



# SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Her Honour the Honourable Wendy Cocchia  
Lieutenant Governor  
at the Opening of the  
Second Session, Forty-third Parliament  
of the  
Province of British Columbia  
February 12, 2026

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## OPENING

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, Elders, Chiefs, veterans, uniformed service members, leaders, and distinguished guests.

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

Thank you to the Lekwungen Traditional Dancers, Elder Frank George from the Songhees Nation, and Elder Mary Ann Thomas from the Esquimalt Nation for starting us off in a good way.

I'm pleased to deliver the Speech from the Throne, outlining your government's plan at a time of rapid global change.

A plan that makes careful decisions, prioritizes what matters most, and leverages B.C.'s strengths to build a more secure future for all of us.

## **IN MEMORIAM**

As has been our tradition over many years, we begin the Speech from the Throne by remembering some of the outstanding British Columbians we have lost in the last 12 months.

We mourn Indigenous leaders, including Delgamuukw Chief George Muldoe, Xsimjiitsiin Chief Lester Moore, Tenim Gyet Art Matthews Jr., Grand Chief Robert Pasco, Aadix Lax Nox Chief Sandra Teegee, Elmer Seniemten George, Chief Bill Williams, Johnson Walkus, Charles McKay, and Dr. Ruby Dunstan.

We mourn former members of this Legislature, including Art Charbonneau and Jack Heinrich, as well as former Member of Parliament John Cummins.

We remember public servants like Janet Erasmus and elected officials like Alice Maitland, as well as community leaders and advocates, including Nalda Perry-Callender, Iqbal Cheema, Carol Matthews, Chris Morrissey, Trey Helton, and Wesley Mitchell.

We mourn people from the world of sports, including Olympic swimmer Steve Hardy, lacrosse's Stan Shillington, football's Tony Dennis and Frank Smith, hockey's Frank Caprice and Mel Bridgman, as well as wheelchair rugby legend Garrett Hickling.

We remember educators, including Christopher Rose, as we do military service members such as Rollie Keith, firefighters such as Joe Arden, and search-and-rescue volunteers such as Neil Brewer.

From labour, we mourn Garry Worth and Chris Allnut.

We mourn the artist Gathie Falk, sculptor Robert Dow Reid, guitarist Paul Hann, double bassist Gary Karr, and Rick Scott of Pied Pumpkin.

From the literary world, we remember Hal Wake and Alma Lee, and from the culinary world we mourn restaurateur Bud Kanke and vegan cookbook author Sarah Kramer.

From the media, we mourn Phil Reimer, Mike Walker, Evan Hammond, Khushpal Singh Gill, Joan Frost, and Dr. Ken Walker, who wrote as Dr. W. Gifford-Jones.

We remember those who developed and planned our communities, including Stanley Kwok, Peter Wall, Neil Griggs, and Ian Niamath.

As we do philanthropists including Jo Ward, Mel Cooper, Curt Garland, Harry Backlin, and Robert H.N. Ho.

We cherish the lessons shared with us by those who survived and witnessed the horrors of the previous century, including Holocaust survivor Janos (Jack) Benisz and military veterans Albert Middleton, Gordon Quan and Rev. Dick Fletcher.

And as we approach the anniversary of one of the darkest and saddest days in modern provincial history, we remember the victims of the tragedy of the Lapu Lapu Day Festival.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of British Columbia declaring a public health emergency in response to the rapid rise in deaths from the toxic drug supply.

We mourn the loss of over 17,000 of our neighbours, family members, colleagues, and friends to this crisis.

We also mourn those who lost their lives on the job and the victims of intimate partner violence.

May our continued work on these issues bring an end to such losses.

And to all who suffered the loss of a loved one last year, we extend to you our condolences and our sympathies. We acknowledge and share your grief.

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## **MEETING THE MOMENT**

This session once again begins at a moment of profound change that will test our resolve and define our future.

We are at an inflection point, between an old order that is fading and a new one that has yet to be defined.

The choices we make now will shape where we go from here and the kind of province we leave for the next generation.

