



Select Standing Committee on
Finance and Government Services

Report on the Budget 2024 Consultation

August 2023



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Second Report
Fourth Session, 42nd Parliament



August 3, 2023

To the Honourable
Legislative Assembly of the
Province of British Columbia

Honourable Members:

I have the honour to present herewith the Second Report of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for the Fourth Session of the 42nd Parliament. This report covers the Committee's work in regard to the Budget 2024 Consultation as approved by the Committee.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Mike Starchuk, MLA
Chair

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COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

Mike Starchuk, MLA, Chair
Surrey-Cloverdale

Tom Shypitka, MLA, Deputy Chair
Kootenay East

Bruce Banman, MLA
Abbotsford South

Susie Chant, MLA
North Vancouver-Seymour

George Chow, MLA
Vancouver-Fraserview

Ronna-Rae Leonard, MLA
Courtenay-Comox

Ben Stewart, MLA
Kelowna West

Adam Walker, MLA
Parksville-Qualicum

Henry Yao, MLA
Richmond South Centre

COMMITTEE STAFF

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Natalie Beaton, Committee Research Analyst

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Mary Heeg, Committee Researcher

Danielle Migeon, Committee Researcher

Mary Newell, Parliamentary Committees Officer

Jianding Bai, Committees Assistant

TERMS OF REFERENCE

On February 21, 2023, the Legislative Assembly agreed that the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services be empowered to:

1. Examine, inquire into and make recommendations with respect to the budget consultation paper prepared by the Minister of Finance in accordance with section 2 of the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* (S.B.C. 2000, c. 23) and, in particular, to:
 - a. conduct public consultations across British Columbia on proposals and recommendations regarding the provincial budget and fiscal policy for the coming fiscal year by any means the Committee considers appropriate; and
 - b. prepare a report no later than November 15, 2023, on the results of those consultations.
2. Consider and make recommendations on the annual reports, rolling three-year service plans and budgets of the statutory officers, namely, the:
 - i. Auditor General
 - ii. Chief Electoral Officer
 - iii. Conflict of Interest Commissioner
 - iv. Human Rights Commissioner
 - v. Information and Privacy Commissioner
 - vi. Merit Commissioner
 - vii. Ombudsperson
 - viii. Police Complaint Commissioner
 - ix. Representative for Children and Youth
 - a. consider and make recommendations on the annual reports, rolling three-year service plans and budgets;
 - b. inquire into and make recommendations with respect to other matters brought to the Committee's attention by any of the aforementioned statutory officers; and
 - c. consider and make decisions, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, regarding the terms and conditions of employment of any of the

aforementioned statutory officers arising as a request of an officeholder during their term of appointment.

3. Inquire into and make recommendations with respect to other matters brought to the Committee's attention by any of the aforementioned statutory officers.

That the Committee be designated as the Committee referred to in sections 19, 20, 21 and 23 of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2) and that the report in section 22 of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2) be referred to the Committee.

That the Committee be designated as the Committee referred to in sections 47.02 and 47.03 of the *Human Rights Code* (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 210).

That, in addition to the powers previously conferred upon the Select Standing Committees of the House, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services be empowered to:

- a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;
- b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
- c. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and
- d. retain personnel as required to assist the Committee.

That the Committee report to the House as soon as possible; and that during a period of adjournment, the Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the “Committee”) conducts an annual consultation on the upcoming provincial budget. British Columbians were invited to share their priorities for Budget 2024 between May 25 and June 16, 2023. The Committee held 16 public hearings in 11 communities across BC, as well as virtually using the Zoom videoconferencing platform. During the consultation period, the Committee heard 375 presentations and received 387 submissions.

The Committee notes the thoughtful input and the significant engagement it received during the consultation from across the province. Members note that labour shortages, housing and associated affordability concerns, climate mitigation efforts, access to health and mental health services, and regulatory processes were key themes in the input they received.

This report provides a comprehensive summary of the priorities and ideas shared by British Columbians during the consultation and outlines the Committee’s 166 recommendations. The report is organized by theme which are presented in alphabetical order; the numbering of recommendations does not indicate priority.

Regarding advanced education, Members recognize the important contributions of international students and the challenges they experience. Accordingly, the Committee supports the creation of a provincial strategy for international students, regulating international student tuition fees to provide predictability, and investing in international student supports. With respect to capital funding, the Committee recognizes the need for additional investments with particular attention to research infrastructure that reflects regional needs and specialties. As it relates to operational funding for post-secondary institutions, Members support a review of the funding model with the aim of providing more flexibility, ensuring sufficient funding for programming and student supports, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources based on regional needs. The Committee also specifically

supports increased funding to expand programming in sectors where there are current or projected skill shortages such as health care and the trades, and to support workers attaining class 3 driver’s licensing. Members additionally acknowledge the importance of encouraging careers in the trades to address labour shortages. The Committee also supports investments in the BC Access Grants to ensure port-secondary education is accessible for all.

To support arts and culture, the Committee’s recommendations include increasing BC Arts Council funding, creating a designated fund for rural community arts organizations, and permanent investment in the BC Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund. In particular, Committee Members recognize Science World and the Scotiabank Dance Centre as vital spaces that require funding to continue to serve their communities. Members also note the importance of promoting BC books and properly compensating creators and publishers. The Committee additionally supports funding for museums and the heritage sector including funding to support repatriation projects in Indigenous communities. With respect to public libraries, Committee Members recognize their expanded role and recommend increased funding indexed to inflation as well as specific support for libraries in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. As it relates to sport, Members note the need for increased investment to improve affordability and accessibility.

Regarding economic development, Members support additional investments in streamlining permitting processes to provide more certainty and predictability for clean and renewable energy, and natural resource development projects. Other recommendations regarding natural resources and mining include expanding resources for First Nations to build capacity in this sector, developing infrastructure for liquefied natural gas (LNG) for marine fueling, and the implementation of a critical mineral strategy including funding geological research through organization such as Geoscience BC. To address energy needs, the Committee acknowledges the importance of diversifying clean and renewable energy and

supports an energy pathways assessment to study BC's energy system, simplifying the geothermal tenure and well permitting processes, and creating a funding stream for district energy systems. With respect to agriculture, Members acknowledge the impact of climate change and affordability challenges on the sector and recommend working with farmers and industry to create a strategy to ensure the sustainability and resiliency of the sector. Members recognize farmers' concerns surrounding water supply and support allocating funding to protect this vital resource. Regarding food security, the Committee supports the implementation of policies and programs to address food insecurity and food waste, with particular attention on the most vulnerable British Columbians. Other recommendations with respect to agriculture relate to the *Assessment Act*, modernizing and replanting crops, meat processing capacity, and funding for the BC Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program.

Also with respect to economic development, the Committee notes the significant labour challenges. Recommendations in this area relate to programs and supports to address labour shortages through improving the foreign employer registry process and credential recognition as well as supports for immigration settlement services. Members highlight the challenges in the Employment Standards Branch and support investments to address wait times and expanding its mandate to conduct proactive investigations. Members also support investment in the technology sector in BC, particular the work of TRIUMF, and Envision BC and the Digital Global Innovation Cluster. Members note the need to harness the potential of government held data and support the creation of a provincial data strategy to do so. Acknowledging the role of tourism in BC's economy, the Committee recommends funding to support accessible and inclusive tourism, food and wine tourism marketing, the Pacific National Exhibition, and the Clayoquot Sound biosphere centre. Regarding trade, Members recommend improving supply chain collaboration by ensuring the provincial goods-movement strategy is integrated with neighboring provincial trade corridor requirements and federal initiatives, as well as investing in trade and transportation infrastructure.

The Committee agrees on the need for additional efforts to address climate change, including increased investments in mitigation and resiliency, highlighting that climate change is impacting all areas and industries in BC. The Committee also acknowledges the importance of improving energy efficiency efforts as well as ensuring the electrical grid is

resilient. Regarding environmental protection and wildlife conservation, Members support increasing funding for land use planning, increasing capacity of enforcement, supporting salmon recovery, and addressing the threat of invasive species. Committee Members also acknowledge the importance of protecting BC's water sources and addressing challenges of increased droughts and depleting watersheds. Members additionally support investment in BC's parks and recreation sites to improve maintenance and access to these areas. Other recommendations in this theme include promoting sustainability efforts and recycling.

The Committee's recommendations regarding fiscal and regulatory policy relate to affordability and competitiveness. Members note that the carbon tax should be applied in a way that ensures competitiveness of BC products, is equitable across all regions of the province, and supports decarbonization. They also recognize that an output-based pricing system should be developed, in consultation with stakeholders, to improve the competitiveness of BC's export sectors. Members highlight concerns regarding permitting processes across many sectors, including housing and natural resource development, and recommend ministries and agencies review all regulatory and approval processes to ensure timeliness, efficiency, and predictability. Regarding small business, Members support reviewing the employer health tax exemption threshold to address impacts related to rising wages and inflation. Other recommendations relate to prompt payment legislation, supporting young entrepreneurs, provincial sales tax (PST) exemptions, and online gaming regulations and enforcement.

Health care staffing shortages and barriers to access were raised by many British Columbians, particularly in rural and remote areas. To address these concerns, the Committee recommends improving recruitment and retention incentives, streamlining credential recognition, and increasing education seats in numerous health care professions, including nursing, midwifery, medical radiation technology and speech language pathology and audiology. Further, Members acknowledge the opportunity to incorporate physician assistants in BC's health care system. The Committee identifies the unique challenges of delivering health care in rural and remote communities and recommends ensuring equitable access to health care including through funding for community-operated health centres, medical travel, and digital health solutions. With regard to seniors, Members support expanding residential care facilities, improving care and oversight, and enabling seniors

to age in place through increased funding for home care, home support, and respite.

Regarding hospice and palliative care, the Committee recognizes the important supports hospices provide to British Columbians and recommend providing stable funding, including for grief and bereavement supports, and establishing a database of palliative care. Regarding coverage for medical equipment and devices, Members note that coverage and accessibility for this equipment and devices needs to be improved, recognizing the role they play in enhancing quality of life.

With respect to public health, Members support enhancing the human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization program as well as funding shingles vaccine for older British Columbians. The Committee also supports increased taxation to discourage smoking and vaping as well as to invest in tobacco and vaping education. Members also make recommendations related to services and supports for British Columbians living with chronic and complex diseases, such as myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), diabetes, multiple sclerosis, dementia, and Parkinson's disease, including funding to support chronic and complex care clinics. Members additionally recommend investment in health and life science research, and surgical day centres to address wait times.

The Committee identifies housing availability and affordability as a priority area for British Columbians. Committee Members recommend investments to significantly increase the full spectrum of housing supply, noting the need to partner with municipal and federal governments, and community organizations on these efforts. The Committee also supports incentives for building housing, including non-market housing, increasing investment in supportive and complex care housing, and providing supports to smaller local governments to address growth. With respect to homeownership, Members recommend reviewing the First Time Home Buyers program's property transfer tax (PTT) exemption threshold to better reflect current market conditions. The Committee also acknowledges challenges with access to affordable rental housing and recommends means-tested rental supports to targeted renters such as persons with disabilities and low-income households, improved housing supports for seniors, and increasing pet-friendly housing options. Members additionally support resources for people experiencing homelessness including through funding for permanent shelter services with supports to transition clients to permanent

housing. Other recommendations in housing relate to real estate data and tiny homes.

