

From: Godin, Keith FIN:EX
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 1:35 PM
To: Piccott, Ryan FIN:EX
Subject: Fwd: QP Summary - 23 February 2016

Please review SDSI on bus pass

Begin forwarded message:

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Subject: QP Summary - 23 February 2016

Hi everyone,

Please see below for a summary of today's topics during QP, as well as a transcript of QP (Hansard Blues version).

Question Period – February 23, 2016

Summary Overview

Issues addressed by Premier Christy Clark:

N/A.

Issues addressed by Minister Michael de Jong:

- N/A

Issues addressed by other ministers:

- BC Hydro energy conservation targets – raised by A. Dix, Addressed by Hon. B. Bennett
- Release of government response to report on youth death case – raised by K. Conroy, M. Farnworth, Addressed by Hon. S. Cadieux
- Capital funding for Bayside Middle school roof replacement – raised by G. Holman, Addressed by Hon. M. Bernier
- Disability benefits and bus pass program changes – raised by M. Mungall, Addressed by Hon. M. Stilwell

Minister de Jong transcript:

N/A

Oral Questions [full transcript]

B.C. HYDRO

ENERGY CONSERVATION TARGETS

A. Dix: To the Minister of Energy: the Liberal government and B.C. Hydro, their Power Smart conservation plan, a plan that cost \$400 million over the past three years, has repeatedly missed its target — last year, according to the minister, by over 1300 gigawatt hours. That's a big miss, even by Liberal standards.

Three years ago, after successfully changing the program in the Premier's way and eliminating successful programs such as LiveSmart, they failed, dramatically, to miss their conservation targets. So what did they do? Why, they lowered the target — kind of a reverse high jump competition. What happened next? They missed the lower target again, by a larger margin.

So what did the minister do this year? What do you think he's trying this year? Now, you could be forgiven for guessing: "Hire Gordon Wilson" — kind of a "no Liberal leader left behind" strategy. But you'd be on the right track.

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members. Members, come to order.

Ministers, come to order.

Please proceed.

A. Dix: Well, you'd be on the right track, but wrong. Here's what they did. They eliminated the target from their service plan. Now, I guess if there's no goal to shoot at, even the minister can't miss the net.

But can the minister explain why he decided not to address the failure of his Power Smart strategy, which has cost \$400 million over the past three years, but instead chose to cover up the facts, so that B.C. ratepayers who pay for it can't measure its success or failure?

Hon. B. Bennett: Actually, the member is incorrect. If the member....

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members. The Chair will hear the answer and the question.

Hon. B. Bennett: If the member would care to go to his big thick binder under his desk or over behind him, he could look up the Clean Energy Act. In the Clean Energy Act, which we passed in 2010, he would find that the target of 66 percent of all incremental demand for electricity must be met by conservation.

So how are we doing? B.C. Hydro is in the process right now of filing a revenue requirements application with the BCUC. In that filing, they will show that in fact they're not going to meet a 66 percent conservation target. They're going to do better than that. They're going to meet over 70 percent of all incremental new electricity.

Madame Speaker: The member for Vancouver-Kingsway on a supplemental.

A. Dix: Well, I understand. What the minister says doesn't matter. What the service plan says doesn't matter. What the minister said in the House doesn't matter. What B.C. Hydro says doesn't matter. The standard for the cabinet is the minimum required under the law.

[1030]

If I may explain just one small thing to the minister. When you spend hundreds of millions of dollars and you dramatically miss your targets again and again and again, it's not the targets' fault. You know, the target

just one small thing to the minister. When you spend hundreds of millions of dollars and you dramatically miss your targets again and again, it's not the target's fault. You know, the target didn't do it. It's innocent. It's not some part of some mythical targets of no organization that's trying to hurt the government. It was B.C. Hydro and the minister that failed to achieve the target. You don't conserve more energy by hiding the results and taking away the comparison.

On page five, last Thursday, the table of B.C. Hydro's new load resource balance estimate to the BCUC, Hydro acknowledged the missed targets but states its intention to extend its current strategy — you know, the one that's failing — to 2019.

Can the minister explain why he is abandoning conservation in this way, why he is failing to take advantage of the thousands of jobs that could be created through conservation programs? Why does he prefer to cover up the failure than to address it?

Hon. B. Bennett: I don't know why the member always has to be so negative. I don't....

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members. This House will come to order.

Hon. B. Bennett: I don't know why he always has to be so negative, other than the fact that everyone who sits around him is also negative. I'll repeat what I said in my first answer. We have a legislated conservation target in this province of 66 percent, and the filing that the hon. member just referred to indicates that B.C. Hydro is going to surpass the 66 percent and we will be conserving at least 70 percent of all incremental demand.

Now, the member, I think, based on his questions, would like B.C. Hydro to just throw money at the wall regardless of how well conservation programs work. What B.C. Hydro has done is they have looked at their programs; they have analyzed their conservation programs. Those that work best: they will continue to invest ratepayer money in those programs. Those that do not work so well: they will not invest ratepayer money in those programs.

That's the way this side of the House does business. It's not the way that side of the House did business when they were in government, and that's why they won't be in government again.

Madame Speaker: Vancouver-Kingsway on a final supplemental.

A. Dix: It is an astonishing thing that the minister.... All of those things that were put down, all of those commitments made by B.C. Hydro failed — acknowledged, by the way, by B.C. Hydro to have failed to meet its targets — and the minister gives that response in the House.

What he's saying is no to conserving energy and the tens of thousands of jobs associated with it. He's saying no to accountability. He's changing the numbers to protect his failures or cover up his failures, no to retrofitting government buildings, no to helping people reduce their electricity costs, no to LiveSmart, no to common sense, no to private sector jobs.

The minister's idea....

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Member. Member, please take your seat.
Please continue.

A. Dix: The minister's only idea to conserve energy is to force ratepayers to pay 28 percent rate increases to pay for Liberal Party energy failures. Can the minister explain why his energy strategy is designed to increase costs on ratepayers and reduce the jobs that can be created in every community in B.C. with a successful conservation program?

[1035]

Hon. B. Bennett: Well, when that member was advising ministers and Premiers in the 1990s, along with the Leader of the Opposition, who was also advising Energy ministers and Premiers at the time...

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members.

Hon. B. Bennett: ...they froze rates for ten years for political reasons: because it bought them votes. There was almost zero investment in the 1990s in B.C. Hydro

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of the Opposition, who was also advising Energy ministers and Premiers at the time.

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members.

Hon. B. Bennett: ...they froze rates for ten years for political reasons, because it bought them votes. There was almost zero investment in the 1990s in B.C. Hydro infrastructure. Today, including Site C, which they oppose, B.C. Hydro is investing \$2.4 billion a year in infrastructure.

The only infrastructure that the NDP invested in, in the 1990s was located in Pakistan. I don't know if they ever figured out how to actually connect that power plant in Pakistan with the B.C. Hydro grid. I don't think they did. That was their one and only significant investment in the 1990s.

Even with \$2.4 billion a year...

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members.

Hon. B. Bennett: ...being invested by B.C. Hydro today, British Columbia has the third-lowest residential rates in North America.

RELEASE OF GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO REPORT ON YOUTH DEATH CASE

K. Conroy: Last fall, we asked the Minister of Children and Family Development why she scheduled the release of her response to the Paige report at 3:00 p.m. on the day of the federal election.

The Premier denied this was the case. She told the media: "The report was ready to be released. The children's advocate supported that release, so that's when it went out."

Well, that wasn't at all accurate. According to newly released government emails, it's clear that political staff in government deliberately hurried the release of the report to ensure that it came out on election day.

My question is to the minister. Why did she try to bury her response to the Paige report on election day?

Hon. S. Cadieux: To reiterate what I said back in October, we had been trying to get the report out for some time. In order to do so, protocol dictated that we brief the representative. We had had briefings scheduled weeks prior to the 19th that her office postponed.

Eventually, the representative agreed with us that we would go ahead and release our response so that it could be out in the public domain for discussion — and discussion here in this House. She even went so far as to provide a quote for the news release that said:

"I am buoyed to see that MCFD and government have begun to grapple with these important issues and that progress will be improved outcomes for these youth, far too many of whom are aboriginal children who have endured incredible journeys of hardship and who deserve our full attention," said Representative for Children and Youth Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. "Government has also released details of its plan today, which is a step toward improved transparency."

We released the report when we did because the House was sitting and we wanted the opportunity to get this out and respond if there were questions. I held a media availability the next day to take questions about the report and the timing.

What the members opposite are asking about today is, again, the timing of a report from four months ago?

Madame Speaker: The member for Kootenay West on a supplemental.

K. Conroy: Again, the minister is just not accurate with her information. The House was not sitting on October 19. According to government emails, the report was scheduled for release on October 21, when the House was sitting. According to government emails, staff suddenly, with no explanation, revised the plan, moved up the release date and panicked to ensure that it was out at 3:00 p.m. on election day.

The Premier insists that it's all just business as usual. I guess it is business as usual for a government that has completely lost its moral compass.

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members, members.

[1040]

K. Conroy: We're talking about a report, a release about the death of an aboriginal teen.

Can the minister explain to the House why she seems more concerned with media strategies and political calculations than she does with protecting the most vulnerable children in our society?

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a release about the death of an aboriginal teen.

Can the minister explain to the House why she seems more concerned with media strategies and political calculations than she does with protecting the most vulnerable children in our society?

Hon. S. Cadieux: Let's talk about some facts. Since the release on October 19, the members have asked me exactly zero times about the response that government has made to this report. They have sent me zero pieces of correspondence asking me about government's response to the Paige report. They have requested zero briefings about our response to the Paige report. In four months, since our response to the representative's very thorough report on an extremely tragic death.... Four months and there has been absolutely zero interest from that side of the House.

Still, today, I hear zero questions on the content of the report, on what we're doing as a government — just about timing. That's interesting — that commentary today. As the representative said on the day after the report was released: "There is never a bad day to come out and come forward and accept this and start moving forward." That was a quote from the representative on the 20th of October.

The suggestion that somehow it would have been better to release the report two days later, as originally scheduled, during the aftermath of an extremely exciting federal election, when the media was preoccupied with analyzing the results of that, is an interesting theory for me to discover. Surely, it says a lot about where the opposition's priorities are, because it certainly isn't on the kids.

M. Farnworth: The minister is concerned about questions. The minister says she's concerned because we're raising questions around an issue that says that she spoke to the Ministry of Children and Families about, that they briefed her. Unfortunately, what the minister failed to tell the House is that, clearly, she didn't share the emails and the communication that had gone on with the Premier's office with the children and families representative. If she had done, I think she would have got a totally different response from the children and....

Interjection.

M. Farnworth: You know what's really interesting? We're talking about the death of a child. We're talking about the death....

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members. The members will come to order.

M. Farnworth: We're talking about the death of a child, and we're talking about the timing of a release of a report into the death of that child and the release of it on an election day, when this House was not sitting.

Let's go straight to the emails that were released, the ones from the Premier's office on October 16 — Matt Gordon, ADM and GCPE — saying, the Premier's office: "Monday is very much desired."

The Premier's office wanted the report dumped on election day. When they were talking about Wednesday, the original release day, that was a no go. They knew there were going to be problems, if you look at the Q and As that were even prepared. They even prepared for blowback from the media. One of the questions that is to be asked is: so to be clear, your response to the Paige report is to remind Ministry of Children and Family Development staff and service providers of stuff they should already be doing as part of their jobs? "Are you kidding?" was their response.

It's clear. This report was released on election day so that it would not receive the attention that it deserved. Can the minister explain to this House how she could be so cynical as to follow the orders from the Premier's office and table the report in the middle of an election day, when they knew that there would be no media scrutiny whatsoever and no opportunity to question it in this House on its release date?

[1045]

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Hon. S. Cadieux: The opposition can spend four months ignoring an incredibly important report and response to that report. In fact, that response accepted all of the recommendations of the representative. If the opposition had bothered to ask for a briefing on how things were going or what was underway, they would know that we provided a very detailed timeline, a very detailed explanation of all of the actions that were being taken.

I'm sure that the opposition is less concerned about the timing of the release of a report that I had committed to trying to get out by the beginning of October, that was delayed not by my office but, in fact, because we were waiting to brief the representative as per protocol. However, I am sure that the opposition is much more concerned about the actions on the ground as a result of that report, the actions that we're taking to ensure that children and youth in troubling circumstances — especially circumstances like those Paige found herself in — are receiving better supports today than they were.

We are getting results. The integrated service delivery model that we have established on the Downtown Eastside is increasing the capacity of workers to make consistent and repeated efforts to deliver and respond seriously to the needs of those youth. Twenty-eight youth on the Downtown Eastside are now and have now received the services they need, which may include finding a permanent fixed address, a home. It may mean they've got the mental health supports they needed. It may mean they got their first government-issued ID, and it may mean that they are reunited with their families in this province.

Madame Speaker: Recognizing the member for Port Coquitlam on a supplemental.

M. Farnworth: That is one of the most cynical answers I have ever heard from a minister in this House ever.

The only reason that this case ever saw the light of day, the only reason there was ever a report done was because this side of the House asked questions day after day. Each time we asked a question, the minister tried to duck, to cover, to obfuscate and to ignore the question. And when the report was finally released, it was done in the most cynical of ways, by releasing it on election day. The minister knows it. Every single member on that side of the House knows it. Most importantly, the emails show it, right out of the Premier's office.

My question to the minister is this. How can this government be so cynical about a report that didn't deal with triple delete, didn't deal with a quick-win scandal? It dealt with the death of a child, and they chose to bury that report on election day, in the most cynical way possible. Why, Minister? Why?

Hon. S. Cadieux: All the foot stomping, finger pointing, chest beating, name calling from the opposition isn't going to help kids one bit. If it was going to help kids, I would have started doing it a long time ago. But what is going to start helping children and youth in this province is if we get to the root of tragedies, get to the root and strengthen the system. That's what I'm committed to.

That's why we take the reports from the representative and seriously consider them and put in place plans to implement the recommendations to make the system stronger.
[1050]

What will help us is focus. What will help us is collaboration. I commit to that every day in my work. It is surprising to me that the opposition would prefer to talk about the timing of a report than, after four months, not to ask one question about the implementation of the response.

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I commit to that every day in my work. It is surprising to me that the opposition would prefer to talk about the timing of a report than, after four months, not to ask one question about the implementation of the response.

CAPITAL FUNDING FOR BAYSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL ROOF REPLACEMENT

G. Holman: Last week I met with the Minister of Education to discuss the roof at Bayside Middle School, which has been leaking for years. The school district has spent almost \$400,000 trying to patch the leaking roof and fix the interior damage that water leaks are causing.

For a number of years, school district 63 has been requesting the ministry approve the capital funding to replace the roof. These requests have been repeatedly turned down. Can the minister assure the Bayside parents attending today that capital funding will finally be provided to school district 63 to replace the roof, avoid the costs of further repairs and keep their kids safe?

Hon. M. Bernier: Of all the times I've had the pleasure of standing up in the House during question period, this will be the first time that I say: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

The member for Saanich North and the Islands did come and meet with me last week. We had a very good talk about this issue. It has been going on for years, as he mentioned.

The roof repairs are normally done by the school districts. We have what's called annual facilities grants, where the school districts, year by year, get money from the provincial government that is able to go into infrastructure that's needed within their school system.

But I will agree with the member opposite and with the parents that have brought this forward. This has gone on too long. This is something that needs to be addressed. I want to thank my ministry staff who have been working behind the scenes with the school district on this issue to try to come to a resolve.

DISABILITY BENEFITS AND BUS PASS PROGRAM CHANGES

M. Mungall: We've been canvassing in this House how people across B.C. are in an uproar about this government's newly announced bus pass clawback, where they've raised disability rates only to take them away with a \$624 annual jump in bus passes.

The minister only needs to look at her own email, her Facebook and her Twitter page to see what people are saying. Karen Fox writes: "No more trips to the library or the park. I'll buy ten tickets and use the rest for food." Pam Patterson...

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members.
Continue.

M. Mungall: ...in Kelowna writes that her son with a disability struggles to pay rent and that "to raise his rate and then claw it back for the only thing that gives him freedom in his life is shameful."

Everybody in British Columbia gets what's going on. They know what's happening in their lives, despite the confusing doublespeak ministry fact sheets and minister quotes and things that she's posting. People know what's happening in their lives. So the question to the Minister of Social Development: why doesn't she get it?

Hon. Michelle Stilwell: Really, the one who doesn't get it is the member opposite. It's disappointing, and it's disrespectful and irresponsible that she keeps twisting the changes we've made.

What I want to know is: where was she when there were 45,000 people in this province who weren't receiving any support for transportation? This is a \$170 million investment in the rates for people with disabilities.

It really is the height of hypocrisy. Let me quote from the vision of the province for the NDP during their 2013 election platform. "An increase of income assistance rates for all singles and couples by \$20 per month within two years." No mention of people with disabilities. Where was she then when she wanted to help people with supports in our province?

[1055]

This is \$170 million, a significant investment. If the members opposite would help us grow the economy and say yes to programs and yes to projects in this province, we would be able to be in a better position to support more.

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in this province, we would be in a better position to support more.

M. Mungall: You know, on....

Interjections.

M. Mungall: I can't even ask my question.

Madame Speaker: Order.

M. Mungall: On the one hand, it is shocking that no one in cabinet seems to understand the disability bus pass program and what this government has done with that program, especially the minister responsible. But when you consider the Premier's statement yesterday, I guess it's not all that shocking. When the Premier has more compassion for cats and dogs, who we all love...

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members. Members.

M. Mungall: ...than she does for people, it says...

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Ministers.

Please continue.

