

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS SECRETARIAT
PREMIER'S ESTIMATES NOTES
2024

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2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Title: B.C. – Federal Relations

Issue: B.C.'s engagement with the federal government

Response:

- The B.C. and federal governments are in frequent contact at all levels - from the Premier and Prime Minister down to operational departments - both in Ottawa and in B.C., to advance opportunities to work together for the benefit of British Columbians.
- There are a number of key priorities for B.C. that would benefit from federal support and partnerships: addressing housing supply and affordability, growing a clean and inclusive economy, improving health care, building safe and resilient communities, and advancing Indigenous reconciliation.
- We will continue to focus on working with the federal government to get results for British Columbians. This includes pressing for further progress on areas of concern such as: infrastructure funding; Indigenous housing on and off reserve; and the pressure that record population growth is putting on communities and services.

Background/Status:

Areas where B.C. has successfully made our voice heard and/or coordinated our actions with the federal government:

- Housing: B.C. and Canada both recognize the need for ambitious and innovative actions to increase housing supply and affordability, and Canada has acknowledged B.C.'s leadership in this space. In early 2024, Canada committed to a \$2bn matching contribution to the BC Builds program, to build thousands of attainable, middle-income homes across the province.
- Clean economic development: B.C. is a vital partner to building a resilient and sustainable Canadian economy, as recognized through major federal investments in B.C.'s clean growth economy, including in the E-One Moli EV battery plant in Maple Ridge, and in AbCellera's life sciences and biotechnology campus in Vancouver, each of which will result in over 400 highly-skilled jobs.
- Environment: B.C. and Canada share a commitment to conserve and steward biodiversity, habitats and species in B.C., in partnership with First Nations, including through the historic \$1bn Nature Agreement signed between Canada, B.C. and the First Nations Leadership Council in November 2023.
- Health care: B.C. and Canada share a commitment to uphold the public health care system in B.C., including through the signing of a \$1.2bn agreement to improve health-care services across the province, with a focus on shared health-care priorities, as well as through a \$773M agreement to improve access to home and community care and long-term care for seniors in B.C.

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

- Reconciliation: B.C. and the federal government are closely aligned in our commitments to Indigenous reconciliation. Both governments are committed to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- Public safety: B.C. successfully advocated for federal legislative reforms to the bail system to address repeat, violent offenders, and has coordinated efforts with federal partners to combat organized crime.
- Climate action: Both governments are aligned on emissions reductions, pollution pricing targets, and in their commitments to invest in the clean energy transition.

Other areas where B.C. continues to make our voice heard include:

- Easing the impacts of the high cost of living, especially on seniors, families, young people, and small businesses.
- Alleviating pressures that record population growth is having on communities, impacting housing, public services, and core infrastructure needs.
- Infrastructure funding, to bolster supply chains, enable economic prosperity, respond to climate disasters, and support housing (e.g. Fraser River Tunnel, Highway 1 improvements, Iona Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades).
- The critical need for Indigenous housing, both on and off reserve.
- The need for a coordinated, all-government approach to combatting the toxic drug crisis.
- Continued investment in clean energy and decarbonization, including electrification, hydrogen development, and critical mineral mining.
- Coordinating emergency management responses to wildfires, flooding, and drought, including in mitigation and adaptation strategies, and in relief and recovery.
- Coastal issues including Pacific salmon restoration, Indigenous commercial fisheries, the Oceans Protection Plan, and marine conservation areas.
- The need to coordinate actions to prevent foreign interference in democratic institutions.
- Addressing labour shortages, skills training and credential recognition in key sectors.
- Cross-border issues with the United States (see separate notes).

Contact: Grant Smith - 250-387-1042
Executive Director, Federalism and Canadian Intergovernmental Policy

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Title: Interprovincial Relations

Issue: B.C.'s participation in the Council of the Federation, Western Premiers' Conference and other interprovincial relations

Response:

- B.C. pursues constructive working relationships with all other provinces and territories, both bilaterally and through multilateral tables like the Council of the Federation and the Western Premiers' Conference.
- These relationships allow us to project our influence on the national stage by joining forces with others and by speaking up to ensure that the national consensus reflects B.C.'s interests.

Background/Status:

Council of the Federation (COF)

- The Council of the Federation (COF) is composed of the thirteen Premiers of Canada's provinces and territories. It was established in 2003, building on the earlier practice of Annual Premiers' Conferences.
- The Chair of COF is assumed by a Premier on a rotational basis, typically for a one-year term.
 - The current Chair is Premier Tim Houston of Nova Scotia.
 - B.C. was most recently Chair of COF in 2021/22.
 - The Chair for 2024/25 will be Premier Doug Ford of Ontario. The exact date of the transition is yet to be determined but will be at or after the 2024 summer meeting.
- COF ordinarily meets at least once each year, with the main summer meeting being supplemented as necessary by a shorter winter meeting. Manitoba hosted the last in-person summer meeting on July 11-12, 2023. Premiers have met virtually since then, and they met in person on November 5-6, 2023 in Halifax.
- The 2024 COF summer meeting will take place in Halifax on July 16-17, 2024.
- Premiers use their meetings and calls to exchange views and information on important aspects of the provincial and territorial response to current and upcoming shared issues, and discuss approaches to related First Ministers' calls.
- Collective priorities of Premiers include but are not limited to health care, affordability, housing, federal infrastructure funding, labour markets, immigration, and Canada-U.S. relations, including trade.
- COF is supported by a Secretariat funded by all provinces and territories.