The Committee makes several recommendations regarding K-12 education. Members emphasize the need for increased capital funding to address seismic mitigation, cover the costs of portables, and purchase zero-emission school buses. The Committee also discusses the value of community-owned and operated schools, citing the Wells-Bakerville community school, and support funding for upgrades of these schools. Members additionally recommend appropriately funding anti-racism, disability, awareness and inclusive reconciliation programs. Regarding student supports, Members recognize the need to ensure schools are accessible and inclusive. Recommendations in this area include appropriately funding inclusive education, reducing wait times for student psychoeducational testing, reinstating the special education equipment grant, and funding support for students with dyslexia. The Committee also supports funding to school districts to provide settlement supports for newcomers and increased funding for independent, group 1, provincial online schools. The Committee acknowledges the importance of continued support of child care and recommends funding a means-tested summer camp subsidy, recognizing the role of summer camps as child care for many during the summer months.

Regarding mental health and addictions, Members recommend increased investments in treatment and support services. The Committee specifically notes that the per diem rate for supportive recovery homes should be increased to better reflect the cost of delivering services. Committee Members emphasize the need for sufficient funding for crisis lines to ensure all calls are being answered. Members also acknowledge the unique challenges experienced by youth and support increasing funding for child- and youth-specific services and supports, including school-based supports, and early intervention and prevention mental health supports. The Committee also recommends funding for Blueprint's First Responder Resiliency Program and fatherhood research program.

With respect to public safety and justice, the Committee makes several recommendations including increasing investments in legal aid services, child and youth advocacy centres, and community-based restorative justice organizations. Committee Members emphasize the importance of access to education in correctional centres and recommend supporting programs

that provide this service. The Committee also recommends investments to provide supports and services for people experience gender-based violence as well as survivors of sexual assault. Members note the importance of violence prevention efforts and the Stopping the Violence and PEACE (Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment) programs. Regarding natural disasters and emergency preparedness, recommendations include funding for regional districts for emergency management as well as investment in flood mitigation, an earthquake resiliency strategy, and sub-regional and regional planning with First Nations participation. Members also note the need for a H1-capable, night vision rescue helicopter to bolster search and rescue efforts in the province. Other recommendations in this theme relate to notaries' scope of practice, the funding formula for policing, contraband tobacco, and supports for those who engage in sex work.

Regarding social services, the Committee emphasizes the need for equitable support for all children and youth in care, highlighting inequities in the Child in Home of Relative Program and with kinship families. Members support funding for children and youth with support needs to improve access to early intervention services, including screening and assessments, as well as increasing funding for the At Home Program to raise the eligibility age to 24 years. Members also note the financial challenges for families of children and youth with supports needs and recommend increasing resources and support for these families. With respect to income and disability assistance, Committee Members acknowledge the need to improve support for individuals receiving assistance

by increasing rates and earning exemptions threshold, and reviewing the spousal cap. The Committee also recognizes the need to improve the inclusion and resilience of people with disabilities and recommends supporting community living organizations, providing funding for community program workers, and promoting community living as a career opportunity. Other recommendations relate to streamlining the grant process and providing predictable funding for the not for profit sector, as well as waiving fees for not for profit organizations changing directors on liquor licences and providing funding to the Garage Community Space Society.

The Committee's recommendations related to transportation including increasing investments in active transportation, expanding incentives for e-bikes, and increasing funding for accessible pathways between communities. Members also support increasing the accessibility of public transportation across the province, particularly for inter-community transit services and HandyDART, as well as providing free transit for children and youth under the age of 19, and for people with disabilities. The Committee also recommends the provincial government advocate to the federal government that it launch a tri-partite national commission with the provinces and transit agencies and move forward the launch of the permanent transit fund. With respect to roads and highways, the Committee supports several projects, including twinning the highway from the Alberta border to Fort St. John, the AR1 North South Interconnector, and the Reconnecting the Rockies infrastructure project. Additionally, the Committee makes recommendations related to airlines and airports, and marine shipping.

CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

The *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*, S.B.C 2000, c. 23 requires the Minister of Finance to issue a budget consultation paper no later than September 15 each year. This paper includes key issues to be addressed in the next budget, and information on how British Columbians may participate in the budget consultation process. The paper is referred to a select standing committee of the Legislative Assembly which must conduct a consultation and report on the results of that consultation no later than November 15. The Legislative Assembly assigns this responsibility to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. This year, the *Budget 2024 Consultation Paper* was released on May 25, 2023. The consultation was held between May 25, 2023 and June 16, 2023.

BUDGET CONSULTATION PAPER

The *Budget 2024 Consultation Paper* described the provincial government's efforts to address the rising cost of living and high inflation. The paper outlined priorities in strengthening health care, addressing the cost of living and housing affordability, building a strong and clean economy, and creating safe communities. Initiatives were listed towards these priority areas, noting work already underway and further plans to address key issues. The paper requested input from British Columbians on their priorities for the provincial budget, and ideas on how government can create a stronger future where British Columbians can build a good life.

MINISTER OF FINANCE BRIEFING

On May 29, 2023, the Minister of Finance, Hon. Katrine Conroy, MLA, appeared before the Committee to present the *Budget 2024 Consultation Paper*. The Minister began by highlighting the importance of the annual budget consultation and the guidance it provides in developing the provincial budget. Further, the Minister discussed how the province is addressing ongoing challenges.

The Minister emphasized the continued priority of strengthening health care, including mental health supports. The Minister noted the implementation of a new payment model for family doctors, along with the introduction of free prescription contraceptives. Further plans were shared by the Minister to enhance the recruitment, retention, and training of health care professionals to bolster the workforce. With respect to mental health, the Minister focused on the expansion of supports across the spectrum of care for people struggling with addiction, including additional treatment and recovery spaces. It was stated by the Minister that total health care spending will reach more than \$30 billion per year by 2025-26.

The Minister noted the continued progression towards CleanBC in Budget 2023, aimed to reduce emissions and transition to a clean, sustainable economy. A new carbon pricing framework was also highlighted, along with the expansion of active transportation networks and supports for the electrification of vehicles. With respect to resource management, the Minister noted a new critical mineral strategy, the modernizing of permit processes, and improving forestry management in partnership with First Nations towards sustainable forestry harvesting.

With respect to the initiatives addressing affordability, the Minister highlighted over \$2 billion in cost-of-living measures that have been implemented including new, targeted supports for people hardest hit by increased costs. Regarding housing affordability, it was shared by the Minister that continued operational and capital funding will be allocated towards housing, including additional funding for the new Homes for People Plan. The Minister described further plans to ease housing barriers such as the lifting of strata restrictions, housing targets for specific communities, creating more student housing, and a rental protection fund. Similarly, additional plans were discussed by the Minister to change zoning regulations and permit processes to support further housing development.

The Minister discussed several other areas in which the province is investing through Budget 2023. Regarding labour shortages, the Minister discussed how the StrongerBC future-ready action plan creates good-paying jobs and provide businesses with the talent they need to succeed and the support they need to do it. Additionally, the Minister shared how government is helping people feel safe and secure wherever they live in BC by strengthening intervention services, modernizing policing, and creating better access to justice services for all British Columbians.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

British Columbians were invited to share their input in two ways: appearing before the Committee at a public hearing or providing a written submission. Participants were once again asked to use a submission form, continuing with the Committee's simplification and standardization efforts of the consultation process. The submission form requested participants focus their input on three recommendations for the next provincial budget. Public hearing participants were also asked to focus on three recommendations and use the submission form to provide written information supporting their presentation.

Several approaches were used to encourage participation in the consultation, including: a media release; advertisements in local and multicultural newspapers; online advertisements; social media; direct outreach to Members of the Legislative Assembly and constituency offices; and direct outreach to stakeholders and public libraries. Those interested in presenting were asked to complete a request form outlining their preference for a virtual or in-person meeting and themes they would discuss.

The Committee received requests to present from over 480 organizations and individuals and was able to accommodate 375 presentations; those who could not be accommodated were encouraged to provide written submissions. In addition to the presentations, the Committee received 387 written submissions and several hundred emails in support of specific recommendations. Public hearings were held in-person in Vancouver, Victoria, Richmond, Campbell River, Kitimat, Prince George, Dawson Creek, Cranbrook, Revelstoke, Penticton, and Abbotsford, and virtually using the Zoom videoconferencing platform. A list of organizations and individuals who participated in the Committee's consultation is available in the appendices.

The Committee carefully considered all input received during their deliberations.

MEETING SCHEDULE

4th Session, 42nd Parliament

February 27, 2023	Planning
April 17, 2023	Planning
May 29, 2023	Public Hearing (Victoria)
May 30, 2023	Public Hearing (Vancouver)
May 31, 2023	Public Hearing (Vancouver)
June 1, 2023	Public Hearing (Richmond)
June 5, 2023	Public Hearing (Campbell River and Kitimat)
June 6, 2023	Public Hearing (Prince George and Dawson Creek)
June 7, 2023	Public Hearing (Cranbrook and Revelstoke)
June 8, 2023	Public Hearing (Penticton and Abbotsford)
June 12, 2023	Public Hearing (Victoria and virtual)
June 13, 2023	Public Hearing (Virtual)
June 14, 2023	Public Hearing (Virtual)
June 15, 2023	Public Hearing (Virtual)
July 10, 2023	Deliberations
July 11, 2023	Deliberations
July 12, 2023	Deliberations
July 13, 2023	Deliberations
July 19, 2023	Deliberations
July 20, 2023	Deliberations
July 26, 2023	Deliberations
July 27, 2023	Deliberations; Adoption of Report

ADVANCED EDUCATION

Key themes relating to advanced education included the need for increased operational funding and measures to address affordability, with recognition of the unique circumstances of rural and remote institutions. Specific issues related to tuition fees for international students, financial assistance, and student supports were also raised throughout the consultation. The Committee also heard that there is a need for additional investments in student housing, training, and trades. Many noted that investments in advanced education, namely through program funding, can help address current and future labour shortages.

CAPITAL FUNDING

Several universities and student societies advocated for more funding for affordable, on-campus residences for both faculty and students to address the housing crisis. The Simon Fraser Student Society noted that affordable, on-campus housing is a critical component to students' academic success, well-being and sense of community. The Students' Union Okanagan of UBC shared that the cost of housing is rapidly rising in the region and that the small number of on-campus accommodations combined with the area's low rental vacancy rate, makes it challenging for students to find housing. Similarly, the Justice Institute Students' Union stated that many students need to shift to part-time studies due to increased cost of living, have had to endure sub-standard or unsafe housing, or spend longer times commuting. Additionally, the University of Victoria highlighted that the lack of affordable housing was a barrier for the institution to attract staff and the Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of the University of British Columbia indicated it was an issue for faculty retention at both the Vancouver and Okanagan campuses.

Other universities requested funding for specific capital projects. Simon Fraser University requested funding for the Life Sciences Building at its Burnaby campus as well as for its medical school, noting that the medical school was a key part of the solution to address the dire shortage of

family physicians in the province. Finally, UBC Okanagan recommended funding for a proposed centre to research and test disaster-resilient infrastructure which will help the province prepare for future climate emergencies.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Many organizations, institutions and individuals noted that domestic student fee increases are capped at two percent per year while international student fees are not. The Committee heard that this has resulted in post-secondary institutions being increasingly reliant on unregulated international student tuition as a source of revenue. The Camosun College Faculty Association noted that colleges and universities are dealing with under-resourcing and as a result, use international student fees to make up funding shortfalls. The North Island Students' Union explained that travel restrictions during the pandemic showed the risks of depending on international enrolment. The Vancouver Community College Faculty Association and the Thompson Rivers University Students' Union highlighted the pressing need to develop a new strategy that ensures that international education delivers benefits and supports to students, along with institutions, communities, and the province.