M. Mungall: ...quite a lot. It does say quite a lot when the Premier has more compassion for cats and dogs than she does for people with disabilities. That's what we saw in her comments yesterday. And this isn't about me. This is about 100,000 people that this government is playing a shell game with their lives. Here is what the advocates are saying.

Madame Speaker: Question, hon. Member.

M. Mungall: Jane Dyson of the Disability Alliance....

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: This House will come to order.

M. Mungall: Clearly, they're not interested in hearing the truth, Madame Speaker.

Here's what Jane Dyson of the Disability Alliance says — after calling the ministry, getting the information and putting it out on the Internet so everybody has the clear facts that this ministry refuses to provide — about the bus pass clawback. People are uniformly seeing it as a mean-spirited and very unkind measure.

Faith Bodner, who did the same thing as Jane Dyson to get information with Inclusion B.C., has 9,000 signatures on her petition and says: "It's callous and it's mean-spirited." Everyone knows the cruel shell game that this government is playing. So will she just do the right thing and stop with the rhetoric and end this bus pass clawback?

Do that, Minister.

Hon. Michelle Stilwell: Madame Speaker, I'll tell you what the right thing is. The right thing is to make a change that helps everyone. Everyone is benefiting from this increase.

Everyone is getting an increase from this benefit. The bus pass program is still available. It has not ended. It has not been taken away. The fact that the member opposite continues to put that out and say that there is misinformation is just disheartening to me, that she would make people in this province —fearmonger them — think they're losing something when they're actually gaining. It is only the NDP that would characterize an increase to everyone in the province as something less.

[End of question period.]

From: Godin, Keith FIN:EX
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 4:08 PM
To: Piccott, Ryan FIN:EX
Subject: Fwd: QP Summary - 24 February 2016

More on bus pass...

Begin forwarded message:

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Subject: QP Summary - 24 February 2016

Hi everyone,

Please see below for a summary of today's topics during QP, as well as a transcript of QP (Hansard Blues version).

Question Period – February 24, 2016

Summary Overview

Issues addressed by Premier Christy Clark:

- Premier's response to Lelu Island declaration – raised by J. Horgan
- Government spending priorities and disability bus pass program changes – raised by M. Karagianis
- Release of government response to report on youth death case – raised by C. James

Issues addressed by Minister Michael de Jong:

- N/A

Issues addressed by other ministers:

- School anti-bullying policies for LGBT students – raised by S. Chandra Herbert, Addressed by Hon. M. Bernier
- Government spending priorities and disability bus pass program changes – raised by M. Mungall, M. Karagianis, Addressed by Hon. M. Stilwell

- Compensation for forest workers in Maa-Nulth Treaty Area – raised by S. Fraser, Addressed by Hon. S. Thomson.

Minister de Jong transcript:

N/A

Oral Questions [full transcript]

PREMIER'S RESPONSE TO LELU ISLAND DECLARATION

J. Horgan: I'm pleased and proud to rise following the comments by the member for Vancouver–West End. It is Anti-Bullying Day and, I think, an appropriate time and the first opportunity I've had to raise this issue with the Premier. She has been taking, over the past number of months, to have an "if you're not with me, you must be against me" attitude towards British Columbians, most recently with respect to individuals, First Nations leaders, in the north coast area who are concerned about the siting of an LNG facility on Lelu Island. They gathered together to express their concerns. They signed a declaration, and the response from the Premier was: "They were kind of a ragtag group of people."

Let's ponder that for a moment, shall we? Keep in mind the words of the member for Vancouver–West End and all of the things that we have been doing as legislators, whether it's been on the front steps or in schools — as I and the member for Victoria–Beacon Hill have. Words are powerful. Words are harmful. For the Premier of British Columbia to speak disrespectfully about a large group of people who have a different point of view, characterizing them as "kind of a ragtag group of people," I think diminishes us all.

My question to the Premier is this. Does she believe that true reconciliation with First Nations begins with name-calling?
[1355]

Hon. C. Clark: I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition is taking an interest in reconciliation. It has been a central part of what

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First Nations begins with name calling?

Hon. C. Clark: I am delighted the Leader of the Opposition is taking an interest in reconciliation. It has been a central part of what we've been trying to do and working toward in this government for many, many years now. We are making very real progress with First Nations all across the province.

Our goal has been to recognize that if First Nations have the economic means, then they can create their own vision, their own economy, in their own communities — not a vision that's created by a government outside their community, not a vision that comes from Ottawa or Victoria, but a vision that they drive.

Ultimately, that is what First Nations have been looking for, for over 150 years. Our government has been working tirelessly and in good faith with First Nations all across British Columbia to try and make sure that we support them in finding the means, in creating the means, for economic wealth because First Nations' children and First Nations communities have been left out of the economic mainstream for far, far too long.

We have a generational chance in this House to change that trajectory for First Nations. And shame on us if we miss that opportunity. First Nations have been waiting far, far too long.

I am committed, members on this side of the House are committed, to making sure that First Nations get the chance, a crack, at the economic mainstream, at a chance to be successful, at an opportunity for their children to live in the kind of wealthy, healthy society that we all expect for our children. We aren't going to stop until we get there.

Madame Speaker: Thank you, Premier. Leader of the Official Opposition on a supplemental.

J. Horgan: I suppose that I can take some comfort in the Premier's comments. But when I look back at the track record of her and the B.C. Liberals, when the Nisga'a treaty was ratified in this Legislature, the B.C. Liberals voted against it.

When they came to government, they not only tried to go to the Supreme Court and have this Nisga'a treaty overturned, they then held — when the Premier was the Deputy Premier — a racist referendum on treaty rights. They put that question to the public — minority rights put to the majority. Again, not necessarily the path to reconciliation.

And then to call a group of individuals ragtag.... They're obstacles to the Premier's vision. I heard what the Premier said, and I don't recall the Lax Kw'alaams in their almost-unanimous votes against this project saying: "You know, if only we had this paternalistic vision from the Premier of British Columbia about liquefied natural gas it, would set us free." Quite the contrary. The entire community said no.

Interjections.

J. Horgan: Yes, they did. Yes, they did.

Madame Speaker: Through the Chair, please.

J. Horgan: The Premier went on beyond the comments about ragtag, and I think she sort of echoed the same comments today. She said in that media interview: "Post-contact, those First Nations are going to have the first chance to create the kind of community that they want."

Now that may well be the Premier's vision, but I think that the best way to find out what those communities want is to ask them. And if you asked the Lax Kw'alaams, if you asked the leadership that was at Lelu Island, you'd get a decidedly different answer than the one the Premier wants to hear.

So, again, I pose the question the question through you, hon. Speaker, to the Premier: You blew up the treaty process in British Columbia where we had had 25 years of hard work, and now you're calling those who disagree with you ragtag. Will the Premier confirm today if you're not with her, you must be against her? Or is she going to rise above that be the leader for all British Columbians, whether they agree with you or not?

Hon. C. Clark: Well, the member forgets, in his recitation of history, that it has been this government that has signed all of the treaties that have come out of the treaty process, all of which have been a tremendous success for First Nations. We have signed hundreds of reconciliation and other kinds of agreements — economic agreements — with First Nations over the last just few years. And every single one of those is a building block toward reconciliation.

[1400]

Most recently we signed a landmark agreement with the Tsilhqot'in, which people said we could never achieve. We signed that agreement and for the first time, heard sung a song that hasn't been heard and has been lost in that community, to that community, for over 75 years.

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Most recently we signed a landmark agreement with the Tsilhqot'in, which people said we could never achieve. We signed that agreement, and for the first time heard sung a song that hasn't been heard and has been lost to that community, for over 75 years, in a moment that was moving for all of us. Every time....

If the member wants to stand up and misconstrue history, he's certainly is allowed to do that in this Legislature. But the truth of it is that our government stands with First Nations. Our government stands up to make sure that First Nations get every opportunity, every generational opportunity that is being presented right now by saying yes to economic development projects, by saying yes to ensuring that First Nations are a part of that those projects.

While that member will stand up and say no to those projects, when he does, he should remember he is also saying no to those futures of First Nations people who have a chance at something they haven't had since contact with European people, and that's the chance to make their own future in an economic mainstream that they have been shut out of by European settlers for far, far too long.

Madame Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition on a supplemental.

J. Horgan: I'm trying to get my head around the Premier's comments about Grand Chief Stewart Phillip: ragtag. Chief Murray Smith, Chief Stan Dennis Sr. and Councillor Stan Dennis Jr., from Lax Kw'alaams: ragtag. Chief John Ridsdale, from the Wet'suwet'en : ragtag. Yvonne Lattie, from the Gitksan: ragtag.

I'm wondering. Although the Premier likes to say that everybody agrees with her when she stands in this place, surely she knows that that's not the case. Surely she has enough understanding of the complexities of British Columbia that she understands that there is a diversity of opinion on a whole range of issues.

I'm prepared to accept that the Premier and I will rarely agree on anything. But I do not call her ragtag. I don't call her inappropriate. I allow her to have that opinion, and I express a counter point of view.

Will the Premier today take the opportunity to say to those individuals who she characterized as ragtag...? Will she respect their right to have a different point of view and maybe, maybe, try and convince them, through the powers of her considerable persuasion, that maybe she can bring them onside rather than dismiss them as obstacles to her agenda, not theirs?

Hon. C. Clark: I am pretty sure that the Leader of the Opposition has called me worse than ragtag in the past. However, let's stick to the line of questioning that the member has talked about.

Thirty-six First Nations have endorsed the project across British Columbia. We have Chief Harold Leighton, from the Metlakatla; Chief Clifford White, from the Gitxaala; Chief Don Roberts, from the Kitsumkalum; Chief Joe Bevan from the Kitselas; Councillor Chris Sankey, on behalf of John Lean of the Lax Kw'alaams; Chief Arnold Clifton, from the Gitga'at First Nation. Those First Nations in the region that have written a letter to his members asking them to stand down their opposition to this project, asking them to step aside, get out of the way and let the First Nations in these communities decide their own future without the politics of no, without the politics of the NDP in the opposition.

They want to have a chance to be able to make these decisions for themselves. They wrote that letter asking these members to step down and take a step back and allow them to make these decisions, and those members from the New Democrats refused.

I wish there had been First Nations in the gallery today. We know that there are pipefitters and members of other unions who are with us in the precincts today. Those are the people in British Columbia that we stand with when we work to get to yes on economic development projects. Those are the people who will benefit when those projects go ahead.

Everyone in this province has the right to freedom of speech, and there won't be a single project where we agree. But the thing that fundamentally differentiates the government from the NDP opposition is this. While they look for every way to try and say no to growth, when they look for every way to say no to jobs, on this side of the House, we stand on the side of trying to find every way that we can to build consensus so that we can get to yes.

[1405]

SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICIES
FOR LGBT STUDENTS

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we stand on the side of trying to find every way that we can to build consensus so that we can get to yes.

SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICIES
FOR LGBT STUDENTS

S. Chandra Herbert: I'm hoping the Premier will finally get to "yes" on this question. As I have been saying for years and years, gay, transgendered, bi and lesbian students are targeted for harassment, violence and bullying at much, much higher rates than most other students in B.C. schools. They've been pleading with us to act to make their schools safer.

The Standing Committee on Children and Youth, made up of members of the Liberals and the New Democrats, made specific recommendations to the Minister of Education to address this violence. They called on the minister to require "stand-alone sexual identity and gender identity policies in schools and support for gay-straight alliances."

Does the minister support this recommendation?

Hon. M. Bernier: British Columbia is a world leader when it comes to working to create safe schools. We are the envy of almost every province in this country to make sure that we are constantly working to create a safe environment for all of our students in the schools, regardless of what the issues are. Their gender, their race, what their religion, their gender identity....

Those are things that we find in the schools every day, and those are things, obviously, that we are going to make sure that we have processes in place. We work with our school districts to make sure that we have policies in place to make sure that no student is ever bullied or discriminated against.

Madame Speaker: The member for Vancouver—West End on a supplemental.

S. Chandra Herbert: Well, targeted violence actually requires a targeted response. Saying we're against bullying, and wearing pink shirts, and saying we're number one do nothing for the student who has been attacked because they're gay. It does nothing for the student who's been attacked because they're transgendered. Specific policies are required.

Liberal members get it. New Democrat members get it. I don't know why the cabinet doesn't get it. Those students are pleading for us to act. Alberta has acted. Ontario has acted. Provinces across Canada have acted, but this government refuses to.

Will the minister, just for once, in this case, actually listen to the voices of students, actually listen to the voices of educators, actually listen to this call and actually bring in stand-alone policies that would specifically target the horrific levels of violence that too often face our lesbian, bisexual and transgendered and gay students in British Columbia schools?

Hon. M. Bernier: I appreciate the fact that the member opposite brought this issue forward, and I appreciate the fact that he referenced the work that's taken place in other provinces. In fact, when those provinces were looking at putting policies and guidelines in place, they looked at British Columbia, because we've been leaders in this far before other provinces actually were doing this.

In fact, we have what's called — and the members opposite know this — our ERASE Bullying strategy, which came in years ago. Through that strategy, we have dedicated safe school coordinators in every school district in the province of British Columbia.

We have that in place, where we've trained over 12,000 teachers and educators in the province of British Columbia to not only recognize but to look at the signs that are in place when it comes to bullying, to make sure they're constantly working with the students.

It's something we don't condone and the teachers educators don't condone. That's why the school districts are encouraged and have policies in place to make sure this doesn't happen.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING PRIORITIES AND DISABILITY BUS PASS PROGRAM CHANGES

M. Mungall: Well, we all know that government is about making choices and that people want their government to make choices that make their lives easier. So the Premier has decided that clawing back bus passes from people on disability was a wise choice. And we now know that she also decided to spend more than \$100,000 to hold a photo op of yoga on the Burrard Street Bridge. She only backed down because the public cried out and asked her to stop doing that.

[1410]

So my question to the Premier is this. Does she really think that her PR needs are more important than providing a \$45 annual bus pass to people with disabilities?

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does she really think that her PR needs are more important than providing a \$45 annual bus pass to people with disabilities?

Hon. Michelle Stilwell: The member is simply wrong. She was wrong last week. She was wrong yesterday, and she's wrong again today. But for some reason she continues to misinform the public about the changes that have been made in my ministry.

Nobody is being denied the bus pass program. The subsidized bus pass program is still available to people with disabilities. The changes we've made are \$170 million investment to help increase the rates for people with disabilities.

We are taking from the strength of our economy in order to build on the investments we can make in ministries across this government, whether it be \$1.5 billion in health care over the next three years, or \$1.2 billion in the social development ministries of Ministry of Children and Families, myself and Housing. These are investments we're making in the future to help those who need it most.

Madame Speaker: Member for Nelson-Creston on a supplemental.

M. Mungall: Nobody is buying this truly Orwellian spin that the government is putting out about the bus passes, but best of luck continuing with that line.

My question was to the Premier. It's because we recently got freedom-of-information documents that showed that she planned to spend more than \$100,000 on her photo-op. She had her aides scope out the costs on the Bridge, and, boy, did they cost — over \$12,000 alone just to set up speakers. Keep in mind that \$12,000 is more than what people with disabilities are getting each year.

Again, my question is to the Premier. Can she tell us who is in greater need of public support? Is it people with disabilities, or is it her PR team?

Hon. Michelle Stilwell: What I can tell this House, and what I can inform the opposition, is that we continue to grow our economy so we can make investments in the welfare of people of our province who need it most.

Since 2001, there has been almost \$5 billion in subsidized housing provided for individuals across this province who need assistance. There are child care subsidies that are provided, free dental and optical, free MSP payments, discounted bus passes, medical equipment and supplies — multiple ways that we wrap supports around people in this province that need it the most. We will continue to invest, and we will continue to support.

M. Karagianis: The freedom-of-information documents had some more interesting information in them — money that seemed to be no object for the Premier to spend on her failed on the Bridge project. There was money for custom stages, money for a giant graphic wrap — and here's my favourite — money for two super silent generators because, of course, you can't do on the Bridge if the generators are making any noise.

Can the Premier tell the House why she was prepared to dedicate taxpayers' dollars to her massive photo-op and yet not provide bus passes to people with disabilities?

Hon. Michelle Stilwell: The \$170 million that is being invested into people with disabilities is new money to help support increased rates.

[1415]

It is part of our continued progressive policy changes that we make in social development, and we have made in the last several years, to help make the lives of people with disabilities more independent, to help those people who rely on us each and every day — whether it be us increasing the asset limits, taking away the exemptions for gifting without it affecting their income assistance rates, whether it's their ability to earn almost \$10,000 in earning exemptions before it is being counted toward their income assistance, if it's the single-parent employment initiative. These are all changes that we are doing to wrap supports around people

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taking away the exemptions for gifting without it affecting their income assistance rates, whether it's their ability to earn almost \$10,000 in earning exemptions before it is being counted toward their income assistance, if it's the single-parent employment initiative. These are all changes that we are doing to wrap supports around people to make their lives better.

Madame Speaker: Esquimalt–Royal Roads on a supplemental.

M. Karagianis: Despite the minister's comments here, she needs to get on top of that file, because the people in the disabilities community know exactly what happened with their bus pass.

It's an interesting and sharp contrast with the kind of money the Premier was prepared to spend to open the bridge. She had planned.... You'll have to just bear with me. There was no guarantee people would watch the Premier doing her yoga on the bridge. She also planned to spend nearly \$25,000 of taxpayers' money for a mobile TV and transmission facilities so that, of course, she could broadcast this great photo op to the world.

How can the Premier honestly tell this House that her photo op was more deserving of taxpayers' dollars than the people in the disabilities community — for a bus pass so they can get around their communities every single day?

Hon. C. Clark: When they look up "scraping the bottom of the barrel," they're going to find this question period in the dictionary. There's no question about it.

