The 2006 provincial budget focused on children, skills and training, tax reduction initiatives and public sector compensation.

FUNDING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES

- Small Communities Protection and Regional District Administration Grants – an additional $42 million over the next three years, in line with the government commitment to double these grants by 2009/10.
- Municipal and Regional Infrastructure Funding – $114 million in infrastructure grants, including water and sewer projects.
- Traffic Fine Revenue Sharing – an additional $21 million over three years. Grants will be $50 million annually for the next three years.
- Tourism - $5 million to develop all seasons resorts and public recreation activities as part of the provincial Resorts Strategy and $3 million to support hosting community-based, national and international sporting events.
- Skills Development - $3 million to extend the Bladerunners program to more communities to assist disadvantaged youth on job training and apprenticeships.

REVENUE/TAXATION MEASURES

- Home Owner Grant – The province will provide $309 million over 4 years to improve the program:
  - The basic grant to increase by 22 percent to $570 from $470, the first increase in the grant amount since 1993;
  - Grant for seniors, disabled and veterans will increase to $845 from $745;
  - Threshold increased to $780,000 in assessed value, up from $685,000; and
  - Eligibility for additional grant will be expanded to include more people with disabilities.
- Average residential school taxes and rural residential taxes will increase by 2 percent for 2006 (provincial inflation rate).
- Non-residential school taxes – limited to inflation plus new construction; rates to be set later.

Provincial Sales Tax Exemptions

- Increasing the vehicle PST surtax threshold for passenger vehicles by $6,000, from $49,000 to $55,000.
- Extending the BC Mining Flow-Through Share tax credit until 2008 to maintain the incentive for raising venture capital for mineral exploration.
- Expanding eligible uses of coloured fuel to all unlicensed vehicles.

OTHER EXPENDITURES OF INTEREST

Transportation

- The Province will provide $3.9 billion over three years as part of its ongoing commitment to the Transportation Investment Plan which includes:
  - $90 million in road rehabilitation funding to manage the impacts of the intense
harvesting required under the Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy;
  o $319 million in provincial funding for the Gateway Program for the North Fraser Perimeter Road, South Fraser Perimeter Road, and the Port Mann/Highway 1 project; and
  o $48 million for airports and ports.

Housing

  • $8 million for housing and support services for people who are homeless which includes $5 million for housing units and $3 million for Homelessness Outreach Teams (3 year pilot projects).
  • SAFER grants for elderly renters: the 10 year eligibility requirement to reside in Canada is eliminated.

Health

  • Additional $301 million for healthcare to support services including:
    o $21 million for 548 additional assisted living and supportive housing units for lower income seniors and people with disabilities;
    o $67 million to expand community living services for people with development disabilities; and
    o $15 million in additional funding over 3 years for the health promotion program known as ActNowBC.

Forests

  • $12 million to strengthen the monitoring of forests and range management.
  • $113 million to address the effects of mountain pine beetle, including $38 million to support increased pine beetle harvest levels and $75 million for reforesting devastated areas.

Mining

  • $2 million for mineral exploration and mining training, and hands-on experience for youth in prospecting and environmental remediation.

Oil and Gas

  • $129 million in funding for initiatives that support the oil and gas sector, including $125 million for the heartland oil and gas road rehabilitation strategy and $4 million for environmental stewardship initiatives.

Tourism

  • $50 million over three years for tourism, which includes $15 million for tourism initiatives.

Environment

  • $6 million to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Environment to assess permitting requests.
  • $14 million to the Living Rivers Trust Fund.
  • $30 million for conservation management and economic development initiatives within the central coast, north coast, and Queen Charlotte Islands.

Land Use

  • $3 million for Front Counter BC to provide assistance for small and medium businesses in obtaining land use and resource approvals.

Safety

  • $3 million for a Community Court Pilot Project to explore more effective responses to street crime.
  • $2 million over three years for a Crystal Meth Secretariat to integrate and co-ordinate efforts to combat the production and use of crystal meth.