



IN THE HOUSE

Released February 8, 2005

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE Highlights of Interest to Local Government

The Honourable Iona Campagnola, Lieutenant Governor, presented the Speech from the Throne on February 8, 2005.

The Speech reflected on the past four years, but the focus was on the future and to that end the Province has identified five goals for the decade ahead.

Now that we have rebuilt within our province, we are ready to take our products to the world. It is time to tell the world about all we have achieved and all we have to offer — not just economically, but culturally, environmentally and socially as British Columbians.

It is time to welcome the world and understand it better, through new gateways to trade, new cultural exchange, new relationships, and new partnerships in education.

This is the path your government will pursue.

1. *To make B.C. the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.*
2. *To lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness.*
3. *To build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk and seniors.*
4. *To lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none.*
5. *To create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada.*

THE BEST PLACE ON EARTH TO RAISE A FAMILY

The Best In Childcare And Early Childhood Development

- Over the next five years, working with the federal government, an additional \$650 million is planned to be made available to young families all over the province to assist with child care.
- Over \$76 million through 2007 will be used to expand diagnostic screening services to every child in hearing, sight and dental testing and additional funding to help prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

The Best In Education

- Block grants to school boards will increase by \$150 million this coming year.
- Steps will be taken to promote physical education and active lifestyles.

- Work with community school advocates and others to examine other uses for under-utilized school spaces across BC.

The Best In Literacy

- New Premier's Advisory Panel on Literacy is assessing literacy challenges, identifying urgent needs, and developing an action plan to help BC meet its literacy goals including an extra \$12 million to improve community libraries and improve access to library resources.
- \$5 million for a new literacy innovation program to promote literacy in our schools and another \$5 million for Literacy Now initiative for community-based programs.

The Best In Higher Learning

- \$132 million over the next three years for advanced education.

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- Major initiative will be undertaken to further increase access to skills training and apprenticeships.
- Establish a World Trade University in Chilliwack, and a One World Scholarship Fund to build new relationships with the world.

The Best System Of Support For Persons With Disabilities, Special Needs, Children At Risk, And Seniors

- Will increase resources for counseling services and outreach activities tailored to the special needs of seniors, multicultural communities, Aboriginal women, and people with disabilities.
- The Premier's Task Force on Homelessness will continue to develop new strategies to tackle the challenges of homelessness, addictions and mental illness in our communities. New steps will be taken to improve legal aid, family law, and addictions services.

Safer Streets And Schools

- Re-confirmed the Premier's announcement at the 2004 UBCM Convention that "100 per cent of all traffic fine revenues are returned to B.C.'s municipalities for crime prevention and policing."
- \$122 million in new funding for 215 new police officers over the next three years. The funding is intended to "improve provincial policing in rural and smaller communities, including First Nation communities. It will help crack down on cyber crimes and better protect children from sexual predators."
- New measures to reduce impaired driving and to discourage aggressive panhandling and unsafe activities will improve safety on our streets and highways.
- New policing and enforcement powers will improve safety for seniors, women, and youth along the SkyTrain corridor.
- New legislation will be tabled this Session to ensure criminals do not profit from their crimes.

Provincial Congress on Public Safety

And your government will engage all levels of government in a common review of steps that might be taken within their respective jurisdictions to take public safety to a higher level. A special Provincial Congress on Public Safety will be convened later this year. It will look across the board at crime prevention, treatment, legislation and by-laws, policing, prosecution, courts, and corrections.

The federal Criminal Code is applied by our police and courts at all levels. It is time to take a hard look at the sentencing options and guidance given to our courts by legislators in problem areas like violent crime, organized crime, drug trafficking, marijuana grow ops, and car theft.

