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## **SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

Her Honour the Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

Lieutenant Governor

at the Opening of the

Third Session, Forty-second Parliament

of the

Province of British Columbia

February 8, 2022

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## **OPENING**

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members.

Premier, welcome back. We are so pleased to see you here today.

Thanks to Shirley Alphonse for the traditional blessing, and to Butch Dick for providing the territorial acknowledgement – starting us off in a good way.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Lekwungen peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, upon whose territories we are gathered today.

It is my honour to deliver The Speech from the Throne, outlining your government's plans to build a stronger B.C. by continuing to help people get through these challenging times.

British Columbians have endured a year unlike any other.

From rebuilding after the fires and floods.

To getting through this difficult wave of the global pandemic.

To building the strongest economic recovery in Canada.

We have shown we can accomplish anything by working together.

Though we have much work to do, brighter days are ahead.

## **QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE**

This year we celebrate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee.

For 70 years, Her Majesty has served Canada and the Commonwealth with steadfast purpose, dignity, wisdom and grace.

Queen Elizabeth II holds a special place in the hearts of many.

She has been present for many important moments in our province's history.

Including B.C.'s Centennial celebration in 1971, the ground-breaking of Canada Place in 1983, the Commonwealth Games in Victoria in 1994, and her most recent visit in celebration of the Golden Jubilee in 2002.

Her Majesty's ambition to conserve forests for future generations has resulted in B.C.'s jewel, the Great Bear Rainforest, being placed under the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy.

We are grateful to Her Majesty for her lifetime of service and the Platinum Jubilee is an opportunity to honour her commitment and dedication as Queen of Canada.

### **IN MEMORIAM**

As has become our tradition, we open the third session of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament by remembering some of the prominent British Columbians we have lost over the last year.

First, let us pause to reflect on the thousands of British Columbians who were taken too soon this year by COVID-19, the toxic drug supply, and extreme weather events caused by the climate crisis – including this summer's heat dome.

We also mourn Indigenous leaders: Ron George, Jack Planes, Sophie Ogen, Bill Blackwater Jr., Edwin Newman, Lillian Howard, Sarah Robinson, and Earl Muldon – named in the landmark Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa decision.

We mourn philanthropists, including Asa Singh Johal and humanitarians, including Shashi Assanand.

We mourn labour activist Soren Bech, landscape architect Cornelia Oberlander, wildlife conservationist Ray Demarchi, environmentalist Norm Fletcher, North Shore Rescue co-founder Karl Winter, United We Can co-founder Ken Lyotier, and Cherry Kingsley, an advocate for sexually exploited youth.

We mourn sports figures, including baseball's Amanda Asay, Olympic champion rower Donald Arnold, and sportswriter Kent Gilchrist.

We mourn those from medicine and health care, including Dr. Madeline Chung – who delivered more than 7,000 babies as the province’s first woman obstetrician and gynecologist, as well as the first of Chinese descent.

We mourn those elected members who once served in this legislature: Thomas Waterland, David Mercier, Gerry Strongman, Allan Warnke, Daniel Jarvis, Frank Mitchell, and Thomas Berger.

We also mourn local leaders, like former mayors Philip Owen of Vancouver, Graeme Roberts of Nanaimo, and Michael Coleman of Duncan.

We mourn many in arts and culture, among them theatre’s Norman Young, writer Lee Maracle, jazz guitarist Jim Kilburn, violinist Jeanne Lamon, the artists Jo Manning and Johnson Su-sing Chow, and the poet Phyllis Webb. Their works live on.

To everyone who has lost a loved one in the past year, we acknowledge and share in your grief.

## **RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Grief marked our year in profound ways.

We were horrified and heartbroken to learn that 215 children were buried in unmarked graves on the ground of the former Kamloops Residential School.

Soon after we learned of other mass grave sites, including 182 in Cranbrook and 160 on Penelakut Island.

Most recently, preliminary findings of another 93 potential burial sites near Williams Lake.

These are not numbers.

Each one is a child with a name, forever taken from their family and their community that loved them.

While the consequences of these atrocities continue to this day, the healing is beginning.

The former residential school in Lower Post has been demolished to make way for a new multi-purpose community cultural centre.

Your government is working to address the over-representation of Indigenous kids in B.C.'s child welfare system and to return Indigenous peoples' inherent jurisdiction over child welfare.

New partnerships are also starting to address the disproportionate representation of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system.

And landmark reforms are ensuring First Nations share meaningfully in the prosperity of the land they have lived on since time immemorial.