That member is talking about money that wasn't spent and comparing it to one of the biggest lifts in rates for people on disabilities that's happened in years in British Columbia — a rate increase that will benefit everyone, including people who will continue to use a bus pass and people who never had a bus pass. All of those individuals are going to benefit from this. Despite the fact that the member keeps saying that that won't happen, it doesn't make it true.

The truth is that this change in the budget, which we've been able to make because of a growing economy.... Because we make a priority of looking after vulnerable people in British Columbia, this change is going to make life a little bit better for all of the people who live with disabilities around the province. When you add that to the long list of changes that the minister has already talked about, changes we've been making to ensure that we're wrapping services around people who need it the most.... When you add those together, it means that every year since I've become Premier life has gotten a little bit easier for people who are living with disabilities in British Columbia.

COMPENSATION FOR FOREST WORKERS IN MAA-NULTH TREATY AREA

S. Fraser: Life hasn't gotten easier for the steelworkers and their families in Port Alberni.

The mayor of Port Alberni, the regional district directors and the United Steelworkers all support treaty and the Maa-nulth treaty, in particular. Part of the treaty provided 105,000 cubic metres of annual allowable cut from the tree farm licence for the Maa-nulth Nations. Those lands previously were held by Western Forest Products. They were providing employment for forestry workers in Port Alberni, and these workers have lost 25 percent of their cut.

Now, the government has a formula for this, and a precedent has been in place for years now to provide compensation to those forestry workers for the decisions made to support the treaty, which we all support. The minister assured workers in Port Alberni that their needs would be met. That was two years ago, when we met.

To the Minister of Forests: why are those workers and their families still waiting?

Hon. S. Thomson: I'm a little surprised, I think, to receive the question. The member opposite knows we've been engaged on this file, knows we've had recent meetings and have met with the union as recently as February 11, just ten days ago or so. We continue to work on the file.

I know the member opposite would just like us to write a cheque. That's not the way we can do things. We have to do our fiduciary responsibility. We have to look through and determine whether or not there is actual compensation due and negative impacts that are a result of the treaty.

[1420]

We're working through those processes. We've asked the union for additional information. They've agreed to provide that information. We're working on the file, and we continue to work on it. So I'm a little surprised to receive the question. The member opposite brought that issue forward to us. We've been working on it, and we continue to engage with the union. I've met recently with the mayor as well.

a result of the treaty. We're working through those processes. We've asked the union for additional information. They've agreed to provide that information, and we're working on the file, and we continue to work on it.

So I'm a little surprised to receive the question, because the member opposite brought that issue forward to us. We've been working on it, and we continue to engage both with the union.... I met recently with the mayor as well. So we are continuing to work on it.

Madame Speaker: Alberni-Pacific Rim on a supplemental.

S. Fraser: The minister might want to take a walk out onto the steps out front and talk to the steelworkers who have not got that meeting. They've been waiting two years.

The steelworkers are not fighting alone on this. They have the support of the Port Alberni mayor, of course. Western Forest Products have stood up for them. And the Huu-ay-aht councillor John Jacks, who is the recipient, the Huu-ay-aht, of the 105,000 hectares.... They don't want to do it on the backs of those workers.

Treaties are an important part of a long-term reconciliation in this province between First Nations communities and non-First Nations communities. But for that to happen, treaties must be done in a way that unites people, not divides them. That's why the government needs to provide a just transition for the forestry workers in Port Alberni and those workers that support the treaty. But they also need to support their families.

Will the minister help unite communities in reconciliation by ensuring that these families receive the settlements that they deserve? Meet with them.

Hon. S. Thomson: It's great to see the member opposite acknowledge a treaty that we signed — that the Leader of the Opposition did not recognize that we have signed the treaties. And those treaties are very, very important steps. And we agree that we need to continue to build that reconciliation.

With respect to this particular case, as I've said, we continue to engage. We met with the union as recently as ten days ago on file and have asked for further information. It's my responsibility to do the fiduciary duty, the due diligence, to assess all of the impacts and what number of....

Interjections.

Hon. S. Thomson: The members opposite talk about the time. If you want me to go into requests for information, how long it took for that information to be provided and the process....

We continue to engage, and we're continuing to do our due diligence and our fiduciary responsibility. I know the member opposite would just like us to write a cheque, but that's not the way we can do things. We have to make sure that the impacts, that the workers are known, the numbers are known. We're working on that, and we continue to meet, as I said, as recently as ten days ago.

RELEASE OF GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO REPORT ON YOUTH DEATH CASE

C. James: When she was asked about the timing of the response to the Paige report last fall the Premier said: "The report was ready to be released. The children's advocate supported that release so that's when it went out." We now know that simply wasn't true. An assistant deputy minister in government communications said in an email that according to the Premier's office, Monday October 19, election day, was very much desired. And then he went out and told staff to do whatever it takes to get it out the door that day. What's clear from these emails, is that the Premier was calling the shots and the Premier wanted to play politics with this report. My question is to the Premier. Why?

Hon. C. Clark: First, if I can go back. The member did ask if we could go and meet with steelworkers. I challenge the members of the opposition to go out and meet with any union leaders, around the province, all of the people to whom they want to deny jobs through their regular

opposition to economic development in British Columbia. Whether it's the steelworkers, whether it's the pipefitters, whether it's a range of people from unions all across the province, they stand united in favour of jobs, and they stand united in getting to yes. I ask the member to go out and meet with the steelworkers and unions across the province and say: "Guess what. I've change my mind. I suddenly believe in yes." That would be a nice change.

[1425]

But the issue that the member has raised is vitally important, and I'm going to say this. What the member talks about specifically is when the report was released. She talks about the day, the next day when the minister made herself available to the media. Never once has this member gotten up and talked about the important contents of that report. Because surely that is the most important. Surely that

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specifically is when the report was released. She talks about the next day, when the minister made herself available to the media. Never once has this member gotten up and talked about the important contents of that report. Surely, that is the most important.... The outcome of that report is surely the most important thing to vulnerable youth in British Columbia.

Yes, we have responded with immediate steps based on the outcome of that report. The rep called for a review of all the files for ministry-involved children and youth in the Downtown Eastside. The minister put together a rapid response team. The rep called for accountability around agencies reporting harm and abuse. We have clarified the duty to report amongst those agencies. The rep called for making sure that the service delivery in the Downtown Eastside was reviewed.

Over a five-month span, the ministry has been working and sitting down with social services agencies all around the Downtown Eastside to make sure we clarify those issues.

I know that the member hasn't asked about whether or not this report has been followed up. She hasn't asked about whether or not the ministry is doing all that it can to respect the lessons that are learned from the tragic loss of Paige from this world. But I'm happy to inform the House and that member that this minister and this government is acting as quickly and responsibly as we can to fulfil the demands of this report, because those children depend on us.

[End of question period.]

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

From: Godin, Keith FIN:EX
Sent: Wednesday, December 23, 2015 11:00 AM
To: Piccott, Ryan FIN:EX; Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX
Subject: FW: REVIEW/APPROVAL DN-Transportation Allowance V7
Attachments: DN-Transportation Allowance V7.docx

Please review and recommend whether we do not consider at this time, or incorporate into our caseload/fix note

From: Dawes, Len SDSI:EX
Sent: Tuesday, December 22, 2015 4:37 PM
To: Godin, Keith FIN:EX
Cc: Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX; Thomas, Martha O SDSI:EX; Parker, Keith C SDSI:EX
Subject: RE: REVIEW/APPROVAL DN-Transportation Allowance V7

s.13

That will be in your ministry's court,
advise if MMS has any changes she wants to make.

I will

s.13

Perhaps we can have a quick call tomorrow.

From: Godin, Keith FIN:EX
Sent: Tuesday, December 22, 2015 4:32 PM
To: Dawes, Len SDSI:EX
Cc: Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX; Thomas, Martha O SDSI:EX; Parker, Keith C SDSI:EX
Subject: Re: REVIEW/APPROVAL DN-Transportation Allowance V7

Thanks for sending. What are your timelines?

On Dec 22, 2015, at 4:08 PM, Dawes, Len SDSI:EX <Len.Dawes@gov.bc.ca> wrote:

Hi Keith,
Please see attached draft. It has not yet been shared with our minister. We welcome your thoughts/comments.
Thanks Len

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

INFORMATION NOTE

DATE: December 23, 2015

PREPARED FOR: Honourable Minister Michelle Stilwell

ISSUE: Persons With Disability Rates and Transportation Allowances

BACKGROUND:

Assistance rates in British Columbia (B.C.) reflect individual and family needs including nutrition, shelter and clothing. In recognition that Persons With Disabilities (PWD) face more barriers to employment their rates are higher. Advocates typically criticize the adequacy of B.C.'s assistance rates. They believe the rates do not meet a person's long-term basic needs and often refer to a study ranking BC fifth in the country for PWD rates (appendix 1).

One of the reasons that BC's PWD rate appears to be lower is due to some of the supplementary programs our clients receive which are not included the rate calculations. In particular, the ministry currently has two basic transportation supplements for PWD clients – an annual bus pass and the Special Transportation Subsidy (STS). These supplements aren't generally captured in cross-jurisdictional rate comparisons because they are not available to all PWD clients.

Annual bus passes are provided to PWD clients where public transit is available. Cost to the client is \$45 annually for the annual pass. The ministry pays the subsidized costs monthly to BC Transit and Translink for an equivalent benefit of \$52/month. An annual application/renewal process is used to confirm eligibility, collect the \$45 payment, and mail passes to clients.

The STS is provided to PWDs who reside in an area where public transit is available, but are unable to use public transit due to their disability. The STS rate is \$790/year, \$66/month (equivalent to the highest bus pass subsidy in the province), and is paid directly to clients in a lump sum each April (prorated if required). STS costs have been steadily increasing by over \$1 million each fiscal year. In total, the ministry pays an additional \$34 million in benefits to PWD clients annually.

DISCUSSION:

Currently transportation assistance provided to clients is inequitable because almost half of PWD clients do not receive either an annual bus pass or the STS. In addition, because the STS is a cash benefit to clients, it is often preferred to a bus pass and as a result, the STS cost has been rising steadily by over 10% annually.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION INFORMATION NOTE

There is building public pressure to increase income assistance rates. The last PWD rate increase occurred in 2007 and was for \$50.00/month. The current PWD rate for a single individual is \$906/month.

The ministry has considered various rate increase options and the cost impacts, which are outlined in appendix 2. s.12,s.13
s.12,s.13

CONCLUSION:

The ministry has outlined five options for consideration, dependent on the level of funding available.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Cross-jurisdictional rate comparisons

Appendix 2: Costing options

Honourable Michelle Stilwell
Minister

Prepared by:

Name Len Dawes

Title ADM, Corporate Services

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

INFORMATION NOTE

Appendix 1 Jurisdictional Comparison:

Monthly Total Income Assistance Rates by Province (as of November 2015) (including federal and provincial child benefits)

Province	Employable	Barriers/ PPMB	Person with a Disability
British Columbia	610.00	657.92	906.42
Alberta ¹	627.00	809.00	1,588.00
Saskatchewan ²	678.21	825.37	1,391.00
Manitoba ³	655.00	871.00	871.00
Ontario	681.00	681.00	1,110.00
Quebec ⁴	646.00	937.00	937.00
New Brunswick ⁵	537.00	576.00	763.00
Prince Edward Island ⁶	619.00	812.00	812.00
Nova Scotia ⁷	555.00	790.00	790.00
Newfoundland & Labrador ⁸	733.00	733.00	733.00
BC RANK	8	8	5

¹Barriers to Full Employment category includes Personal Needs Supplement.

²Saskatchewan will pay for actual utility costs if they are not included in rent. Figures include average utility costs for FY2013/14.

³ Manitoba will also pay for actual utility costs if they are not included in rent.

⁴ Employable rate includes Allowance for Single Employable.

⁵ Disability rate includes monthly Disability Supplement.

⁶ Rates include Travel Allowance.

⁷ Nova Scotia also provides a Poverty Reduction Credit (introduced in July 2010) for those on IA who have no children and were on IA for the whole of the previous tax year.

⁸ Rates include Island Fuel Supplement. Rates for singles (except PWD) are for those over age 30 years. Lower rates apply to employable singles and singles with barriers to employment who are under age 30.

Appendix 2 Incremental Costs per Option:

s.12,s.13

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

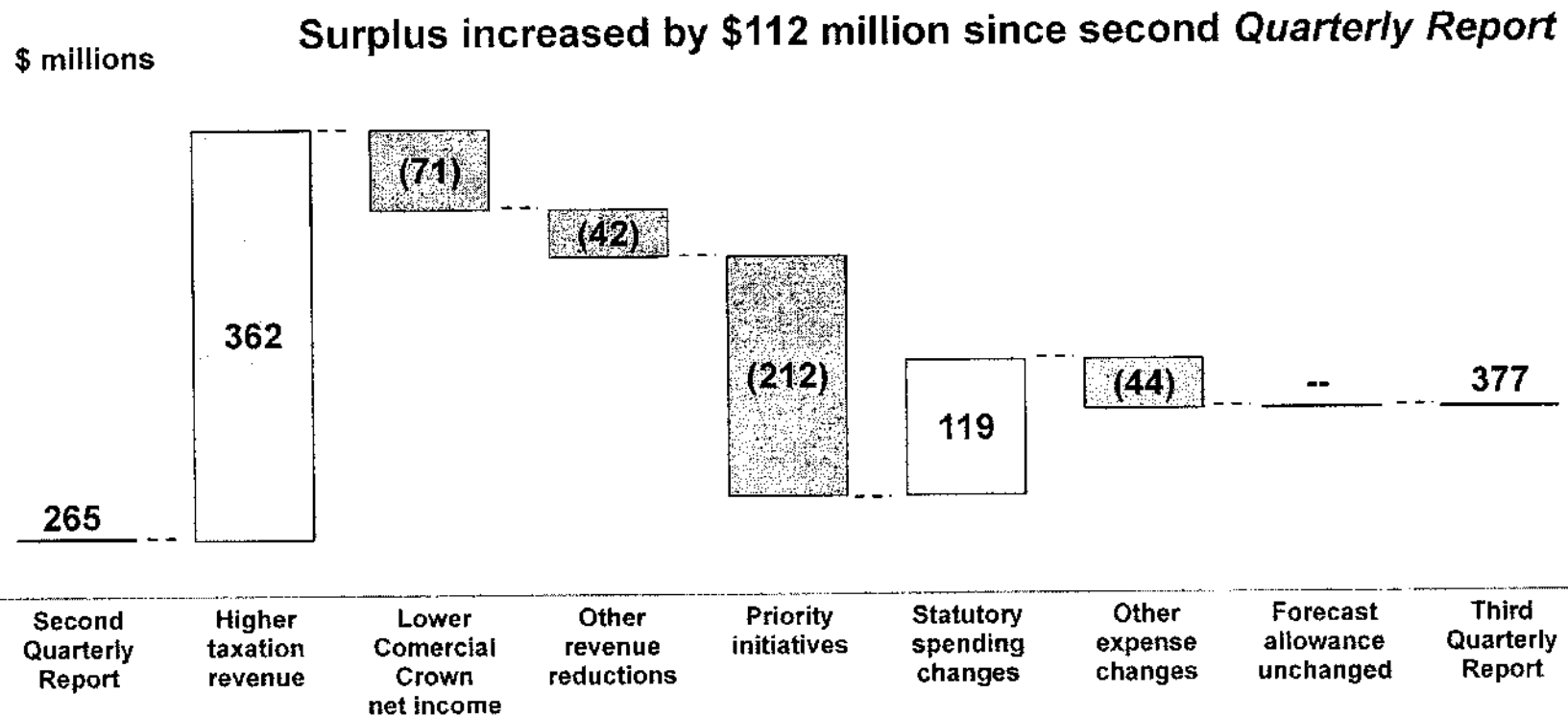
From: Epp, Don FIN:EX
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2016 5:12 PM
To: Enemark, Gord FIN:EX; Godin, Keith FIN:EX; Chandler, Alex FIN:EX; Hill, Heather K FIN:EX; Riley, Dave FIN:EX; Mirza, Sadaf FIN:EX
Subject: Final presentation
Attachments: Budget2016_PPP final.pptx

Here is the lockup presentation as finalized with the minister today.

BALANCED BUDGET 2016



2015/16 updated forecast



Slide 1

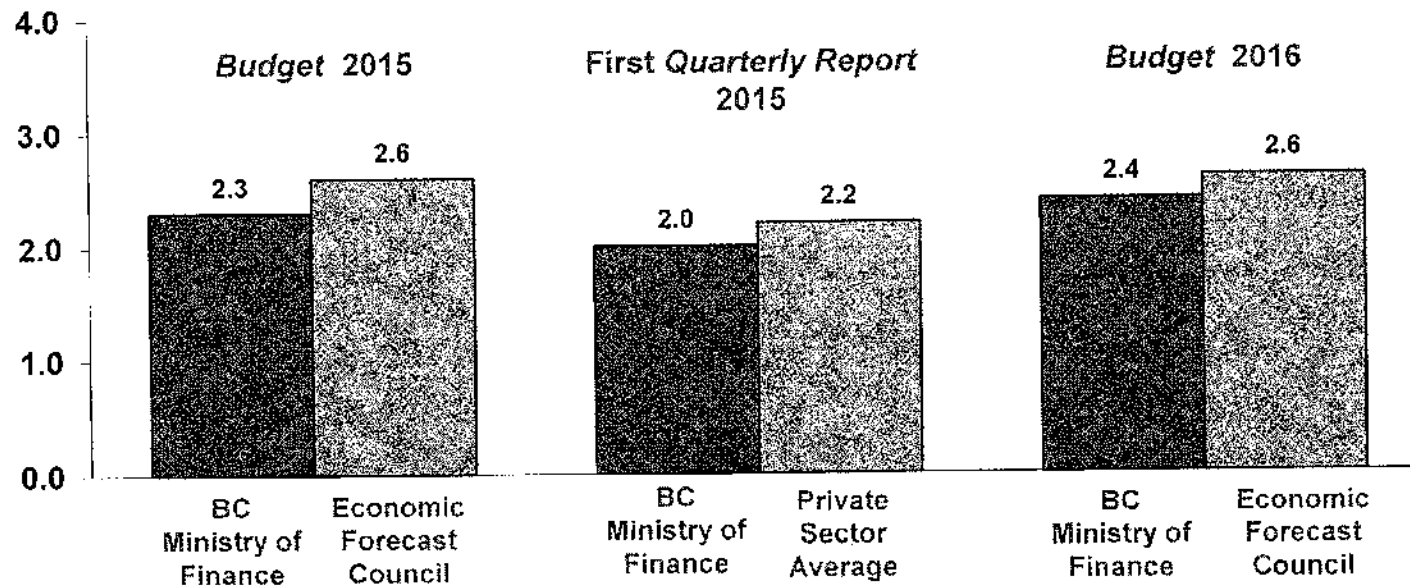
Priority investments

- Strategic wildfire prevention and mitigation investments (\$95M).
- Flood mitigation and emergency response (\$65M).
- BC Training and Education Savings Program expanded eligibility (\$39M).
- Innovative Clean Energy Fund (\$13M).

