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David Eby: This announcement today about student housing is an important one. I think that those of us who have had the opportunity to live in student residence know that it is an important experience. It is part of learning to live on your own, away from home, in a safer environment; often it's more affordable than market housing; learning how to keep things relatively clean; that it is a place to build lifelong friendships with colleagues and to really become an adult, and then transition out, hopefully, into a professional career and really build your life in this province.

The challenge that we face, of course, in BC is that if you'd like to have that experience, if you're able to move into student residence, the spaces fill up fast or there's a wait list and you're not able to get into this really important kind of housing. It means students are forced off campus and that has implications for the broader community as well. All of a sudden, people who are looking for housing are competing with students from the local post secondary institution. In my community, it's the University of BC.

If there's not enough on-campus housing it has an impact on people who are not students who are also looking for rental housing. When Cailey and I were out for a date a little while ago, we were in Richmond and our server was a UBC kinesiology student, and she lives in Richmond despite attending UBC. She spends about an hour on transit each direction to go and from her classes. That adds stress and cost to her overall experience, as well as she'd love to live in residence to build those friendships and have those experiences, but it wasn't available to her. There are many, many students in this situation across the province.

Our government is building student housing at an unprecedented pace. In 2018, you'll recall we committed to building 8,000 student beds in the ten-year period from 2018 to 2028. Today, five years later, we've nearly achieved that goal. More than 7,700 new beds are open, underway, and funded, and to put that in context, in 16 years -- the previous administration -- 130 beds were built.

So for the visual learners in the crowd -- got a little book display here -- very appropriate student -- so for every one unit that the previous government built in 16 years, we built 59 units of student housing and this really captures why it's such a challenge for students today to find that housing. So we've got more to do now.

We do know that there are people out there who think that the housing market should be managed in a way that ensures that no sector is oversupplied in a way that may cause developer profits to come down. We have a different perspective in our party. We believe that

housing is a place to live, that housing is not a profit centre or an investment portfolio builder, and that is why I'm pleased to share with you that our new goal for student housing is 12,000 beds instead of our original goal of 8,000 beds by 2028.

In particular, I'm very proud to share with you that Sngequ House at the University of Victoria is now open. It's home to 385 students and was completed one year ahead of schedule. Congratulations to University of Victoria on that. Last year we opened Cheko'nien House, nearly 400 beds and a dining hall. The new residence increases the University of Victoria student housing market by 25% and takes pressure off of the broader Victoria rental housing market.

Now this is just part of our overall work to make life more affordable for students, for people who are building their skills for the future. We waived tuition for former youth and care of all ages. We increased access to grants and financial assistance for students. We eliminated the interest on student loans. We invested in zero cost textbooks. We made contraception free. Since 2020, more than 65,000 students have received access to the BC Access Grant, which provides up to \$4,000 a year to help defray the cost of post secondary. And we've also deployed the Future Ready Action Plan, which has tuition free post secondary courses for people in BC.

Building student housing is just one more way that we're creating more homes for people. We're building more rentals than ever before in this province. We've put in place the speculation and vacancy tax, recently announced expanding to 13 additional communities. We've eliminated rental and age restrictions in stratas, opening up rental housing units that previously couldn't be rented. And we are restricting short-term rentals in Victoria and cities across the province, making sure that Airbnbs are out and people are into these important housing units that they need.

Students are definitely the future of our province. Young people in our province need to see a future for themselves here. Part of that for many people includes post secondary education. Addressing those barriers to education is a critical way to ensure that our students are successful and our province is successful as a whole. For all BCers, thank you to all the students. I wish you the best of luck on finals and I hope you enjoy a well deserved holiday break.

## Q&A

Reporter: Homeless advocates in Vancouver are calling for a moratorium on the ban of sleeping in parks through the winter because they don't believe there are enough shelter spaces for people to go inside. Would the province consider this ask to ensure that people have a safe, warm place to stay this winter?

