

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BULLETIN



Business Council of
British Columbia
Est. 1966

Volume 57, Issue 2, Apr/May 2025

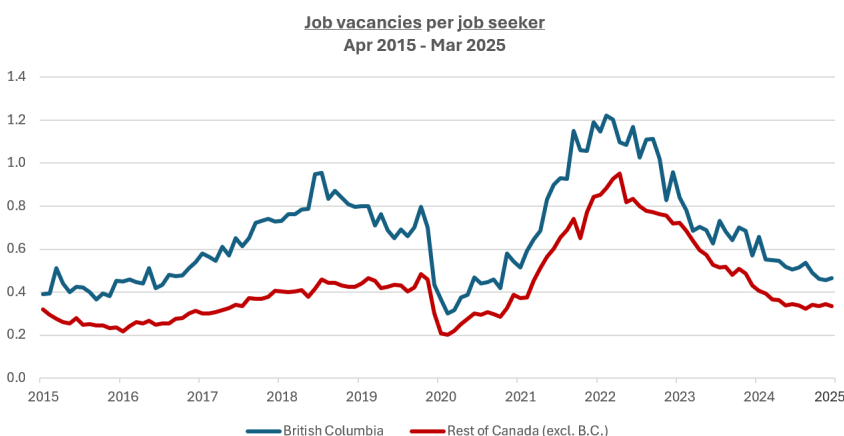
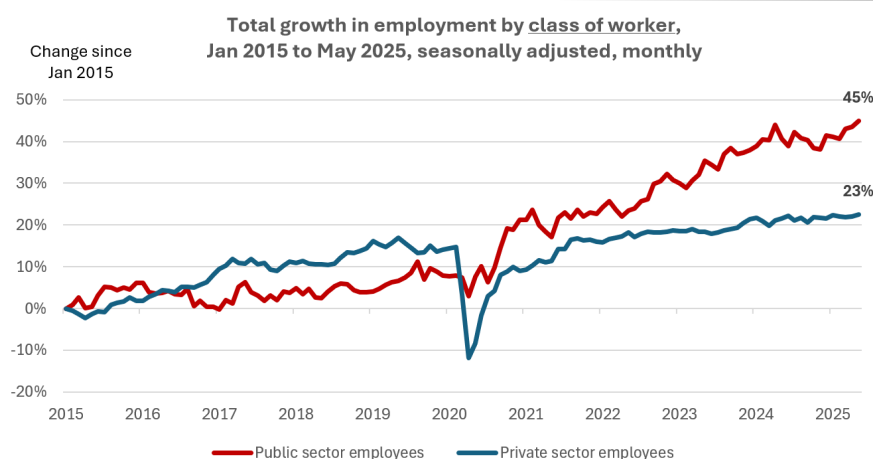
LABOUR MARKET UPDATE – JANUARY TO MAY 2025

B.C.'s labour market has added 43,000 jobs (+1.5%) so far in 2025, with the bulk of the gains front-loaded in January (+23,000), while subsequent months brought smaller, steadier gains. Despite the recent uptick, the broader labour market remains softer than usual. Between May/24 and May/25, total employment has grown by just 1.2%, which is well below the pace recorded between May/23 and May/24 (3.3%) and May/22 to May/23 (2.2%). These numbers suggest a deceleration in B.C.'s employment growth.

In this context, the private sector continues to struggle. It added just 14,700 jobs in the first five months of 2025 (+0.8%). In contrast, public sector employment grew by 15,400 jobs (+2.6%) over the same period, with a growth rate more than three times that of the private sector.

Year-over-year, the pattern is similar: private sector employment is up just 0.9% (+15,900 jobs), while the public sector has expanded by 3.1% (+18,700 jobs). The widening gap underscores a structural shift in B.C.'s labour market, where public hiring has been playing a disproportionately large role in overall job growth.

Against the backdrop of weak private sector job creation, B.C.'s unemployment rate has been trending upward since mid-2024 and continues to climb in 2025. It now sits at 6.4% (May/25), up from 5.6% a year ago (May/24). This is the sharpest increase among provinces. Historically, a rise of more than one percentage point in the unemployment rate over a 12-month



period has only occurred during recessionary periods like the early 1980s, the early 1990s, the 2008-09 global financial crisis, and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, we're seeing a steady decline in the number of job vacancies per job seeker over the last year. This ratio (which was about 0.70 at the start

of 2024) has dropped to just 0.46 (a 34 % decline) as of March 2025. That means there are now fewer job openings for every person looking for work, a clear sign that employer demand is slowing. Over the first three months of the year, however, the ratio has remained steady at 0.46 jobs vacant per job seeker.