

BUDGET 2021 CONSULTATION



It's only been four short months since our government introduced *Budget 2020*, and yet, the world looks very different today.

COVID-19 has affected every aspect of our lives, our communities, and the way we do business. Many of us are adjusting to a new routine working from home, while

other families are grappling with the financial reality of reduced hours or job loss.

Throughout this difficult time, we have leaned heavily on people delivering services in grocery stores and pharmacies. B.C.'s paramedics, doctors and nurses continue to work tirelessly on the frontlines of this pandemic, along with the administrative and custodial staff that we depend on to keep our health-care system running.

Together, we are weathering an unprecedented situation. And every single day we are seeing signs of renewal, resiliency and hope. We are moving forward in a safe way, with restaurants beginning to open their doors, salons welcoming back eager customers, and people enjoying our province's beautiful parks.

Going into this pandemic, B.C. had one of the fastest growing economies in the country, zero operating debt, and one of the lowest unemployment rates among the provinces. This strong fiscal foundation is what will help with British Columbia's economic recovery.

We are working towards a new normal for ourselves and our economy. Now more than ever, we need to invest in people, communities and a clean future to ensure a strong recovery works for everyone.

In communities throughout B.C., work is underway on new roads, hospitals and schools to create a better quality of life with more access to the health and community services people depend on.

Significant investments in K-12 education, skills training and the new B.C. Access Grant will help people respond to the current challenges in our job market, while moving towards a future in our province where your opportunities are not defined by your age, income bracket or home address.

This is the future we all want for ourselves, our friends, our children and our grandchildren. And together, I know we will get there. This consultation is your opportunity to tell your story, share your ideas and outline your priorities for the future of our province.

I recognize that many people are feeling uncertain about what the future may bring. Indeed, the road ahead of us is not without its challenges.

But when I am out in my community, I see what I have always seen: the incredible resiliency and compassion of British Columbians and an unwavering belief that we can – and will – build a better future, together.

Signature of Honourable Carole James.

Honourable Carole James
Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier

B.C.'S COVID-19 ACTION PLAN

The impacts of COVID-19 are being felt around the world, and B.C.'s economy is no different. We took immediate action with British Columbia's *COVID-19 Action Plan* – \$5 billion in income supports, tax relief and direct funding for people, businesses and services, and funding for economic recovery measures.

The plan includes \$2.8 billion to help people and fund the services they need to weather the immediate crisis and \$2.2 billion for businesses and help them recover after the outbreak.

Initial supports include the B.C. Emergency Benefit for Workers, a one-time, tax-free \$1,000 payment to British Columbians whose ability to work has been affected by the pandemic. In July, the enhanced B.C. Climate Action Tax Credit provides eligible families of four with up to \$564 and eligible individuals up to \$218 in an enhanced payment. More supports will be available for those who need it most, with



people on income assistance or disability assistance receiving an additional \$300 per month on their cheque for three months.

We know that for many British Columbians housing-related expenses are the greatest financial pressure. That is why the B.C. government launched a temporary rental subsidy through BC Housing to deliver up to \$500 per month for renters, paid directly to landlords.

Government has also taken steps to support B.C. businesses by deferring tax payments for employer health tax, provincial sales tax, hotel tax, carbon tax and others until the end of September. Commercial property owners will also see the average commercial property tax bill lowered significantly in 2020. And thousands of small businesses across the province may temporarily see their rent reduced by 75% through the new federal-provincial Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program.

Supporting people, First Nations, businesses, and not-for-profits throughout the pandemic is vital to B.C.'s response to and recovery from COVID-19. And as a key part of our \$5-billion *COVID-19 Action Plan*, the Province has allocated \$1.5 billion to spark regrowth in British Columbia's economy.

A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR B.C.

Many things have changed as a result of COVID-19, but our province's recovery from this pandemic continues to depend on the fundamentals: healthy people, resilient communities and responsible long-term fiscal planning. These are the same principles that shaped our government's approach to *Budget 2020*.

Budget 2020 kept building on progress seen over the last three years – it built on our progress to make life more affordable, strengthen our health care and education systems, and invest in a clean economy. *Budget 2020* invested in the infrastructure we need with new roads, bridges, housing, schools and hospitals. And *Budget 2020* put forward a plan for future where your opportunities are not defined by your age, income bracket or postal code.