Eby: It's essential for people to be able to get inside this winter. It's already cold out, and our government is working hard to open up emergency cold/wet weather shelter spaces across the province.

I'll be blunt. In some cities it has been easier than others. And I urge all municipal leaders to work with us. The funding is there. The commitment is there to open these spaces. And the need is certainly there in communities across the province. Encampments, people sleeping in tents, especially during the winter, is a last resort.

There is a constitutionally recognized right of people, when shelter spaces aren't available, to be able to set up a tent in the park. That is not what we want. We want people to be inside, in a shelter with supports and the opportunity to go from the shelter into housing that we're building as well. So that's where our focus is.

We recognize the rights of people, when shelters aren't available, to be able to sleep in parks. And in Victoria here there are designated parks. But our preference is to really work with cities to open up the shelter space that we need.

Reporter: A year ago people in Metro Vancouver felt winter chaos. There were hour-long waits. What has this government learned from what happened last year during the snowstorm that has improved the conditions in Metro Vancouver if we have another event like that?

Eby: The Ministry of Transportation did a review following last year's storms to make sure we were working as best as possible to ensure that people were able to get from point A to point B safely, regardless of weather conditions. And Minister Fleming, I understand, will be available later today. He can provide more detail about that. But that is a commitment to BCers, and we're going to continue to do that work.

Reporter: My question is for anyone here who can answer this. Can you tell us how much one of these units would cost a student per month?

Kevin Hall: I can't give you the monthly. Students come typically for two semesters. It's about a \$7,000 charge. We've actually benchmarked this to other universities in the province. We are doing a very good service for students by having quite a good rate.

Reporter: My next question is for the Premier.

Premier Eby, what you say to concerns from the BC Green Party and other parties that sessions are lasting too long, there is not enough transparency when debating legislation, and they are concerned about their ability to meaningfully comment on the significant number of bills in front of the House before the end of the session?

Eby: The practice in BC for many years was not to have a fall session. We have had significantly more sitting days. We are trying to recognize the reality of our Legislative Assembly as it stands right now, which is that we have not the traditional two parties, not the traditional three parties. We actually have four parties in the Legislative Assembly right now, plus an independent, all of whom have the right and the need to ask questions about legislation. This has required additional time.

To respond to that, the House leader has set out extended sitting days. We've been sitting until 9 o'clock at night to ensure that people are able to canvass legislation in detail. And it is an important role for opposition parties to be able to do that. It was something that I did for four years, and I thought it was an important work, and it was. And so certainly it is something that we support.

I met with the Green Party leader this morning, and she reminded me of her interest in more time and more opportunity to canvass these bills, so we will continue to look for ways that we can improve the way this place operates to provide opportunities for opposition parties to not just examine government bills but also bring forward their own proposals as well.

Reporter: Premier, your homelessness bill, the shelter definition bill, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs has released a letter calling on you to withdraw it. There was debate in the Legislature yesterday over whether you should take this bill out, and not pass it. You have talked about putting in this cabinet provision to enact it. But if you pass it and there are legitimate concerns, you can't change it. So what is the point of the path you are on, on this bill? Why not just take it out until the spring?

Eby: This particular bill responds to a really challenge in our communities. We have, like many provinces across Canada, seen an increase in the number of people sleeping outside and also in encampments, a significant number of people grouped together, living together outside.

One of the challenges we have run into is inconsistent decisions from courts about what the standard is that a local government has to meet to be able to decamp. What is the level of shelter that is required? Do individuals need to be, and to what degree do their individual needs need to be accommodated?

And that inconsistent standard has resulted in, for example, in the case of CRAB Park, the city of Vancouver park board going to court, trying to get an injunction to address the encampment, and then the resolution being that the encampment just stays there.