This is a step towards reconciliation.

It is a core principle that will continue to guide every decision your government makes.

This session, your government will build on the historic, unanimous passage of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* in this legislature – working to implement an action plan drafted in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

It will not always be easy, and we have a long way to go.

But we can work to heal the wounds of the past and build a better future if we move forward together, in partnership.

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## **PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST**

To say the last year has been challenging would be an understatement.

Extreme weather events claimed lives and devastated communities.

Our health-care system strained under the weight of not one, but two public health emergencies.

And just when life was starting to return to some sense of normalcy, a new and highly contagious variant of COVID-19 began to spread.

At a time when these same challenges have increased polarization and division around the world, people here in B.C. have pulled together.

We got vaccinated in record numbers.

We trusted science and continued listening to public health advice.

Above all, we looked out for each other when things got tough.

During the flooding, people in Surrey's Sikh community cooked meals and chartered a plane and helicopter to deliver food to those isolated.

Hundreds of road builders and engineers worked flat out in challenging conditions and allowed us to reopen the Coquihalla in remarkable time.

And throughout the pandemic, people in social services and the non-profit sector worked selflessly to support the most vulnerable.

This is who we are.

We are all aware of our natural beauty and abundant resources.

But B.C.'s greatest strength is our people.

From the moment your government was first elected, the focus has been on investing in people who make our province strong.

It improved public services, and worked to bring down the cost of living.

When a global pandemic hit, it responded with bold action to support British Columbians.

It acted quickly to help keep people working, protect those who lost their jobs, and provide a lifeline to small businesses, from tourism operators to corner-store owners to taxi drivers.

And when wildfires and flooding devastated communities, your government was guided by the same values – providing help to people on the ground who needed it most.

Putting people first has helped us build the strongest economic recovery in the country.

More than 100,000 new jobs were created here last year.

In fact, more people in B.C. are working now than when the pandemic first struck.

Wages continue to rise, and child poverty has been cut by more than 50% from 2016 levels.

85,000 people moved here from other provinces and countries in the first three-quarters of last year alone.

Evidence that B.C. remains one of the best places on the planet to live and raise a family.

While your government has laid the foundation to help us come out of these challenging times stronger and more resilient, more needs to be done.

Many families are feeling squeezed, and worried about rising inflation.

Businesses and communities need help to recover and rebuild.

People are exhausted and concerned about what the future has in store.

Your government will be there for you every step of the way – as it has from day one.

Over the coming year, it will take concrete actions to support people, make life more affordable, and build an economic recovery where no one is left behind.

## **KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE AND HEALTHY**

In the months ahead, your government's top priority will continue to be keeping people healthy and safe through the rest of the pandemic.

It can be easy to forget how far we have come.

Two years ago, the first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus had just reached Canada.

When I last addressed this legislature a year later, one million British Columbians had had their first shot of a safe and effective vaccine.

Today, more than four million people in B.C. have received at least two doses.

Thanks to the guidance of Dr. Bonnie Henry, the incredible work of our health-care heroes and everyone who rolled up their sleeves, British Columbia has one of the lowest per-capita fatality rates from COVID-19 and one of the highest vaccination rates on the continent.

We kept our health-care system going through the most challenging times it has ever seen.

We kept schools safely open.

And we came back together with family and friends.

Vaccines remain our best weapon in the fight against the virus.

Vaccinated people are many times less likely to end up in intensive care units, in the hospital or pass away from COVID-19 than unvaccinated people.

That's why your government will continue taking the next steps in the largest immunization roll out in our province's history.

This includes getting more booster shots into arms and ensuring more children age five to eleven are registered for a safe pediatric dose.

As it has from the beginning of the pandemic, B.C. will continue to have public-health experts leading our response.

## **PROTECTING PEOPLE AT WORK**

Making sure people can stay home when they are sick is another key part of stopping the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.



For too long, many British Columbians had to choose between going to work sick or losing wages.

Not anymore.

Your government made changes to ensure workers in B.C. have access to a minimum of five paid sick days every year.

The most of any province in Canada.

In the year ahead, additional actions will be taken to make workplaces in B.C. the safest in the country.

These will include improvements to workers compensation and new rules to keep workers safe from the deadly consequences of exposure to asbestos.

### **IMPROVING HEALTH CARE FOR PEOPLE**

Even as your government has focused on managing the pandemic, it has worked to improve health care for people in every part of British Columbia.