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Western Premiers' Conference

- The Western Premiers' Conference (WPC) is a forum to advance shared interests of Western Canada through enhanced cooperation and constructive dialogue.
- The WPC is comprised of seven Premiers: B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.
- The WPC normally meets once each year. B.C. chaired the 2023 WPC in Whistler on June 26-27, 2023. The 2024 WPC will be in Whitehorse YK on June 9-10, 2024.
- WPC members do not make financial contributions for the WPC; however, members incur expenses for travel costs to annual meetings and hosting the annual meeting while they are Chair.

Contact: Grant Smith - 250 387-1042
Executive Director, Federalism and Canadian Intergovernmental Policy

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Transboundary Flood Initiative

Recommend Response:

- The Transboundary Flood Initiative (TFI) collaborative framework, signed in October 2023, brings together British Columbia (B.C.), Washington State, local and First Nation governments to develop solutions to addressing flood risks and ecosystem restoration in the Sumas and Nooksack River watersheds.
- As partners, the signatories are committed to jointly evaluating flood hazards, share data, and leverage funding opportunities to advance flood mitigation projects on both sides of the transboundary area for our collective benefit.
- Last spring, the Province also signed a collaborative framework with Semá:th, Matsqui and Leq'á:mel First Nations, the Cities of Abbotsford and Chilliwack to develop a flood mitigation plan for the Sumas River watershed. The transboundary process will inform that plan.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Transboundary Flood Initiative emphasizes a collaborative approach that balances all the important interests and considerations at play in the Nooksack and Sumas River watersheds.
- We are having conversations with the federal government about their participation. We want to see the federal government engaged and strongly supporting funding solutions, following through on their commitments around this area.
- To help protect people, communities, food producers and critical infrastructure in the Fraser Valley's Sumas Prairie from future flood events, the Province has committed \$76.6 million to support critical upgrades to the Barrowtown Pump Station.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- The Transboundary Flood Initiative (TFI) significantly accomplishes the convening function that an International Joint Commission (IJC) reference would achieve. The TFI governance table model was partly based on models the IJC has used elsewhere.

Key Facts:

- The TFI was initiated by former Premier Horgan and Governor Inslee in March 2022. B.C. has a strong relationship with our neighbours in Washington State, and our governments are working closely. Leveraging this relationship is preferred at this stage to an International Joint Commission process in which B.C. parties would have less influence over the timelines and outcomes.
- The TFI includes representatives of nine governments – including B.C. Premier David Eby and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee – and by the Semá:th, Matsqui and Leq'á:mel First Nations, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Lummi Nation, the City of Abbotsford and Whatcom County. The Technical Table includes federal experts (including Environment and Climate Change Canada, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. National Weather Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers). Canada has been invited to observe the policy table.
- The TFI approach is aligned with the new *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* (EDMA) and the draft B.C. Flood Strategy.
- Data sharing and lines of communication between Whatcom County and the B.C. River Forecast Centre have been improved, enabling improved forecasting and advisories to the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and communities subject to potential Nooksack River overflows into Canada.
- B.C. has already provided more than \$4M to establish the Sumas River Flood Mitigation Collaborative Framework and the parties' participation in the Transboundary Flood Initiative.
- Intergovernmental Communications
- The Barrowtown Pump Station is a critical piece of infrastructure to the Sumas Prairie's flood-protection system. The pump station was built to pump water out of the low-lying lands (formerly a lake) but was nearly overwhelmed when flood waters breached the Sumas River dike during the atmospheric rivers of 2021.
- With this latest investment to the Barrowtown Pump Station, the Province has provided nearly \$180 million to support regional recovery from the 2021 atmospheric river events to help protect people and communities for years.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 15, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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TOPIC: Cascadia High-speed Rail Project (Cascadia HSR)

ISSUE: Cascadia HSR Project Update

KEY MESSAGES:

- Washington State Department of Transportation (Washington) has been leading work with B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and the State of Oregon on the Cascadia High-speed Rail Project.
- The proposed project aims to connect Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland via high-speed rail capable of achieving travel speeds of up to 400 km/h which would reduce travel times between these cities .
- The Cascadia HSR project is currently transitioning into the planning phase. In late 2023, Washington was accepted into the U.S. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Corridor Identification Development Program (CID), with an initial award of \$500,000 (USD) to advance further planning work.
- Critical aspects of the project, including possible alignments, technology, scope or cost, are still in development. These elements will be further explored during planning.
- Given the scope, complexity, and international nature of this project, significant additional planning work is required before a viable, shovel-ready project business case is available for investment decision.
- The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) is leading provincial involvement in the project, with support from the Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat, and working closely with Washington and Oregon to advance project planning.
- Current provincial work on this projects includes supporting Washington-led work, coordinating engagement with provincial stakeholders, determining benefits and issues of interest to B.C., and identifying funding opportunities.