A HEALTHY BRITISH COLUMBIA

Over the last three years, government's investments to enhance B.C.'s health-care system have improved access to and quality of care. And now, as we pull together to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, our heroic paramedics, doctors, nurses and other health-care workers are going above and beyond on the frontlines to keep us safe, healthy and out of harm's way.

Our government is supporting health-care workers by investing in a high-quality, modernized system that can respond to urgent and emerging needs.

B.C.'s population is expanding. And we're working hard to enhance the health-care system and meet the demand with new or upgraded hospitals and an expanded primary care network, with new urgent and primary care centres throughout British Columbia.

There are challenges ahead, but with a strong health-care system, British Columbians can feel confident knowing they will have access to the high-quality care needed to stay healthy through all of life's stages.

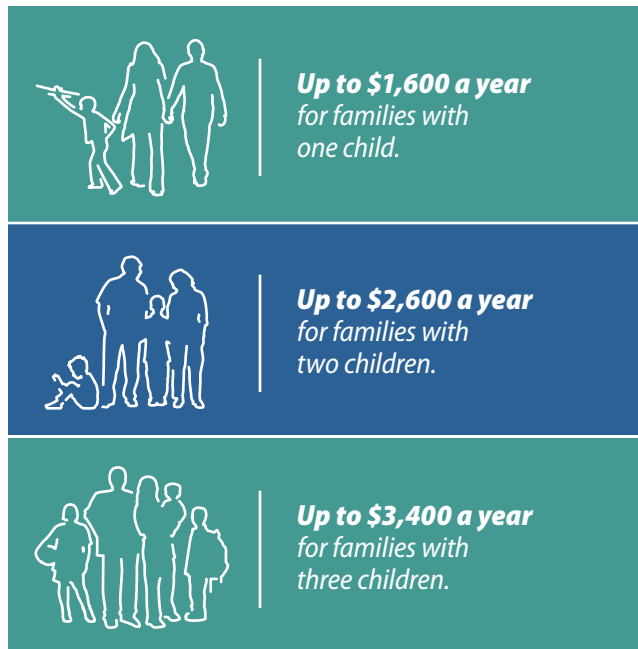


We're increasing access to preventative and diagnostic MRIs and improving care for seniors with new investments in primary care, home health, long-term care, assisted living and respite services.

MAKING LIFE MORE AFFORDABLE

THE NEW B.C. CHILD OPPORTUNITY BENEFIT

Starting October 1, 2020, nearly 300,000 families will benefit from the new BC Child Opportunity Benefit, a tax-free payment for families with children under 18 years of age. The monthly payments will help families with necessities like food and clothing, further reduce child care costs, and make opportunities like sports and arts possible.



The infographic consists of three horizontal panels, each with a white line-art illustration of a family and a text box. The top panel shows a family with one child and states 'Up to \$1,600 a year for families with one child.' The middle panel shows a family with two children and states 'Up to \$2,600 a year for families with two children.' The bottom panel shows a family with three children and states 'Up to \$3,400 a year for families with three children.'

Up to \$1,600 a year
for families with one child.

Up to \$2,600 a year
for families with two children.

Up to \$3,400 a year
for families with three children.

HOUSING

Housing affordability is one of the biggest challenges facing people and families right across the province. *Budget 2020* continued progress on government's 10-year plan to invest \$7 billion to build more than 100,000 homes.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the B.C. government implemented a temporary rent supplement, restricted evictions and froze annual rent increases during the state of emergency. To provide vulnerable people with a safe place to stay during the pandemic and beyond, government has opened supportive homes around the province, from Prince Rupert, to Squamish and Kamloops, while also securing hotel and community centre accommodations in Vancouver and Victoria.

CHILD CARE

Affordable, accessible child care is critically important as we look to safely re-open the economy. Our historic investments in child care gives parents – especially women – the opportunity to fully participate in the workplace and help get B.C.'s economy back on track.



The graphic features a white outline of a teddy bear on a red background. To the right of the bear, the text reads: 'Access to affordable child care is critical to achieving equality in the workplace and supporting essential workers that are on the frontline.'

Thousands of new licensed child care spaces have opened in B.C. and some families are saving up to \$19,200 annually, which means families are saving up to \$1,600 per child each month.

