
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier

THRONE SPEECH LAYS GROUNDWORK FOR NEXT GENERATIONS

VICTORIA – The fourth session of the 38th parliament was launched today with a speech from the throne that lays out new measures to create safe, secure communities, build excellence in education, further strengthen the New Relationship with First Nations, and give British Columbians options to become personally involved in combating climate change.

“Many members of this legislature will not be alive in 2050, but most have or will have children and grandchildren who will be. It is for them that today’s decision makers must take action,” said Premier Gordon Campbell. “By living smarter, we can save energy, water, fuel consumption, time and money. We can reduce waste and get better value from our land, our limited natural resources and our tax dollars.”

A healthy environment and educated populace are essential to healthy human development and a globally competitive economy. A safe, humane society is the object and outcome of an enlightened, prosperous and caring community. The bedrock of each goal is a strong economy.

Government outlines new LiveSmart BC strategy:

- LiveSmart BC will reward smart choices that will save energy, water, fuel, time and money.
- The new 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.
- Consumers will be given new tools to help conserve energy and save money on their power bills, such as Power Smart meters that 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 also 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.
- Green developments waiting for provincial environmental approvals will be fast-tracked and given priority.
- The new Green Building Code will be finalized and implemented to save energy and water.
- All new provincial public buildings will be constructed to LEED Gold or equivalent standards. Existing buildings will be retrofitted to make them more energy efficient, climate friendly and healthier for public servants.
- Higher densities will be encouraged around new transit routes to help make them more affordable and create affordable housing.
- Legislation will require local governments to incorporate greenhouse gas reduction targets and supporting strategies in their Official Community Plans and Regional Growth Strategies.

- Legislation will be introduced this session to facilitate British Columbia's participation in a regional "cap and trade" system that is being developed under the Western Climate Initiative. The framework for that system is scheduled for completion this year.
- A new Citizens' Conservation Council will support B.C.'s mitigation efforts with public education campaigns that will give citizens the tools and information they need to make informed choices.
- A new Youth Climate Leadership Alliance will be formed that will comprise students and other young people from across B.C. It will undertake paid government-sponsored field research, mitigation work, afforestation projects and adaptation efforts.
- A new Youth LiveSmart outreach campaign will encourage young British Columbians to make carbon-smart lifestyle choices that are good for the environment, their health, their pocketbooks and our planet.
- The Scrap-It program will be expanded to get older vehicles with higher emissions off the road.
- Other LiveSmart BC education and outreach initiatives will be launched by the government and the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions.

Other initiatives to safeguard the environment and tackle climate change include:

- The Province will pursue a 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.
- A 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 B.C.
- Major investments in tree nurseries will be made to assist this initiative.
- All forest land currently identified as not sufficiently restocked will be replanted and no "NSR" backlogs will be allowed to develop in ensuing years.
- The Forests for Tomorrow program will plant an additional 60 million seedlings over the next four years.
- 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, liveable communities.
- Standards for low-carbon fuel content will be adopted to reduce the carbon intensity of motor vehicle fuels by 10 per cent by 2020, and new incentives will be created to encourage the purchase of fuel efficient vehicles.
- The 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.
- 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.
- The Innovative Clean Energy Fund will help create 100,000 solar roofs in British Columbia and build on B.C.'s expertise in solar technology.
- 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-B.C. 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.
- The Trust will manage the revenues generated from government's plan to become carbon neutral by 2010. It will be open to offset purchases from private citizens, companies and other governments alike.

- The Province will expand British Columbia's hydrometric and other climate-related networks to improve our ability to monitor, predict and adapt to these conditions.
- 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.
- 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 endangered species.
- Comprehensive air and water stewardship strategies will be released this spring, as new steps are taken to combat global warming.
- This session, all members will be asked to build on the record of environmental stewardship with new conservancies and parks envisioned in approved land use plans.
- A climate action plan will be released shortly after the budget. It will be annually updated and founded on personal responsibility, sound science and economic reality.