Slide 2

Economic forecasts for 2015

BC 2015 real GDP
(per cent change)

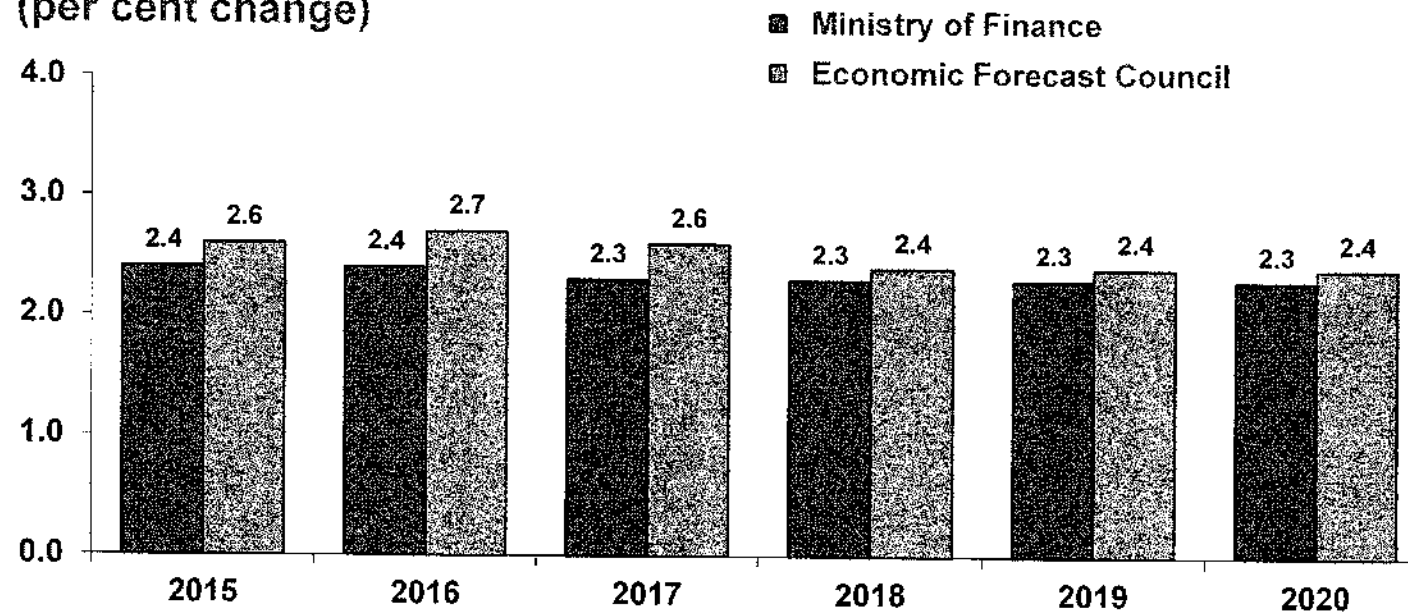


Sources: BC Ministry of Finance, Economic Forecast Council, Private Sector Average (Subset of the Economic Forecast Council)

Slide 3

BC's economic outlook

BC real GDP
(per cent change)

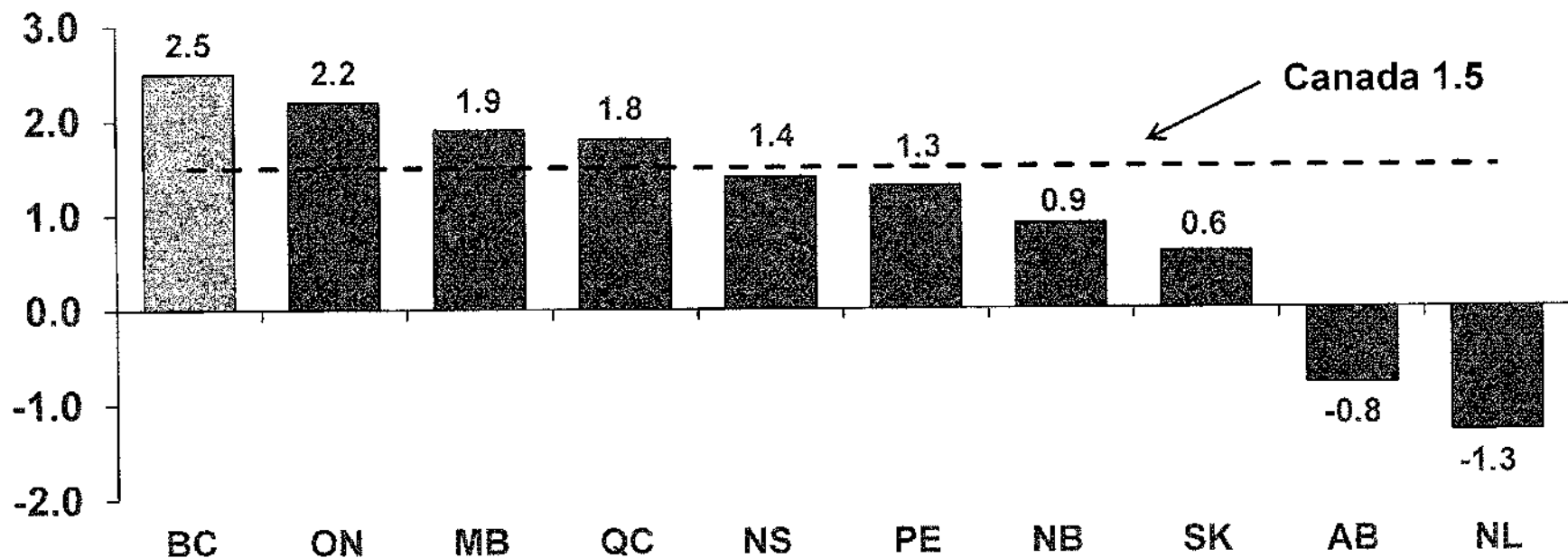


Sources: BC Ministry of Finance, Economic Forecast Council

Slide 4

Private sector economic growth expectations

Forecasted annual growth in 2016 real GDP (%)

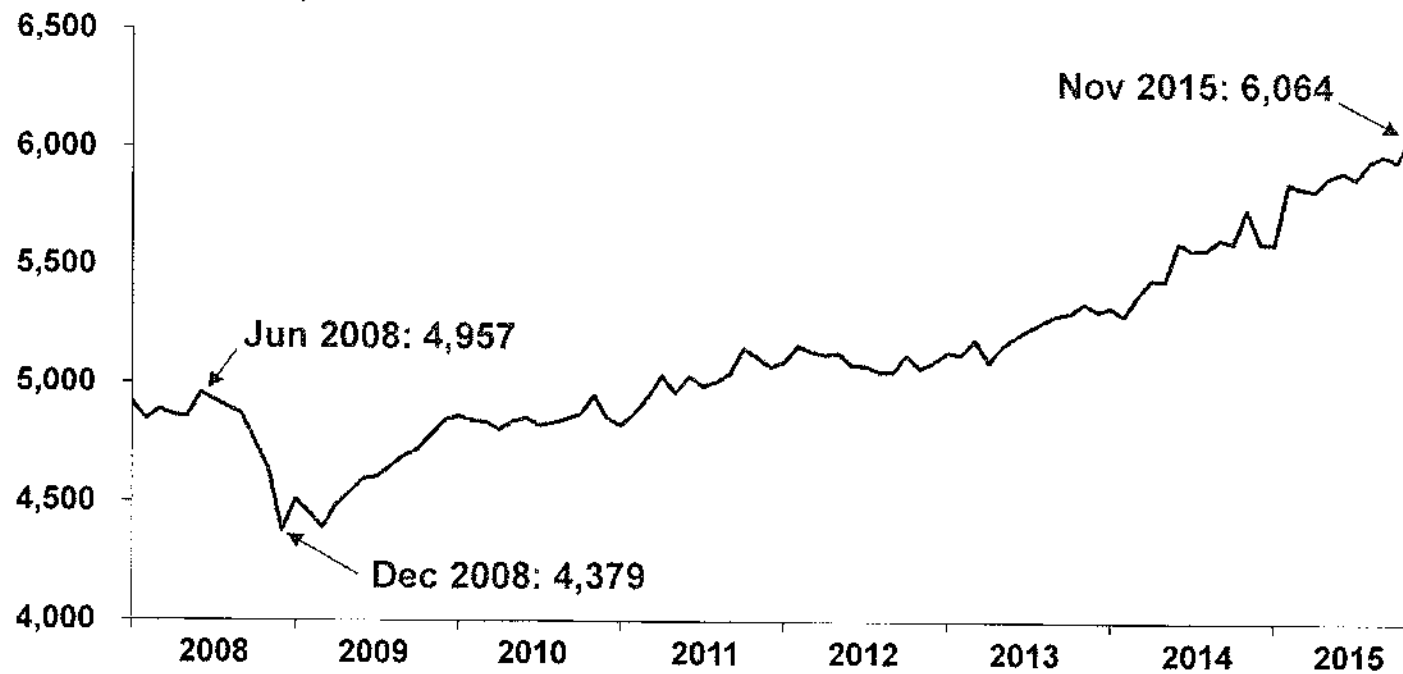


Source: A subset of the Economic Forecast Council that regularly forecasts economic performance in all provinces (Bank of Montreal, RBC, CIBC, TD, Scotiabank, IHS Global Insight), as of February 5, 2016.

Slide 5

BC retail sales

BC retail sales
(\$ millions, sa)

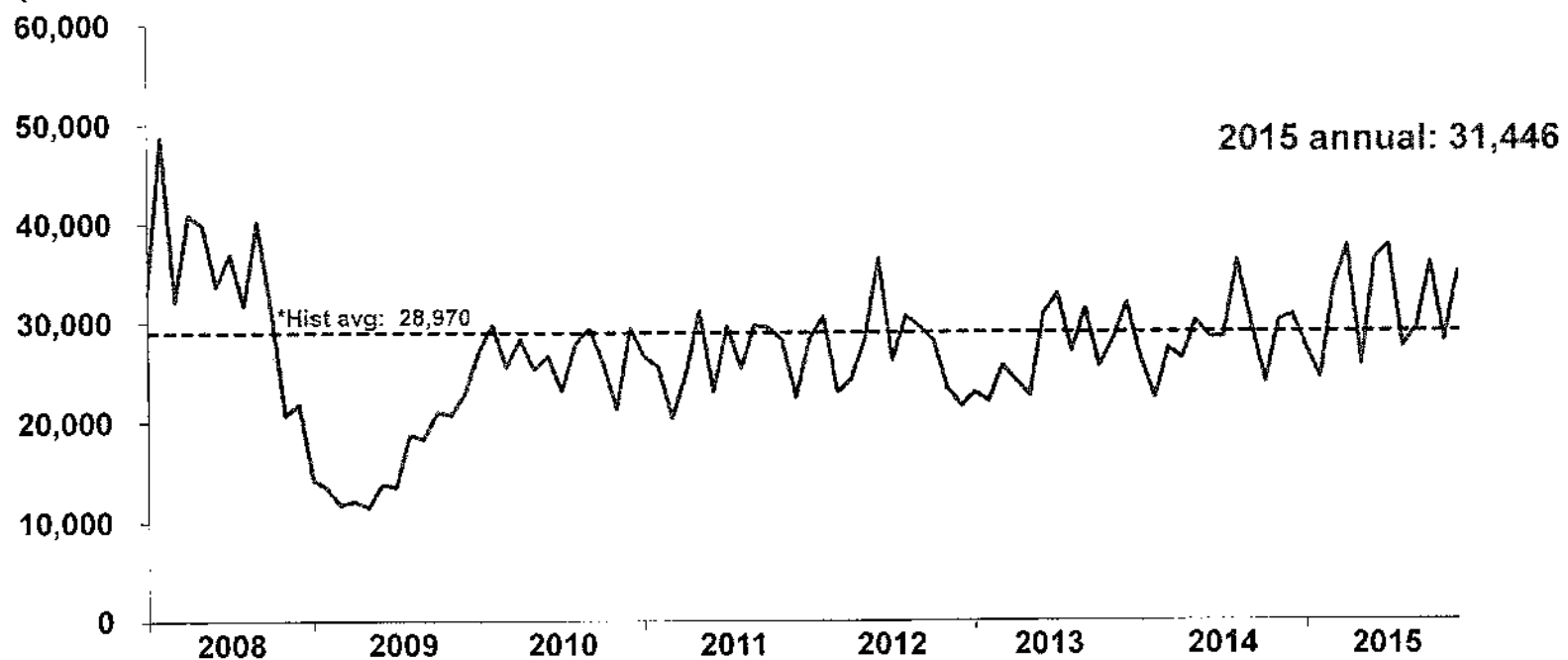


Source: Statistics Canada

Slide 6

BC housing starts

BC housing starts
(annualized units, sa)

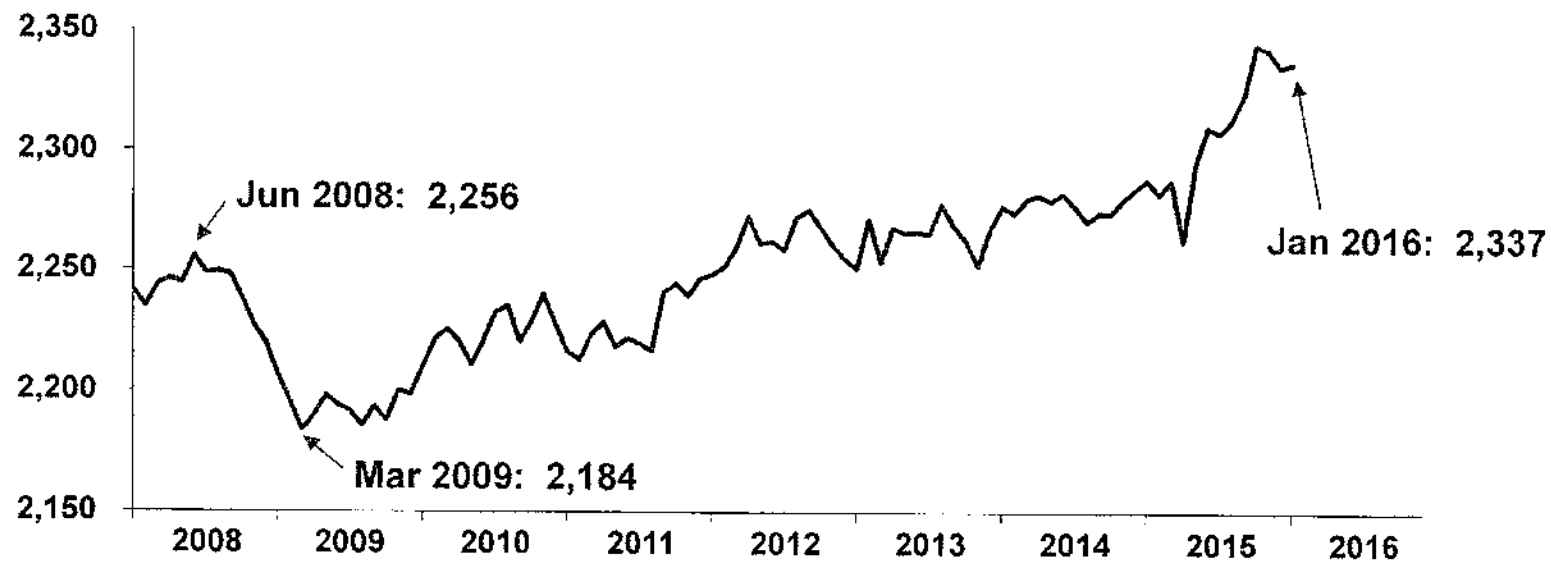


Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
*Historical average from January 1990 to December 2015

Slide 7

BC employment

BC employment
(000s, sa)



Source: Statistics Canada

Slide 8

3 year fiscal plan



(\$ millions)	Updated Forecast 2015/16	Budget Estimate 2016/17	Plan 2017/18	Plan 2018/19
Revenue	46,992	48,066	49,034	50,141
Expense	(46,365)	(47,452)	(48,397)	(49,418)
Allocation to BC Prosperity Fund	<u>(100)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Surplus before BC Prosperity Fund and forecast allowance	527	614	637	723
BC Prosperity Fund	100	-	-	-
Forecast allowance	<u>(250)</u>	<u>(350)</u>	<u>(350)</u>	<u>(350)</u>
Surplus	<u>377</u>	<u>264</u>	<u>287</u>	<u>373</u>

