential building permits Jan—June only	223 Total Value = \$49,626,311

General Trends – COMOX VALLEY

Since 2003 we have seen a steady rise in the number of jobs posted both on our job board and in the local newspapers. Averaging 114 postings* per month from March to August of this year, temporary employment and day labour both see a sharp increase in spring and summer months. While construction trades and service jobs continue to lead the way in numbers of openings, we are also seeing an increase in postings for office, professional and semi-professional jobs. These positions include occupations in social services, IT/technical and FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate).

Wages for entry level, ser-

vice positions and general office work are usually advertised at \$8-12/hour. Semi-skilled construction trades are posted at \$12-15/hour and Journeyman trades are posted at \$22-35/hour. Wages for technical and semi-professional occupations vary widely and most employers indicate they are willing to negotiate a salary for the right person. Many job seekers are reporting multiple job offers and are asking for and receiving the salaries they want.

The Job Shop (Career Resource Centre for the Comox Valley) served 2,026 clients from March 1, 2007 to August 31, 2007. Ap-

proximately half of those clients worked directly with a Career Advisor, meaning they were exploring career options, retraining and self-employment. People are feeling positive about the strong economy and are looking for new employment opportunities. Our Career Advisors report that a large portion (estimated at between 30-40%) of their clients identify themselves as being new to the Valley, having arrived within the last 6 months. Clients using drop in services are generally in job search and looking for employer names, job postings and access to the fax and computers.

General Trends continued – COMOX VALLEY

There are currently both steady sales and a steady rise in prices for real estate. House prices jumped an average of 9% from July 2006 to July 2007. Buyers from the Prairie Provinces, particularly Alberta, and other parts of BC lead the way. WestJet has allowed for easy commuting for people from Calgary and Edmonton. Baby boomers, young buyers and people looking to retire or have recreational property are continuing to fuel the residential construction growth.

Commercial growth is also on the rise with several major projects in the works: [Trilogy](#), [Kensington](#), and [Sage Hills](#) are three major developments in various stages of approval in the Comox Valley area. The scale of these developments

will have a huge impact on the community. The increase in population and continued economic growth have supported the start of many new businesses. Most of the new businesses identified by the City of Courtenay are in construction, equipment operation, landscaping, health and beauty services and pet care. Slegg Lumber is building a new store in Cumberland. It will be approximately 120,000-130,000 sq ft, is expected to open in March 2008 and employ 75 people. There are two (possibly three) hotels slated to be built next year in Courtenay.

Agriculture and agri-tourism are adding flavour to the economy as Invest Comox Valley is promoting the area as the "[Provence of North America](#)." Shelter

Point Whiskey Distillery and Beaufort Wineries are new additions to an active farming and food production industry, which includes specialty crops such as organic berries, organic meat, game and cheese.

**Note: Temporary and day labour jobs are also offered through the local Hire-a-Student office during summer months and year-round through a local temporary agency, Labour Unlimited.*



Community Spotlight – COMOX VALLEY

Healthy Living Continues to be a Theme in the Comox Valley

With its pleasant climate and easy access to recreation areas, the Comox Valley has always attracted people who are looking for quality of life and a healthy lifestyle. Over the last five years, the eco-friendly Valley has experienced a higher than average population growth, resulting in a growing demand for prod-

ucts and services promoting health, wellness and the environment.

The Healing Arts Network was formed in 2004 to promote the skills and knowledge of alternative health care practitioners. There are 95 organizations and individuals listed in its 2006 directory, ranging from

yoga centres and spas to naturopathic doctors and personal coaches. Many of these practitioners are self-employed and some work from home. However, they still have a large impact on the local economy. Some have paid employees, and many contract the services of bookkeepers, marketing companies, printing compa-

Community Spotlight continued – COMOX VALLEY

nies, janitorial services and other business support services.

Spas, wellness centres and salons are also on the rise. The 2007-2008 Yellow Pages lists 38 hair, nail and spa businesses in the Valley. In 2007 a second beauty and esthetics school opened in Courtenay. Three yoga and two Pilates studios, as well as many smaller practices have opened in recent years.

The Valley has a number of thriving health food stores and in the past four years has seen an increase in establishments catering to demands for specialty foods.

Organic produce and locally produced products are sold widely at the Farmer's Market and in grocery stores. Zen Zero, a raw food and health store, has expanded twice and increased from four to 20 employees since opening in 2003.