The Prime Minister has called it a rupture.

What's clear is this: the world is moving faster, rules we once relied on are shifting, and decisions made beyond our borders are having real consequences here at home.

But we also know that British Columbia is built for this moment.

And British Columbians are ready to meet it.

We have the resources the world needs.

We are a gateway to some of the fastest growing markets, facing two-thirds of the world's population.

And most importantly, we have people whose hard work moves this province forward every day.

People who believe in building something better together.

Over the last year, British Columbians have shown who we are.

We stood shoulder to shoulder with Canadians across the country.

We looked out for each other.

We stood up for this country we love.

We chose unity over division.

British Columbians know that division weakens us all, and that our strength comes from standing together, united as proud Canadians.

A year ago, in the face of extraordinary actions of the U.S. administration, your government committed to building a stronger, more resilient economy.

One that puts people first and prepares B.C. for an uncertain world.

We said we would diversify our markets, reduce our reliance on any single trading partner, and get major projects built.

That work is underway and it shows real results.

New trade relationships are beginning, and old ones are being strengthened.

Critical infrastructure and clean energy projects are moving forward.

Multibillion-dollar investments creating thousands of jobs are gearing up.

Skills training and innovation are helping B.C. compete and seize new opportunities.

British Columbia has always met moments like this with determination and confidence in our collective strength.

Getting big things done is in our DNA.

Now is the time to harness our strengths and chart a path that will define the next generation of opportunity with purpose.

We also know that many people are not just worried about the future, but also about the day-to-day pressures they are facing right now.

The Speech from the Throne sets out a plan focused on what matters most to people – meeting today's challenges while building tomorrow's promise.

Good jobs.

Affordable homes.

Accessible health care.

And a province that drives our country's move to stand on our own two feet.

A British Columbia that can move forward in control of its own future.

## **SECURING OUR FUTURE**

Your government will present a new budget next week.

One shaped by our rapidly changing and more uncertain world.

One that will require discipline and careful choices.

Over the last eight years, we have built the foundations of a strong province and an economy we can depend on.

Hospitals, schools, roads, transit, housing, and clean electricity are being delivered to support communities and good jobs across British Columbia.

Tens of thousands of nurses, teachers, doctors, and health professionals have joined the front lines.

We made these investments while helping people and businesses through extraordinary challenges.

A global pandemic.

Devastating floods and wildfires.

And now, through a direct attack on our economy and our sovereignty.

We entered this period from a position of strength.

We have a resilient economy and a low debt-to-GDP ratio that gives British Columbia the capacity to respond when it matters most.

That work is making a difference.

There are more family doctors in British Columbia than ever before.

Rent prices are falling faster here than anywhere else in the country.

It is easier to join a union and secure better pay.

B.C. has the lowest income tax for people earning under \$149,000 a year.

Everyday costs are being eased through measures like the B.C. Family Benefit, lower car insurance rates, and some of the most affordable electricity rates in North America.

The budget will defend and protect those gains.

It will preserve the support people count on when times are hard, while continuing investments that will define our future.

Including a commitment to protect and continue the work we have done to reduce child care fees for working parents.

But it will also be realistic about the pressures we face.

High costs, global instability, and volatile commodity prices are all putting strain on public finances.

While we are less trade exposed than other provinces, U.S. tariffs are battering the forest sector and the revenue it produces.

While we don't know what the future holds or how it will impact our province, we must proceed as though this is the new normal.

As times change, so must our approach.

Strengthening our fiscal position so we are ready for whatever comes next will require discipline.

It will mean some careful choices right now to set British Columbia up for long-term success.

As we wait for major projects to come online and strengthen our economy, your government has taken a careful look at how to both grow revenue and reduce expenditures.

The goals in this budget are clear:

Protect core services – like health care and education.

Remain the country's lowest income-tax jurisdiction for working- and middle-class families.

Reduce the deficit over time to keep B.C.'s debt level competitive.

We took a hard look at government spending before asking anything more of people.

