

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

A STRONGER BC FOR EVERYONE



STRATEGIC PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



A stronger BC for everyone

Our government continues to put people first in B.C.'s recovery from COVID-19.

Building a stronger British Columbia for everyone continued to be our government's focus over the past year. When we tabled the Budget on February 18, 2020, things were changing for the better in communities across B.C. We were starting to see results after three years of hard work and choices that always put people first.

The largest infrastructure investment in B.C. history was underway, with work beginning on new schools, hospitals, highways and housing. We continued to build on the progress we were seeing – to make life more affordable, strengthen the services people count on and create new, family-supporting jobs.

Only a few short weeks after Budget 2020 was tabled, a global pandemic turned our world upside down. Because of our strong economic foundation and fiscal position, B.C. was well-prepared to respond. We took immediate action to protect people's health and livelihoods through the worst of the crisis. Later, our StrongerBC plan took the first steps toward an innovative, inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19, where everyone feels the benefits. In total, we mounted a \$10-billion COVID-19 response that delivered more direct supports per capita to people and businesses than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

As we move forward with a safe restart of our lives and economy, we can look back on the historic steps our government took to support British Columbians through an incredibly difficult time. While the pandemic required us to pivot and adapt, we didn't stray from our fundamental goal: to build a stronger British Columbia for everyone.

We did this by responding to the emerging challenge of COVID-19, without wavering from the ongoing focus of our work. To make life more affordable. To create good, family-supporting jobs as part of an innovative, inclusive and clean economy. And to protect the public services that British Columbians rely on, and that have proven critical in our fight against COVID-19.

COVID-19 supports for people, businesses and communities

Our top priority through the COVID-19 pandemic has been to protect people's health and safety, while continuing to build the hospitals and hire the health-care staff that growing communities need.

- ▶ We hired approximately 1,550 people to work as contact tracers.
- ▶ We added 5,790 new front-line health-care workers, including retraining people from the hardest hit sectors.
- ▶ We amended B.C.'s laws to make sure workers cannot be fired for staying home when they are sick.
- ▶ We launched the largest vaccine rollout in B.C.'s history; to date, more than 80% of people 12 and older have been vaccinated with their first dose.
- ▶ We partnered with the tourism and hospitality sectors to find temporary employment for 1,400 people supporting B.C.'s immunization rollout.



British Columbians rolled up their sleeves as part of the largest immunization program in our province's history.

When the pandemic struck, our government moved quickly to provide relief for renters, families and vulnerable people.

- ▶ We acted quickly to help 640,000 people whose ability to work was affected by the pandemic with \$1,000 through the BC Emergency Benefit for Workers.
- ▶ We delivered an enhanced Climate Action Tax Credit of up to \$450 for a family of four.
- ▶ We protected renters with up to \$500 per month, while bringing in a ban on most evictions.
- ▶ We temporarily boosted income and disability assistance by \$300 per month, including for low-income seniors receiving the Senior's Supplement.
- ▶ In March 2021, we announced a permanent income and disability assistance rate increase of \$175 per month – the largest-ever rate increase. We also increased the Senior's Supplement by up to \$50 per month, marking the first increase since that program was introduced in 1987.

We took immediate steps to help small businesses and their employees get through the COVID-19 pandemic and come back stronger.

- ▶ We delivered \$700 million in relief by cutting most commercial property taxes up to an average of 25%, and deferred payments for PST, hotel tax, carbon tax, motor fuel tax and tobacco tax by six months.
- ▶ We protected nearly 160,000 jobs with the Small and Medium Sized Business Recovery Grant, with enhanced funding for tourism operators.
- ▶ We responded to the March 30 circuit breaker public health orders with an additional \$75 million through the Circuit Breaker Relief Grant Program, which helped almost 10,000 restaurants, bars, breweries, fitness centres and short-term accommodations that were hit hard by the public health orders.
- ▶ We encouraged businesses to hire by offering tax rebates for businesses that increased wages or hired more people in the last few months of 2020.
- ▶ We provided half a billion dollars in PST rebates for the purchase of new machinery and equipment.
- ▶ We expanded the Launch Online program to help over 5,000 businesses access the digital marketplace.
- ▶ We supported working parents by helping child care centres operate safely through the pandemic with Temporary Emergency Funding and health and safety grants.