Not only do Valley residents take good care of themselves, they also seek quality services for their pets. Pet services is another area undergoing rapid growth. Although self-employment and home-based businesses dominate this sector, from May to July, 2007 the Job Shop had eight postings for dog walking and grooming jobs. Currently, there are 10

dog grooming businesses, 13 pet supply stores and seven kennels listed in the 2007-2008 Yellow Pages. A local owner of a grooming shop says she encourages her clients to book their appointments two to four months in advance to ensure they will get a spot. You can even buy natural food for your pets at Wagz, whose tagline is, "Lifestyles for Dogs & Cats."



Powell River and Region

Like other BC coastal communities, Powell River is morphing - quickly. Located on the upper Sunshine Coast, the isolated community is accessible by ferry from the Sechelt Peninsula and Vancouver Island. The 2006 Census puts the region's population at 19,599, the majority of which is located in the com-

munities that comprise the City of Powell River: Westview, Townsite, Wildwood and Cranberry, each with its own character. Approximately 30% of the population resides outside the city limits in the Powell River Regional District which stretches south of the city to Saltery Bay and north to Lund, Savary Island and Desolation Sound.

Historically, the region's economy was dependent on a solitary paper mill, now owned by Catalyst Paper, as well as on the resource industries of forestry, fishing

and quarry mining. More recently, employment has shifted from resource-based industries to the service and public service sectors. Within the past four years, the region has experienced activity similar to other coastal towns: expansion of tourism marketing and opportunities; a lively real estate market fuelled by newcomers attracted to the "small town" friendliness; a rise in residential construction and renovation; and increased commercial construction for new services to meet the projected needs of this evolving community.



Economic Indicators March to August 2007 POWELL RIVER AND REGION

Powell River Region
Population (2006 Census) 19,599
Land mass 5,092 km²

Number of job postings at Career Link	258
Main types of jobs posted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hospitality ◆ Sales/service ◆ Construction/trades
Average real estate unit sales per month	24
Average sale price of a home	\$260,331
# of business licences issued	37
# of commercial Building permits	Information unavailable
# of residential Home Permits	Information unavailable
Percentage change in semi-truck traffic on total Comox/ Powell River route from 2003/04 to 2006/07	+ 240%
Percentage change in semi-truck traffic on total Earls Cove/Saltery Bay route from 2003/04 to 2006/07:	+ 24.5%

General Trends – POWELL RIVER AREA

The number of job postings Career Link receives from local employers has risen significantly in recent years. 258 postings in the six-month period of March to August, 2007 is more than triple the number from the same period in 2003 when the agency received only 81 postings. Hospitality sector postings continue to lead in number, and in length of time posted: hospitality sector postings currently have a reposting rate (posted beyond an initial two-week period) of close to 50%. Businesses located out of city limits are having an increasingly difficult time

recruiting. The number of sales and service postings has increased due in part to the opening of several chain stores: Mark's Work Warehouse, Staples and Dollarama all opened stores this past spring.

Wages for entry-level jobs across sectors have been rising over the past year, with hospitality and sales/service positions often being posted at above minimum wage. We have also seen a sharp increase in the number of employers stating the wages are negotiable. Construction labour hourly wage rates range

from \$10 to \$16, with the lower wage jobs generally taking longer to fill. Anecdotally, some construction sector employers have indicated they are providing housing for workers they have brought into town to work on specific projects.

The construction sector in Powell River is active, with the majority of work in renovations and some new housing starts. It is so active that the commercial and residential building permit information for March to August was not available by publication time because the building

General Trends continued – POWELL RIVER AREA

and licensing department has a data entry backlog! Most local contractors tell us they have work lined up for the next two or three years, and some would take on more projects if they had ready access to additional ticketed tradespeople.

With the increase in retail outlets and construction activity, it is no wonder the truck traffic on the two ferry routes servicing Powell River has increased exponentially in the past four years. While passenger and regular vehicle traffic has remained fairly steady since

2003, the number of semi-truck trips continues to climb.



Community Spotlight – POWELL RIVER REGION

Power

Access to power is one of the founding features of Powell River. The paper mill was sited at the mouth of the Powell River in 1912 and has benefited from easy access to hydro from the adjacent hydroelectric generating station. Now almost 100 years later, as jobs in the mill and in traditional resource sectors of fishing and forestry decline, Powell River finds itself at the hub of emerging power projects on the west coast.