KEY FACTS:

- In 2021, Premier Horgan and Governors Inslee (Washington) and Brown (Oregon) signed an MOU committing to advancing Cascadia HSR, including establishing a Policy Committee with representation from B.C., Washington, Oregon, and regional planning entities.
- Potential project benefits to the Province could include shortened travel times, reduced carbon emissions, increased connectivity, strengthened economic relations, fostering equitable growth and job creation, increased labour mobility, and opportunities for continued Indigenous reconciliation.
- In 2022, the Washington Legislature provided \$4 million (USD) in funding to commence the Cascadia HSR work envisaged by the MOU. Direction for this funding includes development of a decision and governance framework for all parties, engagement

strategy, funding strategy, Corridor ID program, scenario analysis, and creation of a coordinating entity responsible for advancing the project.

- In 2023, Washington submitted two separate federal funding submissions to the U.S. Federal Rail Administration, one through the CID and the other through the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP).
- Washington was unsuccessful with their submission to the FSP Program; however, they were successful in their submission to the CID Program, which included an initial \$500,000 (USD) of federal funding to support early planning work.
- With acceptance into the CID program, Washington and the Cascadia HSR Project partners will collaborate with the FRA to fulfill the necessary technical and advisory planning requirements.
- Next steps for the project include developing a scope of work, schedule, and budget for the planning phase.
- MOTI is currently working through pre-planning activities that include narrowing down project goals and objectives for the Province, high-level corridor identification and feasibility work, long-term funding options, and internal governance and decision-making work.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

- To date, the Province has provided funding three times to support UHSGT work: \$300,000 (CND) in 2019 and \$300,000 (CND) in 2020 through the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation (JEDI); and more recently \$300,000 (CND) in 2022 to support the current scope of work and planning activities being led by Washington.
- Funding to further support pre-planning work is current being explored through multiple streams, including the Pre-project Development Fund as well as the Canada Infrastructure Bank. This funding will support additional Provincial planning activities.

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Title: Transboundary Mining

Issue: Mining activities and transboundary waterways

Response:

- B.C. maintains regular contact with U.S. partners on a range of cross-border environmental files.
- B.C. continues to work with counterparts in Alaska and Montana to implement the Memoranda of Understanding and Statement of Cooperation.
- B.C. also continues to work closely with Indigenous peoples to uphold the Province's commitments under the *Declaration Act*.

Joint Reference

- Canada, the United States, and Ktunaxa government officials have developed a joint proposal for the role of the International Joint Commission (IJC) announced via joint ambassador statement on March 11, 2024.
- The purpose is to reduce and mitigate the impacts of water pollution in the Kootenay watershed, as committed to in the Joint Statement of President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau on March 24, 2023.
- The Province is encouraged by the possibilities of the IJC acting as a neutral facilitator in strengthening crucial relationships and trust across this important international watershed.
- We see this as an opportunity to build upon existing work and enhance information sharing and transparency to the benefit of the region. A fulsome review of existing science through an IJC Study Board will be valuable to support actions B.C. is taking and ensure that all agencies are working with the same information.
- B.C. is committed to a competitive mining sector that grows the economy and creates good jobs, supports environmental stewardship, and advances reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
- We want to ensure that B.C. remains a leader in mining regulation and oversight, while enhancing responsible resource development and strengthening First Nations involvement in the mining sector.
- Using our regulatory tools, the Province has required Teck to address water quality impacts. Teck has already invested over \$1.4 billion dollars in enhanced water treatment for mine-influenced water in the Elk Valley since 2014, and will make further investments to add an additional six new and expanded treatment facilities between now and 2027.
- The IJC process will respect the respective legal responsibilities and jurisdictions of each Government, including the role that B.C. plays as the primary regulator of the mining sector, and B.C. has been assured the IJC Governance Body will not seek to replace or override existing regulatory processes.

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Background/Status:

Southeast B.C./Montana

- As provided for in a 2003 Environmental Cooperation Arrangement and 2010 Memorandum of Understanding, B.C. and Montana have made commitments to protect and enhance the transboundary environment. The implementation of the agreements is being overseen by officials from the Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy and Montana's Department of Environmental Quality.
- There have been numerous calls for an IJC reference in the Kootenay watershed from U.S. agencies, Tribes and Ktunaxa Nation Council Society. Primary concerns have been related to impacts from coal mining operations reducing water quality (specifically selenium).
- Historically, B.C. has not been supportive of an IJC reference due to concerns about duplication, delay, or diversion of resources away from the Province's regulatory actions and other initiatives currently underway.
- In the spring of 2023, B.C. Deputy Ministers met with IJC Commissioners to better understand the potential role and perceived benefits of the IJC reference.
 - Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications
 - Following the meeting with the IJC, B.C. drafted a proposal which Ministers Heyman and Osborne submitted to Canada in July 2023.
- The final joint proposal is based on commonalities across the three proposals Global Affairs Canada received from B.C., the U.S., and Ktunaxa during summer 2023.
- The joint proposal, like B.C.'s proposal, includes a two-tiered approach with a governance table (Governance Body) and technical forum (Study Board).
- Canada and the United States, in partnership with Ktunaxa, are asking the IJC through a joint reference to assist governments in the establishment of a formal governance structure (Governance Body) by June 30, 2024.
- Canada and the United States are also asking the IJC to establish a two-year Study Board to convene experts and knowledge holders, with the aim to support a common understanding of pollution in the Kootenai/y watershed.
 - The purpose is to review existing science, identify gaps, assumptions and uncertainties, and present recommendations to the Governance Body.
 - Participants will be appointed as experts and not to represent organizational interests.
 - The Study Board will not undertake new studies in the watershed.
 - Any recommendations from the Study Board will be considered by the Governance Body and decided on by the governments and not the IJC.