That will mean reducing duplication, administrative costs that do not reach the front line, and programs where evidence shows limited impact.

Critical infrastructure projects will continue to move forward – but our overall capital spending will proceed in a way that reduces costs while delivering results.

At the same time, we need to grow the economy to respond to the threats we face.

The budget will include a historic boost for training in the trades that was announced last fall.

This will give tens of thousands of British Columbians the opportunity to earn more, build a career, and step into the jobs shaping our province's future.

And it will introduce new tools to support growth and generate the revenue needed to sustain public services and invest in what comes next.

This is serious work for serious times.

It will be focused on the things that make the most difference and that secure our future.

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## **LOOK WEST: JOBS AND PROSPERITY FOR A STRONGER BC**

A stronger fiscal position starts with a bigger, stronger, more resilient economy.

One that creates good jobs and opportunities for better paying careers.

One that delivers lasting prosperity to every region of British Columbia.

And one that creates the wealth we need to fund the public services people rely on.

That is what your government's *Look West* strategy does.

It is a plan to grow our economy by focusing on three key areas.

Strengthening our workforce.

Delivering major projects faster.

Diversifying markets and growing key sectors.

Strengthening our workforce means investing in skills and training, so people are ready for good paying jobs in trades, construction, and emerging industries.

Delivering major projects faster means cutting delays and unlocking billions in new investment – while maintaining B.C.'s high environmental standards and our commitment to consultations with First Nations.

Diversifying markets and growing targeted sectors means expanding exports, reducing reliance on any single market, and keeping British Columbia competitive in a changing global economy.

Together, these actions are designed to unlock \$200 billion in new private sector investment and put British Columbians to work.

B.C. will drive Canada's economy forward.

Our *Look West* plan leverages our advantages in life sciences, AI and quantum computing, film and television production, tourism, submarine services, shipbuilding, and modular housing to secure federal and private investment.

This means jobs: on Vancouver Island, in the Interior's aerospace sector, in Prince George building modular housing with B.C. lumber.

Our film and television crews make B.C. a world-class destination for production.

Tourism brings people from around the globe to experience everything our province has to offer.

But the foundation of our economy starts with responsible development of our natural resources.

Minerals, energy, and forests have long supported families and communities.

So too have our farmers and agriculture sector – a vital natural resource that sustains rural communities, feeds our province, and supports jobs across British Columbia.

This natural inheritance remains central to our future prosperity.

## **DRIVING MOMENTUM ON CRITICAL MINERALS**

The effort to grow our economy is already working.

Our resources, geography, and skilled workforce give us a distinct advantage.

Nowhere is that clearer than in our abundant supply of critical minerals.

The world is racing to secure the metals needed for clean energy and technology.

B.C. is where they want to be, and investment is flowing.

In the last 30 days alone, B.C. has permitted new mines that will unlock more than \$3 billion in private sector investment – and will create thousands of jobs.

A new or expanded mine is now permitted in our province every four months, the fastest pace our province has managed in the 21st century.

Each mine brings close to \$1 billion in investment and hundreds of high-paying jobs.

Artemis Gold's Blackwater Mine, built in just 22 months, now supports hundreds of long-term jobs and is expanding further.

Your government was able to cut permitting times in half for Centerra's Mount Milligan project.

That has given the company confidence to study the feasibility of reopening a mine that has been closed for over a decade.

Anglo Teck is moving its global headquarters to Vancouver, where they will have a front-row seat to their Highland Valley Copper expansion, a project hiring more than 1,000 British Columbians.

This is what happens when government works with communities, First Nations, and industry – investment and good jobs follow.

## **DELIVERING B.C. ENERGY TO GROWING MARKETS**

As your government's trade mission to Asia last year made clear, growing economies are looking for B.C.'s LNG to meet energy demand and support the transition to a cleaner economy.

Our LNG has one of the lowest carbon footprints in the world, thanks to electrification.

Six major LNG projects are complete, underway, or reaching final investment decisions this year.