When COVID-19 arrived in B.C., our government worked quickly to protect people and help see businesses through to the other side of the pandemic.

Our government supported communities on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic by helping with financial pressures, keeping people and goods moving, and maintaining the services people depend on.

- ▶ We responded quickly to the COVID-19 related cash flow and revenue issues facing local governments by deferring school tax remittance of over \$1 billion, and increased authority for local governments to borrow, interest-free, from their existing capital reserves.
- ▶ We delivered hundreds of millions in federal-provincial Safe Restart funding to municipalities to ensure they could continue to provide essential community services and address challenges made worse by the pandemic, like homelessness.
- ▶ We kept people moving on transit, TransLink or BC Ferries with over \$1 billion in provincial and federal investment. Additionally, we provided funding to 20 inter-city bus operators and 55 regional airports to make sure British Columbians – especially those living in rural areas – had a safe and reliable way to travel to essential appointments.
- ▶ We made sure schools remained a safe place for children to learn by securing almost \$290 million in federal-provincial funding. This added millions of pieces of PPE, thousands of hand-sanitizing stations, and hundreds of new frontline staff to schools throughout B.C.
- ▶ We expanded community broadband and cellular services along B.C. highways to help people, communities and businesses succeed in a post-pandemic economy.
- ▶ We added \$90 million to the Connecting British Columbia program to improve the speed and reliability of internet access in 200 rural and Indigenous communities.

Making life more affordable

Even before the pandemic hit, we were making progress to bring down the cost of everyday life for people in British Columbia. As we shift from pandemic response to recovery, we will continue our work to make life more affordable by building more housing, delivering affordable and inclusive child care, and cutting costs for drivers.

- ▶ We are moving forward with our Homes for BC plan to tackle the housing crisis and deliver the affordable homes that British Columbians need.
- ▶ Nearly 26,756 affordable homes are complete or under construction, including:
 - 5,780 homes are open or underway for people experiencing homelessness;
 - 10,519 homes are open or underway for low-to-moderate income earners, set at \$74,000 annually;
 - 3,527 homes are open or underway for middle-income earners, up to \$99,000 annually;
 - 1,140 homes are open or underway for Indigenous individuals, families and Elders;
 - 2,806 temporary homes and meal supports for vulnerable people, who were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ We are continuing our work to crack down on money laundering and make B.C.'s real estate market fair for everyone.
 - The public inquiry into money laundering continues, with a final report due in December 2021.
 - Worked toward implementing the publicly accessible Land Owner Transparency Registry, which is part of our government's housing affordability plan and a key recommendation from an expert panel on combatting money laundering in real estate. The registry launched in April 2021 and is the first of its kind in Canada.

We continued our work to build an inclusive, universal child care system. Since 2018, a total investment of \$2.2 billion in our Childcare BC plan has delivered real results for B.C. families.

- Families of 63,000 children have seen their child care fees lowered up to \$1,250 a month, per child, through the Affordable Child Care Benefit.
 - Through the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative, about 94% of child care providers are receiving funding to reduce child care fees for parents up to \$350 a month per child.
 - Tens of thousands of parents are saving up to \$1,600 a month, per child through our combined Childcare BC affordability measures.
 - Exceeded our original three-year goal by more than 18% with nearly 26,000 new licensed child care spaces on the way for B.C. families, with nearly 70% expected to open in the next year.
- We took the final steps to prepare for the launch of ICBC's new Enhanced Care coverage, which will save drivers money and provide better care for people injured in crashes.
- Customers will save 20% on average, compared with last year's premiums for full basic and optional insurance starting after May 1, 2021.
 - Thousands of people have already saved more than \$400 by renewing their insurance early under Enhanced Care.