THE BEST PLACE ON EARTH TO LIVE AND PLAY

Leading The Way In Healthy Living And Physical Fitness

- Current improvements to the BC health care system will be continued, with the help of the extra \$5.4 billion for BC over 10 years injected through the federal/provincial health care accord.
- Priorities for major improvements include home care for seniors, reducing wait times for high demand services and increasing telehealth for rural and remote communities.
- A new major comprehensive health promotion initiative called "Act Now" will be launched to assist in meeting population targets for increasing physical fitness, reducing obesity, reducing tobacco use, and encouraging healthy eating.
- The government plans to expand the BC Centre for Disease control, making it the Pacific Centre for Disease Control and a leader in public health and research

Leading The World In Sustainable Environmental Management

- Habitat Conservation Trust Fund is being strengthened with a \$6.5 million donation to support parkland acquisitions and conservation activities.
- Invest \$9 million over the next three years to establish a B.C. Conservation Corps. The Corps will provide new employment opportunities for B.C.'s students and graduates to work in our parks and wilderness as a new generation of conservationists.
- Will provide \$7.5 million over the next three years to add up to 50 new Conservation Officers and Park Rangers.
- New resources will be added to help implement the \$16 million Drinking Water Action Plan and the \$120 million B.C. Community Water Improvement Program. Investments will be made to strengthen the 184 water quality monitoring units now situated across B.C.
- New Pacific Salmon Forum will be created to help safeguard the province's wild salmon resources as well as improve aquaculture industry. The Living Rivers Strategy will be expanded this year and new investments will be made in salmonoid enhancement and fish habitats.
- Water plans will be advanced in communities across B.C. to implement your government's new Drought Management Action Plan.
- An Alternative Energy and Power Task Force will be established and will report directly to the Executive Council on how to promote wind, tidal, solar, and run-of-the-river power projects.
- New air shed management plans will be supported with improvements to the 146 air quality monitoring units across B.C.

The Best Place To Play

- Over \$4 billion worth of projects now on the drawing board or underway in the resort tourism industry.
- Acknowledgement that the Union of British Columbia Municipalities will receive \$25 million in grant funding to draw tourists to every region of the province. The funding for Tourism BC will also be doubled.
- Creation of new Circle Routes and a Spirit of 2010 Trail system to provide visitors with additional opportunities to see more communities and all the regions of the province.

THE BEST PLACE ON EARTH TO WORK, INVEST AND GET AHEAD

Leading The Nation In Job Creation

- New measures will be taken to help communities and families in the areas affected to better plan and cope with the long-term implications of the pine beetle problem.

- Will initiate a comprehensive review of BC's competitiveness in every sector. It will work with other governments and industrial sectors to plot a course for the next 10 years.
- A B.C. Competition Council will be formed to help steer this initiative and provide advice. Representatives from organized labour will be invited to serve on this Council and to work with employers, academics and regional representatives to help improve each sector's ability to compete.
- Will lead new efforts to promote BC industries to the world.
- Establish a network of Trade and Cultural Centres in key international markets.

The full text of the Throne Speech can be accessed on the government website at: www.legis.gov.bc.ca/37th6th/4-8-37-6.htm

Coming Soon:

Watch for UBCM's coverage of the Provincial Budget next week - February 15, 2005.

OVER \$700 MILLION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING IN JUST ONE WEEK

What a week!

The New Deal Door Opens

On Tuesday, February 1st federal Infrastructure Minister John Godfrey announced the allocation for provinces of the New Deal for Cities and Communities funding. BC's share is \$635 million over 5 years. The program funding will be phased-in and will reach \$254 million per year in the fifth year. The 2005 amount should be in the February 23rd federal budget.

The announcement opens the door for talks to begin on an agreement on how the funds will be distributed in BC including eligible funded activities and allocations within BC to local government. Exploratory talks began last week between staff of federal and provincial governments and UBCM.

UBCM will keep members informed of progress and will seek members' views as required. UBCM is being guided by the policy paper adopted at the 2004 convention that established guiding principles and a number of key directions.

Provincial Infrastructure Program

On February 5th Minister of Communities, Aboriginal and Women's Services, the Honourable Murray Coell announced a new provincial-local government infrastructure program. BC will share on a two-thirds/one-third basis. The province's \$80 million and local government's \$40 million will levy \$120 million in needed projects. The emphasis is on water related - drinking water, water infrastructure and waste water. This is an expedited program with an end of February application deadline.

Another levy feature is that consideration will be given to increasing the provincial share for local governments that face challenges raising their 1/3 share - a feature UBCM has been advocating on behalf of smaller communities.

Additional information and application criteria for local governments may be found at:

www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/lgd/pol_research/grants.html.

And in the weeks to come?

More financial support is expected in the February 15th provincial budget including the local government grants; 2005 traffic fine revenues and library grants.