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

- The IJC reference is specific to the unique circumstances in the Elk Valley and Kootenay watershed. At this time, B.C. is not supportive of IJC involvement in any other watershed and will continue to work collaboratively with neighboring states and transboundary First Nations and Tribes.

Northwest B.C./Alaska

- On November 25, 2015, the former Premier of B.C. and Alaska Governor Bill Walker signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU is being implemented through a Statement of Cooperation on the Protection of Transboundary Waters, which was signed October 6, 2016.
- The Statement of Cooperation is overseen by senior government officials from the B.C. government and the government of Alaska.
- Between 1951-1957, underground mining activities at Tulsequah Chief Mine (the Mine) left a legacy of acid rock drainage in the Tulsequah River, south of Atlin and northeast of Juneau, Alaska in the traditional territory of Taku River Tlingit First Nation (TRTFN).
- The Province remains committed to holding past and present owners of the Mine accountable for addressing acid rock drainage and reclaiming the Mine.
- Since 2020, the Province, in collaboration with the TRTFN and the Atlin Taku Economic Limited Partnership, the economic arm of the TRTFN, has carried out interim reclamation activities at the Mine, including improving site accessibility and ongoing monitoring of water quality.
- To date, Teck has provided a total of \$3.26 million to the Province on a voluntary basis to support interim reclamation works in 2021 and 2022. This is in addition to the \$1.2M security that the Province seized and spent.
- In January 2023, the TRTFN self-declared an area of almost 2 million hectares as an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA), which includes the Tulsequah site. Although the mine site is located within the IPCA, the Province does not expect this to impact current and future reclamation work at the site.
- To underline BC's commitment to reclaiming the Tulsequah Chief Mine, the Province has appointed an Executive Director, whose primary responsibility is to work with Teck and Taku River Tlingit First Nation to ensure the successful reclamation of the Tulsequah Chief Mine, in a timely manner. In February 2019, the Province and Taku River Tlingit First Nation (TRTFN) collaboratively selected a proponent to develop a Remediation Plan for Tulsequah Chief Mine. A final Remediation Plan was submitted to the Province in April 2020.
- The mine is currently owned by Chieftain Metals Inc. (Chieftain), which acquired the property in 2010. Chieftain had agreed to address the historical contamination issues as part of re-development of the mine.

Government Financial Information; Personal Security

Contact: Nicole Longpré
A/Executive Director, International Relations

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Title: MLA Glumac Role - PNWER

Issue: Role of MLA Rick Glumac as Premier's Liaison for the Pacific Northwest

Response:

- I was pleased to appoint MLA Rick Glumac to the position of the Premier's Liaison for the Pacific Northwest in March 2023.
- In July 2023, MLA Glumac also took on the presidency of PNWER for a one-year term. This position complements his role as the Premier's Liaison to the Pacific Northwest.
- Since July 2023, MLA Glumac has been supporting work to build out PNWER Canada Inc. into a robust structure for accessing funding opportunities, strengthening cross-border collaboration and connecting with partners who would benefit from an enhanced PNWER Canada Inc. structure.
- He is working with PNWER and PNWER Canada Inc. to develop cross-border projects that reflect B.C.'s interests.
- He has also been engaging in discussions to explore a more formal legislative exchange between B.C. and Washington State.
- In July 2024, the PNWER Annual Summit will be hosted in Whistler, B.C. MLA Glumac is working to ensure the summit reflects B.C.'s priorities, including those related to clean energy and technology for a sustainable economy.

Background/Status:

The March 8, 2023 mandate letter from Premier Eby to MLA Glumac outlines the roles and expectations associated with this appointment. Previously, MLA Glumac had served in the role of Premier's Liaison for the State of Washington, a position he was appointed to by former Premier Horgan on December 15, 2020. MLA Glumac is currently President, Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER). His Presidency will continue until the end of the PNWER Annual Summit in July 2024.

PNWER is a statutory public/private nonprofit created in 1991 by the US states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington and the Canadian provinces/territories of Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Yukon and NWT. Its mission is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region, while maintaining and enhancing our natural environment. Among other activities, it promotes "models of success", promotes greater regional collaboration and exchange of information, and seeks to leverage regional influence in Ottawa and Washington, D.C.