Many families are saving up to \$1,600 a month per child as a result of our Childcare BC plan.



Our Childcare BC plan is giving kids the best possible start, saving money for families, and opening the door to opportunities for parents, like going back to work or school.

Strengthening public services

Our government is committed to protecting and improving the public services British Columbians rely on. These services have proven critical in our fight against COVID-19.

Better health care:

- ▶ We opened nine Urgent and Primary Care Centres in 2020-21.
- ▶ We announced 15 major health capital projects since 2017 to replace outdated facilities and meet the needs of growing communities – including a hospital and cancer centre in Surrey and an expanded plan for the Richmond acute care tower.
- ▶ We took the unprecedented step of postponing non-urgent surgeries in March 2020. As of March 31, 2021, 97% of the non-urgent surgeries that were postponed during the first wave of COVID-19 have been completed.
- ▶ We moved forward with our multi-year Medical Imaging Strategy. In 2020-21, more than 247,100 MRI exams were performed, even with non-urgent exams postponed in March 2020.

Safe and supported schools:

- ▶ We were one of the few jurisdictions to keep schools open during the pandemic, thanks to the collective efforts of teachers, school administration and staff, and public health experts.
- ▶ We made sure schools remained a safe place for children to learn by securing almost \$290 million in federal-provincial funding. This added millions of pieces of PPE, thousands of hand-sanitizing stations, and hundreds of new frontline staff to schools throughout B.C.
- ▶ We continued our work to build and upgrade schools across the province with a \$765-million investment in 10 new seismic mitigation projects and one new school.

Supporting mental health care:

- ▶ While the COVID-19 pandemic has tested us physically and mentally, our government responded with new supports and continued work on our plan, A Pathway to Hope.
 - Since the pandemic began, we've invested over \$30 million to expand existing mental health and addictions programs and services and launch new services to support British Columbians.
 - We have funded 20 more community agencies – bringing the total to 49 – that offer free and low-cost counselling services across the province. Through these agencies, 15,000 people have received counselling since November 2019.
 - We are responding to the dual public health emergencies of the overdose crisis and the pandemic by doubling the number of beds for youth and adding 100 beds for adults struggling with addictions.
 - We are creating seven new and nine expanded substance use teams throughout B.C. that will help people stay connected to health-care services and on the path to treatment and recovery.
- ▶ Improving wellness for children, youth and young adults:
 - We have added eight new Foundry centres to provide youth and their families with faster, easier access to mental health and substance use services.
 - The new centres will open in Burns Lake, Comox Valley, Cranbrook, Langley, Squamish, Surrey, Port Hardy and Williams Lake.
 - These are in addition to the existing 11 Foundry centres and virtual services, which have supported 12,274 youth and their families over the past year.

Strengthening communities:

