

Setting the Stage for Success:

Speech from the Throne

On February 9th, the Spring Session was opened with the delivery of the [Speech from the Throne](#). It affirmed our government's commitment to building a strong and diverse economy, growing an innovative clean energy and technology sector, maintaining thriving communities, and ensuring that all people in British Columbia are able to share in the benefits of a growing economy.

Leading Canada: Growing a Strong, Diverse Economy:

Balanced Budget 2016

For the fourth year in a row, our government delivered a [balanced budget](#) that demonstrates strong fiscal management and a commitment to reducing British Columbia's operating debt. Budget 2016 improves housing affordability, helps families with the cost of living, provides supports for B.C.'s most vulnerable citizens, invests in our future workforce, and establishes the [BC Prosperity Fund](#). Thanks to our government's fiscal prudence, B.C.'s AAA credit rating has once again been confirmed by [Standard and Poor's](#) and [Moody's Investors Service](#), and [Dominion Bond Rating Service](#) has once again affirmed B.C.'s AA (high) rating.

Getting to Yes on Economic Development

This session saw our government make significant strides towards getting to 'yes' on major resource projects, including the Site C dam and LNG. [A \\$470 million contract](#) to supply and install Site C's turbines and generators was awarded along with the project's [main water licences](#).

Fortis and the Hawaiian Electric Company signed one of the [first agreements to export B.C. LNG](#), showcasing B.C.'s capacity to supply clean energy to new markets and our potential to create jobs and long-term economic growth through the development of our natural gas sector.

LNG benefits agreements were signed with the [Metlakatla First Nation](#), [McLeod Lake Indian Band](#), and [West Moberly First Nations](#). In order to further advance export and investment opportunities in B.C.'s LNG sector, Premier Clark will soon be embarking on a [trade mission to Asia](#).

Training for One Million Jobs

On April 25th, we celebrated the second anniversary of the [BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint](#) by announcing nearly [\\$8 million in funding](#) for pre-apprenticeship programs that will help British Columbians be first in line for the almost one million jobs expected in our province by 2024.

Housing Affordability and Cracking Down on Shadow Flipping

Creating new housing supply is critical to improving housing affordability for families in B.C.'s real estate market. Our government has listened to consumers and industry to take action in response to high demand for homes.

Balanced [Budget 2016 introduced the Newly Built Home Exemption](#) that fully exempts newly built homes – including condominiums – priced up to \$750,000 from the property transfer tax, saving purchasers up to \$13,000. A partial exemption is available for qualifying homes valued up to \$800,000.

This initiative is expected to benefit owners – who must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada – of about 22,000 new homes.

Our government will not tolerate unethical conduct in the real estate market and to further protect sellers, new rules came in effect this week that [crack down on 'shadow flipping'](#). Real estate licensees who draft offers to buy property must include two separate terms about contract assignment in the offer – one, acquire the seller's consent to transfer the contract; and two, require any resulting profit to be returned to the seller.

In addition, we announced the property transfer tax form will [collect new information from buyers starting in June](#), including the citizenship for non-Canadian citizens or permanent residents. This information will be shared with the Canada Revenue Agency to aid in the administration and enforcement of tax statutes.

By collecting this data, B.C. will be in a better position to assess the volume of foreign investment and prevalence of bare trusts in our province's real estate market and determine whether any further action is required.

Motor Dealer Act amendments protect consumers and marketplace integrity

[Changes to the Motor Dealer Act](#) in February added certainty for consumers when purchasing a vehicle and increased the physical and financial protection of consumers. The legislation brought previously unregulated vehicle dealers under the *Motor Dealer Act* in order to ensure that all agents in the used vehicle marketplace operate by the same set rules and regulations.

Giving Back to B.C.'s Rural Communities

At the end of March, Premier Clark announced [that applications for the first year of funding](#) under the B.C. Rural Dividend are being accepted until the end of May. In keeping this promise, we're making sure the wealth that comes from rural B.C. is shared more fairly with the communities that create it. Our rural dividend program provides \$25 million a year for three years so smaller communities, with populations under 25,000, can build capacity and promote economic diversification.

Striking a Balance: Conserving and Managing B.C.'s Lands:

Protecting B.C.'s Environment and Lands

An ecosystem-based management regime in the [Great Bear Rainforest](#) was established by government to ensure that we preserve this pristine forest for future generations, while continuing to support jobs and a growing economy. In addition, our government added more than 11,700 hectares to B.C.'s protected area system, including the establishment of a [new Class A provincial park](#), the Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Wudujut Park.

We also cracked down on irresponsible behavior that contributes to increased wildfire risks by introducing some of the highest [wildfire-related violation ticket fines](#) in the country, in order to protect B.C. communities, natural resources and infrastructure from wildfire damage.

Promoting Responsible Resource Development

We are committed to ensuring that resource development in our province is subject to the highest possible safety standards, which protects British Columbia's natural environment while providing clarity for industry. We amended legislation to [strengthen compliance and enforcement for mining](#), and also [streamlined safety oversight over oil and gas facilities](#), which includes liquefied natural gas facilities.

