

April 20, 2021

NEWS RELEASE

Budget 2021 supports people now while building the foundation for strong recovery

VICTORIA — Budget 2021 focuses on protecting people’s health and livelihoods through the pandemic, while making investments in services, infrastructure and opportunities to support a strong recovery and a brighter future for everyone.

Budget 2021 addresses immediate challenges and builds the foundation for a strong recovery, with new investments in health and mental health services, business supports, affordable housing and child care, keeping life affordable for families, and record levels of job-creating community infrastructure.

“Through the adversity we have faced in the last year, we have witnessed the resilience of British Columbians time and again as communities rose to the challenge of COVID-19. As we continue to roll out the largest vaccination effort in our province’s history, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel,” said Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance. “We know a recovery won’t happen overnight, but by focusing on the things that matter most to people, we can ensure there are better days ahead for everyone.”

Better Health Care

- Keeping people safe during the pandemic with \$900 million in new funding for testing, contact tracing, personal protective equipment and the largest vaccine rollout in B.C.’s history.
- Helping patients get faster access to surgeries and shorter wait times for diagnostic imaging.
- Better care for seniors, including thousands of new staff in long-term care facilities and improved home care.
- More mental health supports in schools, more Foundry centres, quadrupling the number of integrated child and youth support teams, and expanding the response to the overdose crisis — the largest investment in mental health and addictions services in B.C.’s history.

- Providing better care closer to home by building hospitals, including the new Surrey hospital and cancer centre, and new urgent and primary care centres in communities around B.C.
- Addressing systemic racism in health care and ensuring Indigenous peoples have access to culturally appropriate care.

Supporting People and Businesses

- Saving families up to \$672 a year per child with free public transportation for children 12 and under.
- Making it easier to find affordable, quality child care by doubling the number of \$10-a-day child care spaces, doubling the wage enhancement for early childhood educators, and continuing to build and expand spaces.
- Creating 400 more spaces through the Aboriginal Head Start program that provides culturally relevant child care for Indigenous families.
- Continuing to fund the BC Recovery Benefit, which has helped over 2.5 million British Columbians to date and provides up to \$1,000 to families and single parents, and up to \$500 for individuals.
- Helping 80,000 low-income seniors by increasing the Seniors Supplement for the first time ever.
- Helping those who are struggling most by delivering the largest ever permanent increase to income assistance and disability assistance rates, a 53% increase to income assistance since 2017.
- Supporting the resilience of B.C. businesses with a suite of grants and funding, some already introduced in response to urgent needs, to help businesses adapt and grow.
- Helping ensure tourism businesses and communities make it through the pandemic and are ready to thrive when visitors can safely return.
- Improving campgrounds and trails, while adding up to 100 new campsites throughout the province every year, starting in 2022.

Building the foundation for a strong economic recovery

- Creating over 85,000 jobs and strengthening communities around B.C. with record infrastructure investments — an increase of \$3.5 billion in this budget.
- Helping thousands of people find new jobs in sectors like health care through investments in post-secondary education and skills training programs.
- Ensuring more than 5,000 young people land jobs, internships and co-ops through the StrongerBC Future Leaders program, and 3,000 students benefit from new work integrated learning placements.
- Building 9,000 new homes for middle-income families with \$2 billion in development financing.

- Supporting tourism businesses and communities with \$120 million, including grants to help prepare for future visitors through new tourism infrastructure like trails and airport improvements.
- Reducing emissions, protecting communities, expanding the economy and creating careers through an additional \$506 million in CleanBC investments.
- Making annual funding permanent to improve connectivity across B.C.
- Helping high-potential businesses grow in B.C. through funding provided by InBC, a new \$500-million strategic investment fund that will deliver economic, environmental and social returns.

“From the time the pandemic hit, we delivered a broad range of supports for British Columbians who were reeling from how quickly all of our lives were turned upside down,” Robinson said. “Budget 2021 is built from everything we have learned in the last year to continue helping people now, while laying the foundation for people and businesses in our province to seize the opportunities that recovery will offer.”

The world has changed dramatically since the Province released its last budget. B.C.’s real gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have declined by 5.3% in 2020. As the recovery continues, B.C.’s real GDP is forecast to grow by 4.4% in 2021 and 3.8% in 2022, reaching pre-pandemic levels by next year. A steadily declining deficit is projected over the next three years, beginning in 2021-22.

Nine backgrounders follow.

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