- ▶ Through the pandemic, B.C.'s construction industry was able to continue work on key infrastructure priorities. As a result, we are moving forward with critical transportation projects that will keep people and goods moving for years to come.
 - We are continuing work on the Broadway Subway Project and the Pattullo Bridge replacement to improve travel for people in the Lower Mainland.
 - We are reviewing the business case for a George Massey Tunnel replacement, while consulting with partners and stakeholders. We are making progress toward selecting the right solution for the crossing that aligns with regional plans – without charging unfair tolls.
 - We are partnering with federal and local governments to build the Surrey-Langley SkyTrain all the way to Langley.
 - We are also making progress on the Highway 91/17 and Deltaport Way Upgrade Project, which will significantly improve travel for people and goods in the region.
 - The final phase of the Kicking Horse Canyon Project, part of our Highway 1 four-laning program, is now underway east of Golden.
 - We prioritized coastal communities with added sailings, freezing fares on major routes and consulting with British Columbians on how best to improve ferry service for coastal communities.
 - When COVID-19 hit, we successfully advocated for BC Ferries to be included within the Safe Restart Agreement funding envelope.
- ▶ The Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program (CERIP) delivered \$100 million in one-time provincial grants to support economic resilience, tourism, heritage, and urban and rural economic development projects in communities impacted by COVID-19. CERIP funded initiatives support B.C.'s post-pandemic economic recovery through investment in five key streams managed by separate partner ministries.
- ▶ Projects included:
 - Destination Development investments in 54 tourism projects, including a new Sts'ailes Heritage Trail along the Harrison River that will provide a unique ecological and cultural experience, managed by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport.
 - Community Economic Resilience support for 63 community infrastructure projects, such as the recreational upgrades to the Alexandra Neighbourhood Park in Richmond, managed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.
 - Rural Economic Recovery improvements through 38 projects in rural communities, including the Lil'wat Nation's work to provide power, water and other infrastructure services that support local business growth, managed by the Ministry of Forests, Land, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.
 - Aboriginal Head Start investments in 96 on- and off-reserve early childhood development projects to improve outdoor programming for Indigenous children, such as the updates to the Wo'umxhl Simalgyex Daycare site in the Gitwankak First Nation where the preschool teaches children about the Gitksan language and culture, managed by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
 - Unique Heritage Infrastructure funding of 77 projects, such as the upgrades to the Haida Gwaii Museum, focused on the conservation, repair, rehabilitation and development of cultural heritage infrastructure, managed by the Ministry of Forests, Land, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

An innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy

When the pandemic struck, B.C. was a fiscal and economic leader in Canada. We were one of Canada's fastest growing economies, with low unemployment rates and steadily rising wages. A strong fiscal position made it easier to act quickly.

In the early days of the pandemic, government used a broad range of tools to provide support to people, communities and businesses. It began with B.C.'s COVID-19 Action Plan. Through it:

- ▶ More than 640,000 people received \$1,000 through the BC Emergency Benefit for Workers;
- ▶ Businesses saw their taxes deferred or slashed significantly, plus received rent relief;
- ▶ Additional supports kept schools and child care centres operating safely;
- ▶ A rental supplement helped nearly 88,000 households make ends meet.

These measures all had direct economic benefits, by supporting overall demand and employment. We also worked closely with business, labour and WorkSafeBC to keep as many people working safely as possible. Six months later, government launched the next phase of our COVID-19 response plan, StrongerBC.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, our strengths remain. Together, we are building an innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy that works for everyone.

- ▶ We are providing re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities for people whose work had been affected by COVID-19 by supporting new micro-credential courses at 14 public post-secondary institutions, like the new mass timber micro-credential at BCIT.
- ▶ We are connecting 2,500 people who are unemployed or precariously employed with short-term training to help land in-demand jobs.
- ▶ Through the new B.C. Access Grant, we are delivering up-front, non-repayable financial assistance to thousands of low- and middle-income post-secondary students. In the first eight months since it launched, the B.C. Access Grant supported 32,194 students with a total of \$30,724,636 to help cover the cost of tuition, textbooks, and living expenses.
- ▶ We launched InBC, a new \$500 million strategic investment fund, that will anchor jobs and talent here in British Columbia.
- ▶ We are providing \$35 million to support thousands of arts and culture organizations and make sure they are part of B.C.'s recovery.
- ▶ We expanded the BC Food Hub Network to create jobs, help small businesses grow and connect people to local food. New locations in Victoria, Nanaimo (Bowser), Cowichan, Abbotsford-Mission, Kamloops, Creston and Rock Creek region brings the total number of Food Hubs to 12 throughout B.C.
- ▶ The mining sector, which worked closely with government to remain open safely during the pandemic, saw stronger exploration over the past year than any year since 2013.

