



## MEMBER RELEASE

# Provincial Throne Speech Highlights

The February 9, 2010 Speech from the Throne celebrated the arrival of 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The speech highlighted the government's objective to create jobs and stimulate investment by streamlining regulatory processes. British Columbia also made new commitments to enhance public education and increase the availability of pre-school programs. In addition, the province promised to reign in burgeoning health care costs in order to re-balance the budget by 2013.

### Investment

- The government will work with other provinces to amend the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and create a unified federal-provincial review process.
- A new Investment Process Review will be launched to identify opportunities for simplifying and expediting approval processes across government.
- Local governments will be asked to partner with the province in the Investment Process Review to look at all impediments to reasonable investment, including zoning, licensing and permitting requirements.

### Property Tax

- A joint committee on municipal property tax reform will identify specific steps to make property taxes more conducive to investment while assuring municipal services are fairly provided for all taxpayers.
- A new Family with Children Property Tax Deferral Option will be provided to all B.C. families with children under the age of 18. This program will be modeled on existing programs for seniors and those facing financial hardship.

### Economy

- Building on the contributions of the Green Energy Advisory Task Force, the province will launch a comprehensive strategy to put B.C. at the forefront of clean energy development.
- BC will introduce a new Clean Energy Act to encourage new investments in independent power production while also strengthening BC Hydro.
- The government will optimize existing generation facilities and report on the Site C review this spring.

### Education

- The province committed to working with municipalities to dramatically reduce housing costs for young families and to provide increased opportunity for homes they can afford in existing neighbourhoods.

- In concert with local governments, Neighbourhood Learning Centres will integrate neighborhood needs with available capital resources and under-utilized spaces.
- The government reiterated its commitment to StrongStart BC Centres to support the learning needs of children and their families.
- Voluntary, full-time kindergarten for five-year-olds will be fully funded and in every school by September 2011.
- New partnerships with the private sector and parents will enable the establishment of neighbourhood preschools for four-year-olds and three-year-olds within communities over the next five years.

### **Health**

- The government committed itself to stemming the unaffordable growth in health costs as part of meeting its obligation to rebalance the budget by 2013.
- A new \$180-million integrated case management information technology system will be developed to deliver better front-line services and supports to women, children, income assistance recipients and those most vulnerable.

### **Finance**

- The Government rededicated itself to the introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax.

### **Trade and Intergovernmental Relations**

- BC will pursue a New West Partnership with Alberta and Saskatchewan. Using the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement as a model, the partnership will encourage investment and labour mobility across all three provinces, including unified and mutually beneficial purchasing, procurement and licensing opportunities.
- The province will encourage Canada and other provinces and territories to continue efforts to remove all internal trade barriers.
- With California, Washington and Oregon, BC will commit to a common vision for sustainable prosperity and sign new agreements to work on innovation, economic development, ocean conservation and climate-change adaptation through the Pacific Coast Collaborative.
- A new partnership with Montana will identify permissible land uses and establish new collaborative approaches to trans-boundary issues. Mining, oil and gas development and coalbed gas extraction will not be permitted in British Columbia's Flathead Valley.
- BC will establish a National Centre on Contemporary Asia, in partnership with the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada and the Government of Canada.

### **Infrastructure**

- The government will encourage the new high-speed rail link between Vancouver and Seattle.
- The government renewed its commitment to invest in public transit, improve TransLink and develop the Evergreen Line.

- New accountability and transparency will be brought to BC Ferries as it continues improving services with new ferries, terminals and amenities.
- BC Rail will be brought into government and wound down as a Crown corporation.
- New investment partnerships in infrastructure that encourage and enable clean modes of transportation, such as electric vehicles, hydrogen-powered vehicles and vehicles powered by compressed natural gas and liquid natural gas, will be pursued.
- New transmission infrastructure will link Northeastern B.C. to our integrated grid, provide clean power to the energy industry and open up new capacity for clean power exports to Alberta, Saskatchewan and south of the border.

### **Wood First Initiative**

- The provincial government will build a new campus for the Emily Carr University of Art + Design, showcasing B.C. wood, natural building materials and the best in environmental design.
- A new Wood Innovation and Design Centre will be created in the heart of Prince George.