This initiative is really about establishing a standard, because we have also had issues in communities like Prince George, where the city council moved ahead to decamp an encampment, to move people out without ensuring there were adequate shelter beds in place for people to be able to go to. And I do not think there is anyone in this province that supports the idea of moving someone out of an encampment to another encampment. It doesn't solve the problem. It doesn't make anything better.

So we need to ensure that cities meet a minimum standard before removing an encampment that recognizes people's human rights. So the goal of this bill is to set up that minimum standard. Here is the standard you need to hit.

On the one side, now, we have the Union of BC Municipalities that says it makes it impossible to remove encampments if this passes. On the other side, we have housing advocates saying the complete opposite. And I met with, just by way of example, the federal housing advocate this morning.

This is difficult work. This is not something that we go into with a sense of excitement. This is something that has to be done. We do not want to end up in the situation of Oregon and California, of expanding city-sized encampments that cannot be addressed. And at the same time, we want to ensure that we are recognizing the basic human rights and dignity of people who are sleeping outside through no fault of their own.

So we will continue to do this work. Having the legislation in place but not brought into force except by an order-in-council gives the opportunity to go back to the stakeholders, to talk through what are their concerns. I met with the federal housing advocate this morning to talk about her concerns. She'd written to us. We will be meeting with UBCM. We'll be meeting with the First Nations Leadership Council.

If we can't address the concerns, then we won't bring the bill into force. But if we can, if there's a path forward, we will bring into force, and it will be a tool that will be available to protect the human rights of people who are sleeping outside this winter, but also to give

municipalities a clear path, when they are making offers of shelter to people and they are refusing to leave for their own safety, to get that injunction to be able to address the encampment in the park.

It's a critical piece of our housing strategy the people understand what their obligations are in terms of governments and we are respecting people's human rights, but also that when we are funding high quality, good options where people can go into shelter, get meals and then transition into permanent housing, that those are taken up as well.

Reporter: The head of Canada's navy yesterday put out a video saying that the navy is so underfunded, understaffed under resourced, it's in a critical state and it can't meet its basic requirements in BC next year on the west coast. Does that worry you at all? Have you heard anything from the prime minister about this? Does it matter to BCers that the navy can't meet its basic requirements here in this province?

Eby: From BC's perspective, the protection of our west coast and the role of the navy in particular is critical. So there is obviously the defence aspect of our west coast, making sure from a military point of view that Canada is safe and protected; we are exercising our sovereignty in international waters. But the navy also plays a critical role around issues of drug smuggling, illegal fishing, human trafficking, important work that they do in partnership with the United States and that BCers expect them to do.

So I'm certainly concerned to hear that the navy may not be able to fulfil those basic expectations that all BCers have. For example, when you talk about our salmon fishery, the ability of foreign trawlers to be able to fish with impunity in BC waters, decimating our salmon stocks, is a concern to every single BCer. And the ability of the coast guard and the navy and others to be able to ensure that the rule of law is respected in Canada's territorial waters is critically important to so many different industries and to respect for nature here in BC.

So I certainly encourage the federal government to have a look at those concerns, and this is the first time hearing of it.

Reporter: Premier, we have been hearing from cancer patients, one who went to the US and paid \$200,000 out of pocket for a treatment that she said cannot be done here but that surgery saved her life. Another who was a dual US citizen and was able to get that covered. What you say to cancer patients who are saying that even with the Bellingham option, they are still facing unacceptable wait times?

Eby: The need for anybody who faces a cancer diagnosis to be able to get the care that they need right away, within the windows of time that are established by scientific evidence about maximizing their possibility of recovery and defeating cancer, is absolutely essential. I don't care who you are in this province. If you have a family member or someone close to you who is facing a cancer diagnosis, or you do yourself, that is basic.

So we have dedicated significant additional resources to meet the increasing demand we have around cancer diagnosis going up in this province. We have an aging population. We are seeing a record number of cancer diagnoses in this province. At the same time, we are competing with other jurisdictions across Canada for oncologists, for radiation technologists. We've increased the salaries for those critical roles. We have been able to turn the tide and recruit a significant number of those professionals into our cancer teams here to respond and

reduce wait times.