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A/Executive Director, International Relations

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Title: Indo-Pacific Relations

Issue: B.C.'s engagement in the Indo-Pacific

Response:

- British Columbia has significant and long-standing economic, cultural and people-to-people ties with the Indo-Pacific.
- We have ramped up efforts to expand and diversify opportunities in this region for B.C. exporters, as well as promote international education and tourism.
- B.C.'s Trade Diversification Strategy identified the Indo-Pacific as the main focus for emerging and new markets.
- To help our exporters and attract investment, B.C. has 15 Trade and Investment Offices across the Indo-Pacific region. The most recent office to open is in Taiwan, co-located in the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei.
- Premier-led and Minister-led missions to the region are also important in opening doors for B.C. companies, attracting investment, furthering educational and other ties and building relationships.
- Last spring's trade mission to Japan, South Korea and Singapore that I led as Premier, accompanied by Ministers Osborne, Bailey and Brar, advanced trade and investment relationships and promoted B.C.'s climate, sustainability and ESG credentials.
- As the gateway to the Pacific, British Columbia welcomes strengthened engagement by Canada as laid out in the federal Indo-Pacific Strategy.
- We welcome efforts to expand market access and trade diversification in the region through trade agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and those being negotiated with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and Indonesia.
- We are in regular touch with the federal government in relation to Canada's evolving foreign and trade policy approach towards China.
- Like the rest of Canada, British Columbia has a large trading relationship with China. We have a history of cooperation with our sister province, Guangdong, on the transition to a low carbon economy, including the use of mass timber and hydrogen.
- B.C.'s increasing engagement in the region is also driven by India's growing economic and demographic importance, B.C.'s long-standing and deep relationships with Japan and South Korea and the centrality of ASEAN to the region.

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Background/Status:

- The Indo-Pacific, which stretches from Central Asia to East Asia and includes the Indian Ocean and Oceania, will play a critical role in shaping the future of Canada, and British Columbia in particular, over the next half-century. Encompassing 40 economies, over four billion people and \$47.19 trillion in economic activity, it is the world's fastest growing region.
- As Canada's gateway province, British Columbia has long-standing and deep ties to the Indo-Pacific. In 2022 B.C.'s share of Canadian exports globally was 9%. In the Indo-Pacific, in 2022 B.C.'s share was 9% with India, 13.6% with ASEAN, 28% with China/Hong Kong, 34% with Japan, 43% with Taiwan and 48% with South Korea.
- Provincial trade diversification efforts focus heavily on this region and 15 of 20 B.C. international Trade and Investment Offices are located in the region (4 in India, 4 in China, 1 office each in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam and Taiwan). All are co-located within Canadian Embassies, Consulates or Trade Offices.
- Premier-led and Minister-led missions to the region are resuming after a covid-connected hiatus. These missions are important in opening doors for B.C. companies, attracting investment, furthering educational and other ties and building relationships. In May/June 2023 a successful trade mission to Japan, South Korea and Singapore was led by the Premier, accompanied by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, the Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, and the Minister of State for Trade, who also separately visited Vietnam on the same trip.
- British Columbia is deeply connected to the region through its large and diverse diaspora communities, including in particular those of Indian, Chinese and Filipino heritage. British Columbia also hosts large numbers of international students from India, China and other parts of the Indo-Pacific.
- Canada released its long-awaited Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) on November 27, 2022. The IPS is meant to be a "generational shift" in Canada's approach to the region, which is rapidly becoming the global centre of economic dynamism and strategic challenge.

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2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Title: B.C. – India Relations

Issue: B.C. - India Relations

Response:

- British Columbia values its long-standing relationship with India.
- We have important and historic people-to-people ties, the cornerstone of relations between our jurisdictions.
- India is B.C.'s fifth most important export market. In 2023 the value of those exports reached \$1.4 billion.
- B.C. has Trade and Investment representatives based in New Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai and Bengaluru.
- India is the largest source country for international students studying in B.C.
- We were deeply disturbed by the serious allegations raised by the Prime Minister of credible evidence of links between agents of the Government of India and the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey.
- Canadians across the country must be safe from the interference of foreign governments, including threats or physical harm, including murder.
- Three Indian nationals have been arrested and charged for their alleged involvement in the killing of Mr. Nijjar.
- We commend the RCMP and their law enforcement partners for their thorough investigation leading to these arrests.
- The RCMP has stated that their work continues, with separate and distinct investigations ongoing, not limited to the three arrested, and that their efforts include investigating connections with the Government of India.
- Like others, we believe it is vital to get to the bottom of the matter through the courts system and through ongoing investigations and with the cooperation of the Indian government.
- We are also troubled by reports emerging from testimony and summarized intelligence assessments provided to the Foreign Interference Commission suggesting instances of Indian foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections.

Background/Status:

Canada – India Relations:

- British Columbia has had a long-standing and deep relationship with India, an important cornerstone of which is people-to-people ties. British Columbians of Indian ethnic origin have made valuable contributions over many decades to the economic, academic, cultural and political life of the province.