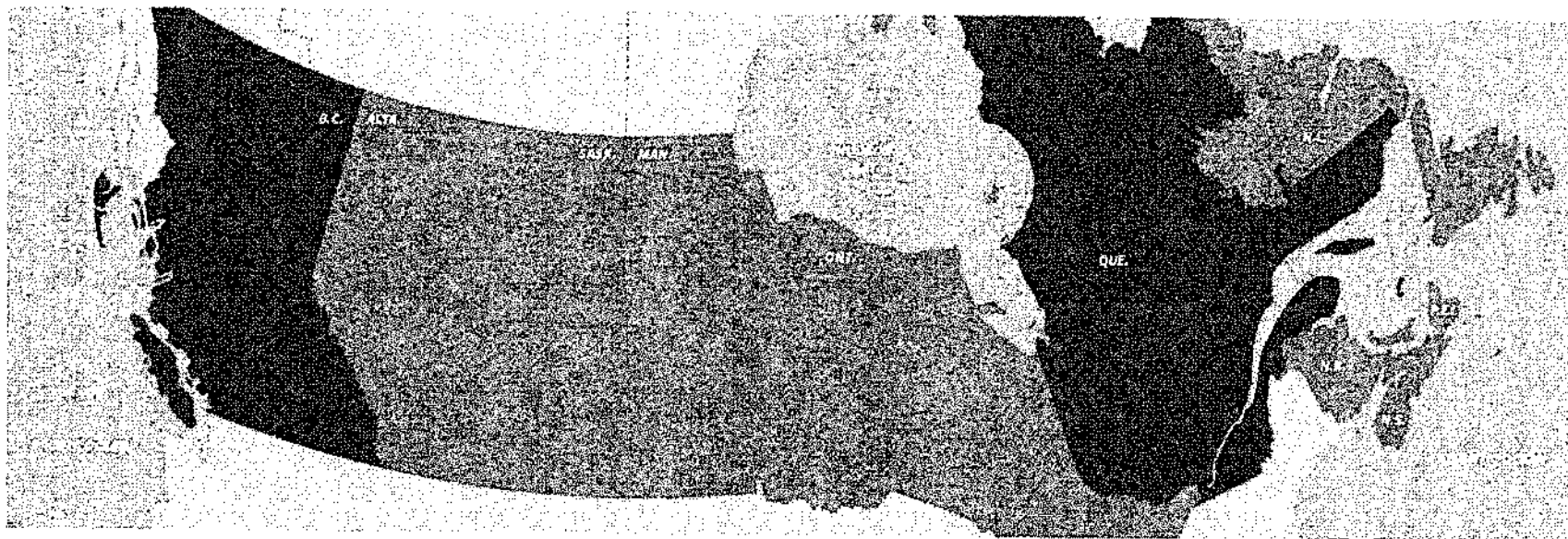
Slide 9

Balanced budgets in 2015/16

CROSS CANADA DEFICITS

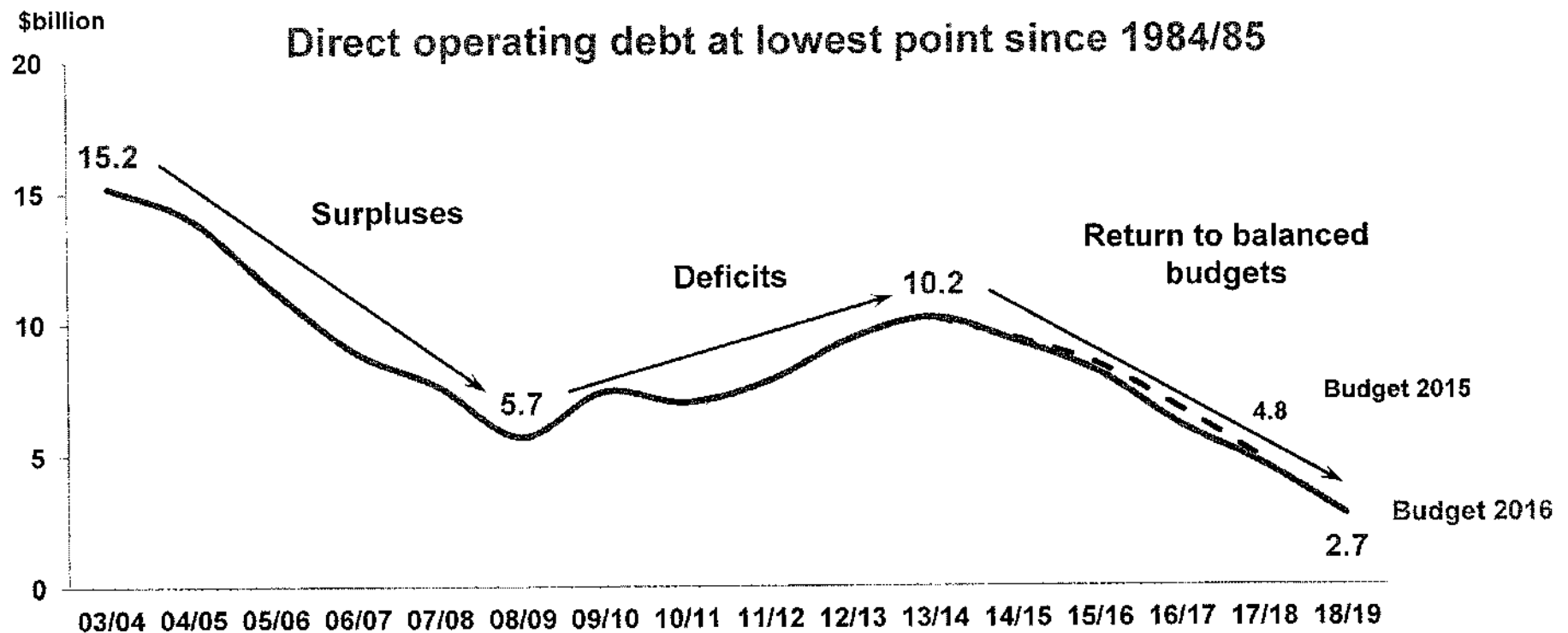
(AS OF JANUARY 1, 2016)

 BALANCED BUDGET  DEFICIT BUDGET



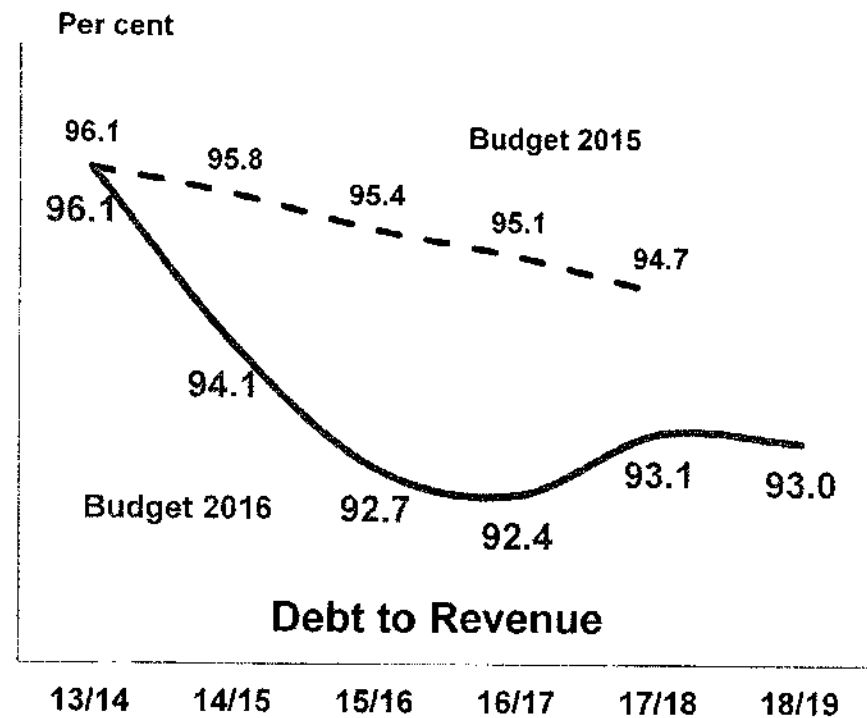
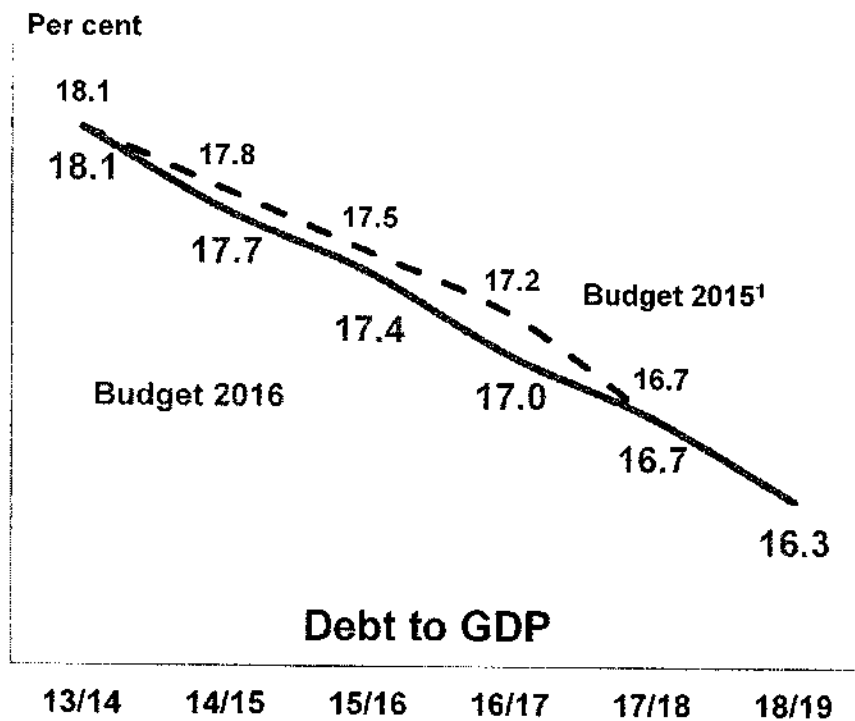
Slide 10

Direct operating debt being reduced



Slide 11

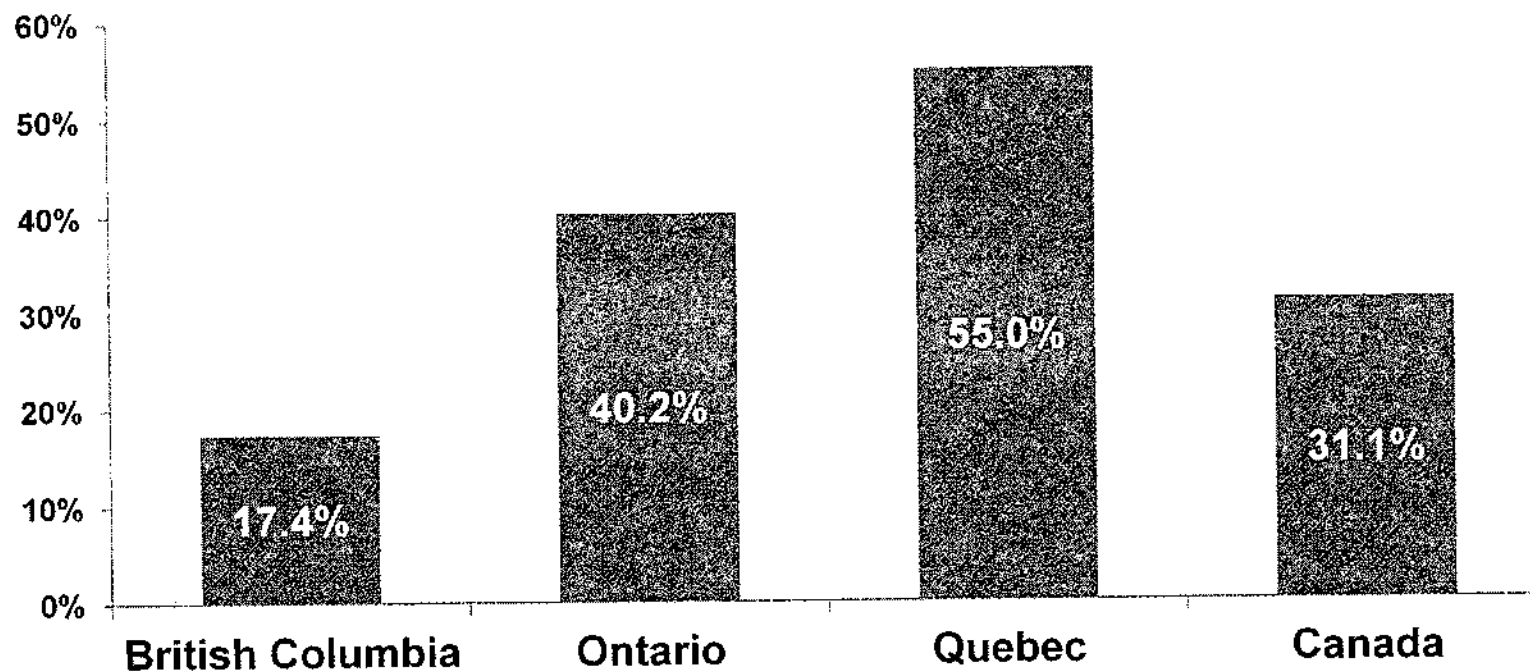
Declining debt ratios



¹ Restated to reflect the impact from Statistics Canada revisions to historical GDP levels in November 2015.

Slide 12

Debt to GDP comparisons



Source: 2015/16 forecast from most recent quarterly update for each jurisdiction.

Slide 13

Credit rating comparisons

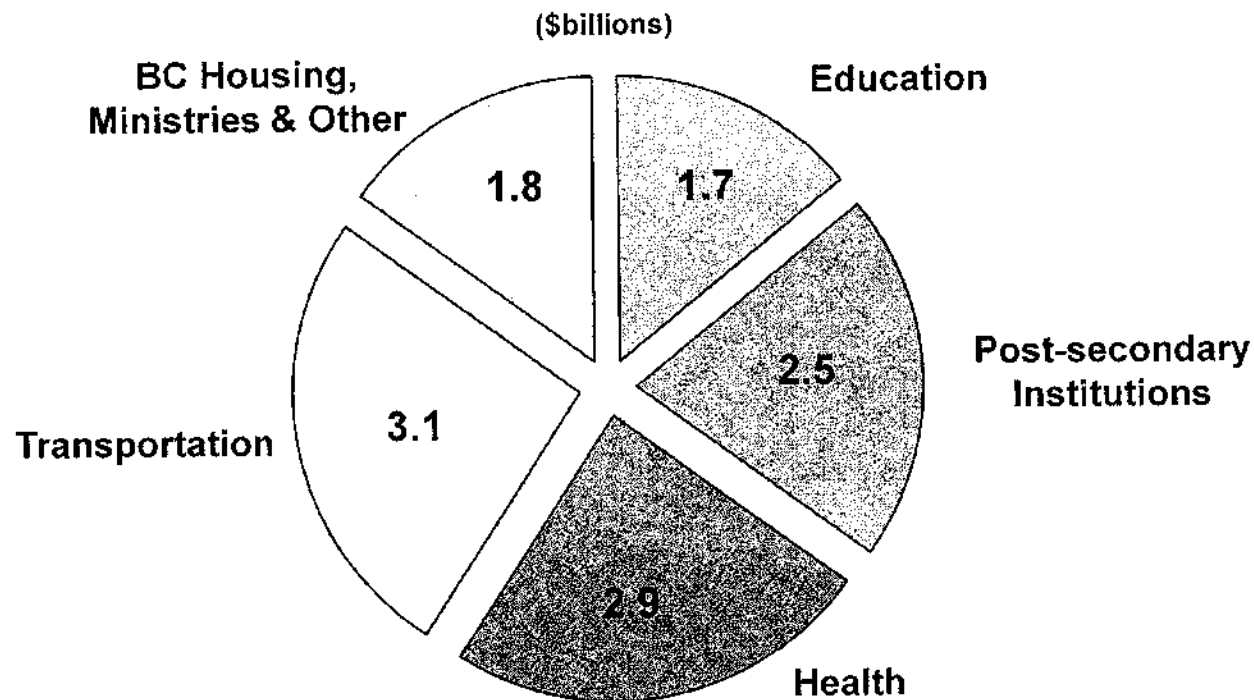
Province	AAA	AA+	AA	AA-	A+	A
British Columbia	●					
Alberta		→ ●				
Saskatchewan	●	↓				
Manitoba			●			
Ontario					→ ●	
Quebec					●	
New Brunswick					●	
Nova Scotia					●	
Prince Edward Island						●
Newfoundland and Labrador						→ ●
Canada	●					