To take the pressure off, we have expanded into the United States. We have retained a firm in Bellingham to be able to deliver cancer care to people so that folks don't have to wait. I'm advised that the recent data we have that is that 49 of the 50 spaces that we have contracted for in Bellingham are currently being used. And I understand it's not going to work for everybody, but we need to give people options. So we're going to respond to this the same way that we have to the other challenges we face in our health care system, through our human resources strategy, through the new cancer treatment centres in Nanaimo, in Kamloops, by ensuring we are competitive with other jurisdictions across Canada for these professionals and making sure that we have the facilities and staff that we need to be able to deliver that care.

Reporter: Have you received any Canadian intelligence about the arrest of the alleged hitman who was contracted to take out a hit on the US New York-based lawyer who was colleagues with a Sikh leader here, Nijjar? And his assassination was also discussed. Again, links to the Indian government in that. What kind of briefing have you been given, and what can you tell us?

Eby: I haven't received any information beyond what I have been able to read in the media about these developments out of the United States and the indictment that has been filed there.

The federal government, I will say, to their credit, has made an effort to be able to provide what information they can to me through existing channels. But unfortunately, the CSIS Act restricts CSIS's ability to share information with the provincial government.

And the reason this is important is pretty straightforward. BCers, and especially, currently, those in the Indian ex-pat community, need to be safe. If there is information and credible information that there is a threat to their lives from a foreign government that wants them dead in Canada, then the province having that information, being able to respond as well in partnership with the federal government is critically important.

The federal government has started an engagement about reforms to the CSIS Act to make changes to be able to share that information so we can keep BCers safe. I hope that it happens quickly. I hope that those changes are implemented quickly at the federal level so that we can get that information that we need to make sure that BCers are safe.

Reporter: I will first ask about a follow up for my colleague and then the housing announcement. BC United and the Green Party are saying that it's not democratic because basically the NDP is choosing how much time is spent on debating and which bill. I just wanted to hear you on that.

Eby: We have a fixed amount of time in the Legislature to be able to get through a significant amount of work. We, traditionally, have been able to work with the opposition parties in allocating time for different bills and do things in a cooperative way. I would say that it has become significantly more challenging with three opposition parties and an independent member to be able to do the planning to provide more predictability around each bill and the amount of time that is required to get through each bill.

I think that as we move forward and each party and the House leader deepen those relationships we'll be able to be a little bit more predictable in that work together. But right now it has been a challenge and I accept that it's been a challenge. We've extended the hours

that we sit and debate these bills, to sit for almost 12-hour days of debate and discussion on these important initiatives, but I'll also say BCers can't wait.

These are initiatives related to housing, the crisis that we face right now in housing, and we feel a sense of urgency around these reforms as well. So we're trying to find that balance. There's a lot of moving parts here in the Legislature these days with all the different parties and we're going to continue to do that work and I accept the critique that we can always do better, and there's always an opportunity for us to provide more debate, more committee work, and opportunities for members in opposition that do important work to be able to raise concerns and do the work that their constituents sent them here to do.

Reporter: I'm hoping for an explanation regarding the apology to the Doukhobors that you didn't make yesterday, and specifically this is something you've been talking about since 2018, it's something the government said four months ago would happen in the fall, it's become clear it's not going to happen in the fall, and I'm wondering why people weren't involved, why they weren't consulted sooner, and given a date sooner?

Eby: Yeah, I would say this is an example of government with all good intentions wanting to get work done, wanting to move forward, and losing track of making sure that it's done right. So the plan was yesterday that we would do an apology and recognition of the impacts faced by Doukhobor children in particular in our Legislative Assembly. It became quite clear to me that there hasn't been opportunity for survivors or family members to come to Victoria, to make travel arrangements, to be able to witness this and that we weren't able to offer, for those that are too sick or elderly or not able through disability to be able to attend Victoria, opportunities in Grand Forks or in Castlegar for people to gather and observe.