The Committee heard that unregulated international student tuition fee increases pose significant barriers for international students looking to complete their education in BC. The BC Federation of Students noted that international undergraduate students in BC paid 426 percent more for their academic year than domestic students and that on average, international student fees accounted for 54 percent of all tuition collected in the province even though international students only accounted for 24 percent of enrolment. Several student societies used the example of Emily Carr University of Art and Design raising tuition by 30 per cent for incoming international students and by 10 percent for current international students to illustrate the need for a more equitable system that regulates international student tuition fee increases. Student unions echoed the BC Federation of Students' call to amend

the tuition fee policy to cap international student fee increases at two percent. The Douglas Students' Union highlighted that students at their institution had advocated for change and that such a policy was already in place at Douglas College. The Kwantlen Student Association explained that by regulating international tuition fee increases and providing these students with predictability, it would create a more fair and just system where all students are equal. The Douglas Students' Union noted that international students work under the table in unsafe conditions, live in illegal rental spaces with many roommates to compensate for the need to pay high tuition costs, and that this added stress forces many students to leave before they complete their studies. The College of New Caledonia Students' Union added that students were deregistered from courses because of their inability to pay their fees. Further, the Emily Carr Students' Union and the Vancouver Community College Faculty Association raised concerns about the consequences of high tuition fees including food, housing and employment insecurity.

With regards to supports for international students, Capilano Students' Union noted that many students are in a precarious financial position due to the instability of tuition regulations, and the high cost of living in BC. They proposed increasing the amount of financial aid available to international students which would allow BC to remain a competitive, attractive and affordable destination for international students. The Justice Institute Students' Union added that new international students would also benefit from increased support to help them integrate into Canadian culture when they first arrive.

Committee Members also heard about the impact of additional fees for Medical Services Plan (MSP) paid by international students. Capilano Students' Union stated that international students must pay double to access basic health care which they believe to be unfair and inequitable. Also, the Justice Institute Students' Union advocated for the permanent removal of the 20-hour per week limit on work for international students stating that it would allow greater opportunities for them to sustain themselves financially.

LITERACY

The Committee heard from numerous organizations about the value of literacy as a key component in poverty reduction, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Several literacy organizations, including Literacy Now and Decoda Literary Solutions, advocated for increased funding for adult literacy

programs noting increases in newcomers needing to learn English and Canadians of all ages struggling in the aftermath of the pandemic. In addition, organizations including Lakes Literacy and the Dawson Creek Literacy Society emphasized the need for additional funding for literacy outreach coordination to help staff earn a living wage and increase retention. Further, Decoda Literary Solutions proposed a multi-ministry, multisector task force to create a strategic plan for literacy. Similarly, the Greater Victoria Alliance for Literacy recommended the creation of a coordinated five-ministry funding model as literacy has impacts on multiple areas.

The Committee also received input regarding financial literacy. The Dawson Creek Literacy Society noted that financial literacy helps to build family health and resilient communities. Family Services of Greater Vancouver shared that many individuals face barriers to access quality financial programs, services, and advice due to discrimination, education, language or systemic barriers, and that investing in financial literacy is a key to reducing poverty. Family Services of Greater Vancouver requested \$500,000 per year over the next three years to be invested in financial literacy initiatives as a poverty reduction strategy.

OPERATIONAL FUNDING

Several organizations advocated for increases to operational funding for post-secondary education. Organizations, including the College of New Caledonia Students' Union, recommended investing an additional \$200 million annually across the advanced education sector. Others, such as the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia, proposed increasing the allocation of annual provincial expenditures to public universities from 3.5 percent to five percent. Finally, CUPE Local 3799 advocated for majority public funding of base budgets to be restored with a progressive increase to 75 percent. In advocating for these increases, organizations referenced the need to break the negative cycle of over-reliance on international student tuition as well as reducing week-long waitlists for essential services, increasing capacity, and addressing lack of service provision and poor quality of education.

The Committee also heard from the Professional Employees Association about the need to mitigate near- and medium-term impacts of high tuition fees and lower enrolments to ensure the fiscal sustainability of post-secondary institutions and enable them to continue to make major contributions

to the economy. Individuals also recommended providing more funding to regional post-secondary institutions and guaranteed minimum funding that lifts all graduate students above the poverty line. One individual added that to ensure advanced education is accessible to people living in rural areas, it needs to be paired with subsidized housing and loan forgiveness for those who move to the north to work.

With regards to financial flexibility and support, the Committee heard that post-secondary institutions cannot carry a surplus into a future year and must balance their budget each fiscal year. The British Columbia Association of Institutes and Universities highlighted the need to explore ways to enhance the financial flexibility of post-secondary institutions to utilize existing financial resources more effectively and allowing them to plan for large capital expenses. The College of the Rockies Faculty Association proposed revising and reviewing the rules around freezing net assets for colleges so that institutions can access funds generated by surpluses.

Several organizations noted the importance of completing the post-secondary funding review and re-examining funding formulas. The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union highlighted that completing the review process would be a step towards a more inclusive and accessible post-secondary education system. Vancouver Community College Faculty Association added that a funding review would allow institutions to achieve balance between financial stability and accessibility. The College of the Rockies Faculty Association recommended revising the funding formula to include equity and Indigenization initiatives, so they are no longer reliant on project-based funding. BC Colleges noted the need for a cost adjustment for small rural colleges stating that these institutions often have multiple campuses throughout large regions, face relatively low student demand because of low population density, and are unable to offer the same levels of student accessibility and learning supports as urban colleges.

Also with respect to funding, the Professional Employees Association highlighted the need to retain sessional lecturers by supporting their conversion to more secure faculty positions while CUPE Local 3799 advocated for increased funding for campus services and bringing outsourced campus services back in-house. Both organizations emphasized the precarious nature of this work and its importance to campus life. Additionally, the Justice Institute Students' Union, Emily Carr Students' Union and Emily Carr University of Art and Design

Faculty Association requested operating funding for their respective institutions.

PROGRAM FUNDING

Several institutions and organizations advocated for funding for new programs. The Students' Union of Vancouver Community College noted that by increasing dedicated program funding, universities will be less reliant on tuition revenue which will in turn reduce barriers to access for students. Several institutions highlighted that investing in areas of provincial priority or areas of greatest need based on labour force projections would ensure that students have the education necessary to grow and succeed in the workforce. In addition, the Research Universities' Council of BC stated that investing in new post-doctoral, graduate and targeted undergraduate student spaces would begin to redress the lack of advanced talent, one of the biggest ongoing challenges faced by employers in the knowledge economy. The College of the Rockies, like other institutions across the province, recommended funding to expand its programming to meet regional economic needs. Royal Roads University also requested funding for the continued development of collaborative educational programming at the West Shore campus.

Post-secondary institutions also highlighted the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge into their operations to accelerate the rights of and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The University of Victoria anticipated that more resources would be needed for programs which foster reconciliation and enable more Indigenous learners to attend post-secondary education. The University of British Columbia shared this sentiment, recommending further investments in programs that support Indigenous students, including better access to education and workforce preparation.

RESEARCH

The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC noted that by earmarking funds specifically for exploratory research in universities, researchers will be able to explore new frontiers, push boundaries, address critical societal challenges, and support student research. The Research Universities' Council of BC highlighted that sustained, reliable research funding tied to areas of provincial priority such as life sciences, climate mitigation, and green technologies will help institutions meet labour market demands. Similarly, Thompson

Rivers University stated that increased funding for research, innovation, and digital infrastructure would foster skills for an evolving labour market as well as promote equal opportunity between regions and enhance BC's global competitiveness. Kwantlen Polytechnic University recommended long-term investment in applied research and innovation at teaching academic institutions, noting that such investments would provide learning opportunities for students while helping local businesses and industry to innovate and expand, thereby creating new jobs and bolstering the economy.

STUDENT SUPPORTS

Several student societies spoke to the issue of food insecurity within their membership and how their food banks have been unable to keep up with demand. The Okanagan College Students' Union noted that students who are meeting their nutritional needs perform better academically, emotionally, and physically and that these students are also more likely to graduate and contribute to the growing economy. The Capilano Students' Union recommended providing direct financial support to help students afford food while the Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia recommended establishing a non-repayable food security grant program for post-secondary students to prioritize student mental and physical health. Finally, in addition to recommending steady funding and resources for student food banks on campus, the Okanagan College Students' Union proposed the creation of meal programs for students.

The Committee also heard from student unions and faculty associations regarding the need for additional student supports, particularly funding for mental health supports. The British Columbia Association of Institutes and Universities noted that because of the pandemic, post-secondary institutions across BC are seeing an increase in the number and complexity of mental health issues experienced by students. In addition, Kwantlen Polytechnic University highlighted that today's students are increasingly disengaged, experiencing low motivation, lack of focus, feelings of isolation, and heightened anxiety as they emerge from the pandemic. The Capilano Faculty Association stated that international students are particularly isolated and are unaware of the resources available to them. Accordingly, these organizations called for increased funding for mental health supports. The Simon Fraser Student Society noted that for international, refugee, and migrant students, the stress of combining studies with work as well as pressure to

perform academically makes it essential for them to access health and counselling services. For this reason, the Society recommended expanding accessibility and investing in health services, including counselling and other mental health services for international, migrant, BIPOC, low-income and Indigenous students. Additionally, Selkirk College highlighted the challenge of providing services to students spread across 10 campuses in the West Kootenay region and recommended funding be allocated specifically for student support, services, and initiatives at rural institutions.

TECHNOLOGY

Organizations and post-secondary institutions highlighted the importance of access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet to access post-secondary education. Thompson Rivers University added that high-capacity connectivity for all regions is important to the equitable development of BC's economy and will benefit many people, including Indigenous communities, and foster inclusivity and equal access to opportunities for all. The Okanagan College Students' Union recommended leveraging Open Education Resources from BCcampus to provide a more accessible learning experience and an alternative to expensive textbooks. The British Columbia Association of Institutes and Universities highlighted that dedicated funding for technology and digital tools would enable greater agility in program delivery, increase student access, and allow institutions to modernize business processes through online cloud-based technologies. The association explained that these would result in greater efficiencies and increase the ability of post-secondary institutions to withstand cyberattacks.

TRADES AND SKILLS TRAINING

Recommendations related to training and credentials focused on connecting British Columbians with the skills they need to achieve employment. Global Container Terminals Inc. emphasized that building strong supply chains depends on having access to skilled labour that meets current and future needs. The organization noted that long-term training funds should be dedicated towards addressing current shortages and aimed at well-paying skilled jobs for the future. Similarly, DigiBC and Hydrogen BC emphasized the labour needs in the creative technology sector and clean energy, respectively.

With respect to the trades, the Committee heard recommendations about coordinating a review of the industry

focusing on how to address current and projected labour gaps. OpenCircle and BC Colleges were of the view that the key to seeing meaningful change would be a systems review that focuses on how to meet projected demand for skilled tradespeople and sets the stage for meaningful and informed education, training, and refinements. The Committee also received input regarding allocating funding for skilled trades training programs, staff, and resources.

Several organizations outlined the challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled labour. The Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia noted that over one million job openings are projected over the next decade, and about 80 percent of those will need post-secondary education or training. The Electrical Contractors Association of BC, and the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada highlighted that there is a limited pool of workers in their respective trades, both of which will be essential in helping BC attain a sustainable future. The Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada called for support to expedite the creation of a residential Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) trade as exists in several other provinces. The New Car Dealers of British Columbia further noted that the auto sector faces a critical labour shortage with an anticipated need for up to 20,000 workers over the next decade. Continuing with the theme of labour shortages, Concrete BC explained that two-thirds of respondents in a survey that Concrete BC conducted of its members had turned down business because they did not have enough qualified drivers. Noting that construction is the second-largest contributor to the GDP in the province, BC Building Trades called for increased funding for trades training and the establishment of a made-in-BC version of the federal Union Training and Innovation Program. Also with respect to education, the Canadian Home Builders' of British Columbia noted that despite the significant economic impact of residential renovations, there is still no licensing system to outline education and training requirements for residential renovations.

The Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce stated that each student in the trades is only funded at approximately 80 cents on the dollar. BC Colleges emphasized that this funding gap is even more significant for rural colleges where small numbers of students and isolation contribute to higher costs. BC Building Trades highlighted that stagnant funding and a workforce that has doubled in size has greatly increased the need for funding for trades trainers while the Canadian

Welding Bureau Group highlighted the need to ensure learning resources for certified trades are offered through the appropriate training institution or accreditation body so they reflect current standards and regulations, and students can prepare for Red Seal examinations. In addition, the Canadian Welding Bureau Group noted that by expanding offerings of training programs and providing funding support or incentives to students enrolling in these programs, critical labour shortages could be alleviated while supporting key industries including the marine and energy sectors. Another solution to the shortage of skilled trades workers, proposed by the Victoria Residential Builders Association, was to offer electives in the trades at universities to provide students with a well-rounded education and employable skills. Concrete BC shared that there are not enough qualified drivers to fill jobs in the concrete industry and one barrier to becoming a concrete delivery professional is the cost associated with class 3 driver's licensing. They recommended that funding of \$15,000 per driver be allocated to support class 3 driver's licensing for workers.

OpenCircle suggested increasing employment in the trades by engaging students, parents, educational institutions, and the industry to end the stigma around skilled trades careers. CUPE Local 3799 highlighted that the underrepresentation of women, Indigenous peoples, and racialized people in the skilled trades workforce in BC is due to systemic issues that must be addressed in advance of students attending post-secondary institutions including by creating trades liaisons in the public education system. Similarly, the BC Centre for Women in the Trades suggested introducing compulsory education and training courses for all apprenticeship programs to build understanding of the contexts of, and intervention strategies for, bullying, harassment, and violence in order to counter the toxic workplace environments that keep women and many other underrepresented groups from joining the skilled trades.

The Committee also heard from BC Building Trades regarding a made-in-BC Trades Exhibition Hall as a tool to recruit more people into the trades. Noting a similar facility in Nova Scotia, BC Building Trades explained that a Trades Exhibition Hall would offer students, job seekers, employment counsellors, teachers, community groups, and the public an opportunity to experience construction occupations in a tangible way. The organization requested a grant of \$50,000 for the College of the BC Building Trades to develop a business case for a made-in-BC Trades Exhibition Hall.

TUITION AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Recommendations related to tuition and financial assistance focused on the need for increased funding for grants, scholarships, bursaries, and subsidies to make advanced education as accessible as possible and increase domestic enrolment. The University of Northern British Columbia suggested broadening the scope of scholarships and bursaries to ensure that there are no barriers to those who want to get an education. Royal Roads University and the Simon Fraser Student Society noted that these supports are most needed by Indigenous, BIPOC, international, and low-income students.

With respect to need-based grants, the Thompson Rivers University Students' Union shared that these grants contribute to increased participation in post-secondary education, completion rates, and successful transitions into employment. The Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia highlighted the importance of the BC Access Grant in improving accessibility to higher education for financially disadvantaged students. In line with these submissions, the Thompson Rivers University Students' Union recommended the expansion of the BC Access Grant, emphasizing federal government plans to reduce the maximum value of the Canada Student Grant and that need-based grants allow students to plan their finances before incurring expenses due to their targeted nature, timely disbursement, and transparency.

Finally, the BC Federation of Students proposed another avenue for financial assistance. The federation recommended freezing tuition fees and developing a plan to progressively reduce tuition fees to lessen the financial burden on students. Additionally, the federation stated that this would help students complete their education, enter the workforce and fill labour shortages.

CONCLUSIONS

Reflecting on input and recommendations from post-secondary institutions, student associations, and faculty, the Committee highlighted the important and evolving role that post-secondary institutions play in training workers to meet current and future labour market demands. Members recognized the unique barriers faced by rural and remote post-secondary institutions and the need to explore opportunities to incentivize staff and students to move to these parts of the province. Members discussed the need to complete the post-secondary funding review and implement an updated funding model, highlighting concerns about institutions relying

on international student tuition. Members also emphasized the need for financial flexibility for institutions to allow for necessary investments.

With respect to international students, the Committee noted the important cultural and economic contributions they make to the province. Members recognized that international students feel that post-secondary institutions are not valuing them as students as much as they are valuing them as a source of revenue to fund shortfalls. They highlighted the importance of tuition fees being predictable, equitable and transparent, noting Emily Carr University of Art and Design as an example of the challenges caused by unregulated tuition fees. The Committee agreed that the current international student tuition system is putting students in difficult and unpredictable situations and discussed ways to best support vulnerable international students beyond tuition regulation.

While discussing program funding, the Committee emphasized the importance of a funding strategy based on mapping out existing skills gaps and shortages and then focusing on areas of greatest need. Members reflected on expanding programming and seats at all levels where needs are greatest given current or projected skill shortages, including in the trades. They noted that economic shifts are happening across BC and industries are rapidly adapting to new technologies. They agreed that programming at post-secondary institutions should be expanded across the province based on specific regional needs.

As it relates to trades and skills training, the Committee acknowledged the crucial need to break the stigma around skilled trades careers to ensure that students continue to train and fill labour market shortages and noted the importance of starting this work as early as possible. Members also expressed concern about the lack of mandatory education and training courses for all apprenticeship programs relating to bullying, harassment and violence. The Committee also noted the lack of qualified class 3 drivers due to the expense of training and agreed that funding is needed to ensure the province has the necessary workers in this area.

Committee Members also reflected on input from student unions and universities that investing in need-based grants like the BC Access Grant would have the most direct impact on improving accessibility to higher education for financially disadvantaged students. Members agreed that students need support to continue to make post-secondary education affordable and accessible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Capital Funding

1. Invest in research infrastructure at BC's post-secondary institutions that is relevant to regional contexts and institutional expertise, such as the proposed centre for disaster-resilient infrastructure at UBC Okanagan.

International Students

2. Ensure cultural and economic benefits of international education for students, communities, and the province by creating a provincial strategy for international students, regulating international student tuition fees to provide predictability, and investing in international student supports.

Operational Funding

3. Complete the post-secondary education funding review and implement an updated funding model that:
 - a. equitably distributes financial resources based on regional needs;
 - b. ensures sufficient program funding to address labour needs;
 - c. expands access to student supports and health services, including trauma-informed sexual violence support, addictions support, counselling, and other mental health services for all students; and
 - d. enhances financial flexibility for institutions to use resources, such as net assets and surpluses, more effectively.

Program Funding

4. Increase funding for all regions across the province to expand programming and seats at all levels where needs are greatest given current or projected skill shortages, including in the trades.

Trades and Skills Training

5. Encourage careers in the trades by engaging stakeholders to break the stigma around skilled trades careers and promoting these professions and by providing permanent funding for the BC Centre for Women in the Trades to create trades liaisons in the public K-12 education system.
6. Allocate new skills training grants for workers to attain class 3 driver licensing.

Tuition and Financial Assistance

7. Improve access to post-secondary education through increased investment in the BC Access Grant to enable increases to the maximum amount given out per student and the grant cut-off threshold.

ARTS, LIBRARIES, AND SPORT

Submissions from the arts, libraries, and sports sectors spoke to the unique value each provides to the province while highlighting a lack of funding and supports. British Columbians described the financial difficulties experienced by these sectors due to a lack of stable funding and increasing inflation.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Organizations representing the arts and culture sector emphasized the value of arts and culture and advocated for more funding to their industries. The Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique noted that the arts and culture sector is vital to the development, viability, and health of society and that community arts play an important role in well-being and social issues. The Capitol Theatre Restoration Society shared this sentiment, adding that the arts have a significant economic impact by stimulating tourism, attracting investment, and generating employment opportunities. The need for funding that keeps up with inflation and cost of living increases was a concern shared by many individuals and organizations working in the arts and culture sector.

Organizations highlighted the importance of BC Arts Council funding as the most direct way to help fund artists and arts organizations in the province. The BC Museums Association noted that for over two decades, BC spent less on arts, culture, and heritage than any province in the country and that currently, roughly 10 percent of museums and galleries in the province receive BC Arts Council operating funding. The Key City Theatre recommended that eligibility for funding be expanded, and funds increased to allow more arts and culture organizations to access funding as arts-presenting organizations like Key City Theatre are not eligible for this funding. The Nelson and District Arts Council advocated for increased funding for the BC Arts Council, highlighting that rural artists and arts organizations need more opportunities to access this funding. Additionally, the BC Alliance for Arts and Culture noted that stable and predictable funding would allow the arts and culture community to plan effectively and improve

access to funding for historically underserved artists, cultural practitioners, and arts and culture organizations.

Several organizations emphasized that the industry is still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and patrons are attending live events less frequently than before the pandemic. To address this issue, the Victoria Conservatory of Music highlighted the importance of the Arts and Culture Resilience Supplement to support sector recovery. As another strategy for recovery, the Canadian International Dragon Boat Festival Society advocated for the expansion of the Community Gaming Grant program stating that it is one of the only sources of funding that is stable from year to year and allows organizations to plan. An individual also noted that continued funding to the BC Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund would stimulate local economies directly through cultural sector employment, employing small businesses that service the events and that surround the events. The Richmond Arts Coalition shared this view and recommended a permanent \$30 million annual investment into the BC Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund.

The Committee heard from organizations promoting the idea of tax credits and incentives for arts and culture. The Canadian Media Producers Association, BC Branch noted that the provincial tax credit system provides stability to the film industry while the Motion Picture Production Industry Association shared that these tax credits have allowed BC to be competitive in the global marketplace. Both associations asked that existing motion picture tax credits be maintained. The IATSE, Local 168 proposed the creation of a live entertainment labour tax credit to mirror the one for the film and television industry citing the benefits provided to that industry and the lack of fairness and equity in the absence of a similar benefit for the live entertainment sector. Finally, the Victoria Conservatory of Music stated that a provincial endowment matching program for not for profit professional arts organizations would allow them to continue to operate in times when earned revenue is limited and encourage donors to contribute more.

The Committee heard from several organizations on issues pertaining to facilities used for arts and culture, with several requesting funding for specific facilities. The Victoria Symphony identified the lack of affordable, accessible and adequate performance and rehearsal spaces in the Capital Regional District and recommended establishing a performing arts facilities planning group to investigate the growing crisis. The lack of affordable housing and studio space for artists was also a concern for several arts organizations including the Richmond Arts Coalition which recommended a \$10 million investment in infrastructure for cultural spaces. The Dance Foundation requested \$5 million in funding to secure the future of the Scotiabank Dance Centre in Vancouver, which is home to 12 arts organizations and provides affordable rental space to the arts community, fitness schools and daycares. Science World reported that funding support for infrastructure repairs is needed to remediate critical issues that may impact their ability to continue in their current location as the dome is leaking, and systems like HVAC, electrical systems, and heavy decking pilings need significant upgrades. Additionally, Science World requires funding for classroom and meeting space and to rejuvenate their galleries, noting these investments will create opportunities for young learners to become confident in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) learning.

The Association of Book Publishers of BC explained that publishers and creators deserve fair compensation for the use of their content in classrooms. The organization shared that the payment of royalties should be enforced to ensure publishers and creators' continued ability to produce high-quality educational resources to support BC curriculum goals. The association also noted the importance of the BC book publishing tax credit for the development of new books and recommended committing funding towards a program to incentivize the purchase of BC books in public schools.

