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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE Highlights of Interest to Local Government

The Honourable Iona Campagnola, Lieutenant Governor, presented the Speech from the Throne on February 14, 2006.

The Throne Speech began with the context of “transformative change” and five goals government has set. It moves into the effects of an aging population, the foundations of the health care system and reforms and action taken, and needed to be taken. It speaks of changes in technology and education sectors and opportunities of the Pacific Gateway. Finally, it dealt with transforming British Columbians quality of life.

Some specific initiatives of interest to local government are outlined in the following extracts:

Bicycle Paths

The new ActNow initiative will improve British Columbians’ health through healthy living, physical fitness, and nutritious eating.

A comprehensive strategy will be developed with the *Union of B.C. Municipalities* to help communities build bicycle paths that are safe and enticing for cyclists. The new Gateway Program’s \$50 million bicycle network is the largest single investment in bikeways in the history of the province.

Broadband

In 2006, your government will fulfill its commitment to bridge the digital divide by bringing high-speed Internet access to 366

communities across B.C. that previously lacked broadband access.

Aboriginal Interns

New steps will be taken to recruit qualified Aboriginal individuals to fill openings in the public sector. A new Aboriginal internship program will be established to provide opportunities for learning throughout the provincial and municipal public services.

Police Technology

New technology will be used to give police new tools in law enforcement and integrated policing strategies. New teams are now fighting cyber crime, sexual predators, and gang violence, and others are working together to solve homicides.

Community Courts

Community courts and Aboriginal courts offer the potential to take pressure off our traditional court system through innovative approaches that have worked well in other jurisdictions. These new courts for communities and First Nations will form part of your government's integrated strategy to improve public safety and combat property crime.

Homelessness and Housing

The problem of homelessness is growing. Homelessness leads to despair, which sadly leads to addiction, which too often leads to crime. The Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Addictions and Mental Health has developed strategies to help.

Your government's \$263 million mental health strategy has helped as well. Yet there are far too many people living on our streets and far too many people waiting for housing.

This year, your government will act to address these needs with a ground-breaking new housing

strategy aimed at helping those most in need, more quickly and effectively. The new housing program will give individuals greater choice and new flexibility. It will transform housing options to help people positively transform their lives.

Natural Resource Sector

A new B.C. Foundation for Natural Resources and Engineering Research will also be launched this year. It will support advanced training, research and development, technology transfer, and commercialization in natural resources, engineering, and applied sciences.

This will help keep our resource sector competitive and sustainable in the face of challenges like the mountain pine beetle, while growing new sectors and fueling economic growth.

Alternative energy will form an integral part of your government's expanded energy vision. It is a critical part of your government's goal to improve air and water quality, and fisheries management.

The full text of the Throne Speech can be accessed on the government website at:

<http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/38th2nd/4-8-38-2.htm>.

Coming Soon:

Watch for UBCM's coverage of the Provincial Budget next week
- February 21, 2006.