Source: Standard and Poor's

Slide 14

Infrastructure spending allocations

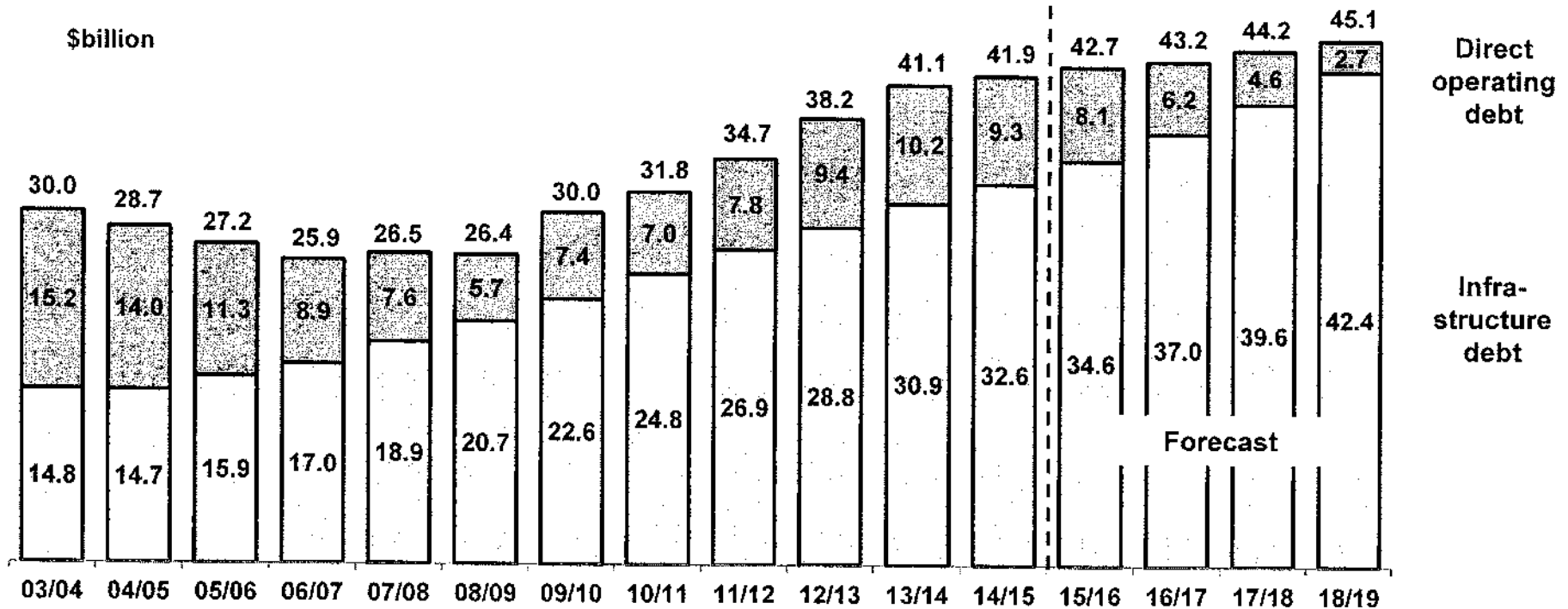
Three-year taxpayer-supported infrastructure spending totals \$12 billion



Slide 15

Debt is mainly for infrastructure

Components of taxpayer-supported debt



Slide 16

Budget 2016 investments and supports

- **Excluding health care, ministry budget increases total \$1.6 billion over the fiscal plan period:**
 - \$418 million for the Economic Stability Dividend and the final year of the Economic Stability Mandate;
 - \$143 million investment in the economy and communities;
 - \$673 million to support families and those in need;
 - \$340 million for community safety and other initiatives.
- **This also includes \$9 million for the Corporate Information and Records Management Office.**

Slide 17

Investments in the economy and communities

- **\$143 million total investment, including:**
 - **\$75 million in funding to assist communities under 25,000 to reinvigorate and diversify their economies (Rural Dividend);**
 - **\$36 million for highways maintenance;**
 - **\$8 million for youth skills training;**
 - **\$5 million to market BC products in India;**
 - **\$7 million in transit funding;**
 - **\$12 million for other initiatives.**

Slide 18

Commission on tax competitiveness

- **Commission to consider ways to modernize the existing tax structure, given the changing economy.**
- **Names of Chair and members as well as the terms of reference will be announced after Budget 2016.**
- **Scope of work will explicitly exclude consideration of a harmonized sales tax.**

Slide 19

Page 045

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s.12;s.13

Support for families and those in need

- **\$217 million for vulnerable youth and their families:**
 - \$152 million of children-in-care and related programs;
 - \$11 million to support child care centres;
 - \$51 million for children and youth in care with special needs;
 - \$3 million for facilitating adoption of children in care.
- **\$286 million to support adults in need:**
 - \$250 million for caseload growth in income assistance;
 - \$36 million for Community Living British Columbia.

Slide 21

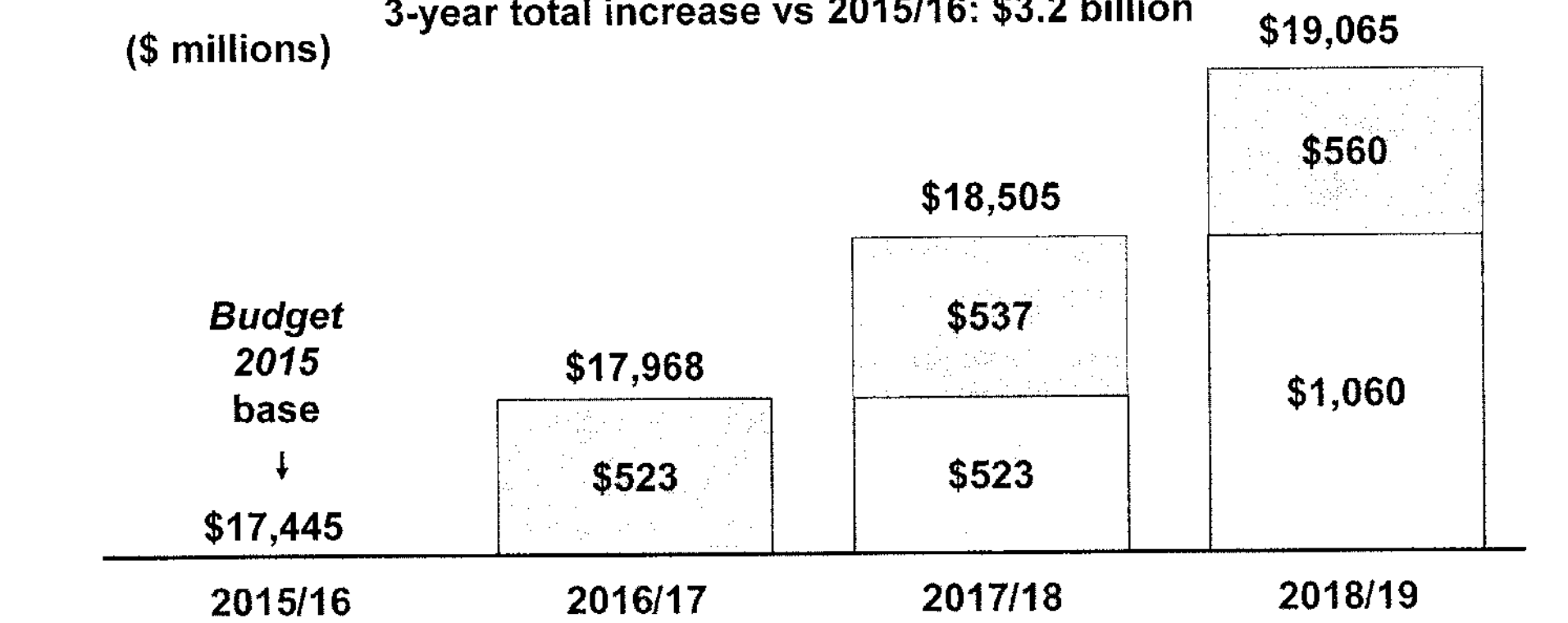
Support for persons with disabilities

- **\$170 million to increase income assistance rates for Persons with Disabilities**
 - Up to \$77 per month rate increase for all individuals receiving disability assistance (over 100,000 persons);
 - Rate increase effective September 1, 2016;
 - Increases fairness and equity in transportation assistance.

Slide 22

Ministry of Health budget

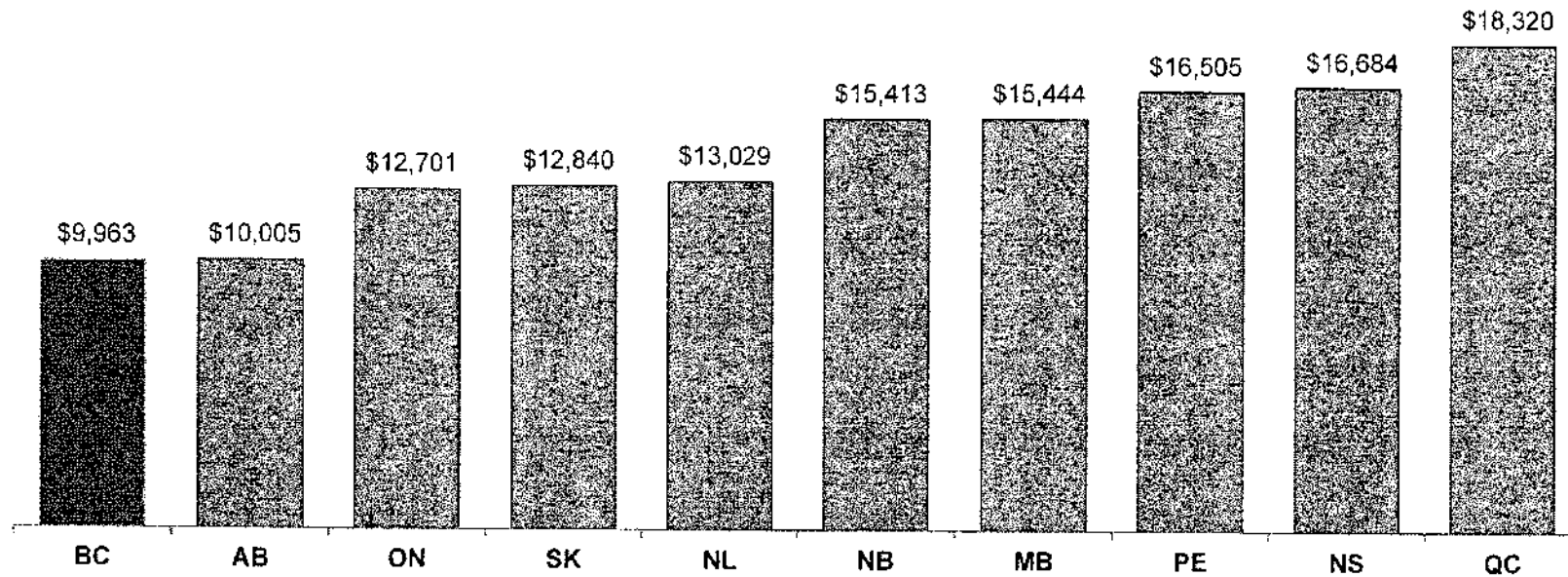
(\$ millions)



Slide 23

Keeping taxes low for BC families

Lowest Provincial Personal Income Taxes for Individuals
Earning up to \$122,000 - 2016 Tax Year



Slide 24

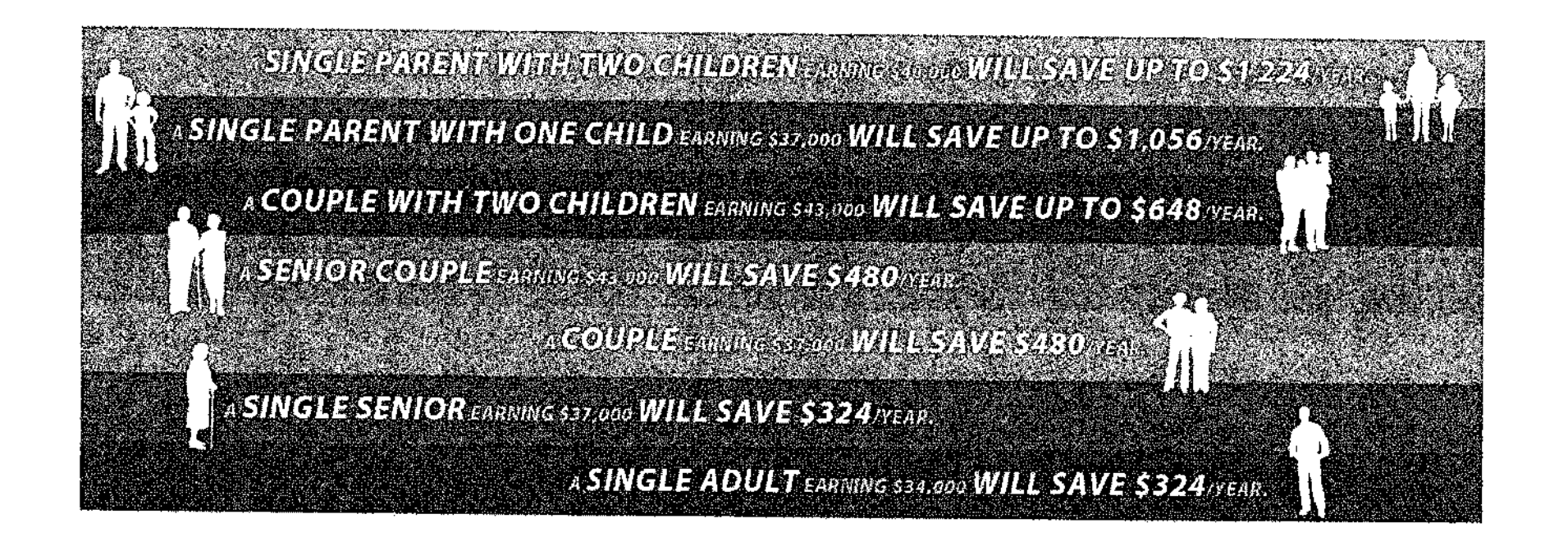
MSP premiums

- **Effective January 1, 2017:**
 - Children are exempted from MSP premiums.
 - Premium assistance is enhanced.
 - Couples will pay two times the single rate.
 - MSP premiums are increased by 4%.
- **With these changes:**
 - 335,000 individuals will pay reduced premiums, including 70,000 single parent families.
 - An additional 45,000 people will no longer pay MSP premiums.
- **Two million British Columbians (more than 40% of the population) won't pay MSP premiums.**

Slide 25

MSP examples

CHANGES HELP FAMILIES, SENIORS AND INDIVIDUALS ON PREMIUM ASSISTANCE
(EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2017)



EXAMPLES BASED ON HOUSEHOLD NET INCOME

Slide 26

Collecting better data

- Up until 1998, government collected information on the citizenship of those who registered property.
- Practice was discontinued due to compliance costs and lack of data use, but there is now a consensus that the data are required.
- Effective summer 2016:
 - Individual transferees when they register a taxable transaction will be required to identify if they are Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada, if they are neither then they must disclose their citizenship.
 - Corporations will be required to disclose their directors' citizenship;
 - Bare trustees will be required to provide information on the settlors and beneficiaries of bare trusts.
- Work with municipalities to reduce the hidden costs in home purchases, and to make those hidden costs clear and transparent to the homebuyer.

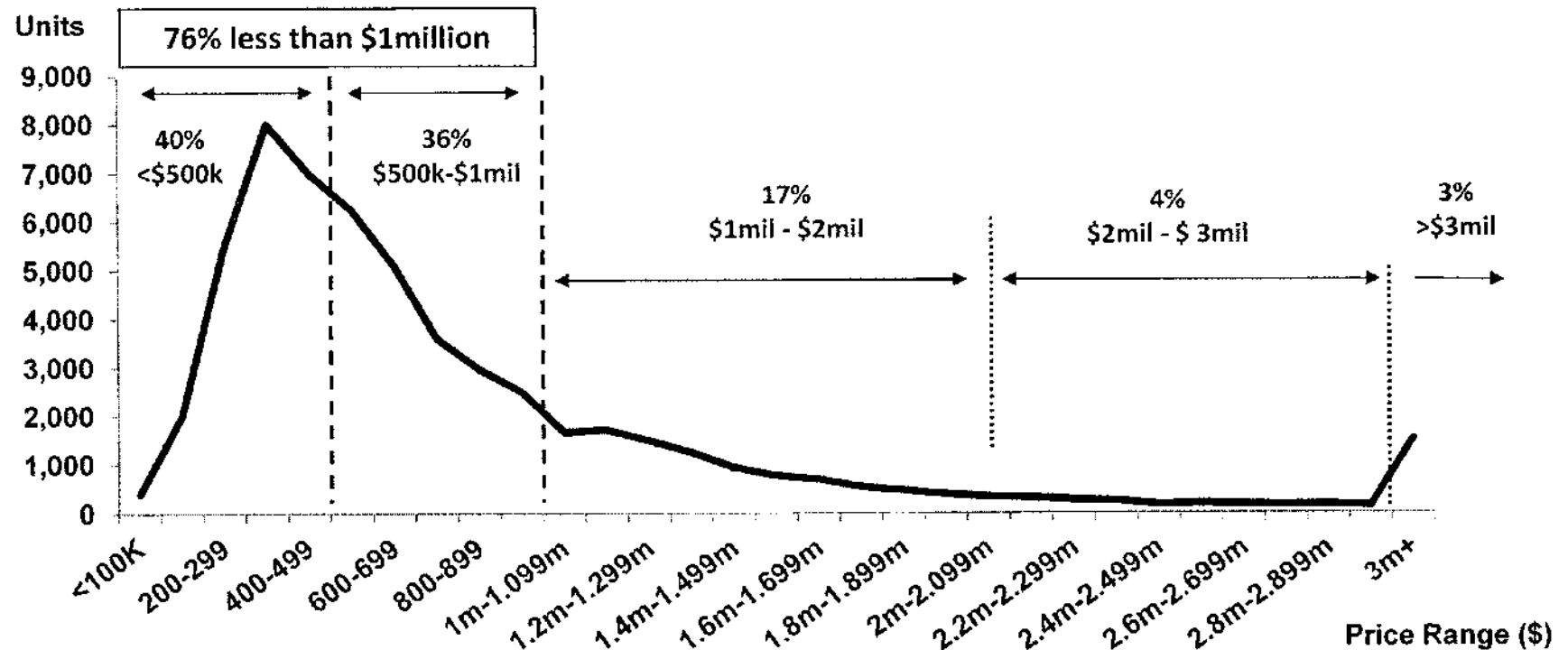
Slide 27

Housing affordability

- **Effective February 17, 2016:**
 - **New housing up to \$750,000 will be exempt from Property Transfer Tax.**
 - **The Property Transfer Tax rate will increase from 2% to 3% on the portion of fair market value over \$2 million.**
 - **Home Owner Grant threshold is increased from \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million for the 2016 tax year.**