At the centre of the activity are the Plutonic Power Corporation run-of-river hydro projects, most of which are still in the proposal or assessment stages. Of the 34 projects Plutonic is proposing, 28 lie north of Powell River. Construction on two projects, on the East Toba River and Montrose Creek, began in July 2007 and will

continue for approximately 3.5 years. Peter Kiewit and Sons, as the general contractor on the project, will continue to hire skilled operators and labourers as the



project works its way inland from Toba Inlet. Camp management and services have been subcontracted

locally, as have brush clearing, transmission-line road construction, and barging. Up to 45 people from the Klahooshe and Tla'Amin First Nations are receiving the training required to work on the project. As these are the first two of many Plutonic projects in the area, local demand for construction workers is likely to continue for several years to come.

Looking beyond construction to the operational phase of Plutonic's plans: Plutonic's Economic impact analysis of the East Toba and Montrose projects, prepared in March 2007 by Vann Struth Consulting Group, projects that operational expenditures on this project will tally \$5.7 million annually for the Powell River area through goods and services purchased. This estimate is based on

Community Spotlight continued– POWELL RIVER REGION

Power

the assumed local purchase of road maintenance, repair, transportation, and environmental monitoring services, as well as insurance and miscellaneous parts and supplies. Operationally, the project is expected to employ five full-time positions in addition to a coordinator stationed in Vancouver and up to four seasonal jobs. This operational staff will include experienced hydroelectric plant managers, ticketed and apprenticing mechanics, and electricians and driver/helpers.

On Texada Island, two proposed projects are attracting varying degrees of attention. Katabatic Power, a private wind-farm development company, is requesting permission to install monitors on Texada Island to measure wind values on the island. The monitoring would continue for at least one year for Katabatic to evaluate the viability of a wind-farm project.

In August 2007, Westpac LNG of Calgary announced a proposed gas-fired power plant and LNG terminal facility at Kiddie Point on the north tip of Texada Island. Similar to LNG proposals up and down the west coast of

North America, this project has attracted controversy from the local community, with growing concerns about greenhouse gas emissions. Although obtaining the necessary permits for this project may take as long as three years, Westpac LNG is estimating the project will provide 300 construction jobs and 75 or more jobs once the plant and terminal are operational. As the project is still in proposal stage, specific details about operational jobs are not available, but the company states the power plant staff would include a mix of operational and electrical engineers, along with plant maintenance positions. The LNG terminal would employ approximately 45 staff involved in security, administration, and technical positions.

Current local jobs in the power sector, while small in number, are both sustainable and well paying. Powell River Energy Inc., owned by Brookfield Power and Catalyst Paper, has run the two local hydroelectric generating stations at Powell Lake and Lois Lake since 2001. The stations are staffed by eight permanent

hires along with an additional 4.5 employees from Catalyst and occasional consultants. The permanent positions require education and experience in mechanical and electrical engineering, environment/water resource management, and administration. In addition, staffing includes a tradesperson who oversees the electrical trades crew from Catalyst.

While power projects do not bring a large number of operational jobs to an area, these jobs by nature require post-secondary education and are well paid. In addition to any direct jobs garnered, Powell River would benefit from heightened recognition from other businesses looking for areas in which to locate. How that plays out in the local economy will become apparent only if these projects move through development to actual construction and operation.



Campbell River and North Island Community Profile

Stretching north from Campbell River to Port Hardy, on the east side of Vancouver Island, and to the West Coast, from Gold River to Tahsis, the North Vancouver Island region has a population of 50,181.

Campbell River and Region economic and labour profile is rapidly changing. With a growing economy and an aging population we are seeing health care, construction and mining increasing through new development projects. The new Ironwood Place Assisted Living and New Horizon Care facilities being built will need 150 employees by March 2008. Both mining

sites Quinsam Coal and NVI Myra Falls have projected to increase their production substantially based on new product lines and/or the demand for products internationally. Residential and industrial construction combined with new developments in resorts, condominiums, patio homes and commercial development are providing hundreds of trade jobs.

The north island economy is also being impacted by the current strike of 7,000 unionized sawmill and logging workers, the laying off of 1,000 workers at Catalyst Paper and the shutting down of 34 coastal logging and sawmilling companies.

The B.C. government's latest plan to revitalize the coastal forest industry is

about to be released, with measures to harvest second-growth timber on a shorter rotation and new rules for exporting logs from both Crown and private forest lands. This plan is needed support as the coastal forest industry struggles with balancing environmental needs, low-cost international competition, a sluggish U.S. housing market and a soaring Canadian dollar.

While forestry remains integral to the north island economy, employment in the coastal forest industry has dropped from more than 30,000 workers in the 1980s to fewer than 10,000 today. Growth industries for the north island include aquaculture, mining manufacturing and tourism.

