



BULLETIN

DATE: February 13, 2019

Highlights from the BC Government's Throne Speech

Yesterday was a big day in provincial politics, as MLAs from across the province were back in Victoria and the Spring sitting of the Legislative Assembly got underway. To open the session, the Lieutenant Governor, Honourable Janet Austin, delivered the Speech from the Throne.

The Throne Speech is an opportunity for government to lay out its agenda for the coming year and highlight themes and issues they intend to address. While the speech does not reveal details, it does provide insight into areas of importance for the government.

Here's a snapshot:

Affordability

This year's Throne Speech continued to promote the theme of affordability – with specific focus on housing for both renters and owners, but also initiatives such as maintaining a freeze on BC ferry fares, the full elimination of MSP, and the introduction of a poverty reduction plan.

The government also committed to more investment in child care options for BC's families. Last year the NDP government introduced the first steps to make child care more affordable and more available, and the Throne Speech indicates this critical program continues to be a priority:

"This year, government will set the foundation for the full implementation of BC's affordable child care program. A key element of this effort will be a collaborative process to develop new legislation to give universal access to quality, affordable childcare the force of law."

There was also a strong focus on consumer protection in the Speech, including cell phone plans, payday lending, and concert ticket re-sale.

Health Care

Health care and mental health services are clearly an ongoing priority for the NDP government, and the Speech from the Throne served as a reminder of the investments underway:

- Cut or eliminated Fair PharmaCare deductibles for 240,000 people;
- Creating a network of team-based primary care services that will include 200 more family physicians, 200 nurse practitioners and 50 clinical pharmacists and other health-care providers;
- Building, renovating and expanding hospitals in Terrace, Fort St. James, Surrey, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Richmond, North Vancouver, the Cowichan Valley and many other communities;
- Increasing staffing levels in residential care homes;
- Adding more surgeries and MRI exams throughout the province to reduce wait times; and
- Creating an integrated, province-wide network of health and social services for youth, including Foundry wellness centres.

CleanBC

Climate action was also prominent in the Throne Speech, with the NDP initiative *CleanBC* being the central focus. *“CleanBC is this government’s roadmap to reduce emissions and create an innovative, low-carbon economy.”* It includes initiatives to transition to clean-energy vehicles, building retro-fits, net-zero energy standards for new buildings, and industrial electrification and carbon capture.

Reconciliation

The Throne Speech made the commitment that the BC government will introduce legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“This legislation will form the foundation for the Province’s work on reconciliation, mandating government to bring provincial laws and policies into harmony with the Declaration.”

Jobs, Innovation and Infrastructure

The Speech makes reference to many of the industries that support our economy – from mining, to forestry, to tourism and agriculture. Some highlights worth mentioning include: bringing high-speed internet to rural and remote communities; exploring the feasibility of an ultra-high-speed corridor connecting BC, Washington and Oregon, a new Chinese Canadian Museum to honour the community’s significant contributions to BC; and ride hailing options.

You can read the full Speech from the Throne [here](#).

The next important event to watch for happens on Tuesday, February 19 when the government introduces the 2019 Budget. This is where we can really see what priorities government is making investments in – including those areas highlighted in the Throne Speech like poverty reduction and climate action.

You can find HSA’s submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services as part of the Budget 2019 consultation [here](#).

Stay tuned. We will provide an update following the release of the provincial budget!