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

- B.C. exports to India have grown from \$468 million in 2013 to \$1.4 billion in 2023, in tandem with India's rapid economic growth. It now ranks as B.C.'s fifth most important export market.
- India is also B.C.'s largest source of immigrants and international students.
- B.C. companies wishing to export goods or services to India can be assisted by four B.C. Trade and Investment offices in India, located in New Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai and Bengaluru.
- On June 18, 2023 Hardeep Singh Nijjar was murdered as he left Surrey's Guru Nanak Gurdwara. On September 18, 2023, Prime Minister Trudeau informed the House of Commons that "Canadian security agencies have been actively pursuing credible allegations of a potential link between agents of the Government of India and the killing of a Canadian citizen, Hardeep Singh Nijjar."
- The Premier's Office shared a statement later the same day.
- Canada paused negotiations on a free trade deal and cancelled a planned Team Canada trade mission to India.
- India has denied the allegations, claiming Canada has not provided any relevant evidence.
- Shortly after the Prime Minister's statement, India temporarily paused some visa services for Canadians. Those services have now been restored.
- On October 19, 2023 India forced the departure of two-thirds of Canada's diplomatic staff from the High Commission in New Delhi (41 diplomats and their families) by unilaterally withdrawing their diplomatic immunity.
- On May 3, 2024 at a Surrey news conference, RCMP Asst. Commissioner Dave Teboul announced that three Indian nationals, in Canada on student visas, have been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in relation with the homicide. They were arrested in Edmonton and will appear in court in Vancouver on May 7, 2024.
- While Asst. Commissioner Teboul was unable to comment on the evidence or motive behind the murder, given the "very broad public interest" he stated the matter "is still very much under active investigation." "I will underscore that today's announcements are not a complete account of the investigative work currently underway. There are separate and distinct investigations ongoing into these matters, certainly not limited to the involvement of the people arrested today, and these efforts include investigating connections to the Government of India."
- In his statement of May 3, Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc sought to reassure community members: "While today's actions by the RCMP may be welcome news, I know that many Canadians, particularly members of the Indo-Canadian community, may still have questions or concerns. I encourage everyone affected by this to put their trust in the justice system and know that your safety is our priority. My department and our security partners continue to work closely with the provinces, territories, municipalities and local police to ensure the safety and security of all Canadians."

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- An unclassified summary, with caveats and limitations, of an intelligence assessment provided to the Foreign Interference Commission in April 2024 referred to foreign interference activities of Government of India officials, including their Canada-based proxy agents, directed against the 2019 and 2021 federal elections.
- On May 3, 2024 Commissioner Hogue issued an initial report from the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions (“the Commission”). In describing, with similar limitations and caveats, foreign interference activities of Indian officials, including Canada-based proxies, she suggested those activities “aim to align Canada’s position with India’s interests on key issues, particularly with respect to how the Indian government perceives Canada-based supporters of an independent Sikh homeland (Khalistan).” She indicated “India does not differentiate between the lawful, pro-Khalistan political advocacy and the relatively small Canada-based Khalistani violent extremism. It views anyone aligned with Khalistani separatism as a seditious threat to India.”

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2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Title: B.C. – China Relations

Issue: B.C. – China Relations

Response:

- Like the rest of Canada, B.C. has a significant trading relationship with China. B.C.'s exports amounted to about \$8 billion in 2023.
- We also have a long-standing and valued sister-province relationship with Guangdong Province in China. This relationship has economic benefits and has allowed for cooperation on issues relating to a low-carbon future, including mass timber and other sustainably produced B.C. forest products.
- British Columbia consults closely on and follows the Government of Canada's lead in its evolving approach to relations with the government of the People's Republic of China.
- The Government of Canada's approach recognizes that defending Canada's national interests will at times require challenging the Chinese government on its behaviour, and that Canada will also seek to cooperate with China to find solutions to global issues such as climate change.
- Reports of foreign interference by the Chinese government in recent elections in Canada, including in British Columbia, are of serious concern. Canadians deserve a thorough and independent investigation into these activities. We welcome the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions.
- The initial report of the Public Inquiry, issued by Commissioner Hogue, indicates that China is assessed by Canadian authorities as the most active foreign state actor engaged in interference directed at government officials, political organizations and candidates and diaspora communities.
- These reports are very troubling and we will continue to work with federal authorities to address the threats to our democracy and values from foreign interference.
- The large and diverse communities of British Columbians of Chinese heritage have made extraordinary contributions to the fabric of this province, including with respect to our cherished democratic values and freedoms.
- B.C. echoes Canada's concerns relating to the passage in Hong Kong in March 2024 of the *Safeguarding National Security Ordinance*. We share a deep concern regarding the impact the new law could have on human rights in Hong Kong, already eroded by the 2020 *National Security Law*.
- British Columbia follows Canada's One China Policy. Under that policy Canada maintains unofficial but valuable economic, cultural and people-to-people ties with Taiwan. B.C. recently opened a Trade and Investment Representative office co-located within the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei.

