

OKANAGAN

# Area job prospects drop with mercury

Unemployment rate climbs to 8.4% in Okanagan, 7.3% in Kelowna

By STEVE MacNAULL  
The Okanagan Saturday

Winter doldrums have hit the Okanagan economy and pushed people out of work. In the Thompson-Okanagan region surveyed by Statistics Canada to determine January unemployment figures, the labour force shrank, as did the number of people working. The

## JOBSTATS

**Thompson-Okanagan January 2014**  
 — Population aged 15-plus: 434,400  
 — Labour force: 272,200  
 — Employed: 249,200  
 — Unemployed: 23,000  
 — Unemployment rate: 8.4 per cent

**December 2013**  
 — Population aged 15-plus: 434,400  
 — Labour force: 275,000  
 — Employed: 253,200  
 — Unemployed: 21,700  
 — Unemployment rate: 7.9 per cent

**Kelowna January 2014**  
 — Population aged 15-plus: 152,000  
 — Labour force: 95,000  
 — Employed: 88,100  
 — Unemployed: 6,900  
 — Unemployment rate: 7.3 per cent

**December 2013**  
 — Population aged 15-plus: 151,900  
 — Labour force: 98,000  
 — Employed: 91,200  
 — Unemployed: 6,800  
 — Unemployment rate: 6.9 per cent

number of jobless rose, and the unemployment rate spiked to 8.4 per cent.

In December, the unemployment rate was 7.9 per cent.

In Kelowna, the story is much the same with a smaller labour force, fewer employed and more unemployed.

The city's jobless rate in January was 7.3 per cent, up from 6.9 per cent the month before.

The economy always contracts in the Okanagan in the winter with it being the off-season for tourism and big industries such as forestry, construction and real estate slowing because of the weather.

Even retail hits the doldrums after the excitement of

Christmas, Boxing Day and early January clearances. The population of people aged 15-plus remained virtually the same in both the Thompson-Okanagan and Kelowna, yet the labour force shrank by 3,000 in each.

That could be people who are giving up on their job search for now because it is so bleak, thinking it will be better to resume in the spring.

It can also be workers deciding to take a job in the oilpatch in northern Alberta while maintaining a home in the Okanagan.

Nationally, there were actually job gains. Canada's unemployment rate dropped to seven per cent in January from 7.2 per cent in December.

The B.C. rate also fell — to 6.4 per cent from 6.6.

Cities with the lowest unemployment rates in January included Saskatoon and Quebec City, both at 4.3 per cent, Regina with 4.4, Calgary at 4.8 and Victoria with 4.9.

The highest jobless rates were found in St. Catharines with 8.8 per cent, Trois-Rivieres at 8.7, Toronto with 8.4 and Abbotsford at eight per cent.



WAYNE EMDE/Special to The Okanagan Saturday

## New queen crowned

Retiring Queen Silver Star Emily Pfannschidt places her crown on the head of her successor, Cheyenne Krog, while one of the members of the queen's committee, Coleen Noel, waits to hand Krog her flowers. The new Queen Silver Star was crowned Thursday evening in Vernon as part of the city's Winter Carnival festivities. The 54th Vernon Winter Carnival continues through Feb. 16. For a list of Winter Carnival events, visit [www.vernonwintercarnival.com](http://www.vernonwintercarnival.com).

OKANAGAN

# Mussel threat prompts call for boat inspections in B.C.

**Water board says strategy needed to prevent spread of harmful mussels into Okanagan lakes**

By Okanagan Saturday Staff

Boats being towed into B.C. should be inspected for a harmful form of mussel, Okanagan water officials say.

If the zebra and quagga mussels reach local lakes, they could foul beaches, create algae blooms and harm tourism, officials say.

"A comprehensive strategy is needed and we're running out of time," said West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater, chairman of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. "Every year that goes by is another year our lakes could get infected."

Mussel-inspection sites should be



Findlater

created at major points of entry into the province, said Anna Warwick-Sears, the OBWB's executive director. Some American states, such as Idaho, already have such inspection points, she said.

"Prevention is going to cost a lot less than dealing with it once it's here," Warwick-Sears said.

Controlling the mussel population once it becomes established might cost as much as \$43 million annually, according to estimates done for the OBWB based on experience elsewhere.

The OBWB's board of directors, made up of local politicians from throughout the Valley, has asked staff to meet with provincial and federal officials to discuss plans to prevent the mussels from reaching B.C. lakes.

# Given month to make

Thursday Staff

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