The Revelstoke Heritage Railway Society highlighted the multiple roles played by museums as a core element of the educational system, a support for truth and reconciliation, a place for families to connect and enjoy themselves, and a key element in tourism infrastructure. With respect to the lack of funding for museums, individuals noted that Provincial Heritage Properties are ineligible to apply for funding through the BC Arts Council and that current funding is minimal. Several organizations and individuals noted that this lack of funding resulted in the closures of two cultural institutions in 2023, the Bateman Gallery and Point Ellice House Museum

and Gardens. The Committee also heard that additional funding for museums is needed so that staff can spend less time writing grant applications and spend more time focused on projects, as well as to increase wages and prevent burn out. One individual recommended reinstating the Royal BC Museum redevelopment project because of the importance of maintaining and preserving historical and cultural artefacts from British Columbia.

The BC Museums Association noted that in 2021, two museums in Lytton burned to the ground due to a wildfire. Several submissions noted that to protect irreplaceable cultural heritage from future damage, an emergency mitigation and response plan for the arts, culture and heritage sector needs to be developed. Individuals added that available grants such as the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program and the BC 150 Time Immortal Grants were oversubscribed and that there continues to be significant unmet demand for climate mitigation projects in the heritage sector. Similarly, the MISCELLANEOUS Productions Society emphasized the need for an emergency plan for BC charities to provide short term support and stability since they will not receive funding from the Vancouver Foundation or the TELUS Vancouver Community Fund before 2025.

The Committee heard from smaller arts organizations about their unique challenges. The Kamloops Art Gallery noted that over the past 10 years increased shipping costs to its location have come to make up half of each exhibition's total costs. The Capitol Theatre Restoration Society and Key City Theatre highlighted that stable operating funding for rural cultural and arts organizations is vital to fulfill BC's mandate towards truth and reconciliation as it enables outreach and engagement efforts to build relationships with Indigenous peoples, supports collaboration on Indigenous-led projects, and facilitates the development of relevant programming in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Both organizations requested that funding be designated specifically for the arts sector in rural areas.

On the topic of reconciliation, the BC Museums Association recommended ongoing grants to allow Indigenous communities to continue the work to repatriate culturally significant artifacts, as institutions and collectors around the world hold culturally significant items that should be returned. The West Kootenay Regional Arts Council echoed the BC Museums Association's call to ensure that funding for Indigenous arts, culture, and heritage is sustainable and

reflects the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA). In addition, the Council noted that BIPOC and other equity-seeking groups were more likely than others to highlight the importance of participation in arts and culture for personal well-being. Finally, the Kamloops Art Gallery noted that it will take time and additional resources to hire into and sustain positions to support reconciliation and equity and to further engage with and provide opportunities for Indigenous people and people of colour. Therefore, they advocated for new investments for hiring to support reconciliation and equity initiatives in the arts.

ArtStarts in Schools explained that by supporting initiatives that bring arts educators into schools and communities, children can explore their local environments, engage with their cultural heritage, and develop a deeper appreciation for their surroundings. Additionally, the organization highlighted that the arts have proven to be a powerful tool in promoting healing, and emotional well-being, and understanding complex illnesses and care. ArtStarts in Schools suggested that art could be integrated into healing and health care work by funding art therapy programs in pediatric hospitals, supporting arts-based interventions for children with chronic illnesses, and integrating art into health education curricula.

LIBRARIES

The Committee heard about the important role that libraries play in the province and communities. Organizations in this sector noted that libraries are community hubs which help to reduce isolation and provide free access to resources and government services for children, families, newcomers, seniors, and vulnerable people. The Kootenay Library Federation additionally noted the role libraries have played as cooling, warming, and clean air centres. Organizations also highlighted the role of rural libraries as hubs for community support, literacy, access to technology, and skills training.

Several libraries noted that public libraries have not had an increase in core provincial funding in over a decade. The British Columbia Library Association highlighted that over the same period, community demands on libraries have multiplied and the costs to provide core library services have drastically increased. The Surrey Public Library noted that these cost increases put additional strain on municipalities, as provincial funding only accounted for four percent of its annual funding.

Other organizations, including the Powell River Public Library and the Association of BC Public Library Directors, discussed a need for funding to allow public libraries to meet the increasingly complex demands of their communities. Overall, 13 libraries, associations, and organizations recommended increased operational funding for public libraries. Several of these, including the British Columbia Library Trustees Association, specified that annual funding to public libraries be increased by \$30 million with ongoing increases for inflation.

SPORT

Over 15 amateur sport organizations recommended an investment of \$15 million over three years in the sector. Sport organizations emphasized that participation in sports builds communities, leaders, and healthy and resilient citizens. They elaborated that sports provide an opportunity for real connection and can help participants support their physical and mental health. The BC Ultimate Society noted that at the heart of any sporting program are provincial, local, and club organizations that are dependent on core government funding. The British Columbia Amateur Athletics Association stated that government contributions have stagnated for more than a decade and that when coupled with inflationary costs over the same period, makes it very challenging for organizations to continue to deliver critical programs and services to individuals and communities throughout the province.

PacificSport Fraser Valley spoke to the importance of removing barriers from sport and that increased funding could be used to prioritize accessibility and inclusion. Several sports organizations, including Triathlon British Columbia, highlighted that more British Columbians should be afforded the opportunity to derive the social and economic benefits of sport—particularly underrepresented populations, including Indigenous peoples, girls and women, British Columbians with a disability, and new Canadians. The Sport Medicine Council of BC noted that the perception of safety in sport can be a barrier for parents enrolling their children in sport and that additional funding towards sport safety would increase participation. Cost was also highlighted as a barrier to entry for many people wanting to participate in sports and organizations like KidSport BC recommended additional funding to support grants towards children's registration fees. Other recommendations in the sport sector relate to dedicated funding for sport infrastructure, having Sport BC as the lead provincial level sport agency, and additional consultation with sport organizers prior to policy changes.

A few organizations advocated for funding for specific projects and programs. BC Adaptive Snowsports works to improve the quality of life of British Columbians living with either a physical or cognitive disability by funding programs and activities which provide direct access to ski resorts and slopes. They requested dedicated funding to celebrate the organization's 50th anniversary and highlight the life-changing impacts of making sport accessible. While the British Columbia Mainland Cricket Association, the West Coast Cricket Association, and the Surrey Warriors Cricket Club called for investments in the province's fastest-growing sport, specifically for natural turf wickets, new cricket facilities, and funding for youth programs.

CONCLUSIONS

Committee Members highlighted the value of the arts and culture sector along with the difficulties that this sector is facing as patrons remain resistant to return to live events in a time of increasing costs. While discussing enhancing BC Arts Council funding, the Committee agreed that rural, not for profit, and charitable community arts organizations, such as presenting arts organizations, who are not eligible for BC Arts Council funding were at a disadvantage especially since they also struggled throughout the pandemic. Such funding disparities for organizations in small and rural communities are a significant issue since these organizations often act as local arts and culture hubs. Members noted the importance of the BC Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund as it enables arts and culture organizations across the province to keep up with inflation and to stimulate local economies through employment and tourism.

With respect to book publishing, Members acknowledged the industry's request to renew the book publishing tax credit for another five years to help support the industry. Additionally, Members reflected on the need for the Ministry of Education and Child Care to pay copyright fees to publishers and creators for works used in schools in order to appropriately compensate publishers and writers.

The Committee recognized the importance of sustainable museum funding and the growing need to preserve artifacts, history, and heritage properties. In addition, Members highlighted the challenges faced by Indigenous communities when artifacts are offered back to their rightful communities and how these communities do not have funding to transport or care for the delicate artifacts. Members agreed on the

importance of designated funding for Indigenous repatriation projects to remedy these issues.

The Committee expressed support for increased investments in infrastructure for cultural spaces. Members emphasized the role of Scotiabank Dance Centre as a key community asset. Members also discussed the need for capital funding for Science World to make necessary repairs and upgrades to continue to teach children about STEAM fields. Members noted the importance of funding both these organizations.

While discussing public libraries, Committee Members recognized the importance of libraries as community hubs which reduce isolation and increase access to resources, programs, and services. Further, they highlighted the fact that libraries do far more than provide books; they act as cooling and heating centres and are taking on a more vital role within communities with the advent of climate emergencies. Members agreed that libraries are crucial for those living in rural, remote, and First Nations communities as they may be the only place to access the internet and stay connected. They acknowledge the increased costs and responsibilities of libraries and the need for funding to better reflect the expanded roles as well as increased inflation.

The Committee described sports as an investment in physical well-being and community economic development. Members also acknowledged that participating in sports fosters a sense of community and plays an important role in mental health. Members noted the numerous individuals and organizations that requested an investment of \$15 million over three years in the sector. They recognized that increased funding would ensure that all the benefits of sports are available to underrepresented groups such as Indigenous peoples, girls and women, British Columbians with disabilities, and new Canadians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Arts and Culture

8. Increase the BC Arts Council budget to \$50 million annually with ongoing inflationary increases and work with the sector to create a sustainability plan to ensure the future health and vibrancy of arts and heritage.
9. Establish a multi-year designated fund for rural, not for profit, charitable community arts organizations, such as presenting arts organizations, who are not eligible for BC Arts Council funding.
10. Make a permanent \$30 million annual investment with ongoing inflationary increases into the BC Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund to continue supporting charities, not for profit organizations, and free community events.
11. Provide the Scotiabank Dance Centre with \$5 million in funding to help secure the future of the centre and the benefits they provide to the greater community.
12. Contribute toward Science World's five-year plan of \$80 million for critical infrastructure and \$35 million for classroom and gallery space.
13. Recommit to fairly compensating creators and publishers by paying the royalty rates set by the Copyright Board for materials used in schools.
14. Renew the BC book publishing tax credit for another five years.
15. Provide sustainable funding to museums and the heritage sector, including Provincial Heritage Properties.
16. Provide stable funding to Indigenous arts and culture, including an annual fund of approximately \$750,000 to support repatriation projects in Indigenous communities.

Public Libraries

17. Increase permanent funding for public libraries to \$30 million annually with ongoing inflationary increases, and support services to rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

Sport

18. Increase funding for amateur sport by \$15 million over three years.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Concerns about labour shortages were raised by several organizations and individuals, with several industries calling for innovative approaches to improve training and recruitment of skilled workers. The Committee also received requests to provide more support for farmers and improve food security in the province. With respect to natural resource development, several organizations also raised concerns about permitting times, with several highlighting the need to better support Indigenous capacity and reconciliation related to forestry, mining, and natural resource development. Additionally, the Committee heard about the need to decarbonize the economy with suggestions to switch to alternative energy sources.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOODS

Richmond FarmWatch noted that affordable land and labour costs are significant stresses on farmers and that adequate farmland in BC is limited and is under pressure from competing land uses which is driving up the costs. The organization suggested government decrease the minimum farm revenue threshold on properties that are less than 0.8 hectares, encourage small lot farming, and help secure land tenures for tenant farmers. The BC Dairy Association noted that the average BC dairy farmer is carrying \$5 million in debt, largely due to the high cost of land in the province, and that interest rates mean BC dairy farmers are producing at a deficit. The association recommended working with farmers to find ways to reduce costs related to farming and prevent new costs, regulations, fees, or taxes from arising. The Small-Scale Meat Producers Association stated that 94 percent of small-scale meat producers in BC cannot afford to make a living, and advocated for investment to build up meat-processing capacity in BC.