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Background/Status:

Canada – China Relations

- The Canada-China relationship has been under strain due to a number of issues in recent years, including the arbitrary detention of two Canadians, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. In Canada's 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), China is described as "an increasingly disruptive power". According to the policy outlined in the IPS, behaviours and policies of the Government of China which erode the existing rules-based international order undermine Canadian interests. At the same time, the IPS acknowledges that China's sheer size and influence makes cooperation necessary to address the world's existential challenges, such as climate change. It also notes that China's economy offers significant opportunities for Canadian exporters.
- The Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions, under Commissioner Hogue, is currently assessing the extent to which state actors, including China, interfered in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections. The final report is due by year end.
- The initial report of the Public Inquiry, issued May 3, 2024 by Commissioner Hogue, indicates that "the People's Republic of China stands out as the main perpetrator of foreign interference against Canada. China has been assessed by Canadian authorities as the most active foreign state actor engaged in interference directed at government officials, political organizations, candidates for political office and diaspora communities."
- The federal government has modernized its toolkit to address economic security, including through amendments to the *Invest in Canada Act* related to critical minerals. It has also introduced new guidelines aimed at safeguarding Canadian research in sensitive technologies; of the 100 listed research affiliations of concern, 85 are Chinese institutions.

B.C. – China Relations

- B.C. businesses have connections with China across a variety of economic sectors, including clean technology, agriculture, energy and forestry.
- China and Hong Kong ranked #2 as a destination for B.C. exports behind the U.S., with B.C. exports totalling about \$8 billion in 2023.
- B.C. has four Trade and Investment offices in China, co-located in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing and in consulates in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing.
- The large and diverse multi-ethnic Chinese diaspora communities in B.C. have long made, and continue to make, valuable contributions to the economy and social fabric of B.C.
- China is a significant source country for international students in B.C.

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B.C. – Guangdong

- B.C. and Guangdong formed a sister-province relationship in 1995.
- Guangdong is the ancestral homeland of a large proportion of British Columbians of Chinese heritage.
- Recent activities under this twinning arrangement have focused on the promotion of mass timber and a low carbon future.

Hong Kong

- Canada supports the right to peaceful protest and autonomy under Hong Kong's Basic Law and the "One Country, Two Systems" framework. In that context, Canada voiced deep concerns about a new security law passed in March 2024, the *Safeguarding National Security Ordinance*, and potential impacts on human rights in Hong Kong, already eroded by the 2020 imposition of the *National Security Law*.
- In a March 20, 2024 statement the Government of Canada raised concerns about the law's broad definitions of national security offences and national security threats and the potential for enforcement overreach. The statement further outlined concerns about the chilling effect created by the new security law at a moment when the city is trying to maintain its status as an open and free international hub.

Taiwan

- Under its One China Policy, Canada does not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state or conduct official government-to-government relations; however, it maintains unofficial but valuable economic, cultural and people-to-people ties. B.C. follows this approach.
- China's military forces have carried out aggressive exercises close to Taiwan. According to the IPS, "Canada will oppose unilateral actions that threaten the status quo in the Taiwan Strait."
- Taiwan is an important economic partner for B.C. In 2023 B.C. exported \$782 million in goods to Taiwan, making it B.C.'s seventh largest export market.
- B.C. has recently opened a Trade and Investment office co-located in the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei, which represents Canadian interests in Taiwan in the absence of formal diplomatic relations.

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2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Title: International Trade Missions

Issue: Premier-led Missions in Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Response:

- Trade missions are an effective tool to leverage economic opportunities for B.C. with our priority partners and international markets.
- This government is committed to advancing international relationships on key priorities and interest, including growing and diversifying trade and investment ties.
- As we continue to feel the impacts of a complex and interconnected global environment, re-connecting with our international partners is more important than ever to ensure B.C. can leverage our trade and investment relationships to ensure there are good paying jobs for British Columbians.
- In fiscal year 2023-24, there was one Premier-led international trade mission to Asia, which included stops in Japan, Korea, and Singapore.
- Costs associated with Premier-led missions are subject to fiscal compliance and review.

Background/Status:

Premier Eby Mission to Asia - May 26-June 7, 2023

- Premier Eby led a trade mission to Japan, Korea and Singapore to bolster B.C.'s trade and investment ties in the Indo-Pacific, the world's fastest-growing economic region, and advance the Province's new Trade Diversification Strategy.
- Supported by the Ministers of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation; Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation; and the Minister of State for Trade, the mission advanced strategic trade and investment relationships to strengthen B.C.'s economy in key sectors, such as clean technology, renewable energy, natural resources and critical minerals, information and communications technology, and agrifood.
- The mission was also an opportunity to further B.C.'s reputation for climate leadership and sustainability, while promoting continued trade and investment advantages in Asia.
- During the mission the Province renewed and strengthened bilateral agreements focused on climate change and clean energy including:
 - A renewed memorandum of co-operation with the Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corporation for Transport and Urban Development to collaborate on developing clean transportation and infrastructure solutions.
 - A renewed and strengthened memorandum of understanding with Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security to explore ways to grow trade and unlock new sources of energy, such as hydrogen.