- ▶ We supported a variety of community job-creation grants in rural communities, in partnership with the regional trusts, and committed millions through the FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund and Community Forest Wildfire Risk Fund to promote economic development, create jobs and reduce wildfire risk.

We are supporting the hard-hit tourism and arts sectors.

- ▶ Necessary public health measures made the last year exceptionally challenging for people in the arts, tourism and hospitality sectors. That's why our government worked closely with industry to deliver initiatives that are helping businesses recover as we reopen:
 - We created a \$100-million tourism-specific stream under the Small and Medium Size Business Recovery Grant program.
 - We have allocated \$5 million in relief funding through Indigenous Tourism BC for 140 Indigenous tourism businesses, one of the fastest-growing sectors of the industry.
 - We have also invested \$53 million in community-based tourism infrastructure and destination development to help tourism in B.C. recover, create jobs and spur economic development. This supported upgrades to local trails in Clearwater and installing new solar electric-vehicle charging stations at Fernie's Town Hall and Visitor Information Centre.
 - We are providing \$35 million to support thousands of arts and culture organizations and make sure they are part of B.C.'s recovery. Organizations like Ballet BC, the Belfry Theatre and Vernon Public Art Gallery all received record high supports to help them get through pandemic restrictions.



New micro-credential courses are giving thousands of students the opportunity to re-skill or up-skill as part of B.C.'s economic recovery.

A cleaner future

CleanBC is North America's most progressive plan to reduce carbon pollution, all while creating a more sustainable economic future on the other side of COVID-19.

- ▶ We are continuing to invest in the CleanBC Industry Fund (CIF), including the new Innovation Accelerator and Feasibility Studies stream, to support B.C.'s industry with the transition toward net zero emissions.
- ▶ Our government has supported 34 CleanBC Industry Fund projects to date across industry sectors, including in forestry, mining, agriculture, waste management, and manufacturing. Together, these projects will eliminate an estimated 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through 2030.
- ▶ We are continuing our CleanBC Go Electric program to encourage more people to buy electric vehicles (EV). Now a record number of British Columbians are driving EVs, with more than 50,000 EVs on the road.
 - As of December 2020, 54,469 EVs were on the road in B.C., leading to an estimated 216,000 tonnes in emission reductions per year.
 - We expanded our EV charging network to more than 2,500 public charging stations in B.C., making British Columbia home to one of the largest public charging networks in Canada.
- ▶ We are creating jobs for people restoring watersheds, protecting habitats, removing invasive species, and enhancing B.C. parks.
 - A total of 37 positions with BC Parks and 46 positions with the BC Conservation Officer Service are giving young people valuable experience and helping to protect the environment.
 - The BC Parks Student Ranger Program offers 48 young adults training and employment opportunities in B.C. parks and protected areas.
 - The BC Parks Stimulus Proposal supports projects spanning 24 provincial parks that will help create jobs and safeguard nature. Projects include EV charging stations, upgrades to campgrounds and parking lots, and accessibility improvements.
 - Investments through the Species and Ecosystems Conservation and Restoration fund will support more than 60 projects and create more than 350 jobs.
 - The Watershed Initiative and Wetlands Project will support about 70 projects and create more than 750 jobs, all while helping B.C. communities adapt to the impacts of climate change and conserve species in their habitat.



British Columbia is leading the charge in North America on the switch to electric vehicles.