The BC Agriculture Council explained that because of how prices are set, farmers cannot pass costs on to customers and end up making less. The council suggested the establishment of an industry-government collaborative working group to identify ways to reduce costs for producers and to mitigate future cost increases. Additionally, the BC Fruit Growers'

Association highlighted that current market conditions in Canada mean that only five retailers are responsible for the majority of all produce purchases which has resulted in produce selling for 20 cents less per pound than in the United States. They called for a more transparent and orderly system for marketing fruit prices.

Water scarcity was also a key concern, with the BC Dairy Association explaining that farmers are investing more in water infrastructure to adapt to scarcity. The BC Agriculture Council noted that water scarcity has been exacerbated by prolonged periods of low precipitation and competing demands from other water user groups. The council shared that the *Water Sustainability Act* outlined some measures to reserve water for agricultural production but more could be done to clarify government's commitment to reserve an adequate supply of water for future agricultural production. The Small-Scale Meat Producers Association explained that, although licensing for non-domestic groundwater use under the *Water Sustainability Act* was open until March 1, 2022, only about 38 percent of users had applied and more needs to be done to assist farmers in obtaining ground water licences.

Organizations highlighted the need to help farmers better prepare for the challenges of climate change. The Small-Scale Meat Producers Association shared that regenerative agriculture could help mitigate climate change and explained that, by investing in regenerative agriculture practices like no-till, diversification, cover cropping, livestock integration and well-managed grazing, BC could become a leader in climate change solutions. The association recommended more collaboration between organizations and Indigenous partners to facilitate knowledge-sharing and better adoption of regenerative agricultural practices. The BC Fruit Growers' Association noted a need to provide incentives for fruit growers to replant and modernize their orchards, sharing that the previous replant program was discontinued, and growers need support in replanting species that can better survive the changing climate.

Several individuals and organizations highlighted concerns about the impacts of food insecurity in BC with a number of recommendations to invest in food hubs. The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable explained that food costs have skyrocketed, hitting lower income families hardest. Cowichan Green Community Society and several individuals described food hubs as instrumental in the ongoing delivery of agriculture and food rescue programs, school meal programs, good food boxes, community gardens, and gleaning initiatives. Nanaimo Foodshare Society explained that food hubs empower people to feed themselves nutritiously for less money using local, seasonal means and environmentally sound practices. Cowichan Green Community Society and LUSH Valley Food Action Society called for funding for contribution agreements with Island Food hubs to promote food security for Vancouver Island communities. Additionally, the Comox Valley Food Policy Council advocated for the establishment of regional and provincial food policy councils to advance planning and policy to strengthen local food economies.

BC Association of Farmers' Markets described how farmers markets are an important source of food security for rural and remote regions as they connect farmers and communities. Accordingly, the association advocated for multi-year funding to the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon which provides food coupons for food insecure individuals to be used at farmers markets. Additionally, the Food Stash Foundation recommended better monitoring of the food supply chain, explaining that almost 2.3 million tons of edible food is wasted each year in Canada and that food waste contributes between eight and 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. The BC Alliance for Healthy Living suggested addressing food insecurity by raising income assistance rates to the poverty line according to market basket thresholds.

CLEAN AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Several individuals and organizations expressed support for BC to transition to a low-emissions economy. Advanced Biofuels Canada explained that the BC Low Carbon Fuel Standard has been the most successful climate action policy in the province, noting that it has managed to divert 15.75 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions during the period from 2010 to 2021, and recommended further private sector investment in clean fuel innovations in BC. The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada noted that the chemistry and plastic sectors can help the province transition to net-zero by using chemicals to stabilize and transport renewable fuels such as

hydrogen, and called for increased investment to improve the transportation of renewable fuels. General Fusion highlighted its project in Richmond and recommended funding supports to fast-track fusion energy development in BC. The City of Burnaby recommended funding to build the Burnaby district energy system which recovers energy by burning waste, and is projected to generate up to 22,000 tons of greenhouse gas credits annually. Pearson College UWC explained the need for support to help incentivize institutions to modernize their electrical grids and reduce carbon emissions to help meet BC's emissions targets.

Innergex Renewable Energy noted the need to expedite permitting and construction for renewable energy sources, explaining that permitting and construction of a new wind facility in BC currently takes more than five years. The Canadian Geothermal Energy Association and Kitselas Geothermal also referenced challenges with application and permitting processes in describing how geothermal energy development could help BC meet its emissions targets with clean and renewable energy.

With respect to hydrogen, FortisBC explained that BC is endowed with the right mix of resources, infrastructure, research institutions, and clean technology firms that could enable the hydrogen sector to generate significant growth and value for the province. Fortis BC further noted that the hydrogen sector is vital to helping BC reach net-zero. Additionally, Hydrogen BC explained that BC needs to streamline regulatory processes for hydrogen as an energy source.

The Committee heard that without a clear sustainable plan, BC will not be able to successfully transition its economy. Innergex Renewable Energy explained that BC needs to commission an independent energy pathways assessment to look at BC's entire energy system, including electricity and natural gas, to determine how the province can successfully achieve net-zero by 2050. Similarly, the David Suzuki Foundation highlighted the need to develop an energy policy that includes a blueprint to seize economic opportunities, reduce costs, and reform energy governance to help the economy pivot to renewable while in compliance with DRIPA.

The Committee also heard several recommendations to provide support for individual British Columbians as the province transitions to clean and renewable energy. The BC Sustainable Energy Association explained that several climate action initiatives will put pressure on energy costs

and explained the need to alleviate this pressure on low-income households. Ecotrust Canada highlighted that existing and proposed measures remain insufficient, particularly as other provinces outpace BC in their approach to equitably decarbonizing homes. They recommended a permanent electricity bill assistance program modelled after Ontario's Electricity Support Program. The Vancouver Electric Vehicle Association noted the need to work with remote, rural and Indigenous communities to support access to clean energy infrastructure.

FORESTRY

The Committee heard from several individuals and organizations who expressed concerns about recent policy changes impacting the forestry industry. Resource Works Society explained that the current policies are exacerbating fibre supply issues, and noted the need to ensure that communities receive enough fibre supply to keep mills operational as new processing facilities are brought online. The Resource Municipalities Coalition described the new forestry approach as not grounded in input from the community or sector experts.

Several individuals expressed the importance of protecting remaining old growth ecosystems and providing economic support to First Nations communities and forest dependent communities as they transition away from harvesting old growth forests. For Our Kids explained that less than 2.7 percent of old growth ecosystems are left and suggested that funding for value added wood products could help communities generate employment opportunities. Save Our Forest Team Comox Valley explained that BC is approaching the end of the three-year deadline to fully implement the recommendations of the old growth review panel, yet none of the recommendations have been fully implemented. Wildsight Revelstoke called for immediate financial support to First Nations to ensure logging deferrals are economically viable, including compensation for lost logging revenue and jobs, and further suggested employing forestry workers to rehabilitate lands and streams. Similarly, Nature United noted that a thoughtful approach that strengthens economic resilience as well as prioritizes ecosystem health will help ensure that BC's forest-dependent communities are not left behind.

LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

The Committee received recommendations to increase the budget of the Employment Standards Branch. The BC Federation of Labour described the Employment Standards Branch as critically important to BC workers and noted that the Branch has neither the mandate nor the resources to deal with modern workplace challenges such as the gig economy and temporary foreign workers. Additionally, CUPE North Area District Council stated that from 2013 to 2017, the Branch failed to collect \$14.9 million in owed wages, hurting workers and their families who rely on this money. The Committee also received recommendations to improve oversight of WorkSafeBC.

A key theme was the need for more workers across the province to address labour shortages. The Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training highlighted the need to invest in their mid-career services in addition to the pre-employment services it currently offers. The association explained that helping people upskill can be a strong economic driver that currently receives minimal funding. The Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training further noted that career development and employment service providers in rural areas have had inadequate funding to help develop the workforce in their communities and recommended that funding move away from population-based targets and focus on the realities of delivering services in rural communities. The City of Dawson Creek explained that there are a lot of people with skills that need resources to help them transition to new jobs while the Burnaby Board of Trade called for credential recognition to double. Restaurants Canada and the BC Hotel Association both suggested more foreign workers in their industries could help alleviate labour shortages.

MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The Committee heard from several groups regarding the need to streamline permitting processes. The Cariboo Mining Association highlighted that permitting processes are slowing down mining initiatives, explaining that it can take 550 days for government to approve work applications. The Fort St. John Chamber of Commerce noted that a lack of standardized time frames around resource permitting has resulted in investment leaving BC. Teck emphasized that government needs to

address procedural issues and enhance the predictability of the permitting process.

Teck discussed opportunities to unlock resource rich regions in the province through the federal Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund and recommended partnering with companies to secure funding. The Association for Mineral Exploration recommended investing \$50 million for the implementation of a critical minerals strategy with Geoscience BC highlighting how BC has minerals that can help with electric vehicle manufacturing. Geoscience BC additionally requested support for its research projects to implement the upcoming BC critical minerals strategy. Geoscience BC noted it has the infrastructure and expertise to ensure that geoscience can support Indigenous reconciliation; increased environmental, social, and governance standards; working with local communities; and understanding BC's role in the critical minerals and metals supply chain. They added that every dollar Geoscience BC invests in minerals research results in at least 7 dollars of mineral exploration investment.

Several individuals and organizations noted the need to build Indigenous capacity to better negotiate with organizations. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers explained that consultation processes in BC require companies to conduct engagement with First Nations on all oil and gas applications on Crown and private lands prior to submitting an application. The Mining Association of BC highlighted that there needs to be true partnerships between Indigenous nations, government and industry; the association called for more financing for Indigenous governing bodies to build capacity in this area. The association further explained that BC produces 16 of the 31 critical minerals on Canada's list and called for greater emphasis on Indigenous co-ownership and equity positions in projects.

The Committee received several recommendations related to LNG in BC, both in favour of and opposed to its further integration into the economy. Both Resource Works Society and Shell Canada Limited highlighted the benefits of LNG in helping BC reach its emission targets at home and abroad. FortisBC explained that marine shipping is a significant source of both local and global emissions and suggested that developing infrastructure to provide LNG marine fuel could significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Conversely, Stand.earth described LNG marine fuel as a false climate solution while the David Suzuki Foundation stated that LNG locks up investment in other types of renewables. East

Kootenay Climate Hub and several individuals highlighted concerns about the expansion of the LNG industry in BC and called for investment in other forms of energy.

The Committee also heard the need to support workers in the natural resource sector. The Just Transition Working Group recommended providing skills training for workers to successfully transition to new employment in the event they lose their jobs due to climate policy or declining demand for fossil fuels. Similarly, one individual supported providing funding for retraining fossil fuel workers.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

BC Tech noted that BC needs to support local tech companies and that technology jobs will be the number one source of private sector job growth in BC in the coming decade. The Council of Canadian Innovators explained that government can create cutting-edge solutions and expedite the development and deployment of technologies that can drive clean growth but also create good jobs by awarding procurement contracts to local companies. They also recommended creating a provincial data strategy and data authority based on the principles of Ontario's Digital and Data Strategy to harness the power of its data as an economic asset and better serve citizens and businesses across the province, while promoting privacy, transparency, and equity.

Several organizations highlighted how technology can help spur innovations in the province. The Research Universities Council of BC explained that post-secondary education and research from remote locations is becoming increasingly common. They explained that provincewide modern and secure connectedness to support remote research is one of the most potent tools that government has to foster inclusive prosperity but cautioned that investments in high-speed broadband must be coupled with investments to ensure systems are secure and protected. The Global Innovation Cluster explained that it aims to use technology to develop homegrown innovations in a number of industries that are central to BC's economy. TRIUMF highlighted that continued investment in the Institute for Advanced Medical Isotopes could develop the next generation of cancer therapies. Additionally, South Island Prosperity Partnership recommended developing an Indigenous Innovation and Training Centre in Greater Victoria to attract new investment, draw national and international attention, and create a national icon for economic reconciliation in action.