By the end of the decade, B.C. will have 20 million tonnes of export capacity, driving economic activity in our province and contributing directly to Canada's GDP.

Your government is working with partners to provide the certainty investors need.

A few weeks ago, BC Hydro signed an agreement with Ksi Lisims LNG to secure electricity supply through the North Coast Transmission Line.

This brings us closer to final investment decisions and a stronger energy future for B.C., and more jobs and prosperity for every part of the province.

### **POWERING OUR FUTURE WITH CLEAN ELECTRICITY**

Powering much of our growth here in B.C. will be the North Coast Transmission Line.

It will provide the clean, reliable electricity needed to unlock tens of billions of dollars worth of private sector projects across the northwest.

And it will be built in true partnership with First Nations.

Grounded in recent agreements that reflect shared decision-making, shared benefits, and in some cases, co-ownership.

These partnerships are not incidental.

They are essential to deliver the project at a record pace and to ensure long-term success for the region.

With certainty on power, mines can move from concept to construction.

LNG projects will have the electricity they need to be lower emitting and more attractive to growing markets.

Ports, processing facilities, and manufacturing will be able to turn B.C.'s resources into good jobs here at home.

This line creates the certainty companies need to make final investment decisions.

And it ensures opportunity translates into jobs and lasting benefits for local communities.

## **RECONCILIATION AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

That brings us to the work of reconciliation.

It's not new, and it's not radical.

Reconciliation reflects a broadly shared consensus in this province – that working in partnership with Indigenous Peoples is a constitutional imperative for every government in this country.

It is the fair and just path forward for our country and province – and is much better than the endless conflict of decades past.

That's why the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act passed unanimously in this legislature.

And this work delivers real results.

First Nations and Métis are reconnecting with their languages.

More Indigenous children are being cared for in their communities surrounded by their culture.

Communities are reclaiming traditions that strengthen identity and belonging.

The reach and resonance of this heritage can be seen beyond our borders.

Even as far as the Super Bowl.

Recently, researchers found that the iconic logo of the Seattle Seahawks drew inspiration from a traditional Kwakwaka'wakw transformation mask from Northern Vancouver Island.

The discovery reconnected Indigenous artists from 'Namgis First Nation with the cultural artifact.

And when the Seahawks defeated the Patriots to win the Super Bowl on Sunday, it served yet another reminder of the living culture and creativity of First Nations.

Reconciliation is also central to B.C.'s economic future.

Because strong partnerships are essential to certainty.

And certainty is the key to prosperity that helps everyone in B.C.

The reality of Aboriginal title was not created by provincial law.

It is recognized in Canada's Constitution, and the courts have been clear:

Aboriginal title exists in British Columbia.

Repealing the Declaration Act, or walking away from negotiations with First Nations, would not change that reality.

It would not reduce conflict.

And it would not create certainty.

It would create chaos, delays, lost jobs, and endless lawsuits.

The Declaration Act is not an obstacle to development in British Columbia.

It is one of the reasons projects are moving forward at a record pace.

Just weeks ago, a new mine at Eskay Creek in the Northwest was approved through a joint environmental assessment by the Tahltan Central Government and your government.

This is the first ever Section 7 agreement negotiated under the Declaration Act.

It shows what cooperation can deliver.

A billion-dollar-a-year project.

Hundreds of good jobs.

Progress built through partnership, not conflict.

Real jobs, building our province, not a multimillion-dollar lawsuit, draining certainty and resources.

Your government remains committed to advancing work under the Declaration Act.

It is crucial we do so directly with First Nations in a government-to-government relationship and with other Indigenous Peoples, Métis and Inuit.

While work with Indigenous Peoples must continue, recent court decisions have raised questions about what reconciliation means in practice.

Your government's bright lines are clear.

First, reconciliation is the responsibility of elected governments.

That is why we will amend the Declaration Act this spring to ensure it reflects our original intent.

Second, private property rights are not negotiable.

We will challenge court rulings to make these lines clear.

But your government will not abandon responsibility for reconciliation.