The goal from the beginning has been to deliver better care faster and closer to where you live.

While there are still too many people in B.C. who need a family doctor and our health care system has been strained by the pandemic, important progress is being made.

New urgent and primary care centres are making it easier for people to see a doctor or other health-care professional when they need to.

Hospitals are being built, modernized and expanded throughout B.C.

Thousands of health-care workers have been hired over the last two years, 6,000 of them to care for seniors in long-term care homes or assisted living.

And we are performing more surgeries and diagnostic tests by optimizing space and investing in more MRI scanners where they are needed most.

The pandemic has shown us just how important health care is to people.

At the same time, it has exposed underlying gaps and will add long-lasting challenges.

When governments in Canada first came together to lay the foundations of universal public health care, it was a 50-50 partnership.

Today, the provinces are paying nearly 80% of health care costs.

If nothing is done, our share of the cost will keep increasing.

This is not sustainable.

As chair of the Council of the Federation, your government will continue to lead an effort to secure a renewed partnership with Ottawa on health-care investments.

This is an important opportunity to work together with other provinces and our federal partners to protect and strengthen universal public health care from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

So we can afford to continue modernizing and improving care for people.

## **SUPPORTING PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH**

The loneliness and isolation of the last two years has also taken an enormous toll on many people's mental health.

Through it all, your government has taken action to make sure more people can access the support they need.

It has increased funding for free and affordable counselling programs, made it easier to find support through enhanced virtual services, and made historic investments in treatment and recovery.

B.C. became the first province in Canada to offer a prescribed safe supply – a critical step to prevent overdoses from toxic drugs.

At the same time as your government builds up supports, it is also working to tear down the stigma that can come with addiction.

Last year, B.C. applied to the federal government to remove criminal penalties for people who possess small amounts of illicit drugs for personal use – and will continue to press for federal leadership.

There is no doubt we have much more to do.

We are building a comprehensive system of treatment and care in B.C. where one did not exist just five years ago.

In the year ahead, your government will continue this ground-breaking work.

Including investments in a new housing model to meet the needs of those with serious, complex mental-health and addiction issues whose needs have not been met with existing health and housing services in their communities.

#### **KEEPING SCHOOLS SAFE AND OPEN**

In the last two years, we have seen just how important in-person, in-class learning is for our children’s mental health and intellectual growth.

Keeping schools open is essential for families.

Not just for kids, but also parents who get up every morning and go to work.

Schools provide important support for the most vulnerable kids – like meal programs.

And they act as community hubs, especially in times of crisis.

That’s why British Columbia was one of the first jurisdictions in the country to reopen schools and one of the few to keep them open throughout the pandemic.

New investments, strong health guidelines, and high vaccination rates mean B.C. schools are safe and supported places for school staff and students.

Ensuring kids get the best possible start in life has been a priority since the beginning.

Over the last four years, record funding for education has helped B.C. schools hire thousands of new teachers and education assistants.

In September, thousands of students returned to safer and modernized classrooms at 16 new or improved schools throughout the province.

That included Langley's Donna Gabriel Robins Elementary.

Named after a member of the Kwantlen First Nation who dedicated her career to education in the district, the school also includes 100 new child care spaces.

These investments in schools and teachers will continue to increase as enrolment grows.

### **BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE B.C.**

While public services are being strengthened, your government is also making them more inclusive.

It is working to remove barriers for people living with disabilities and to provide better care, earlier, for more children with support needs.

It has ensured gender designation on provincial ID cards for two-spirit, transgender and gender-diverse people can now be changed without doctor verification.

And your government will introduce new anti-racism data legislation this session – helping to pave the way to a fairer and better delivery of services.

While our work to make B.C. more inclusive is rooted in building a stronger future for everyone, we must recognize our shared history.

In the days ahead, your government will take a major step toward establishing the first Chinese Canadian Museum in Canada.

It will be a beacon of light in Vancouver's Chinatown.

The long-overdue process to modernize the Royal BC Museum will also continue, with more details on the scope and budget to be decided in the coming months.

Once complete, the RBCM's exhibits will continue to tell the story of our past.

But it will include everyone in these stories – especially communities that were previously overlooked, ignored or left out.

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## **MAKING LIFE MORE AFFORDABLE**

In addition to strengthening public services, your government has also made choices that help make things a little easier for people in their everyday lives.

Instead of giving tax cuts to the wealthiest, it gave middle-class families the largest break in a generation by ending expensive medical premiums.