Economic Indicators March to August 2007 CAMPBELL RIVER AND NORTH ISLAND

Campbell River Region Population (2006 Census) 36,461 Land Mass of region (2006 Census) 143.48 km²

Number of job postings at NIEFS	1421 Average 237 jobs per month
Main types of jobs posted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hospitality/Tourism ◆ Retail/Sales ◆ Trades
Average real estate unit sales per month	67
Average sale price of a home	\$298,652
# of business licences issued	175 Averaging 29 new businesses per month
# of commercial building permits	15
# of residential building permits	241
Total construction value of all permits	\$52,134,410

General Trends – CAMPBELL RIVER REGION

General trends we are seeing in the Campbell River Region are:

- ◆ The number of jobs posted by local employers on NIEFS Job Board and our Career TV Channel has steadily increased each year by 43%.
- ◆ Job postings tend to increase in the months of May and June of each year for the tourism hiring season. Occupations most in demand at this time are: sales clerks, cashiers, counter attendants, cooks, front desk clerks, cleaners and tour guides.



- ◆ The top 3 job postings at NIEFS March through August are in the Hospitality/Tourism, Retail/Sales and Trade.
- ◆ Full time employment was requested 3 times more by local employers than part time work positions. The average hourly wage rate for all persons employed in



Campbell River was \$22.83 according to the 2000 Census. The North Island Region of Mount Waddington was also high at \$23.99 compared to the province at \$17.64. Unfortunately the current 2006 Census information is not published as of this date.

- ◆ With the tourism industry taking a lead role in our local economy Campbell River saw 155 new business licenses issued in 2007 averaging about 31 per month in the period of March to July. That's an increase of 36% over the same period last year. Factors leading to this trend are the needs of the new arrivals to the area who are relocating here, buying vacation homes, investments, or if they are visiting as a tourist.
- ◆ The nature of this new

growth was favoured by tourism driving new businesses to construct and develop new homes and commercial sites, provide personal services to enhance individual lifestyles and increase the options for retail shopping in our local community.

- ◆ House sale activity continues to rise in Campbell River with a 4% increase in unit sales from 2005 to 2006. Only Campbell River posted a gain in 2006. Sales in 2006 were down eight per cent across the Vancouver Island Region. Campbell River continues to have a strong and steady market due to baby boomers, recreational/lifestyle seekers moving to the area as well our strong provincial economy.



Community Spotlight CAMPBELL RIVER AND NORTH ISLAND

Examples of new business attracted to Campbell River include: Cap-It International, Wal-Mart, Home Depot and London Drugs. Other business developments include the relocation and construction of new buildings for Mark's Work Warehouse, Save-on-Foods, Fountain Tire, Canadian Tire and Real Canadian Superstore. A major upgrade to Campbell River Commons (formerly called Ironwood Mall) has helped to attract new businesses to our community. Other important developments include: the completion of expansion to the local Gaming Centre and the successful completion of the First Nations Cruise Ship Terminal which attracts thousands of new visitors from around the world to Campbell River.

New Campbell River developments include the "Spirit Square Development Project" in support of the Living Downtown Residential Strategy; a potential 3,000 seat sports arena to support the growth of sports and recreation in the community; and the Middle Point Barge Terminal north of town used for Quinsam Coals export, other heavy duty equipment, the aqua-

culture industry and the growing construction boom on Sonora and Read Islands.

The above economic growth combined with an aging population and regional and international competition for skilled workers is resulting in employers struggling to find enough people with the right skills to meet their immediate employment needs. This trend became noticeable in 2005 - 2006 and is now accelerating.



Labour and skill shortages are being experienced across all industries and occupations with the greatest shortages in construction trades, transportation, health care professionals, managers, financial services and skilled professions. Businesses typically reliant on new entrants to the workforce are struggling to find workers as the youth population declines and workers are able to more

quickly advance to other employment opportunities.

Local industry, business, and employment and training organizations are working to develop solutions to attract, retain and train a workforce diverse and skilled enough to meet existing and projected occupational shortages. With the current labour shortage, local businesses are looking at new and innovative ways to attract and retain their employees. Examples include increasing productivity through the use of technology, on-the-job training, flexible work schedules, and creative approaches to both the organization of work and compensation and employment incentives. Rapid demographic shifts are affecting every sector and employer in Canada, Campbell River and North Island. We will all be challenged to efficiently and effectively manage change as we enter our next demographic transition. The opportunity is to develop responses to these changes that make the north island a destination of choice for both new business and the workers needed to support this economic growth.