

IN THE HOUSE

UNION OF
BRITISH
COLUMBIA
MUNICIPALITIES

#60 - 10551 SHELLBRIDGE WAY
RICHMOND, BC V6X 2W9
(604) 270-8226 Fax: (604) 270-9116
E-mail: ubcm@civicnet.bc.ca

EXCERPTS FROM THE THRONE SPEECH of Interest to Local Government

The following excerpts from the February 12, 2008 Speech from the Throne are of particular interest to local government:

Major Themes

- Combating climate change
- Creating safe, supportive communities
- Sustainable health care delivery
- Building a new relationship with First Nations
- Enhancing economic growth

ENVIRONMENT

The discharge of landfill gas will be regulated to foster the capture and conversion of emissions into clean energy.

A new "Brownfields to Greenfields" redevelopment strategy will target existing "dirty" sites for the creation of well-treed, green, livable communities.

A new Pacific Carbon Trust will foster economic growth from new opportunities in carbon credit trading and carbon offsets. The Trust will invest in made-in-BC offset projects that produce emissions reductions that are permanent, measurable, verifiable, and additional, and that are regulated by government. Projects in energy efficiency, renewable energy, carbon capture and sequestration – including incremental tree planting – will all be eligible.

Legislation will be introduced to facilitate BC's participation in a regional "cap and trade" system.

The legislature will be asked to adopt new California-equivalent vehicle tailpipe emission standards, in tandem with California and a number of other states and provinces.

New investments will be made in plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, hydrogen-powered buses, clean retrofits of dirty diesel trucks and the electrification of truck stops.

Amendments to the *Wildlife Act* will build on the Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan, the Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Project and the Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy.

Tough new penalties will prevent and punish poaching and killing of endangered species.

NEW LIVESMART BC STRATEGY

LiveSmart BC initiative will help to contain urban sprawl and reward development that creates more affordable housing, new green spaces and more people-friendly neighbourhoods.

Power Smart meters will be installed in every home in British Columbia by 2012. That will give families new information and control over their power consumption.

New "inclining block" rate structures will allow families to choose and save by making Power Smart choices.

These changes and the BC Energy Plan will be supported by a new legislated direction for the BC Utilities Commission.

New Green Building Code will be implemented to save energy and water.

Green developments waiting for provincial environmental approvals will be fast-tracked and given priority.

Please make copies of this Circular and distribute them to Council/Board Members and Staff

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Amendments to the *Police Act* will aim to improve transparency, accountability and public confidence in the police complaints process.

Comprehensive review of sentencing practices in BC courts to understand why sentences in BC tend to be shorter than in other provinces for crimes such as homicide, theft, property crimes, fraud, impaired driving and drug possession. It will also assess how the federal government's anti-crime measures might affect demands on our police, Crown prosecutors, courts and correctional system.

Community Safety Strategy will be released this fall. The strategy:

- will build on recent initiatives to fight the scourge of crystal meth, gang violence, drug-related homicides, grow-ops, street racing, dangerous driving and property crimes;
- will include enhanced policing, new community courts and expanded correctional capacity; and
- will also work with local governments to explore the potential to further integrate policing and to examine the possibilities for amalgamating police forces and creating safer communities.

BC 211

A "211" service, in partnership with the United Way, will be launched to give citizens new telephone access to information about the full range of social services offered in their communities. This will help women, seniors and persons with disabilities find support services that are delivered by multiple levels of government and private providers.

HOMELESSNESS ISSUES

Community Planning

Communities will be required to include provision for mental health and addiction service facilities in their community plans.

A new multi-year investment will be made to revitalize Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Mental Health

An updated 10-year mental health plan will be completed.

Expanded outreach programs will help lift people out of the street and offer them personalized support.

Patients with severe mental illnesses who require intensive, sustained and complex medical treatment will be provided care in new and existing facilities at Willingdon in Burnaby, which will be retrofitted and opened this year, and at Riverview in Coquitlam.