Slide 28

2015 Metro Vancouver housing sales



Sources: Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver; Fraser Valley Real Estate Board; BC Real Estate Association Economics

Slide 29

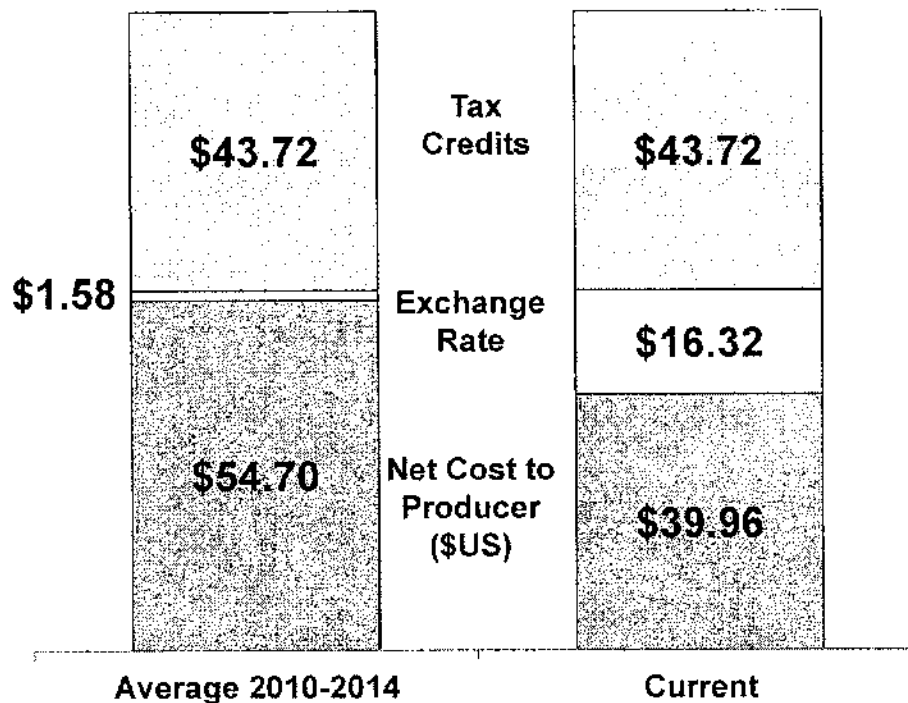
Targeted tax measures

- **Other measures:**
 - **Farmers' Food Donation Tax Credit is introduced.**
 - **Seniors' Home Renovation Tax Credit is expanded to include persons with disabilities.**
 - **Mining Flow-Through Share Tax Credit is extended for one year.**
 - **Mining Exploration Tax Credit is extended for three years.**
 - **Small Business Venture Capital Tax Credit budget is increased by \$5 million.**
 - **Enhanced property tax relief for tourist accommodation providers in rural areas.**

Slide 30

Film tax credits

Foreign Production Spending \$100 on BC Labour



- Industry is booming due to very low exchange rate, skilled labour force and shared time zone with California.
- Tax credits are forecasted to be almost half a billion dollars in 2015/16.
- Government will move to limit growth in film tax credits.

Slide 31

BC Prosperity Fund

- **\$100 million inaugural commitment.**
- **Priority uses:**
 - **Eliminating taxpayer-supported debt over time;**
 - **Investing in health care, education, transportation, family supports and other priorities that provide future benefits;**
 - **Preserve a share of prosperity for future generations.**
- **Minimum 50% for debt; minimum 25% saved for earnings.**

Slide 32

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

From: Enemark, Gord FIN:EX
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2016 3:45 PM
To: Edwardson, Jamie GCPE:EX
Cc: Williams, Susan GCPE:EX; Godin, Keith FIN:EX; Chandler, Alex FIN:EX
Subject: For review: Budget speech draft - TBS comments
Attachments: Budget speech - Jan 28_DRAFT econ fiscal checks.docx

Here you go Jamie – Keith/Alex, I took care of all PBO input so you might want to take a quick look at the numbers/language for your areas.

This has input from Dave, Sadaf, Don, Heather as well as PBO.

No total revenue & expense figures yet – still in the consolidation process
Note that numbers will need to be rechecked again

From: Williams, Susan GCPE:EX
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2016 4:07 PM
To: Enemark, Gord FIN:EX; Farkas, George FIN:EX; Flanagan, Paul FIN:EX; Purnell, Richard FIN:EX
Cc: Edwardson, Jamie GCPE:EX; McLachlin, Jessica GCPE:EX
Subject: For review: Budget speech draft
Importance: High

We're delivering this draft to the Minister tomorrow afternoon (he asked for it Friday afternoon so he could look at it over the weekend).

This version incorporates his feedback and changes from Tuesday afternoon's meeting.

Please review and track any changes or comments before tomorrow afternoon. I know that some of the info and numbers will still be in flux, but we're looking for any obvious information mistakes or omissions.

Thanks!
Susan

Susan Williams
Senior Public Affairs Officer
GCPE – Ministry of Finance
Office: 250 387-9092
Cell: 250 812-8513

Page 059 to/à Page 075

Withheld pursuant to/removed as

s.13

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

From: Enemark, Gord FIN:EX
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2016 4:11 PM
To: Mirza, Sadaf FIN:EX; Riley, Dave FIN:EX; Epp, Don FIN:EX; Chandler, Alex FIN:EX; Godin, Keith FIN:EX
Subject: FW: For review: Budget speech draft
Attachments: Budget speech - Jan 28_DRAFT.docx
Importance: High

Please get me any edits by noon tomorrow. Dave/Sadaf if you can collaborate on one copy that would be helpful.

From: Williams, Susan GCPE:EX
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2016 4:07 PM
To: Enemark, Gord FIN:EX; Farkas, George FIN:EX; Flanagan, Paul FIN:EX; Purnell, Richard FIN:EX
Cc: Edwardson, Jamie GCPE:EX; McLachlin, Jessica GCPE:EX
Subject: For review: Budget speech draft
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Susan Williams
Senior Public Affairs Officer
GCPE – Ministry of Finance
Office: 250 387-9092
Cell: 250 812-8513

Page 077 to/à Page 093

Withheld pursuant to/removed as

s.13

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

From: Epp, Don FIN:EX
Sent: Friday, February 5, 2016 1:50 PM
To: Chandler, Alex FIN:EX; Godin, Keith FIN:EX; Enemark, Gord FIN:EX
Subject: Ministry slides in presentation
Attachments: Budget2016_PPP pbo.pptx

For your review

Page 095 to/à Page 102

Withheld pursuant to/removed as

s.12;s.13

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

From: Epp, Don FIN:EX
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2016 6:17 PM
To: Farkas, George FIN:EX
Cc: Riley, Dave FIN:EX; Mirza, Sadaf FIN:EX; Enemark, Gord FIN:EX; Godin, Keith FIN:EX; Chandler, Alex FIN:EX; Hill, Heather K FIN:EX; Flanagan, Paul FIN:EX; Purnell, Richard FIN:EX; Edwardson, Jamie GCPE:EX
Subject: Penultimate Presentation
Attachments: Budget2016_PPP penultimate.pptx

One last kick at the can; need your feedback by noon tomorrow.

Page 104 to/à Page 136

Withheld pursuant to/removed as

s.12;s.13

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

From: Epp, Don FIN:EX
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2016 11:07 AM
To: Enemark, Gord FIN:EX; Godin, Keith FIN:EX; Riley, Dave FIN:EX; Mirza, Sadaf FIN:EX; Hill, Heather K FIN:EX; Chandler, Alex FIN:EX
Cc: Flanagan, Paul FIN:EX; Purnell, Richard FIN:EX; Edwardson, Jamie GCPE:EX; McLachlin, Jessica GCPE:EX
Subject: Presentation for meeting with MMdJ today
Attachments: Budget2016_PPP penultimate.pdf

Haven't heard from anyone in a while; so it seems all is well. Here is you copy; if you want something to look at during the meeting, you'll have to print yourself a copy and bring it along.

Don

Page 138 to/à Page 171

Withheld pursuant to/removed as

s.12;s.13

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

From: Green, Ben GCPE:EX
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2016 1:33 PM
To: Harper, Katie FIN:EX; Chandler, Alex FIN:EX; Godin, Keith FIN:EX; Hill, Heather K FIN:EX; Henderson, Kim N FIN:EX; Chandler, Penelope E FIN:EX; Miniaci, Mario FIN:EX; Brown, Chris FIN:EX; Edwardson, Jamie GCPE:EX; Farkas, George FIN:EX; Foster, Doug FIN:EX; Hopkins, Jim FIN:EX; MacLean, Shelley FIN:EX; Mazure, John C FIN:EX; Newton, Stuart A FIN:EX; Richards, Tara R FIN:EX; Rogers, Carolyn FIN:EX; Symes, Elan C FIN:EX; Wenezenki-Yolland, Cheryl FIN:EX; Wood, Heather FIN:EX; Enemark, Gord FIN:EX; Mirza, Sadaf FIN:EX; Riley, Dave FIN:EX; Skillings, Chris FIN:EX; Menzies, Brian FIN:EX; Halls, Lori D PSA:EX; Snider, Martin C FIN:EX
Cc: McLachlin, Jessica GCPE:EX; Zoeller, Sonja GCPE:EX; Williams, Susan GCPE:EX; Ingram, Ben GCPE:EX; Clarke, Brennan GCPE:EX
Subject: QP Summary - 18 February 2016
Importance: High

Hi everyone,

Please see below for a summary of today's topics during QP, as well as a transcript of QP (Hansard Blues version).

Question Period – February 18, 2016

Summary Overview

Issues addressed by Premier Christy Clark:

N/A.

Issues addressed by Minister Michael de Jong:

- Investigations into real estate transactions – raised by D. Eby

Issues addressed by other ministers:

- Drinking water quality and testing in schools – raised by J. Horgan, J. Rice, R. Fleming, Addressed by Hon. T. Lake
- Support for first responders with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – raised by S. Simpson, Addressed by Hon. S. Bond
- Massey Tunnel replacement project – raised by V. Huntington, Addressed by Hon. T. Stone
- Disability benefits and bus pass program changes – raised by M. Mungall, Addressed by Hon. M. Stilwell

Minister de Jong transcript:

INVESTIGATION INTO REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS

D. Eby: It was last week that the Real Estate Council of B.C. wrote to realtors saying that the actions of a few realtors had "shaken public confidence in the real estate industry." In fact, it's the Real Estate Council and this government's lack of oversight that has shaken public confidence.

HSE-20160218 AM 011/BMG/1050

D. Eby: It was last week that the Real Estate Council of B.C. wrote to realtors saying that the actions of a few realtors had "shaken public confidence in the real estate industry." In fact, it's the Real Estate Council's and this government's lack of oversight that has shaken public confidence.

Realtor Banti Shahi, for example, was hired by a Burnaby family to sell their home. He told them he had found a buyer. He hid the fact that he was also the agent for the buyer and that he would receive additional commission if they sold to this person. He also lied to the buyer, saying he'd pay the buyer half of his commission. He never paid a dime.

Mr. Shahi was never suspended, not even for a day. It took the Real Estate Council a year and eight months just to fine him.

To the Minister of Finance: why is the Real Estate Council investigating itself when they allow Mr. Shahi to continue selling property after ripping off not one, but two B.C. families on the same transaction?

Hon. M. de Jong: Maybe I can correct at least one thing the member has said. The Real Estate Council, which is statutorily responsible for this self-regulated profession — and it has been a self-regulated profession for many decades — has sought the leadership assistance and expertise of the independent real estate superintendent, with whom I know the member has had an opportunity to meet.

She is in the midst of putting together an informed and experienced panel to look at precisely the kinds of issues that the member alludes to today, describes today. He will know from our past conversations in this chamber that I share concerns about circumstances in which real estate agents are not fulfilling their primary obligations and duties to their client.

The work of the superintendent is underway. The panel is being composed, and I expect their first report by the middle of April.

Madame Speaker: The member for Point Grey on a supplemental.

D. Eby: When Shahi Sahaly lied to the Real Estate Council about a court finding that he had committed fraud, he kept his licence, wasn't suspended. When Frank Chu committed fraud by altering a contract to secretly double the commission to be paid by his client, he was allowed to continue selling property in B.C., even when he appeared yet again before the Real Estate Council on another offence.

When realtor Ama Basari committed fraud by secretly altering a contract to double the commission he took from a family buying a home in Surrey and then committed four other violations of Real Estate Council rules on just three transactions, he was suspended for just 30 days.

Within the last three months, four realtors who have stolen money from B.C. families through deceit had their cases decided by the Real Estate Council. Not a single one lost the privilege to sell real estate in B.C.

The minister knows the Real Estate Council has a prominent role in running this investigation into themselves. With their high tolerance for fraud on B.C. families, why is this council investigating itself and its own problems that led to the public loss of confidence in realtors in B.C.?

Hon. M. de Jong: Well, two things. First of all, for reasons that the member is well aware of, the Real Estate Council most pointedly is not investigating itself. It has sought the leadership and expertise of the separate and independent superintendent, who exists statutorily, organizationally, administratively, entirely separate from the council.

If the member is expecting any kind of defence, let alone spirited defence, of behaviour on the part of realtors that falls short of the standard they are expected to uphold professionally, he will not receive it from

me. It is for that reason that the superintendent is engaged. It is for that reason that we are anxiously awaiting the results of their work.

As I have said and members of the government, including the Premier, have said, if the kind of behaviour that is described continues and unless we see a plan and evidence of an approach that will eliminate that behaviour, the government reserves the right to act statutorily.

Oral Questions [full transcript]

DRINKING WATER QUALITY AND TESTING IN SCHOOLS

J. Horgan: Yesterday we asked the Minister of Education why it was that high lead and copper volumes were found in drinking water in four Prince Rupert schools. The minister didn't answer, but the Minister of Health said: "The health officer in Prince Rupert has determined, through routine testing, that there are slightly elevated...levels." Now, those slightly elevated levels were 14 times higher than Health Canada's guidelines, but if that's "slightly elevated" to the minister, so be it.

But I want to get a little bit deeper into these "routine tests" that the minister referred to. Can he explain to the House and to the people of Prince Rupert just what those routine tests were that led to the finding of lead and copper volumes 14 times higher than Health Canada's guidelines?

Hon. T. Lake: As I said yesterday, the problem of lead leaching from old plumbing has been around for decades. In the '80s and '90s there was a lot of mitigation that occurred throughout the province of British Columbia — in fact, all across North America — in recognition of that issue. We have had past examples in Kitimat, for example, where this was recognized, and that's why the health officer in Prince Rupert decided to conduct some testing in these schools. Once the elevated levels were discovered, mitigation methods were put in place to ensure that children are protected.

Madame Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition on a supplemental.

J. Horgan: The only jurisdiction in Canada that does routine testing of water is Ontario. The minister suggests that there was testing done in Kitimat. That's part of the story, to be sure. The story, however, is that a science teacher in Kitimat was doing an experiment with salmon eggs. When the salmon eggs didn't hatch, she asked a friend at DFO to do some testing on the water. What was found? High levels of lead and copper, which led to the health officer being advised that fish eggs were not hatching and that therefore there might be a challenge to public health.

That's not routine testing, and if it's best practices in British Columbia to have science experiments in high schools or elementary schools determine what a safe level of drinking water contamination is, then we're in more trouble than I thought we were.

[1030]

My question so the minister is this. Is it best practices in British Columbia to rely on science experiments in classrooms, or are there actually regular, routinized assessments of what drinking water in schools

HSE-20160218 AM 007/CGL/1030

to have science experiments in high schools or elementary schools determine what's a safe level of drinking water contamination, then we're in more trouble than I thought we were.

My question so the minister is this: is it best practices in British Columbia to rely on science experiments in classrooms, or are there actually regular routinized assessments of drinking water in schools across British Columbia?

Hon. T. Lake: The article the member refers to was based on a school in Kitimat, as I referenced earlier. The abstract says that although water is typically not an important source of these metals, intermittent use and corrosive water" can cause metals like copper and lead to leach out.

That's why Northern Health was aware of this situation. They worked with the school district, in that case, to remedy the problems there. That information led to increased awareness, why the medical health officer tested the schools in Prince Rupert.

As far as the province is concerned, the B.C. Centre for Disease Control did a complete review of all blood tests on lead in B.C. from 2009 to 2011. It was only rarely that cases of elevated lead levels were detected, and in fact, the source was related to diet or natural remedies, not to water.

Madame Speaker: Leader of the Opposition on a supplemental.

J. Horgan: That may be great comfort for those tested between 2009 and 2011, but the report that the minister and I are referring to, "Investigating Elevated Copper and Lead Levels in School Drinking Water", was published in 2014.

My concern, again, is that six scientists wrote this report, three of which work for the Minister of Health — three of them, three of six, half, worked for the Minister of Health — and their findings were that they support the need for routine monitoring of drinking water in schools. "Exposure to copper and lead in school drinking water can substantially increase the daily intakes of these metals when levels are highly elevated."

A recommendation from three scientists that worked for the Minister of Health concluded that routine monitoring in schools was an appropriate course of action based on the information that they were publishing in their journal.

We don't know how long this has been going on. We don't know whether or not the government will commit to routine testing, and based on what's going on in Shawnigan Lake, just up the hill from here, based on what's going on in Spallumcheen in the Interior, certainly people in British Columbia should have some concern that we're working with science experiments from kids in school to come to conclusions and determinations about whether our drinking water is safe.