It is essential to build a stronger, more prosperous B.C. for everyone who calls this place home.

## **BUILDING ONE STRONG CANADIAN ECONOMY**

As we diversify where we sell our products around the world, we also need to make sure trade works here at home.

B.C. has been leading the national conversation on reducing internal trade barriers in Canada.

Our recent agreement with other provinces sets a new standard for cooperation and growth.

This session, legislation will be introduced to help us continue our work to make it easier for businesses to move goods and provide services across provincial borders.

Outdated rules that slow opportunity will no longer get in the way.

That matters for families, especially at the grocery store.

Barriers between provinces make it harder to process food locally, limit competition, and drive-up food prices.

This year, we will bring forward legislation to ban restrictive covenants that block new grocery stores, spurring more competition and keeping food prices down.

By strengthening food supply chains, strengthening food processing opportunities here at home, and allowing more competition across provincial lines, we can help bring costs down for families.

And we will keep pushing for labour mobility, removing barriers that hold people and businesses back, and raise prices for your family.

The International Monetary Fund says removing trade barriers could grow Canada's economy by 7%.

That's \$210 billion in new opportunities we must not leave on the table.

We need to build one Canadian economy, especially in the face of global threats.

#### **A MORE SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY SECTOR**

In British Columbia, nowhere is global pressure felt more directly than in our forestry sector and the communities that depend on it.

On top of low lumber prices, U.S. tariffs have moved from threat to reality, hitting forestry harder than any other sector.

The impacts are being felt in mills, in jobs, and across entire communities.

For many families, the consequences are devastating.

Your government is responding.

We fought for, and secured, additional federal support for workers and the industry.

And we will continue pressing for Ottawa to ensure B.C.'s forestry industry receives the same level of support as the automotive and steel industry in Ontario and Quebec.

We are opening new markets for B.C. products, expanding support for value-added manufacturing, and addressing long-standing structural issues in the sector.

There are no quick fixes, but stability and predictability matter.

That is why we are moving toward a more coordinated, long-term approach to forest management.

Take the Gwa'ni Project as an example.

Your government and the 'Namgis First Nation worked with industry and communities on a shared plan for how land is used, protected, and managed.

The result: higher harvest levels and greater predictability for industry and forestry families.

These outcomes take time, energy, and commitment.

But they are real – and they represent the future of a sustainable industry.

In the coming months, your government will engage the public on how we build on this progress.

To further advance an area-based approach to forest management, rooted in the idea of a working forest.

We are also taking steps to expand and strengthen BC Timber Sales so it can better meet community needs and support good jobs.

Despite challenging market conditions affecting many large companies, BCTS is selling more volume than last year.

Expanding BCTS's mandate will give it the tools to provide more fibre to local mills and value-added manufacturers that do not hold tenure.

These changes will help ensure our forests benefit people and communities.

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## **FOCUSED ON WHAT MATTERS MOST**

A stronger, more resilient economy is not an end in and of itself.

It matters because it gives people the security of a good job.

It matters because it provides opportunities to train for better pay.

And it matters because it's how we pay for strong public services families rely on.

In the months ahead, your government will focus on those things that matter most to you – the things that are foundational to a good life in British Columbia:

A job that pays the bills.

A home you can afford.

Health care you can count on.

And strong support when it's needed most.

As part of this work, your government will improve how support is delivered to families who have children with disabilities.

Thousands more families will have direct funding to tailor supports to their child's unique needs.

While community-based services, therapies, and mental health support will be expanded and easier to access.

By focusing on both financial support and better services close to home, we are taking a fairer approach to helping children with disabilities and the families who care for them.

These changes reflect what we heard from families and caregivers who know these challenges best.

## **HOMES PEOPLE CAN AFFORD**

Having a safe and affordable home is essential to building a good life in British Columbia.

It's more than a roof over your head.

It's a place to raise children, put down roots, and be part of a community.

That is why your government has taken strong action to reduce costs, protect renters, and build more homes for people who live and work here.

And those actions are making a difference.