HEALTH CARE

New BC Patient Safety Council to enhance patient safety and promote transparency.

Creating new Patient Care Quality Review Boards for every health region.

Improvements to the *Public Health Act* will help deal with public health risks such infectious diseases and emergency health hazards.

Authorizing and training nurses to deliver a broader range of health services, such as suturing, ultrasounds, allergy testing, local anesthesia and cardiac stress testing. Nurses will be able to give medications for minor pain at triage while patients are waiting to see a doctor, order lab work, blood tests and X-rays.

Ambulance paramedics will be authorized to treat and release when appropriate.

New tools and support services will be created to help home caregivers and family members who are providing in-home care.

The province will study the possibility of establishing a new Independent Living Savings Account framework to allow citizens to invest each year, up to age 75, in a tax-sheltered savings account for home care support, assisted independent housing and supportive housing options.

Establishing ActNow seniors' community parks throughout BC.

New legislative authority to ensure health professionals certified to practise in other Canadian jurisdictions can practise in BC, including foreign-trained doctors.

Creating a new restricted licence that will allow internationally trained physicians to practise in their specific areas of qualification.

Significantly expanding residency positions, and introducing a new framework to allow Canadian citizens trained outside Canada to find residencies and practise in BC.

Launching an innovation and integration fund for the Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Health Authorities to help move beyond “block funding” toward a new provincewide, patient-centred funding model.

FIRST NATIONS

- Support for fast-tracked treaty negotiations at common tables, as suggested by the BC Treaty Commission and First Nations themselves.
- Pursue “incremental treaty agreements” to help First Nations benefit earlier in the treaty-making process.
- New mechanisms will facilitate effective engagement of all parties in meaningful consultation and help First Nations participate as equity partners in major economic development projects.
- New investments in carbon offset projects that benefit First Nations will be an integral part of the government’s climate action plan.
- New legislation will enable Aboriginal authorities to assume legal responsibility for the delivery of most child and family services in their communities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENERGY

Goal of zero net deforestation, and work with First Nations, industry and communities to put that goal into law by 2010 and establish a viable strategy for realizing that vision by 2015.

New Trees for Tomorrow program will launch a large, urban afforestation initiative. Millions of trees will be planted in backyards, schoolyards, hospital grounds, civic parks, campuses, parking lots and other public spaces across BC.

The Forests for Tomorrow program will plant an additional 60 million seedlings over the next four years.

New BC Bioenergy Strategy will create new opportunities in clean technology for rural communities, for independent power producers, and for our forest and agriculture industries.

Creation of a new northern energy corridor from Prince Rupert to Prince George.

New integrated Pacific Ports Strategy will also be developed to make the most of Canada’s Pacific Gateway.

Working Roundtable on Forestry will recommend new possibilities for forestry, including new tenures, and a 90-day regulatory and process review will cut unnecessary administrative and process costs.

New pension bridging opportunities will be developed for older workers nearing retirement. New training opportunities will also be offered to help forest workers who have been temporarily laid off to upgrade skills and earning potential.

Consultation now underway will continue to advance the potential for Site C, which could be a major economic catalyst for rural British Columbia in years to come.

New British Columbia Agriculture Plan will ensure farming continues to have a bright future in BC.

OTHER ISSUES

Amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* will improve protection for farm workers and prohibit agricultural producers from using unlicensed farm labour contractors.

The Provincial Nominee Program and the successful Skills Connect for Immigrants program will be expanded to help meet the demand for skilled workers.

New Centre for Autism Education and Research will be developed that will provide a residential environment for children with autism and create a national hub for research and a centre for parental supports.

Creating new “Walking School Bus” and “Bicycle Train” programs to encourage children to walk or bicycle to school with adult supervision.

Enacting new legislation to ban smoking in vehicles when children are present.

Banning the use of trans fats in the preparation of foods in schools, restaurants and food-service establishments by 2010. ■