Supporting B.C. Farmers

2015 was a record year for British Columbia's agricultural and agri-foods sector, with revenues topping \$12.3 billion. Our government is building on this success by [investing in Growing Forward 2](#) agricultural programs and services which support ongoing innovation and market development, and by protecting B.C.'s agriculture lands through a [significant budget increase for the Agricultural Land Commission](#).

Building Better Lives for all British Columbians:

MSP Eliminated for Children

To help families with the cost of living, we announced that [calculations for Medical Services Plan \(MSP\) premiums](#) will no longer include children starting next year. Instead, the monthly rate for each household will be based only on the number of adults. We will also invest some \$70 million annually to enhance premium assistance to help more lower-income families, seniors and individuals qualify for reduced rates. With these changes, an additional 335,000 people will see their premiums reduced, including 70,000 single parent families.

Single Parent Employment Initiative

Government continues to make life more affordable for all British Columbians, especially our province's most vulnerable families. Increased investments have been made in programs such as the [Single Parent Employment Initiative](#), which allows single parents on social assistance to be eligible for up to 12 months of funded training for in-demand jobs or a paid work experience placement.

Minimum Wage Increase

To ensure all workers benefit from B.C.'s economic success, our government has pledged to increase the minimum wage in two stages. With substantial GDP growth occurring this year and next, government has decided there is [room for adjustment beyond the CPI](#). The first increase will bring the minimum wage up to \$10.85 per hour effective September 15, 2016 while a second increase will bring it to \$11.25, effective September 15, 2017.

Meningitis Protection Increased for B.C. Children

Young British Columbians will continue to be served by B.C.'s world-class healthcare system with the [introduction of a vaccine](#) for Grade 9 students that protects against four strains of the bacteria causing the meningococcal disease instead of only one.

Refugee readiness teams prepared for Syrian refugees

British Columbia is doing its part in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis, having chosen five community organizations to lead [Refugee Response Teams](#). Supported by a \$500,000 investment from the \$1 million Refugee Readiness Fund, they are identifying and prioritizing short-term community needs to support a coordinated approach to helping refugees.

Boost to persons with disabilities

For British Columbians whose health, safety and well-being depend on quality social programs and services, Budget 2016 [added an additional \\$673 million](#) over the next three years. This includes \$217 million to support vulnerable children and families and implement recommendations in the Plecas report; \$286 million to address caseload pressures in temporary income assistance, disability assistance and related supplementary benefits, including \$36 million to Community Living BC; and \$170 million to increase income assistance rates for Persons with Disabilities.

\$40 million fund to help revamp and refresh schools

As a result of B.C.'s sound fiscal management, government is able to support key investments like the [School Enhancement Program](#). In March, we announced a \$40 million investment in the Program to help school districts repair, upgrade and improve their facilities. In addition, [a further \\$45 million](#) under the School Enhancement Program is being invested in 80 projects throughout our province.

Enhanced protection of pets and responsible breeders

Government took [steps towards enhancing the protection of](#) animals by targeting irresponsible commercial breeders of cats and dogs. An amendment was made to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* recognizing the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's Code of Practice for both kennel and cattery operations as generally accepted management practices for B.C. cat and dog breeders.

Community Paramedicine Program expanded

To improve access to primary health-care services for British Columbians living in rural areas, our government introduced the [Community Paramedicine Initiative](#). Under this program, 73 remote and rural communities in B.C. will receive community paramedics, who will provide basic health-care services within their scope of practice to complement existing primary health-care providers.

Keeping British Columbians Safe:

Province passes legislation to make campuses more responsive to sexual misconduct

Recognizing the importance of allowing B.C.'s students to feel safe in their environment of learning, we [passed legislation](#) requiring every public post-secondary institution in the province to establish sexual misconduct policies. The bill defines sexual misconduct to include a wide range of acts of a sexual nature, ranging from voyeurism to harassment and sexual assault.

Government sets stronger penalties for those who put others at risk

Several fines and penalties were increased for those engaging in reckless behavior that endangers the safety of others. Effective June 1st [penalties for distracted driving will be raised significantly](#) and calculated from a base fine of \$368 – up from \$167. Additionally, in order to ensure the safety of our children, [fines will be raised](#) for drivers who fail to stop when children are getting on and off a school bus.

Increased resources committed to fighting gang crime

In April, government announced a [\\$23-million boost to B.C.'s Guns and Gang Strategy](#) to help authorities keep communities safe and bolster public safety. Through the funding, more police teams and prosecutors will be dedicated to combating gang violence and curbing gun crime across the province. We also introduced [a variety of new and additional resources](#) for Surrey in order to combat gun violence.

Province moves to close the book on profiting from crime

Criminals convicted of heinous offences will no longer be able to profit from recounting their crimes through memoirs and memorabilia under [new legislation put forward by government](#). The *Profits of Criminal Notoriety Act* will target those who seek to benefit from the sale of stories of their crimes and prevent the victims of their crimes from being subject to further anguish.

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Continuing to Get to Yes:

By staying focused on controlling spending and growing a strong, diverse economy we have successfully balanced our budget for a fourth consecutive year—giving us room to make important investments that make a real difference in the lives of British Columbians.

We'll continue to work hard to get to 'yes' on major projects of significance, creating more jobs and opportunities for people in our province and boosting social supports for our most vulnerable. B.C. is truly leading Canada and it's paying off for British Columbians.