Will the Minister of Health or, certainly, the Minister of Education commit today to ensuring that there are thorough and ongoing reviews of drinking water in schools right across British Columbia? Let's start on the North Coast and make sure every kid taking a drink out of a faucet in this province is safe.

Hon. T. Lake: In fact, the member should know — because he was a participant in the government in the '90s — that this was actually a widespread problem in the 1990s.

Many mitigation measures were taken at that time, and the result of the studies that the B.C. Centre for Disease Control did showed that there was no risk of elevated lead exposure across the population of British Columbia.

Now, if the member doesn't want to take my word for it, this is from our provincial health officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, who I think all of us in this House respect. He says that studies from B.C. Centre for Disease Control show there is no population exposure putting kids at risk, and studies have shown that, in schools where historically high levels of lead in drinking water fountains occur, the kids are not drinking enough water to have health risks.

Now, having said that.... These are the words of Dr. Kendall, I should say, if the members opposite want to listen.

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members.

Hon. T. Lake: Having said that, "when elevated levels are detected, mitigation measures are put in. In this case, flushing is taking place, and filters are being put on to ensure that the level of metals in that drinking water is within the drinking water guidelines."

J. Rice: Yesterday I asked the minister how long he had known school children in my riding had been drinking contaminated water. The minister refused to answer, so I'll give him another chance.
[1035]

How long have children in Prince Rupert been drinking contaminated water and how long has he known about it?

Hon. T. Lake: As I mentioned, Dr. Kendall has informed me that

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him another chance. How long have children in Prince Rupert been drinking contaminated water, and how long has he known about it?

Hon. T. Lake: As I mentioned, Dr. Kendall has informed me that the situation in Kitimat that was discovered is not an unusual situation in older buildings, particularly if you have a water source that has a low pH. You will get leaching of lead and other metals sometimes into the water. That situation alerted the provincial medical health officer for Northern Health in Prince Rupert, and the testing was done.

Now, if the members are truly worried about lead exposure, according to the Centre for Disease Control, they should be railing against natural remedies that are full of lead and that are apparently raising lead levels in children. I don't hear them talking about that.

But we have taken measures to ensure the water in Prince Rupert, Kitimat and other schools is safe for our children to drink.

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Hon. Members, the Chair will hear the answer and the question.

J. Rice: There are many remote communities in my riding, and according to the paper authored by the minister's own staff, many should be concerned about high lead levels. This information was published in a 2014 report on the Kitimat issue. Can the minister tell parents in my riding when the water was tested in schools in Queen Charlotte, in Masset, in Port Clements, in Bella Coola? And what were the results of those tests?

Hon. T. Lake: Medical health officers in all of our health authorities take their jobs very seriously, and as soon as there is a concern that is discovered in any situation that puts people at risk, they investigate. That is exactly what they did here. When lead levels were determined to be high by testing by the medical health officer, action was taken immediately to ensure the mitigation measures were put in place and parents were informed. And we ensure that children have safe drinking water in those schools.

R. Fleming: The minister just answered the question by saying that when there is a concern, the health authorities react. Well, there is a concern. There's a concern that was published by three scientists in his own ministry, and there's been no testing.

The question that was asked by the member for North Coast was: when did the Minister of Health know about the elevated lead levels in these schools? And will he tell the House, in a straightforward manner, when, in fact, he was first made aware of the discovery?

Hon. T. Lake: I was made aware of this, this week. As soon as Northern Health reported those results, we were made aware. In fact, I take the advice from people who have expertise in this area. Dr. Perry Kendall is someone that I think all of us respect in terms of his recommendations. Dr. Kendall assures me that after the Kitimat situation....

That alerted other medical health officers in the region to test the water. In fact, that's exactly what happened. As soon as the problem was determined to be a potential problem, water was tested, action was taken, and as Dr. Kendall says, there is no widespread risk to children in Prince Rupert, Kitimat, or any other place in British Columbia.

SUPPORT FOR FIRST RESPONDERS WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

S. Simpson: There is a growing consensus in British Columbia and across Canada that post-traumatic stress disorder is a real and very serious occupational threat for first responders. We know from evidence that police, firefighters, ambulance paramedics, sheriffs, corrections officers and dispatchers experience PTSD about two times the general rate of the population.

More than 80 first responders have committed suicide in Canada since April of 2014. Unfortunately, too many first responders are struggling to get services in a timely and effective manner.

We know that Alberta, Manitoba and now Ontario are taking, or have taken, action on a presumptive clause in the area of workers compensation on this issue.

[1040]

Will the minister reconsider the position she took in estimates last year and initiate work on a presumptive clause for first responders who suffer from PTSD?

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Will the minister reconsider the position she took in estimates last year and initiate work on a presumptive clause for first responders who suffer from PTSD?

Hon. S. Bond: I know that every member of this House and British Columbians do care a great deal about the impacts of the work that first responders do in British Columbia. Many of us in our personal lives have relationships with people who go through those very difficult circumstances.

British Columbia, in 2012, was the first jurisdiction in the country to recognize that there are impacts in your workplace that could impact your mental health and wellness. In fact, in the legislation that we put in place, we did look at recognizing post-traumatic stress disorder.

Here in British Columbia today, once a person has been diagnosed with PTSD, there are a series of supports put in place immediately. All of us are concerned about the impacts on first responders' lives. We are continuing to look at ways that we can provide the kind of support that they deserve.

Madame Speaker: The member for Vancouver-Hastings on a supplemental.

S. Simpson: What we know is the extent of that support that's apparent now is this committee with WorkSafe and a number of the unions and others. But we know that that committee is not adequate. We know that that committee has been directed that legislation is not to be part of its conversation. WorkSafe has been clear. Now many of the participants in that committee are telling me that it's bogging down, and they're starting to be frustrated with its progress.

The minister knows the story of Lisa Jennings. I know the minister has met with Ms. Jennings, who is a fast first responder who has been a strong voice for those who suffer from PTSD. She's with us in the gallery today.

Lisa, though, is like so many first responders who've provided critical services, often in traumatic circumstances, for all of us and our families and our communities. Many of those first responders are now suffering the consequences of those services.

Will the minister tell first responders today that she's going to take action on a presumptive clause, and if not, why not? It can't simply be about money.

Hon. S. Bond: I have indeed met with Ms. Jennings, and I have face to face told her how much I appreciate not only her service to British Columbians, but I deeply respect the courage with which she has brought this issue forward in our province and across the country.

To the member opposite, it is about more than money. Today in British Columbia, and especially when I met with Ms. Jennings and a group of others that have been dealing with PTSD.... We talked about what some of the gaps may be, what we needed to do to improve supports. I have worked very directly with WorkSafe to

ensure that if there is a concern about PTSD, they are dealt with extremely quickly. We have had claims accepted in British Columbia.

I'm the first to admit that there is more work to continue to do to support our first responders. But we do need to recognize that in British Columbia today there is a pathway to support first responders. Does there need to be more work? Yes, and that's why we are working very closely with the Minister of Health and others to identify the gaps — in particular, identified to me by Ms. Jennings — between community supports and WorkSafe supports. That work is underway.

It is about more than money. It's about making sure we have an appropriate way, the right supports in place, and that work continues to be done.

MASSEY TUNNEL REPLACEMENT PROJECT

V. Huntington: Metro Vancouver has asked the Minister of Transportation for a two-month extension to the comment period for the project definition report on the Massy Tunnel replacement. Metro needs this additional time to complete its calculations of the project's impacts on both regional land use planning and infrastructure.

The minister has indicated he is not open to the idea. He says the environmental assessment has started and that there will be future opportunities to comment. But the environmental assessment office was looking for comments on the valued components identified in the project definition report, and it is these components that Metro needs more time to consider.

[1045]

Will the minister consult with his colleague the Minister of Environment in a genuine effort to have the comment period on the valued components extended as per the request of Metro Vancouver?

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that Metro needs more time to consider. Will the minister consult with his colleague, the Minister of Environment, in a genuine effort to have the comment period on the valued components extended as per the request of Metro Vancouver?

Hon. T. Stone: The financial stewardship of this province, as evidenced in a balanced budget earlier this week and which is the envy of the country, is why this province has the confidence and the wherewithal to move forward with what will be a multi-billion dollar project creating 9,000 jobs in British Columbia.

Now, with respect to the member's specific question relating to consultation, I will say this. We are just concluding the third formal consultation as part of the George Massey Tunnel replacement project. Metro Vancouver has had many opportunities in those three consultations to offer their input.

We also have met on 20 separate occasions with Metro Vancouver — some of those meetings were with mayors; some of those were with staff — since 2012. All of their input has been incorporated into the project definition report, the business case and, in fact, the 3,700 pages of information that's been released to this point.

I will highlight, as well, that with respect to the environmental assessment process, the project is in the preapplication phase. There are two comment periods available. This is a terrific opportunity, through the balance of this year, for Metro Vancouver to ensure that their concerns and their input is reflected in what will be a critical piece of infrastructure for all British Columbians.

Madame Speaker: Delta South on supplemental.

V. Huntington: Just to answer that comment. The staff at Metro Vancouver are every bit as professional as are the staff in the Ministry of Transportation, and if they feel they need more time to consider valued components, then I think the minister should genuinely consider that request.

In 2013, the minister said that a review of B.C.'s tolling policy was "high up on his to-do list," and that he would engage in "vigorous discussion and debate in order to bring fairness and equity to the hard-working people south of the Fraser." But with no discussion and debate, the minister recently announced that the new

Massey bridge will be tolled. It would seem that the hard-working people south of the Fraser are going to pay for the bridge after all.

A provincial tolling review should have started years ago, and this minister should have been leading it. Instead, he decided the people south of the Fraser should shoulder the financial burden for the largest infrastructure project in British Columbian history. Why didn't the minister follow through on his promise, and will he commit to starting that review today?

Hon. T. Stone: Again, we are very excited that we are moving forward with the largest infrastructure project in the province. At this point, it will address the single largest bottleneck in the province. There are 80,000 commuters, and I would hasten to suggest to the member opposite that a good number of them are her constituents, who are sitting in their vehicles day after day because of the congestion that exists at this point.

This project is going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This project is going to facilitate expanded transit. This project is going to create a lot of jobs.

With respect to the member's specific question on tolling, we're obviously very well aware that there is a vibrant debate, a discussion taking place in the region with respect to tolling.

Interjections.

Madame Speaker: Members.

Hon. T. Stone: We welcome the input of all British Columbians in that debate. At the end of the day, hon. Speaker, the tolling policy requires that we engage with British Columbians whenever tolling is considered for major infrastructure, and that is exactly what we are doing on this project.

[1050]

INVESTIGATION INTO REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS

D. Eby: It was last week that the Real Estate Council of B.C. wrote to realtors saying that the actions of a few realtors had "shaken public confidence in the real estate industry." In fact, it's the Real Estate Council and this government's lack of oversight that has shaken public confidence.

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D. Eby: It was last week that the Real Estate Council of B.C. wrote to realtors saying that the actions of a few realtors had "shaken public confidence in the real estate industry." In fact, it's the Real Estate Council's and this government's lack of oversight that has shaken public confidence.

Realtor Banti Shahi, for example, was hired by a Burnaby family to sell their home. He told them he had found a buyer. He hid the fact that he was also the agent for the buyer and that he would receive additional commission if they sold to this person. He also lied to the buyer, saying he'd pay the buyer half of his commission. He never paid a dime.

Mr. Shahi was never suspended, not even for a day. It took the Real Estate Council a year and eight months just to fine him.

To the Minister of Finance: why is the Real Estate Council investigating itself when they allow Mr. Shahi to continue selling property after ripping off not one, but two B.C. families on the same transaction?

Hon. M. de Jong: Maybe I can correct at least one thing the member has said. The Real Estate Council, which is statutorily responsible for this self-regulated profession — and it has been a self-regulated profession for many decades — has sought the leadership assistance and expertise of the independent real estate superintendent, with whom I know the member has had an opportunity to meet.

She is in the midst of putting together an informed and experienced panel to look at precisely the kinds of issues that the member alludes to today, describes today. He will know from our past conversations in this chamber that I share concerns about circumstances in which real estate agents are not fulfilling their primary obligations and duties to their client.

The work of the superintendent is underway. The panel is being composed, and I expect their first report by the middle of April.

Madame Speaker: The member for Point Grey on a supplemental.

D. Eby: When Shahi Sahaly lied to the Real Estate Council about a court finding that he had committed fraud, he kept his licence, wasn't suspended. When Frank Chu committed fraud by altering a contract to secretly double the commission to be paid by his client, he was allowed to continue selling property in B.C., even when he appeared yet again before the Real Estate Council on another offence.

When realtor Ama Basari committed fraud by secretly altering a contract to double the commission he took from a family buying a home in Surrey and then committed four other violations of Real Estate Council rules on just three transactions, he was suspended for just 30 days.

Within the last three months, four realtors who have stolen money from B.C. families through deceit had their cases decided by the Real Estate Council. Not a single one lost the privilege to sell real estate in B.C.

The minister knows the Real Estate Council has a prominent role in running this investigation into themselves. With their high tolerance for fraud on B.C. families, why is this council investigating itself and its own problems that led to the public loss of confidence in realtors in B.C.?

Hon. M. de Jong: Well, two things. First of all, for reasons that the member is well aware of, the Real Estate Council most pointedly is not investigating itself. It has sought the leadership and expertise of the separate and independent superintendent, who exists statutorily, organizationally, administratively, entirely separate from the council.

If the member is expecting any kind of defence, let alone spirited defence, of behaviour on the part of realtors that falls short of the standard they are expected to uphold professionally, he will not receive it from me. It is for that reason that the superintendent is engaged. It is for that reason that we are anxiously awaiting the results of their work.

As I have said and members of the government, including the Premier, have said, if the kind of behaviour that is described continues and unless we see a plan and evidence of an approach that will eliminate that behaviour, the government reserves the right to act statutorily.

[1055]

DISABILITY BENEFITS AND BUS PASS PROGRAM CHANGES

M. Mungall: Well, this week, the Liberals' budget presented a lot of smoke and mirrors. Bad ideas were made to sound nice with words like "choice"

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M. Mungall: This week the Liberal's budget presented a lot of smoke and mirrors. Bad ideas were made to sound nice with words like "choice" and "increase to rates" But looking behind those words, here's what we see: the tenth year with no increase to shelter or cost of living for people with disabilities and the cancellation of an annual bus pass program that cost \$45 per year. Its replacement is \$580 more expensive each year, at \$52 a month.

While the government gives with one hand, it's taking away with the other. My question is to the Minister of Social Development. Why is she playing a shell game with the province's most vulnerable citizens and their well-being?

Hon. Michelle Stilwell: There are, absolutely, people around this province who need our support, and that is why we continue to improve our policies and create some of the most progressive policies in the country. Budget 2016 provides \$456 million to the Ministry of Social Development over the next several years.

It's unfortunate that the member opposite doesn't seem to understand the changes that we've made and the significance of over \$1 billion in new money for social programs in the next three years.

For the record, let me clarify: 40,000 individuals in British Columbia with the designation of persons with disabilities assistance were not eligible for the bus pass program because of where they live. That change that we have made makes it — creates an equity around the system for people with disability but also provides an increase in their rates and gives them the freedom to choose how they make their transportation decisions.

M. Mungall: Well, no surprise. We hear a lot more of this rhetoric from the minister. She's talking about choice. She's making grand claims that they're doing everything they possibly can. But this is what they've done. They've cancelled a bus pass program that people around this province relied on. It cost them only \$45 a year, and that has been confirmed. This cancellation has been confirmed by groups like Inclusion B.C. It was all over the media yesterday, and the minister should maybe check into that, then, if she's saying otherwise.

The fact of the matter is that the \$45-a-year program has been cancelled, and there are people who have no choice but to now shell out another \$52, and they're not getting an increase.

Madame Speaker: Question.

M. Mungall: Many seniors who relied on the \$45-a-year bus pass now get nothing, and it is shameful.

I want to know from the Minister of Social Development: why is she making life harder for seniors in this province?

Hon. Michelle Stilwell: Again, let me clarify for the member opposite, because she doesn't seem to get it. The bus pass program will still be eligible for those people who choose to have it. They are receiving an increase, and people in her community are receiving the increase. The policy reforms that we are making are making life better for British Columbians.

[End of question period.]

Thomson, Craig S FIN:EX

From: Enemark, Gord FIN:EX
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2016 4:11 PM
To: Mirza, Sadaf FIN:EX; Riley, Dave FIN:EX; Epp, Don FIN:EX; Chandler, Alex FIN:EX; Godin, Keith FIN:EX
Subject: FW: For review: Budget speech draft
Attachments: Budget speech ~ Jan 28_DRAFT.docx

Importance: High

Please get me any edits by noon tomorrow. Dave/Sadaf if you can collaborate on one copy that would be helpful.

From: Williams, Susan GCPE:EX
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2016 4:07 PM
To: Enemark, Gord FIN:EX; Farkas, George FIN:EX; Flanagan, Paul FIN:EX; Purnell, Richard FIN:EX
Cc: Edwardson, Jamie GCPE:EX; McLachlin, Jessica GCPE:EX
Subject: For review: Budget speech draft
Importance: High

We're delivering this draft to the Minister tomorrow afternoon (he asked for it Friday afternoon so he could look at it over the weekend).

This version incorporates his feedback and changes from Tuesday afternoon's meeting.

Please review and track any changes or comments before tomorrow afternoon. I know that some of the info and numbers will still be in flux, but we're looking for any obvious information mistakes or omissions.

Thanks!
Susan

Susan Williams
Senior Public Affairs Officer
GCPE – Ministry of Finance
Office: 250 387-9092
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