

For Immediate Release  
2005OTP0015-000118  
Feb. 8, 2005

Office of the Premier

## **2005 THRONE SPEECH HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Speech from the Throne, Sixth Session, 37th Parliament**

“Better access to education and high quality health care. Better support services for women, children, seniors and people in need. More jobs and new opportunities for families, First Nations, and small businesses across B.C. Higher take-home pay and a better standard of living. That is the power of a strong economy. That is the point of responsible fiscal management. And that has always been the object of your government’s visions for a brighter future.”

– Speech from the Throne, Feb. 8, 2005

Today’s throne speech set out a bold vision for British Columbia’s future, building on the hard work and success of the last four years. The speech outlined “Five Great Goals For A Golden Decade”:

1. To make B.C. the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.
2. To lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness.
3. To build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk and seniors.
4. To lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none.
5. To create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada.

### **Make B.C. the Best Educated, Most Literate Jurisdiction in North America**

- \$150 million in new funding to ensure school districts provide library services, textbooks, arts and music programs, and services to students with special needs.
- Extend the Action Schools program to every school in B.C. in grades K to 9 and eliminate junk food in all schools within the next four years.
- Extend the Roots of Empathy program, which teaches children compassion and understanding, and has proven effective in helping reduce aggressive behaviour, to every school.
- \$1.5 billion plan to complete all seismic upgrades to schools within the next 15 years.
- Explore new ways to use under-utilized schools for the benefit of their entire community – as not just centres of learning but also centres of community activity and child development.
- Increase funding for colleges and universities by \$132 million over next three years.
- Legislation to limit future tuition increases to the rate of inflation, effective this September.
- New steps to improve student financial assistance.
- Continue program of adding 25,000 post-secondary student spaces by 2010.
- Legislation to create a new Thompson Rivers University based in Kamloops.
- Establish a World Trade University in Chilliwack to offer graduate-level programs in trade-related fields and host international trade conferences and events, including potential World Trade Forum events.

- Establish a One World Scholarship Fund to help B.C. students earn their degrees and diplomas in other non-G8 countries, helping B.C. create new relationships around the world.
- Speed up credentialing in trades and the professions for newcomers to Canada.

### **Lead the Way in Healthy Living and Physical Fitness**

- \$1.5 billion more for health care in the next three years.
- Focus new energy and new resources on prevention.
- Launch “Act Now” – a health and fitness program for all British Columbians.
- Review the U.K.’s innovative Personal Health Guides as a possible model for B.C.’s health care. Personal Health Guides mean that citizens work with their family doctors, nurse practitioners, nutritionists, and other members of the health care team to develop personally tailored health plans and help citizens achieve their health goals.
- Welcome B.C.’s first-ever class of nurse practitioners that graduates this year from UBC and UVic, while the first class of nurse practitioners will begin at UNBC.
- Continue building toward achieving the goal of 5,000 new beds for seniors across the spectrum of assisted living, residential care and independent housing.
- Continue working towards the establishment of a national Pharmacare strategy.
- Implementing the recent federal/provincial health accord that will pump an extra \$5.4 billion into B.C.’s health care system over the next 10 years.
- Budget \$100 million in 2007 to support the Michael Smith Foundation’s amazing work in genome mapping and cancer research.
- Expand on B.C.’s reputation as a global leader in public health and research by expanding the B.C. Centre for Disease Control into the Pacific Centre for Disease Control by working with governments and institutions in Singapore, China, and India.

### **Build the Best System of Support**

- A new Premier’s Council on Aging and Seniors Issues to identify opportunities to improve seniors’ services, examine how to improve housing options and homecare, consider the issue of mandatory retirement, and make recommendations on how to improve seniors’ independence and quality of living.
- Increase the earnings exemption for persons with disabilities – this follows our earlier move to bring in the single largest rate increase in history for persons with disabilities on income assistance.
- \$37 million in new funding over the next three years to ensure women and children escaping violent and abusive relationships have more 24/7 access to safe housing.
- Task Force on Homelessness to continue developing new strategies to tackle homelessness, drug addictions and mental illness.
- \$122 million in new funding for 215 new police officers over the next three years.
- A special Provincial Congress on Public Safety to meet in the fall to review crime prevention, treatment, legislation and by-laws, policing, prosecution, courts, and corrections.
- Strengthen early childhood development programs – including \$76 million (through 2007) for early diagnostic screening of children for hearing, sight and dental problems.
- Funding for adult community living services to increase by \$91 million over the next three years.
- Offer new respite support for families caring for children and adults with developmental disabilities.
- Work with the federal government on plans to make \$650 million available for child care over the next five years.

### **Lead the World in Sustainable Environmental Management**

- Build on success of acquiring and preserving Burns Bog and the Codd Wetlands.
- Habitat Conservation Trust Fund will get a \$6.5 million donation to support parkland acquisitions and conservation.
- \$9 million to establish a B.C. Conservation Corps so students and graduates can work in B.C. parks and wilderness as a new generation of conservationists.
- \$7.5 million to add up to 50 new Park Rangers and Conservation Officers.
- A \$120 million B.C. Community Water Improvement Program.
- A new Pacific Salmon Forum to help us safeguard our wild salmon and improve our aquaculture industry.
- Continue our opposition to the Sumas 2 power project.
- Appoint an Alternative Energy and Power Task Force that will report directly to cabinet on how to promote wind, tidal, solar, and run-of-the-river power projects.
- New resources to help implement the \$16 million Drinking Water Action Plan.
- Expand the Living Rivers Strategy and make new investments in salmonid enhancement and fish habitats.

### **Lead the Nation in Job Creation**

- Launch an Asia-Pacific Gateway Strategy to take our products to the world and open doors for new cultural exchange, new relationships, and new partnerships in education.
- Appoint an Asia-Pacific Trade Council to advise the government.
- Establish a network of B.C. Trade and Cultural centres in key international markets to promote made-in-B.C. products.
- Appoint a B.C. Competition Council to conduct a comprehensive review of B.C.'s competitiveness in every sector, pinpoint the barriers to growth, and identify solutions to overcome them.
- Establish a World Trade University in Chilliwack to offer graduate-level programs in trade-related fields and host international trade conferences and events, including potential World Trade Forum events.
- Establish a One World Scholarship Fund to help B.C. students earn their degrees and diplomas in other non-G8 countries, helping B.C. create new relationships around the world.
- Expand the B.C. Centre for Disease Control into a Pacific Centre for Disease Control.
- Budget \$100 million in 2007 for the Michael Smith Foundation to continue its position as a leader in health research, including genome mapping and cancer research.
- Open up our transportation links to the Pacific by opening up the Port of Prince Rupert, expanding the Port of Vancouver and improving cruise ships facilities all along our coast.
- Develop new tourism products to attract Chinese tourists generated by Canada's approved destination status with China.
- Increase support for ESL programs, and do more to promote aboriginal languages and learning in Punjabi, Mandarin and other languages of the Asia-Pacific.

The full text of the throne speech is available on the Legislative Assembly website at <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/37th6th/4-8-37-6.htm>.

Visit the Province's website at [www.gov.bc.ca](http://www.gov.bc.ca) for online information and services.