Interest on student loans, and bridge tolls in the Lower Mainland have been eliminated.

And 300,000 families are receiving the *Child Opportunity Benefit*, putting thousands of dollars back into the pockets of those with kids under 18 years old.

Despite the progress made, many people are still feeling squeezed.

B.C. is an incredibly desirable place to live.

But that can also make it an expensive one.

The pandemic has only made it more difficult for many.

That's why your government will continue taking steps to make life more affordable.

Millions of drivers are benefiting from the biggest ICBC rate reduction for car insurance in B.C. history – saving people an average of almost \$500.

Hundreds of thousands of families will benefit from free public transit for kids under 12.

People living on low incomes will continue to benefit from the first-ever increase to the *Senior's Supplement* and the largest-ever increase to social assistance.

And the lowest-wage workers will benefit from a minimum wage that has gone from one of the lowest in the country to the highest among provinces at \$15.20 an hour.

In the months ahead, your government will take action to tie minimum wage increases to the rate of inflation so B.C. workers do not get left behind.

## **EXPANDING CHILD CARE**

The pandemic shone a light on how important reliable and affordable child care is.

It gives kids an early start on the path to learning and it helps parents return to work and pursue opportunities.

For too long, investing in child care was not the priority it should have been.

Many parents felt left behind by rising fees and long waiting lists.

Your government has been working hard to change that.

Families are already benefiting from thousands of new spaces and saving up to \$19,000 a year in lower fees.

Your government will build on the progress made by more than doubling \$10-a-day spaces and reducing average fees by as much as 50% by the end of this year.

Our province is closer than ever to having the first new social program in a generation.

A future where child care is a core service – available to every family that wants it, when they need it, at a price they can afford.

As part of that work, your government will move responsibility for child care into the Ministry of Education this year, which will manage child care programs through new regional offices.

This new, regional approach will allow your government to better understand local needs as it continues to build more spaces for families.

Over time, this will bring certainty and reliability to child care.

The same way that parents feel knowing that they have a public school to send their kids to.

## **BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Your government has also worked hard to tackle rising housing prices and help people find safe, affordable homes.

It banned renovictions and cracked down on speculation.

It froze rent increases during the pandemic, and capped them to inflation.

It moved people from entrenched homeless encampments in cities across the province into safer housing.

And it is building 8,000 new on-campus student housing beds.

After years where speculators and big developers were put before people, we are seeing signs of progress.

Since 2017, 52,000 new rental homes have been registered in B.C.

That's more than the previous 15 years combined.

But the fact is, people are still struggling to buy or rent here in British Columbia.

The biggest challenge is housing supply.

With thousands of new people moving to our province every month, that challenge is only growing, and your government is determined to tackle it head on.

It is making more low-cost financing available to encourage building homes that middle-class families can afford.

It is making the largest investment in affordable housing in B.C.'s history – with 32,000 homes built or on the way already.

In the year ahead, the Province will work with local governments to speed up approvals and seek new tools to curb speculation, moving more underutilized units into the market.

And this spring, it will introduce a cooling-off period on home purchases to protect people when they are buying a home, especially in a volatile market.

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## **PROTECTING THE PLACE WE CALL HOME**

For British Columbians, there is simply nothing more important than protecting the place we call home for our children and grandchildren.

We share a deep connection to the clean water, abundant forests and rich farmland around us.

Our province's landscape is a source of beauty, food and economic opportunities.

But the things we cherish most are at risk like never before.

The climate emergency is here.

If there was ever any doubt, the extreme weather events of this summer and fall should have erased them for good.

The impacts are all around us.

People in Lytton lost their homes and community to wildfires.

Farmers on the Sumas Prairie lost crops and livestock to the flooding.

And people in every part of B.C. lost their lives to last summer's heat dome.

The scale of the climate crisis we are living through demands that we act with greater urgency.

Both in the short term and over the long haul.



## **REBUILDING STRONGER**

The most pressing priority is helping communities recover and rebuild from recent extreme weather.

Once again, your government has your back.

It is providing supports to people who have been evacuated from their homes – including temporary housing, food and clothing – and helping repair highways.

Working with the federal government, B.C.'s government has developed the largest financial recovery package ever to help farmers who have suffered losses due to flooding, return land to production, and support British Columbia's food security in the years ahead.

At the same time, climate change compels us to adapt how we plan and prepare for natural disasters.

Ensuring infrastructure is climate resilient – built to withstand future events.

Your government understands that communities can't do this on their own.