Several organizations noted the need to improve connectivity in rural and remote areas of the province especially in Indigenous communities. Transition Kamloops explained that broadband access and digital capacity are critical to the future resilience of communities across nearly all indicators of economic development and well-being, such as health, education, socialization, political participation, and access to meaningful employment. The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff at UBC highlighted that Indigenous communities in rural and remote areas of the province lack adequate connectivity and described Indigenous access to reliable internet connectivity as meaningful action on reconciliation. TELUS Corporation highlighted that digital connectivity could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 20 percent and ensure that remote communities can thrive in a modern economy.

TOURISM

The Committee heard from organizations about the need to provide better support to help the tourism industry grow. The Revelstoke Chamber of Commerce stated that all sectors, such as trades, health service providers, and community support organizations, are part of the ecosystem that sustains traditional tourism businesses. Accordingly, the chamber was of the view that all businesses in a resort municipality should be eligible for tourism funding grants. The BC Hotel Association explained that the lack of hotel capacity in BC cities poses challenges to keep up with tourism projections and that providing incentives to grow this sector can generate employment, stimulate economic prosperity, and contribute to sustainable development. Destination Greater Victoria shared its aim to be a global leader in sustainable tourism and recommended supporting the transition toward a more sustainable and circular tourism economy, noting the important role of destination marketing organizations in fostering that transition.

The Committee also received recommendations specific to accessible tourism. Spinal Cord Injury BC and Access BC highlighted that accessible and inclusive tourism contributes \$81.7 billion to the global economy. They recommended additional funding to the access and inclusion liaisons in each of the tourism association areas, a position that has existed through cost sharing arrangements with Spinal Cord Injury BC and tourism associations, noting the economic benefits of investment in this area. They further noted opportunities to expand investment in accessible and inclusive outdoor

recreation and the promotion and marketing of inclusive tourism experiences.

Wine Growers BC discussed food and wine tourism, explaining that BC's wine and allied industries contributed \$2.56 billion in business revenues, \$440 million in tax revenue, and \$753 million in wages in 2019. The organization recommended an annual investment in food and wine tourism marketing, explaining that this would generate 57,500 new visitors per year with an increase of \$55.5 million in new direct tourism revenue per year.

The Committee also received funding requests for specific tourism projects. The Pacific National Exhibition explained that it is a not for profit organization owned by the City of Vancouver and generates an annual surplus between \$2 million and \$4 million. The organization is currently constructing a new amphitheater set to be completed in spring 2026 and requested funding to help finalize construction. Clayoquot Biosphere Trust requested \$5 million to support the development of the Clayoquot Sound biosphere centre, explaining that the centre would advance conservation skills and learning, community health and social enterprise. They added that this is the only First Nations and non-First Nations organization in Canada working collaboratively to develop a UNESCO visitor centre and knowledge hub. The Commercial Bear Viewing Association recommended that creating an Adventure Tourism Branch within the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport to champion the sector and improve communications between the sector and government.

TRADE

A few organizations proposed solutions to improve trade in BC. Global Container Terminals supported the development of a goods-movement strategy and expressed the need for the strategy to be well integrated with the three other western provinces' trade corridor requirements and federal initiatives. The organization stated that this would increase the strategy's effectiveness and ensure the implementation does not result in further layering of unnecessary costs on the operators and drive up costs of doing business in BC. The Railway Association of Canada called for the provincial government to resist federal regulations related to supply chains. The association noted that workers are prevented from loading grain onto vessels in the rain at the Port of Vancouver and this policy forces Canadian railways to move Canadian freight to US railways at a below market rate.

Kitselas Development Corporation, the economic arm of the Kitselas First Nation, aims to develop a foreign trade zone operated by the Nation to provide a centralized point of access for trade specific government programs in northwest BC. The corporation recommended government support the review, analysis, and investigation of the merits of developing the foreign trade zone.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee acknowledged the challenges faced by farmers due to extreme weather events and climate change. Members agreed on the need for additional supports, including investment into strategies and technologies to ensure the resiliency of the sector while also ensuring the financial stability of farmers and the sustainability of farming production. Members further discussed water supply concerns and the need to commit resources to water preservation, including establishing an irrigation framework and assisting farmers to complete groundwater use licence applications. The Committee additionally explored options for growing the agriculture sector, including reviewing the *Assessment Act* and the minimum farm revenue threshold to ensure farmland is being properly utilized. Other recommendations supported by the Committee included expanding incentives for farmers to replant and modernize crops and increased funding for the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon. Members also highlighted the need to expand the capacity of meat processing within BC by supporting infrastructure development and training for the sector to support local production.

The Committee stressed the importance of food security, noting how groups such as seniors, students, and others with low or fixed incomes, often lack access to consistent and affordable food. Members expressed support for addressing food insecurity, food waste, and the unaffordability of food to better support vulnerable groups.

Regarding clean and renewable energy, the Committee identified the need to support and invest in the diversification of renewable energy sources, such as geothermal, solar, wind and hydrogen, as well as the modernization of electrical grids. The need to identify new energy sources was similarly discussed, with Members supporting the commissioning of an energy pathways assessment to locate and map potential new energy sources to better inform energy decisions within the province. The Committee was impressed with the presentations regarding geothermal energy and noted that

existing tenure and permitting processes for geothermal energy need to be simplified to support its development.

With respect to labour and immigration, the Committee underlined the importance of timely processing within labour and immigration systems, including streamlining and better resourcing the processing of foreign worker credentials, along with the foreign employer registry process. The Committee agreed that increasing resources and supports for immigrant settlement services and the recognition and upgrading of credentials could help address labour shortages. Members further discussed the need for investment in rural and remote employment services noting that skill seeking individuals currently must leave their communities to gain employment skills, with many never returning to their communities, exacerbating labour shortages in these areas. Members also supported increased funding for the Employment Standards Branch, including expanding its mandate to conduct investigations to ensure fair, timely supports, and resolutions.

Regarding natural resource development and clean and renewable energy projects, Members discussed the need to significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of permitting processes. They noted that improving the permitting process should include provincial and federal alignment, with a focus on ensuring predictable timelines and efficient processing to provide industries with more stability. Additionally, increasing Indigenous partnership in natural resource development was discussed by the Committee. Members agreed on the need to provide resources to support administrative and technical capacity of First Nations to promote self-governance, determination, and predictability.

Members highlighted the need to prioritize and fund the implementation of a critical minerals strategy given its vital link to supporting energy transitions, as well as the importance of partnering with industry stakeholders to ensure BC receives its share of federal funding. Members also noted the importance of geological research for this area as well as how this research supports other non-mining activities such as emergency preparedness. With respect to LNG, the Committee acknowledged the economic, environmental and energy impacts as well as the varying perspectives on this industry. Members supported infrastructure development for LNG marine fueling to reduce marine emissions along our coastlines and encourage the transition from bunker fuels.

Regarding technology and innovation, the Committee discussed the need to develop a provincial data strategy

as data has become a critical resource in the knowledge, technology, and innovation economy. Members also supported a provincial data authority to aid in the harnessing of potential economic benefits from government held data. The Committee also recommended investments towards organizations, including TRUIMF's wet lab spaces, Envision BC and the Digital Global Innovation Cluster.

Members expressed support for continuing investments towards promoting and expanding accessible and inclusive tourism throughout the province. The Committee additionally supported specific funding towards the marketing of food and

wine tourism, a new amphitheater for the Pacific National Exhibition grounds, and the development of the Clayoquot Sound biosphere centre.

As it relates to trade, the Committee discussed the importance of an efficient and resilient supply chain and recognized the need to create resilient trade corridors through investing in trade and transportation infrastructure. Members agreed on the need to advance supply chain collaboration, and support the implementation of a provincial goods-movement strategy which would integrate trade corridor requirements and federal initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Agriculture and Agri-Foods

19. Consult with farmers and industry partners to develop a long-term strategy that addresses the impacts of climate change and associated financial challenges, and ensures the sector's resiliency.
20. Review the *Assessment Act* by launching a government industry taskforce to review the minimum farm revenue threshold.
21. Support farmers to address water supply concerns by allocating sufficient financial resources, establishing an irrigation framework, and allocating resources to support farmers to complete applications for groundwater use licences.
22. Provide increased, multi-year funding to the BC Association of Farmers Markets for the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon.
23. Expand incentives for farmers to replant and modernize crops.
24. Increase meat processing capacity in BC by supporting infrastructure and training.
25. Implement policies and programs to address food insecurity, food waste, and unaffordability with specific attention to BC's most vulnerable.

Clean and Renewable Energy

26. Diversify clean and renewable energy, such as geothermal, hydrogen, fusion, solar, and wind, by:
 - a. incentivizing institutions to modernize electrical grids;
 - b. investing in the means to store and distribute energy; and
 - c. working with remote, rural, and Indigenous communities to increase access.
27. Simplify the existing geothermal tenure and well permitting processes to make geothermal solutions more accessible.

28. Commission an energy pathways assessment to look at BC's entire energy system, including electricity and natural gas.
29. Create a funding stream for district energy systems.

Labour and Immigration

30. Increase funding to the Employment Standards Branch and expand its mandate to conduct proactive investigations to ensure fair, timely supports and resolution.
31. Address labour shortages by working with the federal government to improve immigration processes, including:
 - a. implementing a streamlined foreign employer registry process;
 - b. increasing funding for credential recognition for foreign workers; and
 - c. increasing the resources and support available for immigrant settlement services and credential recognition and upgrading.
32. Increase investment in rural and remote employment services by focusing on the realities of delivering services in unique areas.

Mining and Natural Resource Development

33. Streamline and increase capacity for permitting for natural resources, and clean and renewable energy projects to ensure predictable timelines and process efficiency, including working with the federal government to align processes.
34. Expand resources and supports to First Nations to build governance, administrative, and technical capacity as it relates to resource development and extraction.
35. Develop infrastructure for LNG marine fueling and amend the Low Carbon Fuel Standard to reduce marine emissions and encourage transitions from bunker fuel.
36. Sufficiently fund and prioritize the implementation of a critical minerals strategy including funding for geological research through Geoscience BC and other organizations.

Technology and Innovation

37. Develop a provincial data strategy and a provincial data authority to harness the potential of government held data.
38. Fund a \$10.8 million capital investment to finish outfitting the TRIUMF wet lab space for the development of medical isotopes.
39. Support Envision BC and the Digital Global Innovation Cluster.

Tourism

40. Continue to invest in expanding accessible and inclusive tourism within BC in partnership with stakeholders.
41. Provide \$2 million per year to food and wine tourism marketing.
42. Provide \$25 million in funding for the construction of a new amphitheater on the Pacific National Exhibition grounds.
43. Provide \$5 million to support the development of the Clayoquot Sound biosphere centre.