Lasting reconciliation

Together, we are building a sustainable, innovative and inclusive recovery – one where everyone feels the benefits. A brighter future is within reach and we will get there in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

- ▶ We completed and signed a long-term agreement in September with First Nations that will see approximately \$3 billion in gaming revenue shared over 25 years.
- ▶ We are enabling more than 1,700 Indigenous people in communities throughout B.C. to access education or skills training for in-demand jobs.
- ▶ We provided \$7.8 million to support friendship centres' ongoing work to deliver essential services for Indigenous individuals, young families, single parents, youth and Elders.
- ▶ We delivered funding to 140 Indigenous tourism businesses, which helped create or maintain nearly 1,200 jobs. For example, Talaysay Tours in Vancouver used its grant to create a virtual tour that guides people remotely through Stanley Park.
- ▶ We are supporting the Aboriginal Head Start Association's work to build new outdoor early learning and play spaces that will benefit more than 1,700 Indigenous children. For example, the Wo'umxhl Simalgyex Daycare is building a Smoke House and Clan Houses for the children that will serve as a place for traditional gatherings and healing circles.
- ▶ We are improving connectivity for 200 rural and Indigenous communities through a \$90-million investment in the Connecting British Columbia program. We are also adding 140 kilometres of cellular coverage along B.C.'s highways.
- ▶ We are contributing \$25.7 million to make safety upgrades to the Bamfield Road in partnership with Huu-ay-aht First Nation. The improvements also advance Huu-ay-aht's vision for economic growth and diversification in the regional economy, supporting job creation for local businesses in forestry, tourism and construction.
- ▶ We signed a landmark comprehensive reconciliation agreement with Lake Babine Nation and the federal government that sets a path to implement and recognize Lake Babine Nation rights and title. We also accelerated the transfer of \$22 million under the agreement to support the Lake Babine Nation with economic recovery from COVID-19.
- ▶ We signed agreements to facilitate the return of lands to First Nations, including shíshálh, Esquimalt, Tsartlip, Snuneymuxw, Nicola Valley, Xat'súll and Halalt First Nations.

"Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve Programs are extremely important to the ongoing spiritual, physical and mental health development of First Nations children in B.C. In addition, these programs offer critical support services to parents that ultimately lead to stronger, healthier and happier First Nations communities." - Dr. Nel Wieman, acting deputy chief medical officer, First Nations Health Authority.



New child care spaces are supporting Indigenous families in communities throughout B.C.

An inclusive British Columbia

While the pandemic brought out the best of who we are as British Columbians, it unfortunately also brought out the worst in some – with hate crimes and racist actions on the rise. We are working to build a British Columbia that is more accessible, equitable and barrier-free for everyone.

- ▶ The new Accessible British Columbia Act allows government to establish accessibility standards aimed at identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and inclusion.
- ▶ BC Housing partnered with the SAFERhome Standards Society to review all BC Housing units built since 2019 to ensure they are accessible or easily and affordably adaptable.
- ▶ We launched a new multilingual racist incident hotline to help British Columbians report racist incidents and receive support and referrals.
- ▶ Through StrongerBC we provided funding for the Work Experience Opportunities Grant and for CLBC Employment Services. Both these programs help people with disabilities and people facing barriers find employment opportunities. Through the Work Experience Opportunities Grant, 1,100 people received short-term employment.
- ▶ We have committed to introduce anti-racism data legislation, as well as a new anti-racism act to make B.C. a safer, more welcoming and equitable province for everyone, regardless of their race, skin colour or faith.
- ▶ We launched a provincewide anti-racism awareness campaign –antiracist.gov.bc.ca/ – and provided millions of dollars in grants to communities across B.C. for grassroots anti-racism projects and our Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network.
- ▶ We established a Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act, which will review the role of police with respect to mental health, harm reduction and systemic racism, with a specific focus on areas that disproportionately affect racialized and marginalized communities.
- ▶ We expanded the provincial Erase strategy (Expect Respect and a Safe Education) to include anti-racism resources and information for students, staff and parents.

A stronger BC for everyone

As we safely restart our lives and economy, our government will continue to make choices that put people first. We have weathered an incredibly difficult time by following the guidance of Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s provincial health officer. As the pandemic evolved, so did our government's response to protect people's health and livelihoods. COVID-19 is still with us – but we are ready to seize the opportunities that come with recovery. Together, we are going to keep building a stronger B.C., for everyone.