To date, Childcare BC has delivered:

- » More than 13,000 new spaces.
- » \$10 or less / day child care for 29,000 children through the Affordable Child Care Benefit and Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative.
- » Reduced rates for more than 61,000 families.
- » Wage lifts for more than 12,000 early childhood educators (ECEs).
- » 5,400 bursaries for ECEs.

In response to COVID-19, government has invested more in child care to ensure centres can remain open now, and centres that have closed can reopen in the future. Additionally, more than 2,500 essential service workers on the front lines of the pandemic have been referred to open child care spaces through the Province's new child care matching process.



EDUCATION

Opening B.C. schools is an important next step as we create our new normal. School is where B.C. children learn how to connect with each other and grow together. While we work to implement new measures to keep teachers, staff and students safe at our public schools, we are continuing to invest in the success of B.C. students. *Budget 2020* ensures that our K-12 education system has the highest school operating funding in B.C. history.



We're building, expanding and seismically upgrading schools in every corner of the province. Our record investments also mean our education spaces have more teachers, special education teachers, psychologists and counsellors. We've reduced class sizes and increased classroom resources to help students of all ages and abilities succeed.

Changes made following the funding model review mean that during these difficult times, there will be vital additional support for vulnerable students. \$93.3 million in targeted funding will continue to support Indigenous learners.

A further \$23 million will be disbursed through a new supplement to school districts in 2020-21 to recognize children and youth in care, children living in low income families and students with mental health challenges. This supplement will be allocated using data researched during the Funding Model Review process.



RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE AND BUILDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbians are working hard to provide for themselves and their loved ones during this pandemic. But for many families, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant job losses and reduced hours. There is no doubt that this is a difficult time, but we will get through this together.

A key part of that is moving forward with government's plan to create good, safe jobs for people in communities throughout British Columbia. *Budget 2020* made new commitments to bring taxpayer-supported capital spending over three years to \$22.9 billion – the highest level in B.C.'s history. Our province's economic recovery will be fuelled by the work that is already underway on new and upgraded hospitals and health facilities, highway and transit projects, schools and new housing for British Columbians.

Healthy, resilient people form the foundation of a strong economy – an economy where no one is left behind, and opportunities are available to everyone. *Budget 2020* affirmed the Province's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples by sharing 7% of provincial gaming revenue net income with First Nations. This will help First Nations address the need for stable, long-term funding in their communities, and support true and lasting reconciliation.

The power of a greener future to help grow our economy is at the heart of CleanBC, our government's plan to invest \$1.3 billion towards climate action over four years. CleanBC is a central pillar of B.C.'s Restart Plan and our path to a more resilient economy.

It's from this solid economic foundation that British Columbia can respond to and rebuild from the financial challenges brought on by COVID-19. Informed by feedback from businesses, labour, non-profits, First Nations, and the public, \$1.5 billion in provincial funding within B.C.'s \$5 billion *COVID-19 Action Plan* will support economic recovery and businesses once the pandemic has passed.



INFRASTRUCTURE & JOB CREATION

B.C. is ready to respond to the challenges ahead with an economic plan that provides good jobs building the infrastructure our growing province needs in communities throughout British Columbia. By continuing to build up our province, people will have access to the jobs, infrastructure and services that are needed to weather the COVID-19 pandemic and transition to a new, stronger economy.



B.C. is investing the highest level ever on schools, hospitals, post-secondary facilities, transit and roads.

With B.C.'s population set to rise over the long term, the need for new schools, highways, hospitals and homes will only grow. Work underway on infrastructure projects is stimulating more than 100,000 direct and indirect jobs across the province during construction.



Transportation: \$7.4B for priority projects including bridge replacements, highway expansions, and corridor improvements.



Health: \$6.4B to build and expand hospitals and health facilities, and for medical equipment.

K-12

Education: \$2.8B to replace, renovate or expand K-12 schools – many to include child care spaces and neighbourhood learning centres.



Housing: More than \$1B for more affordable housing for seniors, Indigenous peoples, individuals, and families.



Post-secondary education: \$3.1B to expand our institutions, help meet workforce needs, and build student housing

POST-SECONDARY TRAINING & EDUCATION


Our post-secondary training and education system has remained nimble during the COVID-19 outbreak, switching from on-campus to virtual training. This is possible because the B.C. government focused on breaking down barriers and creating pathways to opportunities.

- » Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning are now free.
- » Twelve hundred former youth in care have benefited by attending college, university and trade schools for free.
- » B.C. student loans are interest free.
- » And we're partnering with post-secondary institutions to build thousands more student housing beds.

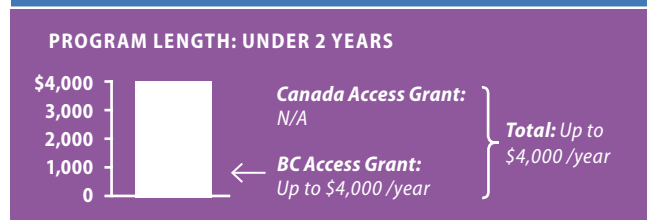

And starting this fall, more than 40,000 students at colleges and universities will receive immediate support with up-front costs of their education through the new BC Access Grant.

The needs-based grant helps ensure low- and middle-income students receive up to \$4,000 a year to help with the cost of programs that lead to a degree, diploma or certificate.

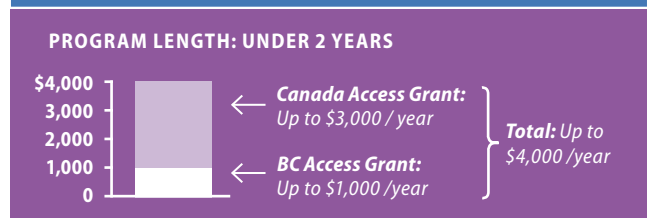
The BC Access Grant complements the Canada Access Grant, and this funding, along with the federal government's support for post-secondary students during COVID-19, means that B.C. students can remain in the classroom and be part of B.C.'s brighter future.



For a **program length of under 2 years**, B.C. students can receive a total of **up to \$4,000 a year**.

For a **program length of 2 years and over**, B.C. students can receive a total of **up to \$4,000 a year**.



SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. The B.C. government is committed to making life more affordable, delivering the services people count on and building a resilient, sustainable economy. What are your top three priorities to help make life better for you and your community as we come through COVID-19?

a:

b:

c:

2. Aside from the immediate need to keep people healthy and safe through the COVID-19 pandemic, what actions should government prioritize to help strengthen B.C.'s economy? Please rank your top three choices.

- Improve access to affordable child care
- Improve physical and mental health supports and programs for all workers
- Improve regulations in B.C.'s financial and securities markets
- Invest in the transition to a clean economy and reduce pollution
- Support paid sick leave for working British Columbians
- Increase financial support for COVID-19 economic recovery
- Increase opportunities for training and post-secondary education
- Increase programs for women, LGBTQ2S+ people, Indigenous people and others who face systemic barriers
- Invest in affordable housing and work to stabilize the real estate market
- Invest in health care and emergency preparedness against possible future waves of COVID-19
- Reduce trade barriers and advocate across borders for B.C. industries
- Streamline government processes and regulations
- Other:

3. If you had one dollar to put toward programs and services across government, how would you choose to divide it?

- Affordable child care
- Affordable housing
- Arts and culture
- Building the clean economy
- Children and family development
- Debt reduction
- Health care
- Homelessness and poverty reduction
- Indigenous resources and reconciliation
- Justice and public safety
- K-12 education
- Mental health and addictions care
- Post-secondary education and skills training
- Public transportation
- Roads, highways and bridges
- Technology and innovation
- Other