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- An enhanced action plan agreement with Gyeonggi Province in Korea to strengthen co-operation on cleantech and clean energy to address climate change.
- Additionally, B.C. and the Korea Mine Rehabilitation and Mineral Resources Corporation signed a statement of co-operation to work together to advance the development of critical minerals for both countries.
- By strengthening our relationships with government, business and industry leaders, we are creating new trade and investment partnerships that will grow our clean economy and benefit all British Columbians.

Dates	Mission	Delegation
May 27-June 7, 2023	Asia mission: Tokyo, Japan; Seoul, Korea; and Singapore	Premier (May 27-June 7) Minister Osborne (May 27-June 3) Minister Bailey (May 27-June 3) Minister of State Brar (May 25-June 3)

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Title: Foreign Interference

Issue: Foreign interference targeting elections, elected representatives and the diaspora community

Response:

- We remain deeply troubled by recent reports, based on summarized or redacted intelligence assessments, of foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections in Canada, including in British Columbia, by state actors, including China, India and others, and/or their proxies.
- Canadians deserve a thorough and independent investigation into these claims. We welcome the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions under Commissioner Hogue.
- While Commissioner Hogue, in her initial report of May 3, 2024, concluded that foreign interference did not have an impact on which party came into power at the federal level in 2019 and 2021, she indicated that it is possible results in a small number of ridings were affected.
- She also concluded that foreign interference impacted the broader electoral ecosystem, undermined public confidence in Canadian democracy and had a disproportionate impact on diaspora communities.
- It is vitally important for our democracy that our electoral system is safeguarded from foreign interference and that Canadians and British Columbians have faith in that system.
- The testimony of Canadians who claim to have been targeted by state actors or their proxies is also very concerning. No Canadian should feel threatened personally or out of concern for family members abroad, for exercising their democratic rights to express their views and concerns. They should feel protected and be able to count on the support of the province and all its citizens, as well as Canada's police and security agencies.
- Countering foreign interference requires a whole-of-society approach.
- We welcome the federal government's introduction of *An act respecting countering foreign interference* on May 6, 2024. This bill would amend, among other legislation, the CSIS Act, to allow for more information sharing, including with provinces and territories.
- We also support in this new bill the establishment of a foreign influence transparency registry, with appropriate safeguards and engagement of communities most affected.

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- Our officials maintain close contact with federal counterparts responsible for national security, foreign and trade relations and economic and research security. We support recent measures to strengthen the Invest in Canada Act and better safeguard Canada's research ecosystem.

Background/Status:

- Since late 2022 media reports have alleged that the Chinese government was involved in foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 Canadian elections. Specific allegations have emerged that the Chinese Consulate General in Vancouver interfered in both the 2021 federal election in Lower Mainland constituencies and in the 2022 Vancouver mayoral election.
- In response to these allegations, on March 6, 2023, Prime Minister Trudeau asked the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians to study foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections and spoke to the

2024/25 Estimates Note - Advice to the Premier

Chair of the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency about a review of how Canada's national security agencies handled the threat of foreign interference in those elections.

- He subsequently named former Governor General David Johnston as an Independent Special Rapporteur tasked with building on the work of the Committee and Review Agency and recommending additional processes, such as a formal public enquiry. David Johnston released his first report in May 2023, concluding that interference is an increasing threat and that China is particularly active, but determining that because of the classified information involved, a public inquiry would not be appropriate. In June 2023, David Johnston resigned and filed his final and confidential report.
- In September 2023, based on all-party agreement, the federal government established the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions ("the Commission") under Commissioner Hogue to respond to concerns about foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections. The Commission will also examine the flow of information within the federal government in relation to these issues, evaluate the actions taken in response, assess the federal government's capacity to detect, deter, and counter foreign interference, and make recommendations on these issues.
- On January 24, 2024, pursuant to its terms of reference, the Foreign Interference Commission requested the Government of Canada to provide information and documents relating to alleged interference by India in the 2019 and 2021 elections. The original ToR referenced "China, Russia and other foreign states or non-state actors".
- Redacted and summarized intelligence assessments provided to the Commission in April, now publicly available, discuss foreign interference in Canada carried out principally by China but also by India or its proxies in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections.
- Commissioner Hogue issued her initial report on May 3, 2024, finding that while the Canadian electoral system itself is robust, acts of foreign interference occurred during the last two federal elections and "are a stain on our electoral process and impacted the process leading up to the actual vote."
- Commissioner Hogue described two federal ridings in B.C. (Vancouver East and Steveston-Richmond East) where concerns about foreign interference and disinformation on the part of Chinese state actors and their proxies are alleged.
- In her report she indicates that according to intelligence collected by Canada, the People's Republic of China stands out as by far the main perpetrator of foreign interference against Canada. She indicates that "Canada's intelligence holdings also identify Russia, India, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, among other countries, as possible foreign interference actors in Canada."
- The Foreign Interference Commission's second stage of work will include an examination and assessment of the capacity of relevant federal departments, agencies, institutional structures, and governance processes to permit the