Live smart means safe, supportive communities. Initiatives to create safe, secure communities include:

- A comprehensive review of sentencing practices will address why sentences in B.C. tend to be shorter than in other provinces for crimes such as theft, homicide, 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.
- That information will contribute to a Community Safety Strategy that will be released this fall. That strategy will include enhanced policing, new community courts and expanded correctional capacity.
- Amendments to the Police Act will aim to implement Josiah Wood's recommendations to improve transparency, accountability and public confidence in the police complaints process.
- An updated 10-year mental health plan will be completed.
- 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.
- A new multi-year investment will be made to revitalize Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Anchored by the new Woodward's project, new public initiatives will be undertaken in partnership with the city and the neighbourhoods to enhance the 40-block area that includes Gastown, Chinatown, Strathcona and Japantown.
- Communities will be required to include provision for mental health and addiction service facilities in their community plans.
- Expanded outreach programs will help lift people out of the street and offer them personalized support.
- 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.
- The Province will work with local governments to explore the potential to further integrate policing and to examine the possibilities for amalgamating police forces.
- More will also be done, as government implements the Hughes recommendations on child protection, improves programs to prevent violence against women, and increases support to people with developmental disabilities, children with special needs and their families.

New initiatives to strengthen the New Relationship with B.C.'s First Nations include:

- Support for fast-tracked treaty negotiations at common tables, as suggested by the BC Treaty Commission and First Nations.
- Pursuing “incremental treaty agreements” to help First Nations benefit earlier in the treaty-making process.
- Aboriginal rights to harvest wood for domestic purposes on Crown land will be given new statutory recognition.
- New investments in carbon offset projects that benefit First Nations will be an integral part of government’s climate action plan.
- The Province will work with First Nations and the federal government to put Jordan’s Principle into action, and to strengthen services for Aboriginal children and families. That principle says the interests of Aboriginal children must always be paramount, and that no child, on- or off-reserve, should be put at risk due to jurisdictional disputes.
- New legislation will enable Aboriginal authorities to assume legal responsibility for the delivery of most child and family services in their communities.
- The Province will contribute to the establishment of the Stehियाq Healing and Wellness Village in the Fraser Valley.
- 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 initiatives to build educational excellence include:

- A new program leading to a certificate in leadership will be introduced for teachers.
- New powers will be given to the College of Teachers to remove the teaching certificate of any member who is found to be incompetent.
- New steps will be taken to expand B.C.’s public university system, provide new clarity of purpose in our post-secondary institutions and create new opportunities for higher learning. Funding will be targeted where it is needed most, to meet skills demands with added training capacity for skilled workers.
- The Provincial Nominee Program and the successful Skills Connect for Immigrants program will be expanded to help meet the demand for skilled workers.
- Post-secondary students will be given new consumer protection as institutional accountability is strengthened under the new Education Quality Assurance program.
- A major new arts endowment will provide lasting benefits to all British Columbians.
- Steps will be taken to enhance the Vancouver Art Gallery’s international reputation as a showcase of B.C. art of all genres, cultures and regions.
- The Province will support the establishment of a National Maritime Centre for the Pacific and the Arctic in North Vancouver.

New initiatives for B.C. children include:

- Another 316 StrongStart BC centres will be added in the next two years, for a total of 400 in B.C. by 2010. StrongStart BC is a free, drop-in early learning program for preschool-aged children accompanied by a parent or caregiver.
- A new Early Childhood Learning Agency will be established. It will assess the feasibility and costs of full school day kindergarten for five-year-olds. It will also undertake a feasibility study of providing parents with the choice of day-long kindergarten for four-year-olds by 2010, and for three-year-olds by 2012. That report will be completed and released within the year.

- A 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.
- Expanded pediatric oncology research will offer new hope for cancer prevention and treatment specifically focused on children.
- Committing to the upgrading and expansion of BC Children’s Hospital.

Next week’s budget will build on other initiatives to support B.C.’s continued economic prosperity that include:

- Pursuing creation of a new northern energy corridor from Prince Rupert to Prince George.
- Pursue the next phase of the Port of Prince Rupert development, in co-operation with First Nations and the federal government.
- Working with the federal government, a new integrated Pacific Ports Strategy will also be developed to make the most of Canada’s Pacific Gateway.
- Amendments to the Employment Standards Act will improve protection for farm workers and prohibit agricultural producers from using unlicensed farm labour contractors.
- The new 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.
- The new BC Bioenergy Strategy will create new opportunities in cellulosic ethanol, biodiesel and other clean, renewable fuels.
- The 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.
- A new British Columbia Agriculture Plan will ensure farming continues to have a bright future in B.C.

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