British Columbia now has the fastest and most consistent decline in rental asking prices in the country.

Over the past three years, the average rent is down by 12%.

That means real relief for families, seniors, students, and workers who have been stretched too thin or priced out of neighbourhoods they love.

We are also protecting affordable homes people already live in from being sold out from under them to big corporate landlords.

By creating the Rental Protection Fund, your government set aside \$500 million with a clear goal:

Protect 2,000 affordable rental homes and keep tenants in their communities.

In less than three years, the team at the Rental Protection Fund surpassed that goal using just \$350 million of the fund.

More than 2,100 homes have already been protected.

Because this approach is working, the remaining \$150 million is now available to protect even more affordable homes across British Columbia.

That means greater stability for renters today, and more affordable housing is preserved for the long term.

These results did not happen by accident.

They are the result of standing up to housing speculation, reining in out-of-control short-term rentals, and making it easier to build rental housing where people need it most.

There is more to do.

One way your government is working to build on this progress is through the Attainable Home Ownership Initiative.

This is a new approach to help people without family wealth or large down payments take that first step toward owning a home.

The first project, developed with the Musqueam Nation on the former RCMP site, shows what is possible when government, communities, and partners work together.

This initiative is designed to be scalable, creating attainable paths to ownership for working and middle-class families.

And it will also serve as a model for adoption by the federal government and the private sector.

The focus is simple: help more people put down roots, give buyers certainty, and make home ownership feel possible again.

### **HEALTH CARE YOU CAN COUNT ON**

Health care is another cornerstone of a good life in British Columbia.

It's about more than treatment when we are sick.

It is the promise that families can rely on the care they need when they need it.

And it's part of who we are as Canadians.

But the system faces real pressure.

Our population is aging, patients are arriving sicker, and medical treatments are more advanced and expensive than ever.

Even with these challenges, we are making progress.

New hospitals and care facilities are opening their doors.

This fall, the new medical school at SFU's Surrey campus will welcome its first class and in the year ahead, we expect to break ground on the school's permanent home.

Over 741,000 British Columbians have seen a pharmacist for minor ailments or free birth control.

More family doctors and care teams are working in communities across the province than ever before.

This includes more than 140 doctors, nurses, and health professionals from the United States who are drawn to our values – with many more on the way.

Last year, more than 17,000 young people visited a Foundry centre to seek mental health and addiction support, community, and connection.

This spring, as part of a national pharmacare agreement, B.C. will provide free, enhanced public coverage for both menopausal hormone therapy and a wide range of diabetes medications and devices.

But we also know that the system cannot simply keep doing the same things and be sustainable over the long term.

Let us be clear: privatization, or a U.S.-style, two-tier system, is not an option for British Columbia.

We must always be a place where we take care of each other, no matter how much money someone has.

That is why your government is making responsible choices to reform care, not to cut or privatize it.

A comprehensive review of health authorities is identifying administrative duplication and redirecting savings to the front lines.

Since the review began, 1,100 administrative positions have been eliminated, closed, or left vacant.

And the savings are being redirected to frontline patient care.

Responsible choices also mean earlier intervention, so people can get help before they end up in hospital.

It means bolstering community-based services, so fewer people depend on emergency care.

Because British Columbians deserve a health-care system they can rely on today and into the future.

### **MAKING LIFE A LITTLE EASIER**

Your government is focused on the biggest challenges facing our province.

At the same time, we will take smaller, but meaningful steps to make people's lives a little easier in the spring session.

Legislation will also be introduced to allow people to renew their driver's licences online.

This will save people time, reduce lineups, and remove one more source of stress from busy lives.

Speaking of saving time, this March will be the last time British Columbians change their clocks, as your government will be making daylight saving time permanent.

This will make mornings a little easier – especially for parents with young kids, who will not have to reset sleep schedules twice a year.

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## **KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE**

People and families deserve to feel safe in their homes, on their streets, and in their communities.

Disorder in the streets – vandalism, theft, and violence – creates fear and frustration.

That's why your government is taking strong action.

