

Is the grass always greener on the other side? Comparing employment among the provinces

submitted by Jim Follwell, Economist

Labour Market Information

Finding a short term job or a career outside PEI is an option many Islanders have considered and will continue to explore. But before moving, it is important to check out labour market conditions in other provinces first.

Among the factors you should consider are the trends in job growth or loss in other provinces. Check out the **employment** facts and figures and not just the **unemployment** rates. Job seekers focus on the monthly reports on how many people are without jobs and the number of layoffs. But what about looking at the size and growth of the number of people in the workforce?

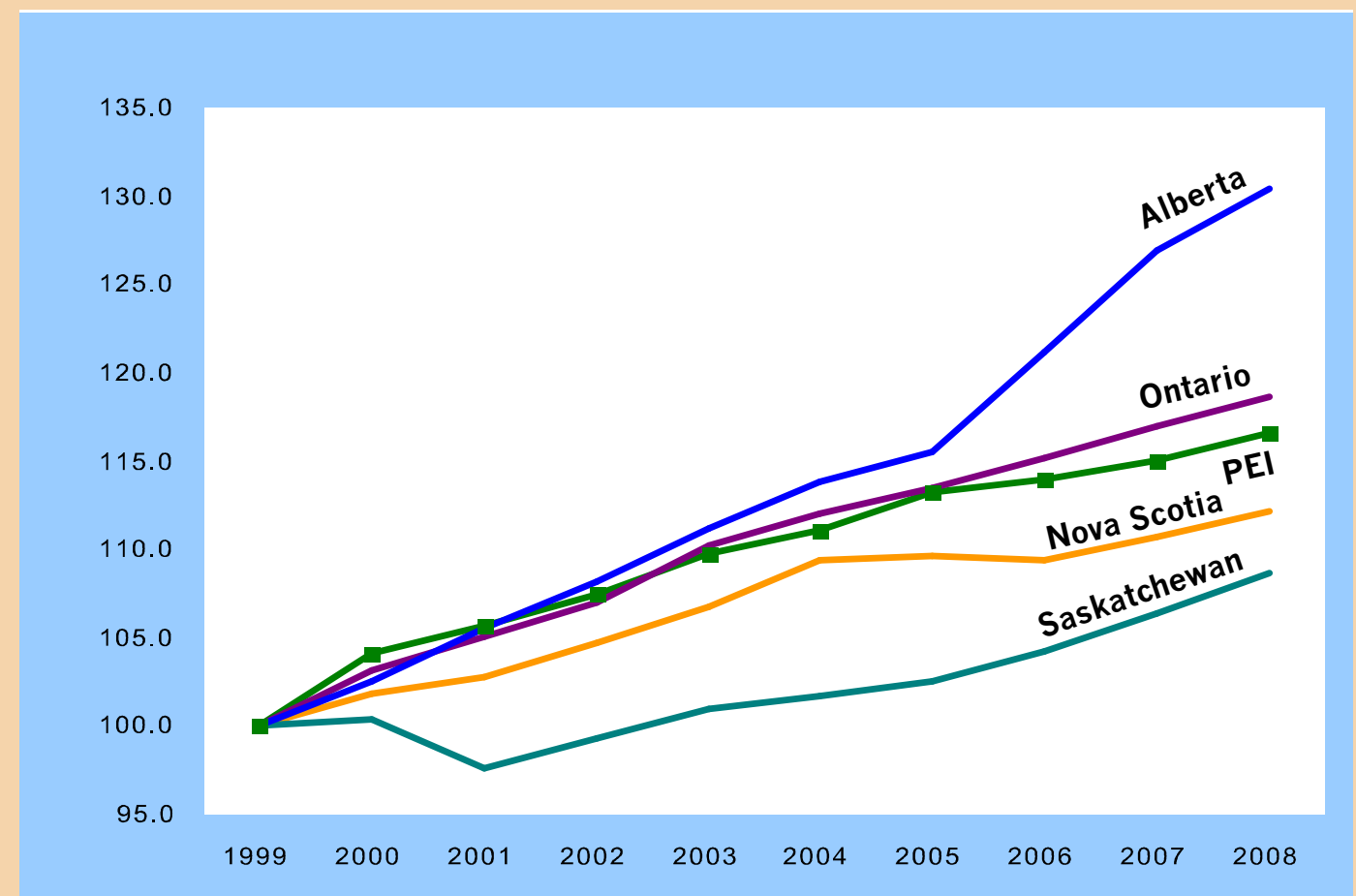
All other provinces have larger numbers of workers and persons employed than PEI, which is not surprising since we have the smallest population. Where there are more jobs overall, there are probably more opportunities from which to choose. But that does not mean we have the fewest opportunities.

In the past ten years, the “grass has been greener” in several ways on the Island. For example, PEI’s labour growth has been somewhere in the middle among the provinces.

The Employment Growth chart compares the growth of PEI’s employment to several other provinces. It is no surprise that Alberta has had a decade or more of the highest employment growth. Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, Saskatchewan, just next door, was among the most modest employment growers. PEI had a higher rate of employment growth than Nova Scotia as shown in the figure, and New Brunswick (not shown in the figure).

In terms of the number of people employed during the past 10 years, it’s important to note that PEI was in the middle of the pack for job growth.

Employment Growth



July 2008 to July 2009

To round out our brief look at the employment picture, let’s see what the past year has delivered in jobs. The period has included the big financial scare of course, and it has had an impact on the real economy, including job prospects. We all feel that effect in some way or other, but the news is not as bad as we feared.

- While the number of employed has decreased, it has not been a huge drop. For those who have become unemployed in recent months, this may not be much comfort. But all in all, the outcome could have been much worse. And because employment has held up, the prospects for renewed growth are probably better.

Of course, your prospects, whether at home or away, are very much determined by factors including the marketability of your skills and education, the sector in which you look for work, and your adaptability. Future employment growth is a topic of much debate. We know that the

demographic trend is toward an aging workforce, with anticipated increases in retirements. The unrelenting pace of technological change is another factor.

How these factors and others will balance out in the future remains uncertain, but looking at employment growth is a positive approach to finding your place in the workforce.

Employment numbers

Province	From Seasonally Adjusted Information	
	Employment (Seasonally Adjusted) July 2009	Change in Number of Jobs (Seasonally Adjusted) from July 2008 to July 2009
Newfoundland	212,200	-6,200
Prince Edward Island	69,200	-500
Nova Scotia	450,900	-4,200
New Brunswick	364,900	Unchanged
Quebec	3,821,900	-35,200
Ontario	6,500,300	-168,100
Manitoba	607,900	-1,400
Saskatchewan	520,100	14,100
Alberta	1,985,800	-26,100
British Columbia	2,247,100	-74,500

*Data from Statistics Canada, LFS