That's why it will work with local governments to support recovery efforts with new investments so they can not only rebuild, but rebuild stronger than ever.

Continuing to upgrade rapid transit, roads and bridges around the province is key to building stronger, more resilient communities.

That's why your government is committed to bringing the SkyTrain all the way to Langley, and has secured a major investment from the federal government to help make it a reality.

When built, it will be the first rapid transit expansion south of the Fraser River in three decades.

Work will also continue on the Broadway Subway extension, replacements for the Massey tunnel and Pattullo Bridge, as well as the fourth and final phase of the Kicking Horse Canyon.

Taken together, these projects will create thousands of jobs, reduce carbon pollution and cut commute times – so families spend less time in traffic and more time together.

## **TAKING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

Three years ago, your government introduced *CleanBC* – an internationally recognized climate plan that is one of the strongest in North America.

In that time, B.C. has set sectoral emissions targets for the biggest polluters while we work with industry to protect jobs and competitiveness.

We have legislated strong climate targets to reduce pollution and increase accountability.

And it is now easier than ever for people and businesses to switch from fossil fuels to clean, made-in-B.C. energy solutions.

Last fall, your government took the next step by launching *CleanBC: Roadmap to 2030*.

It is a plan that builds on the progress we have made with new measures to keep us on track to meeting our Paris targets in 2030 and reaching Net Zero by 2050.

Critically, it will encourage innovation of clean alternatives by making them more available and affordable to British Columbians.

This includes helping homeowners reduce costs with rebates on heat pumps and plans to expand B.C.'s EV charging network, building on our strength as a leader in electric vehicles.

Over the coming year, your government will take additional steps to lower emissions.

Communities will benefit from increased investments to strengthen capacity and build critical projects to reduce pollution and expand opportunities.

A comprehensive review of the province's oil and gas royalty system will seek to eliminate outdated and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

And under B.C.'s new Hydrogen Strategy, we will build on our strengths to make our province a world leader in the low-carbon hydrogen economy.

## **CARING FOR OUR FORESTS**

Another key to tackling and mitigating the effects of climate change is to protect B.C.'s forests and their sensitive ecosystems.

Our forests are part of who we are as British Columbians.

B.C. is leading the country in reforestation, planting more than one billion trees since 2018 – including more than 300 million last year.

And your government is breaking with the divisive approach of the past, and bringing people together to protect forests for future generations.

A cornerstone of this new vision for forest care is a plan to work with First Nations to defer harvesting within 2.6 million hectares of our most at-risk, old growth forests.

This is an area equal to 6,400 Stanley Parks.

Deferrals will prevent irreversible biodiversity loss while a new approach to sustainable forest management that prioritizes ecosystem health and increased community control is developed.

Progress is already being made.

Just last month, Nanwakolas Council and Western Forest Products worked together to defer the harvest of thousands of hectares of old growth on Vancouver Island.

As deferrals are made, your government is making sure the people affected are cared for.

It is investing in skills training to help workers and their families, and providing rural communities with on-the-ground support services.

Forestry is, and will remain, a foundation of the B.C. economy.

Your government wants to ensure it is sustainable for the long term.

Recent legislative changes will increase opportunities for First Nations and ensure more benefits are felt by local communities, while promoting greater value-added manufacturing like mass timber.

In the year ahead, your government will continue investing in mass timber projects for everything from student housing and new health-care facilities to firehalls and cultural centres.

### **BETTER STEWARDSHIP OF OUR LANDS AND RESOURCES**

Stewardship and management of B.C.'s lands and resources are two of your government's greatest responsibilities.

But administration and oversight of our province's coast, land, rivers and mountains has failed to keep pace with new realities.

The cumulative effects of economic activity must align with environmental objectives.

Approval processes for projects must be transparent, timely and fair.

Most critically, B.C.'s commitment to reconciliation must come to life through the consultation, collaboration and co-management of land and resources envisioned in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

In the coming months, your government will launch a new ministry, created after more than a year of planning, to support those goals.

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### **BUILDING A STRONGER ECONOMY—FOR EVERYONE**

Despite the disruptions of the past few years, B.C. remains a national economic leader.

We have a strong business climate, with low unemployment.

We enjoy a strategic location as a gateway to Asia and a port to the United States.

The port of Vancouver is Canada's largest, and a planned expansion in Prince Rupert could make it the country's second busiest this year.

And we have a government that is helping people succeed in an economy where business is increasingly conducted online.