More police are being hired and trained.

In fact, officer training at the Justice Institute of B.C. increased by 50%, from 192 to 288 per year.

New resources target robbery, shoplifting, theft, and property crimes through C-STEP.

A dozen Repeat Violent Offender Intervention hubs monitor over 400 high-risk individuals across the province.

Specialized teams are supporting people in mental health crises.

Last year, these teams responded to nearly 5,500 calls, with police only needed in just 1% of them.

Police capacity is being strengthened with more RCMP officers in rural communities.

Your government secured changes to the Criminal Code to strengthen bail laws.

This addresses delays in the criminal justice system and will mean people are better protected from repeat violent offenders.

And B.C. continues to lead the charge for further reforms to address systemic and legal barriers for survivors and victims of intimate partner violence.

B.C. is opening 100 more involuntary care beds in Surrey and Prince George to support people with complex needs, with 28 already operating in Maple Ridge and Surrey.

This is part of a larger effort to tackle the toxic drug crisis by expanding treatment and recovery options, helping people rebuild their lives.

These actions are making a difference.

B.C.'s Crime Severity Index fell 11% in 2024 – the largest drop in the country and the lowest level in six years.

But there is more to do.

In recent years, threats and vandalism targeting synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship have increased.

Your government will act to protect safe access to these spaces.

The freedom to practise one's religion without fear or intimidation is core to who we are as Canadians and British Columbians.

There is no place in our province for racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, or any kind of bigotry that targets people because of who they are or who they love.

## **FIGHTING THE EXTORTION CRISIS**

One threat demands particular attention: the extortion crisis that is disrupting daily life in our communities and neighbourhoods.

Families are being threatened.

Businesses are being targeted.

Neighbourhoods have been shaken to their core.

This is a slow-motion terror attack – and people are asking for more information and more help to fight it.

When any one person or one community is targeted, it is felt by all of us.

Your government is acting.

There is no bigger public safety issue in our province than extortion.

We will find those responsible, charge them, and not relent until this violence stops.

That's why we created the B.C. Extortion Task Force, a dedicated multiagency team.

It is the first coordinated extortion model in Canada – bringing together local police, the RCMP, and federal partners, including the Canada Border Services Agency.

B.C. has expanded the provincial forensic lab to speed up weapons testing and help police crackdown on extortion and organized crime.

As community members raised concerns, your government fought to secure more federal resources.

We are backing police with the tools, intelligence, and capacity they need to bring criminals to justice.

It can't come soon enough, but we've seen this approach is starting to deliver better results.

Sixteen people now face extortion-related charges.

In Surrey, police arrested and prosecutors charged three foreign nationals in connection with a shots-fired extortion incident almost immediately.

We need to see more of that.

That's why we've created a new community advisory group on extortion to close any gaps between taskforce leadership and community members.

Led by an ex-RCMP officer with deep roots in Surrey, this is another example of B.C. listening to community concerns.

By working together, we will put extortionists behind bars, remove those who do not belong in Canada, and take back our communities.

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## **A BRIGHTER FUTURE – FOR EVERYONE**

British Columbia has always been shaped by the choices we make when conditions are hardest.

This is one of those moments.

The challenges we face are undeniable.

The world is uncertain.

The pressures on families, communities, and public services are real.

And there are no shortcuts that will get us where we need to go.

But our province was built for moments like this.

Because we share a deep belief that we are stronger when we move forward together.

The path ahead will require discipline and focus.

It will require making careful decisions and being honest about tradeoffs.

It will require asking more of ourselves – so that British Columbia is ready for whatever comes next.

But it will also be guided by a clear sense of who we are and what we can achieve.

Together, we will deliver a B.C. that works better for people.

A place where people can find good work, afford a home, and count on the care and services they need.

A place that faces a changing world with resolve, grounded in our values, and focused on the future.

The road ahead will not always be easy.

But British Columbians have never shied away from hard work or hard choices.

Together, we will meet this moment.

And together, we will build the brighter British Columbia of tomorrow.