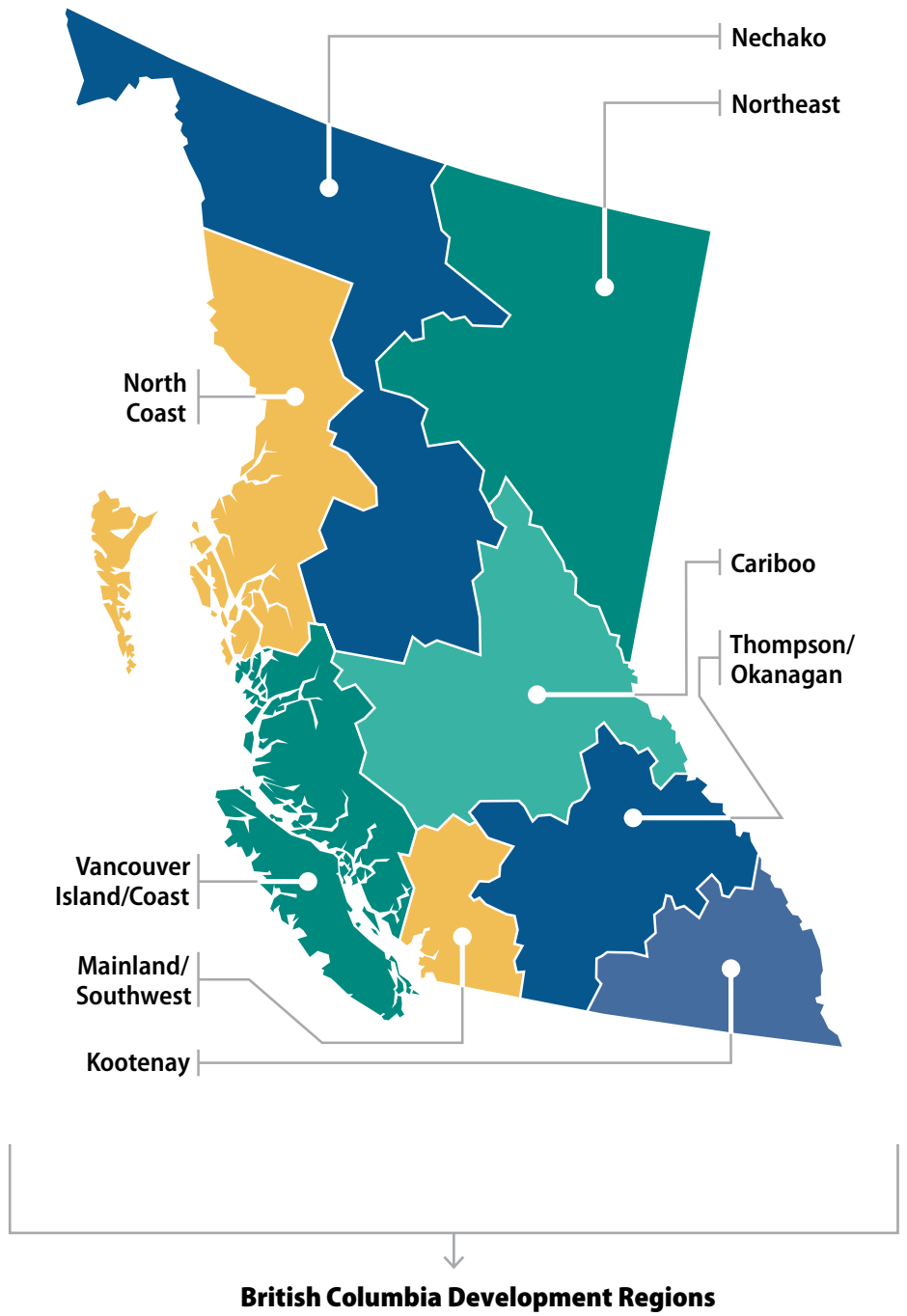
- Total**

4. Given the ongoing demand for government programs, supports and services, how would you like to see your government continue to pay for them?

- Increase the provincial debt
- Increase personal income tax
- Increase corporate income tax
- Increase property-based taxes
- Increase consumption taxes, including PST and Carbon Tax
- Reducing or eliminating existing programs
- Other:

5. Please identify your region:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> North Coast | <input type="checkbox"/> Nechako |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vancouver Island/Coast | <input type="checkbox"/> Northeast |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower Mainland/Southwest | <input type="checkbox"/> Cariboo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kootenay | <input type="checkbox"/> Thompson/Okanagan |



SUBMIT YOUR IDEAS

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services is one of ten permanent parliamentary committees of the Legislative Assembly of B.C.

Each year, the committee holds province-wide consultations to seek the views of British Columbians on priorities for the next provincial budget and presents a final report with recommendations to the Legislative Assembly.

You can share your views by completing the survey or making a written, audio or video submission. The Committee is also holding public hearings via video/teleconference. The hearings will be organized by theme with presenters grouped into small panels based on these themes.

For full details on how to participate and opportunities to make a submission or fill out the survey, contact:

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Room 224, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Email: financecommittee@leg.bc.ca

Phone: 1 (877) 428-8337 (toll-free)

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Web: bcleg.ca/FGSbudget

The consultation closes Tuesday, June 26, 2020 at 5 pm.