Record funding has connected thousands of people to better high-speed internet in hundreds of rural, remote and Indigenous communities throughout British Columbia.

In a tumultuous world, B.C.'s combination of high environmental standards, skilled labour, and partnerships with First Nations is providing certainty and attracting strong investment from around the world.

Take mining as one example.

The \$4.3-billion investment by world-class Newcrest Mining in B.C. demonstrates strong investor confidence.

Mining exploration in B.C. last year exceeded \$600 million, an increase of 50% over the previous year – and the highest level since 2012.

Or take life sciences as another example.

B.C. companies are helping to solve major challenges around the world, while attracting talent and investment to our province.

Last year, B.C. experienced a surge in private technology startups valued at more than \$1 billion.

In fact, 2021 was one of the best years ever for raising capital by B.C. companies.

This year InBC, a new \$500 million strategic investment fund, will begin investing in high-growth potential businesses to help them expand, while anchoring skilled jobs and intellectual property right here in British Columbia.

## **A NEW VISION FOR A FAIRER, GREENER ECONOMY**

But growing the economy is not an end in and of itself.

If people are not feeling the benefits of a growing economy, then we can't say it's working.

In the coming days, your government will release a new vision for building a strong economy.

It is based on feedback from British Columbians from every region of the province and from all walks of life.

They have told us that they want economic growth that is shared by everyone.

B.C.'s new Economic Plan will aim to grow the economy with purpose.

To help solve big challenges – like inequality and climate change – with growth that is inclusive and sustainable.

These twin goals will guide your government's plan to foster the high-skill, low-carbon economy of tomorrow.

The recently released Labour Market Outlook estimates B.C. will have more than one million job openings in the next 10 years.

Almost 80% of these will require post-secondary education or training.

The rapid pace of change in our economy will require B.C.'s workforce to acquire new skills and knowledge to keep pace.

This is both a challenge and an opportunity.

Even after accounting for young people entering the labour market and immigration, B.C. still faces a skills gap large enough to slow down our strong economy if that challenge is not met.

While your government has taken action to address the challenge by creating thousands of new post-secondary spaces and reducing barriers to education, more must be done.

That's why the new Economic Plan will include a generational commitment to develop the talent B.C. needs to close the skills gap.

This commitment will also be reflected in a new workforce readiness plan to be released later this year.

It will connect workers with skills, and businesses with talent.

It will be guided by your government's core principle that people are our economy.

Because every aspect of the economy is supported by working people.

The last two years have driven home how fragile our supply chains can be.

And the disruptions have highlighted the importance of something we often take for granted: the food we eat.

We are lucky to have incredible bounty here in our backyard.

Food is a huge part of our economy.

Between the people who grow and produce it and those who get it to grocery stores, tens of thousands work to put food on our plates.

That's why your government's new Economic Plan will improve the movement of goods in and out of our province and grow B.C.'s thriving agriculture and agritech sector.

## **A BUDGET THAT KEEPS INVESTING IN PEOPLE**

In two weeks, your government will deliver its next budget.

This one will again choose to invest in people.

It will continue to respond to the immediate effects of the pandemic and extreme weather that are still with us today and it will build on our strengths to prepare us for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

New investments will be coming to make child care more available and affordable.

To get more people connected to high-speed internet.

To train people for the jobs of tomorrow.

And to help us better fight climate change, while we protect communities from climate-related disasters.

Your government knows that we can't cut our way to a better future.

Building a strong economy is not about pulling back.

It's about leaning in to make life better for people.



## **STRONGER TOGETHER**

The extraordinary events of the last few years have taught us many lessons.

One of the most important is our capacity to overcome big challenges when we work together and lift each other up.

During the extreme weather this summer and fall, we saw examples all around us.

Think of those still grieving on the Tk'emlùps te Secwèpemc First Nation, who nevertheless opened their homes and hearts to people fleeing wildfires.

Or the owners of a small restaurant in Hope who served breakfast to people who were stuck when floodwaters washed away sections of the highway.

Or the farmer who went to buy supplies after losing his home to flooding, only to have the store's staff tell him there would be no charge for his purchase.

This is the kindness and generosity that will help us recover and rebuild stronger than ever.

We have been through a lot together.

No doubt there will be more challenges ahead.

But if we look out for each other, we have shown we can overcome anything that gets thrown our way.



As we begin this legislative session, your government will be right there to support you.

It will continue to build a stronger B.C. for everyone by putting people first.

Just as it has since day one.

Thank you.