When we do this work, and examples are the apology to the Japanese community, we need to do it right and it is something that we pointed out under the previous administration is something that can be done in a way that actually deepens the harm rather than recognizes and begins to work at building trust.

I made the decision that we would take the time to make sure that the community could be physically here, that they could be part of the recognition of their own mistreatment by the provincial government, knowing that some people had expectations that it would happen this week and that they may be disappointed, this is a community that already has trust issues with government, but I just felt the need for them to be physically present if they could be and the need for us to accommodate people in local communities was just too important to not say let's regroup, let's make the right decision, let's do this properly.

Reporter: I think lots of people in the community agree with that. We were talking about 80-year-olds in the Kootenays who wanted to be here. The apology was to happen Tuesday morning. You invited them on the Monday. There was four months before that. I'm not really understanding who dropped the ball or why things weren't in line for a proper apology yesterday.

Eby: I'll take responsibility. This is an initiative out of the Premier's Office and it should have been done and it wasn't done, and for anyone that that caused difficulty for, I want to apologize to them. I made a number of calls last night to clarify why we were deferring this to a date when people were able to attend and I understand people's disappointment about that.

And just a commitment that we're going to do things right and sometimes that means



recognizing when you're screwing up and this is one of those occasions.

Reporter: Question regarding the public accounts that came out yesterday; they showed that BC exports are down 16% year to year over the first nine months of this year. How concerned are you that the trade winds are blowing in the face of BC at this stage?

Eby: I think trade data is something that we've been proud of. We've seen an increase of 41% in our exports since forming government. But recently with the downturn in the global economy and rising interest rates, we are seeing the softening of demand for major exports from BC. We've also seen commodities exported from BC at a lower global price, which means that our exports are at the same level, but they're not commanding the same price globally as they were before. And so it appears as though exports are lowered when actually just the value of the same number of exports is down.

Our goal around trade is pretty straightforward. Diversifying the countries that we trade with - we've opened new trade offices in Vietnam and the Philippines and in Taiwan to increase our trading partners. Today's news out of India is just one more reminder of how vulnerable our international relationships can be. We're a small trade-dependent jurisdiction. Canada's relationship with the rest of the world has a disproportionate impact on BC. Tensions between the US and China and Canada and China and Canada and India have impacts on trade for us and so it's critical that we have a diverse number of clients and customers, that BC businesses are supported in finding customers and clients in other parts of the world, and that we have an array of industries that are exporting as well.

So we're continuing our work around that and we are seeing some of the impacts of a slowing global economy right here in BC.

Reporter: I'm not expecting you to announce your budget here today, but what, if any, headline or what, if any, lesson are you taking away from the public accounts that could impact what the budget is going to look like in February of next year?

Eby: One of the challenges that we have in the budgeting exercise is understanding what our revenues are in the province and that's because we're very dependent on Revenue Canada to provide us with data. We're still getting data from Revenue Canada about the 2022 tax year that are being reflected in our updates. It makes it challenging to know the actual fiscal position of the province, but despite those challenges we know around the province the key challenges faced by people.

We know that people are struggling with affordability generally and particularly in relationship to housing. We know that our health care system needs support to ensure that health care is there for people when they need it. And we also know that we need to continue to build our economy and we need to continue to ensure safe and strong communities across the province. None of these things will be surprises to anyone here.

These are all areas of focus and priority that we've talked about, that I've been talking about since being sworn in as Premier. We're going to continue that focus, whether it's in the budget or otherwise, as government and as for the impact of rising interest rates, the slowing global economy, issues around rising costs of the materials for our capital projects and so on, things shift quite dramatically in the economy globally right now and so the Finance minister is definitely being kept on her toes.



