



Highlights

- Year over year imports are down while exports are up
- Building permits receded further in B.C. in November; retrenchment prompted by waning construction in residential sector

B.C. trade volumes continue to decline

Alan Chow, Business Economist

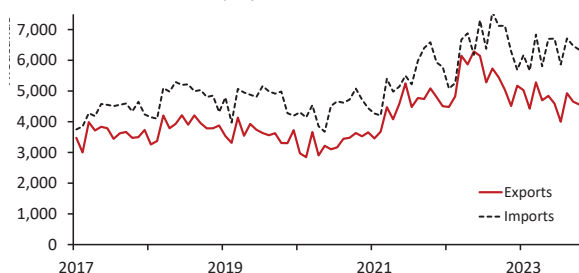
In November, the growth in B.C.'s merchandise exports returned positive territory, achieving a year-over-year gain of 2.5 per cent. This marks the first increase since January. Total exports reached \$4.6 billion. Exports have been sluggish since their peak in the middle of 2022. Despite maintaining steadiness in recent months, export sales are still down about 20 per cent from peak. Imports have also declined but held up more than exports, even with an 11 per cent year-over-year drop during the month. Year-to-date, imports and exports are down with imports down 3.9 per cent and exports down 13.6 per cent.

Within the exports category, key themes persisted. The drag on 12-month exports was primarily driven by forestry products, experiencing a 15.5 per cent decrease, which reflects challenging market conditions for U.S. housing starts and still modest prices. Subsequently, there was a decline in consumer goods (down 7.3 per cent), and in farm, fishing and intermediate food products (down 9.2 per cent). This was counterbalanced by a significant increase in metal ores and non-metallic minerals (up 262 per cent) and Metal and non-metallic mineral products (up 24.6 per cent). Year-to-date, the decline in exports was led by a 28.2 per cent decline in forestry products and a 18.9 per cent decline in energy products.

On the imports side, the decline was led by lower consumer goods (down 16.9 per cent), and industrial machinery, equipment and parts (down 26.5 per cent). Only three categories saw a year-over-year monthly increase in imports with the highest increase seen

B.C. trade volumes remain suppressed

Dollar volumes, not seasonally adjusted ('000,000s)



Source: Statistics Canada, Central 1

latest: Nov/23

in motor vehicle and parts (up 76.7 per cent). Year-to-date, lower imports were largely driven by lower consumer goods (down 11.8 per cent), metal and non-metallic mineral products (down 23.9 per cent), and forestry products (down 16.0 per cent) but offset by higher motor vehicle and parts (up 36.3 per cent), and higher energy products (up 47.1 per cent).

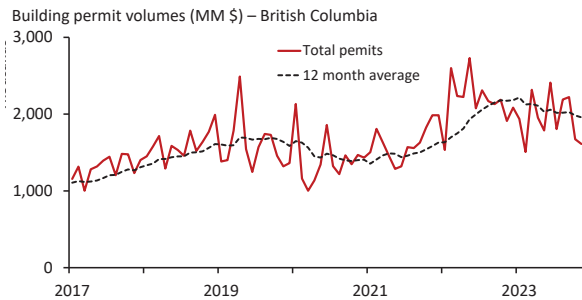
B.C. construction sector sees curtailment in building permit values in November

Eloho Ennah, Economic Analyst

B.C. building permits declined further in November, following October's downswing. The total volume of permits decreased by 3.7 per cent to \$1.6 billion. Although monthly data can be erratic, November's number was the lowest figure since February 2023 as the overall trend shows withdrawing construction intentions given unfavorable borrowing conditions, fewer pre-sales, and a stale economic environment. This month's reduction was driven by a strong dip in residential unit construction which shrunk by 19.4 per cent, and an equal magnitude decline recorded in the prior month. On the other hand, non-residential permits saw a boost, up 48.5 per cent during the month. Year-to-date, total dollar permit volumes have receded 11.1 per cent, with residential permit volumes down 15.8 per cent while non-residential permit volumes declined 0.4 per cent.

Total residential permit values fell in November to \$1.0 billion, with multi-family dwelling permits leading the monthly decline with a decrease of 27.6 per cent. This was a further pullback from the 20.1 per cent decrease in October. Single-family dwelling permit

Building permit volumes recede in B.C.



values increased 14.7 per cent during the month to almost counter the 16.7 per cent decline in the previous month. Year-to-date, single-family permits have decreased 18.8 per cent while multi-family permits have fallen 14.9 per cent.

Non-residential permit volumes increased in November, rising to \$574.3 million following two consecutive month-over-month declines. All subcategories posted increases during the month with industrial permits rising the most, up 118.1 per cent. Commercial permits also increased 37.3 per cent while government permits rose 47.1 per cent.

Among census metropolitan areas, Vancouver recorded a 11.3 per cent contraction in monthly permits, following a reduction of 16.9 per cent in October. It was one of the two areas to record a monthly decline. In addition, permit values in Kelowna fell 22.4 per cent. Abbotsford-Mission permits leaped 44.8 per cent while they increased in Victoria by 3.7 per cent. In Chilliwack, permits were four times the value of the prior month while they increased 26.1 per cent in Kamloops.

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