



EARLY MARCH 2023

I would like to introduce the big news of the week, that we approved spending an extra \$2.715 Billion from the 2022 surplus to support people and build a stronger BC. I chaired many hours of debate over the last two weeks as Ministers answered questions of the Opposition on the proposed supplementary budget. In the end, the BC Liberals did not support expenditures to improve food security, connectivity, cancer research, reconciliation, watershed security, local government core infrastructure and amenities, critical infrastructure, libraries, next Gen 911, or ferry fares.

Despite the BC Liberal attempt to block it, the supplementary estimate vote passed successfully. This authorizes government to invest BC's budget surplus to address some of the most significant challenges facing British Columbians, like:

- \$150 million to the BC Cancer Foundation for cancer research
- \$1 billion Growing Communities Fund to invest in infrastructure and other amenities in communities across the province (Including almost \$20 million for the Comox Valley)
- \$150 million to keep people safe by modernizing the province's outdated 911 system
- \$500 to BC Ferries to avoid double digit ferry fare hikes
- \$75 million to advance reconciliation agreements with First Nation
- \$200 million to improve food security at a time of rising grocery prices



ISLAND LIFE

- Another BC Affordability Credit coming in April. Approximately 85% of British Columbians will receive an additional full or partial payment as early as April 5, 2023 worth as much as \$164 per adult and \$41 per child, or approximately \$410 for a family with two children.
- The \$500-million investment from the B.C. government into BC Ferries is to keep annual average fare increases below 3% a year. By acting now, we can prevent double-digit fare increases from hitting people and businesses who depend on our ferries. Keeping people connected.

- 911 is a crucial service in life-threatening emergencies. That's why a \$150-million investment will fund upgrades to B.C.'s 911 emergency communications system, which will allow people the choice to contact 911 through new options, such as real-time text, and caller location features. The Province is working with local governments to complete these upgrades to critical emergency communications services in our community.
- In February, I had the honour of introducing an amendment to the Provincial Symbols and Honours Act to make the Elasmosaur the official fossil of BC! In 1988, Mike Trask and his daughter Heather discovered the Elasmosaur fossil right here near the Puntledge River. Comox Valley history is BC's history, and this amazing scientific find deserves to be recognized as a symbol of BC! How lucky are we to have the Elasmosaur fossil right here at the Courtenay & District Museum?
- A joint Food Security investment between the Ministry of Agriculture and Social Development and Poverty Reduction will help improve food security for British Columbians. The funding will be put towards programs and grants that support the end goal of making sure we have affordable, uninterrupted supply of nutritious food grown and processed here in B.C., so we can help people afford their grocery bills, keep our farmers and food manufactures profitable and resilient while making sure no one goes hungry.

Reducing barriers with inclusive language



EQUITY PROGRESS

- BC will become the first province in Canada to systematically amend provincial laws to remove gendered and binary language. Since 2020, the government has amended more than 1,400 instances of gendered and binary language from provincial regulations. This government is committed to supporting the health and well-being of Two-Spirit, transgender, intersex, non-binary and gender-diverse people and making B.C. a more inclusive province when it comes to gender identity
- **Free contraceptives.** Prescription contraceptives will be free to all BC residents - a first in Canada. As of April 1, 2023, BC PharmaCare will cover the full cost of commonly used birth control methods, including: oral hormone pills; birth control injections; hormonal and copper interuterine devices (IUDs); sub-dermal implants; the morning-after pill (Plan B)
- On International Women's Day, we honour the many women, girls, Two-Spirit people, and non-binary people in our province who are so often the cornerstones of our families, neighbourhoods and communities.



StrongerBC
for everyone

Celebrating International Women's Day

Multiyear action plan:

- Legislation to close BC's gender wage gap
- Legislation to protect against the sharing of intimate images without consent
- Introduced new housing projects for women fleeing violence
- We're moving forward with pay transparency legislation to hold employers accountable and shine light on pay discrimination in the workplace.

- More women and children rebuilding their lives after fleeing violence, will have an affordable, safe and secure place to go, as **150 homes are either opening or are under construction** in four different locations throughout the province. Three of the new women's housing projects will be operated by non-profit providers that specialize in housing and supports for women, including transgender women, Two-Spirit and non-binary people, as well as their dependent children who are experiencing or are at risk of violence.

HEALTH CARE

- Budget 2023 sets out more than **\$1 billion in new funding over the next three years** to ensure that people living with mental health or addiction can find and stay connected to the care they need. **\$586 million** is going into the health-care system to add more treatment and recovery services, including **195 treatment and recovery beds** throughout B.C.
- Cancer patients and their loved ones will benefit from expanded access to care as B.C. launches a new action plan with immediate steps to better prevent, detect and treat cancers, delivering improved care for people now while preparing for the growing needs of the future. **A \$440-million investment will expand cancer-care teams and service hours**, introduce revised pay structures to ensure B.C. is attractive and competitive for oncologists and cancer-care professionals, improve cancer screening programs, support cancer research, increase Indigenous patient support positions, and support patients who must travel for care from rural communities

ENVIRONMENT

- Watershed strategy co-developed with First Nations, **\$100 million** invested. Healthy watersheds are not only essential for our individual health and well-being, but they also ensure that ecosystems, economies, and communities throughout B.C. can flourish. Government and the B.C. First Nations Water Table announced an unprecedented **\$100-million investment in healthy watersheds** and the launch of engagement on a new co-developed watershed security strategy intentions paper to help ensure safe, clean water is available. This builds on the success of a previous **\$27-million investment in the Healthy Watersheds Initiative (HWI)** under the StrongerBC economic plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Would you like to lend your voice on important topics in BC? There are many topics on which the government of BC would like to hear from you. Take some time to lend your voice - with EngageBC

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES

Is someone in your life, your workplace, or your church celebrating a Milestone birthday or anniversary? Make sure to put in a request for a letter from your MLA.

Get in touch

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about any provincial issue, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to help you. My office can be reached at 250.703.2410 or Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca Our Office hours are Monday to Thursday 10am-4pm. If the door is locked, simply knock or call 250.703.2410 to get our attention. Fridays are by appointment only.

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of BRITISH COLUMBIA