Reporter: Hi, Premier. Just a follow up on the encampment amendments, just forgive me, I'm trying to understand -- I understand that some, previously, they have gotten to that stage -- third reading -- and then they can potentially sit in limbo for a while, and this is a very complicated situation, as you obviously know. I'm just wondering what's the capacity to make changes at that point, after it's been through third reading, and then there's no ability to debate it after? I'm just not clear on that.

Eby: So just from a purely technical point of view, a bill comes into force either on Royal Assent or by order-in-council. Royal Assent, the bills usually go through in a group at the end of the session. By order-in-council there's no due date or no timeline on ordering council bring it into force. So for example, when we were sworn into government we brought into force a provision that had been passed by the Liberals almost a decade previously about privatization in the health care system. We brought it into force through order-in-council. That was a bill that had been passed, debated in the House, and then sat for many years before being brought into force by our government.

So the bill can stay there. It can't be amended. It would have to come back to the Legislature for further debate if there were changes that needed to be made. My hope is on this bill that people are looking at it and if you're a housing advocate, you see a bill that somehow reduces people's human rights, even though it explicitly recognizes a right to dignified shelter in the province, and if you're a municipality, you look at it and you say, oh my gosh, I'm never going to be able to remove an encampment again, and so somewhere between these perspectives is the actual impact of the bill.

So our hope is that by meeting with the different advocates, whether for municipalities or First Nations or housing advocates, that we're able to help people understand the intent of the bill, have a discussion about whether it achieves that intent, and really narrow down what our points of difference are.

Reporter: I'm just wondering if you then change it based on all these consultations and feedback, is there an opportunity for debate on that or...?

Eby: Yes, the short answer is we cannot change it unless it comes back to the Legislative Assembly for the full bill process.

Reporter: I'm looking at the housing shortage for students in Victoria. You've just taken care of that with UVic. Camosun has several thousand students as well that would need housing. Is that the next tranche of what you're going to do about student housing? And that would free up more housing for the local community as well.

Eby: I know Camosun and many other post secondary institutions in the province have proposals around housing. We're keen to work with them. I know UVic has more proposals around housing that they want to bring forward. I think it's safe to say that there is huge demand for student housing right now in the province. Our government, by increasing our own goals from 8,000 to 12,000 units of student housing, additional resources for universities and colleges to be able to access for that, we're opening opportunities for schools like Camosun and other universities to be able to advance those proposals with us.

We are keen to have schools develop more housing, including schools that haven't had housing before and are building their housing program from scratch.

Reporter: This might seem like a broad question, but do you feel that with all the new housing legislation you've done enough for renters? And where I'm going with that as well is that even with all the good initiatives that you've brought in, it will take time for some of these spaces to liberate. And as people are let go from their rental accommodation, where do they go? There's going to be a short term crisis.

Eby: There there's no question that people are struggling to find the housing they need right now, which is why we've really focused on where can we find housing that's available right now that can be opened right away. So our changes around the strata rules, for example, that prohibited rental prohibitions required stratus to permit people to rent out their units is one example that the short-term rental initiative, which, by the way, I got a letter there for yesterday from someone who has just moved into a place that he says was previously a short-term rental. It's a fully furnished apartment. Four units in a house; went from three. The owner lived in one. There were three Airbnb units. Now the owner lives in one, there's one Airbnb unit, and there are two rental units.

He rented one of them. So we're already seeing the impacts of the short-term rental legislation and with that said, we know we've got more to do. We are seeing some landlords misusing what's called landlord use provision where they evict somebody for a landlord use and then bring in a new tenant at a higher rent. We know that's an area that requires attention. We also are hearing from landlords and people who want to be landlords who are concerned about tenants who choose not to pay rent or who caused significant damage or are involved in criminal activity in the unit.

These are all areas that we are looking at because we want more people to become landlords and we also want to make sure that tenants that are benefiting from the carefully thought out rent controls we do have in the province, that they're not evicted for improper reasons. So there's more work to do, absolutely, and we are working on it.