Trade

44. Advance supply chain collaboration by ensuring the provincial goods-movement strategy is integrated with neighbouring provincial trade corridor requirements and federal initiatives, and investing in trade and transportation infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENT



British Columbians outlined concerns about the impacts of climate change on health, the economy, and ecosystems in BC. Many expressed a desire to see action on climate change by building resilience, adapting to the changing climate, and reducing emissions. The Committee also heard about the importance of good environmental stewardship and the need for more robust protections for BC's land and water.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Committee received a number of recommendations to increase investments in climate mitigation and adaptation. Okanagan Climate Hub stated that government is spending \$1.6 billion over the next 12 months on climate mitigation, emissions reduction, and adaptation, and that this amounts to less than the two percent of the GDP recommended by Nicholas Stern, former World Bank Chief Economist. Some individuals noted that BC is already spending billions each year to recover from extreme weather events. The Emergency Planning Secretariat raised concerns that BC is predicted to receive three times the amount of rainfall received in 2021 and called for more annual funding to support flood planning and modelling at a regional and sub regional level. The Just Transition Working Group suggested the establishment of the Youth Climate Corps BC to employ British Columbians to help communities transition and prepare for a changing climate. Comox Valley Regional District explained that local governments want to make progress on climate action programs but need more support and funding. The regional district noted that climate programs at a community level are essential for helping BC hit its emissions targets and that municipalities are slowed down by having to apply for grants; and recommended establishing a community building funding stream to accelerate local government climate related investments.

First Things First Okanagan explained that the generation and distribution of electricity in BC is highly centralized and prone to outages as a result of natural disasters such as fires or floods and that resilience can be improved with the targeted

installation of local and regional micro grids. The organization explained that micro grids can provide energy generation and storage at the local level and smooth out fluctuations in the use or production of electric power. The organization further noted that as BC moves towards a system of micro grids, it will need to develop new guidelines, policies, and rules to maximize coordination between the power generator and utilities while still being safe and secure.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Several organizations referenced the amount of greenhouse gas emissions released by buildings and the need for investments in building retrofits to improve energy efficiency, with For Our Kids noting that 11 percent of BC's current emissions come from buildings and homes. The Pembina Institute raised concerns that BC is not on track to meet the building retrofit rate necessary to meet emissions reduction targets, explaining that to achieve its 2030 targets, BC needs to retrofit 70,000 homes. Transition Kamloops explained that current programs and rebates for retrofits require the building to undergo an energy audit, which is slowed down by a lack of skilled auditors.

Organizations and individuals noted issues with the existing energy rebate and retrofit incentive programs, including difficulties navigating the program and high upfront costs, and advocated for increasing financial supports and making them easier to access. The British Columbia Seniors Living Association explained that municipal approvals processes can be slow and the current clean building tax credit, a refundable income tax credit for qualifying retrofits that improve the energy efficiency of commercial buildings, expires in 2025. The association recommended extending the program to 2028 with specific attention focused on multi-unit dwellings and seniors' residences. The Building Owners and Managers Association of British Columbia explained that energy retrofits like building envelope replacements are expensive, complex, and have a long payback period with a significant upfront cost. The association noted that other jurisdictions, such as

Washington, have allocated significantly more money to retrofitting programs. The Pembina Institute called for the creation and implementation of a BC Building Retrofit Strategy to ensure all buildings in BC meet climate resilience and net-zero emissions commitments. Transition Kamloops highlighted the benefits of Property Assessed Clean Energy financing programs to provide funding for building retrofits to make buildings more energy efficient, water efficient, and resilient to natural disasters. The organization added that similar programs are in place across the United States and in some provinces.

Organizations highlighted that making homes more energy efficient has economic benefits for British Columbians experiencing energy poverty. Ecotrust Canada explained that many of those living in poverty are forced to choose between paying their utility bills or feeding their families. Okanagan Climate Hub explained that nearly 20 percent of Canadian households experience 'energy poverty' due to the high cost of heating and cooling of their homes and that implementing a basic electricity assistance program, like the Ontario Electricity Support Program, would help alleviate energy poverty in BC. The Pembina Institute further noted that 272,000 BC households are currently experiencing energy insecurity and called for funding to help these households retrofit. Force of Nature Alliance warned that BC Hydro's Step 2 thresholds, in which the cost of electricity increases as people draw more electricity from BC Hydro, may discourage people from switching away from heating their homes with fossil fuels which could be cheaper.

The Committee also received several recommendations related to heat pump adoption. Ecotrust Canada explained that heat pumps can save lives by improving air quality and providing cooling during extreme heat and wildfire smoke events, while making life more affordable through lower energy bills and achieving reductions in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. The organization added that the current income qualified program to help cover the cost of installation of a heat pump has not kept up with inflation and remains unaffordable for many. Armstrong Fluid Technology explained that buildings can substantially reduce their carbon footprint by adopting energy efficient HVAC solutions that help cut emissions and recommended partnering with companies that specialize in heat pump optimization solutions. Okanagan Climate Hub explained that heat pumps can help BC significantly reduce its greenhouse gas emissions but there are issues in who can qualify for rebates. As an example,

the organization noted that landlords do not qualify for any rebates to retrofit their homes or buildings with heat pumps. Okanagan Climate Hub requested improved access to heat pumps and a requirement that all commercial buildings install them. Nanaimo Climate Action Hub conducted a survey of 227 Nanaimo area residents and found that 86.7 percent of respondents have considered a heat pump but half indicated cost was a barrier to making a purchase. The organization explained that in Prince Edward Island, the government directly pays for the installation of a heat pump for eligible individuals, rather than requiring the individual to take on any upfront costs.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Committee heard from several organizations about the need to improve environmental stewardship. Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, British Columbia explained that significant investment is needed in natural resource management before BC suffers detrimental biodiversity loss and climate breakdown which would have significant repercussions on tourism, industry, and the broader economy. Citing a lack of progress on old-growth forests as well as calls from First Nations and communities to stop logging old growth without compensatory funding, Save Our Forest Team Comox Valley advocated for an immediate implementation of the Old Growth Strategic Review's recommendations for logging deferrals for old growth. Additionally, Peatlands Protection Society called for more efforts to protect BC's peatlands.

Elders Council for Parks in BC noted that government committed to protecting 30 percent of BC's land and water by 2030, primarily through Indigenous-led conservation. The organization emphasized the importance of achieving this goal as quickly as possible as it is critical to a healthy environment and a healthy economy. Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative noted overwhelming interest from Indigenous communities for advancing initiatives to conserve wildlife and habitat, and along with Wildsight, Northern Confluence Initiative, and Nature United, recommended more funding for Indigenous-led conservation. Nature United noted that Indigenous-led conservation is vital to reconciliation and can advance Indigenous stewardship, leadership, governance and sustainable economic development, and pointed to the Indigenous Guardians program as an example.

Multiple individuals expressed concern about a lack of environmental protection enforcement contributing to

environmental degradation in specific parts of the province, including the Fraser River and the West Kootenays. Unlikely Allies further called for more funding for environmental investigation and enforcement within the Conservation Officer Service to support on-the-ground enforcement. The David Suzuki Foundation highlighted how fossil fuel projects harm forest groundwater and air quality and suggested establishing an Office of Nature Recovery and Implementation Accountability. Unlikely Allies called for the establishment of a chief ecologist to work alongside the Chief Forester to set targets for biodiversity and ecosystem health. The organization suggested that this position would emphasize a forest management approach that promotes transparency and accountability between industry and government.

The Committee received approximately 230 emails recommending the tripling of the land use planning budget. Several organizations also raised concerns about the lack of progress on land use planning. The Northern Confluence Initiative noted that BC's efforts to modernize land use plans have been slow to date because of capacity gaps and a lack of guidance but added that modernizing can be assisted by tripling the land use planning budget and increased funding to support Indigenous protected and conservation areas. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, British Columbia explained that despite commitments to establish 17 land use plans by 2026, only five are currently underway. The Society cited a 2021 poll that found that 70 percent of BC residents would be more likely to support a big and important nature conservation goal like protecting and conserving 30 per cent of British Columbia's lands and waters by 2030 and 75 percent would support working with First Nations and local communities to create at least one major new provincial park or protected wilderness.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

The Committee received a number of recommendations to increase the budget for fish and wildlife conservation. Council of Canadians - Terrace Chapter explained that across the province, regional fish and wildlife entities operate with a skeleton staff and budgets that prevent new research projects. Wildsight noted that fish and wildlife provide jobs, revenue, viewing opportunities, recreation, and sustenance for BC's economy, and supported funding for the biodiversity and ecosystem health framework for fish and wildlife restoration. Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative expressed concern about decreased numbers of fish and wildlife as well

as specific endangered species. The organization, along with Wildsight, the BC Wildlife Federation, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, British Columbia, and over 230 individuals who sent in emails, recommended increasing the budget for fish and wildlife management to \$200 million.

The BC Wildlife Federation noted that since 1993, BC has reduced the proportion of the provincial budget spent on conservation by over 75 percent and that several problems related to fish and wildlife need solid, science-based solutions. The federation noted that a licence fee to hunt a moose is \$25, only \$5 of which is dedicated to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. The federation explained that if the fees were dedicated to conservation, hunters would be willing to pay an average of \$114 for the same licence and as such, recommended increasing licensing fees and fines and creating a dedicated fund for fish and wildlife management.

Concerns were also raised about declining salmon stocks across BC. The First Nations Fisheries Council of BC noted that wild pacific salmon populations have declined by 93 per cent over the past 30 years. The Council called for the allocation of a portion of the conservation surcharge included in the purchase of recreational fishing licences to be directed to First Nations-led organizations, as well as the establishment of salmon parks in partnership with Indigenous communities to protect and restore wild pacific salmon populations in BC and advance biodiversity goals. The Council, as well as the Pacific Salmon Foundation, also recommended the establishment of a provincial salmon recovery office, similar to the Washington State Governor's Office of Salmon Recovery which is based on a watershed approach and ensures that decisions regarding habitat restoration and protection are thoroughly vetted and supported at the watershed level.

The United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union - Unifor raised concerns that due to corporate and foreign ownership of BC fishing access, independent fish-harvesters are under threat. The union explained that these fish harvesters are vital to the economic health of BC's coastal communities and that due to a lack of policies to limit corporate concentration, independent fish harvesters are having a hard time purchasing licences and quotas. The union further noted that processing companies are the only source of a loan, and once the independent fish harvesters have purchased from the processing companies, harvesters are bound to sell their catch to the company who provided the loan, not necessarily paying market rate. As such, the union recommended the establishment of a provincial

loan board to allow harvesters who wish to be independent to access capital, without borrowing from processing companies.

INVASIVE SPECIES

The Committee heard from several organizations and individuals about invasive species in BC. The Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council explained that after habitat loss, invasive species remain the second biggest threat to biodiversity and that when landscapes are disturbed by wildfires, floods, and landslides, invasive species more easily establish and spread. The council further explained that the problem has been made worse due to outdated provincial regulations and the continued sale of invasive species in the province. The Thompson-Nicola Regional District explained that some invasive species, such as myrtle spurge, is extremely toxic to humans and wildlife, and have escaped cultivation and invaded natural areas.

The Invasive Species Council of Metro Vancouver explained that between 2016 and 2017, local governments in Metro Vancouver spent \$2 million managing 11 priority invasive species. The Thompson-Nicola Regional District estimates that there are 52,000 invasive plants sites on Crown land in the Thompson-Nicola Regional District which would cost \$31 million to treat, far greater than the current regional invasive plant budget of \$250,000. To manage this issue, the Sea To Sky Invasive Species Council, Invasive Species Council of BC, and Invasive Species Council of Metro Vancouver recommended a \$15 million annual budget for invasive species prevention, monitoring, and management. Additionally, the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society, Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council, the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society, Invasive Species Council of Metro Vancouver, and Thompson-Nicola Regional District recommended strengthened regulatory tools complemented by enforcement.

To highlight the urgency of invasive species prevention, the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society noted concerns about zebra and quagga mussels, which are responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in annual economic damage in North America. The society explained that should the mussels arrive in BC, the estimated impact would be between \$64 million and \$129 million annually. The Okanagan Basin Water Board noted that such an invasive species like zebra mussels would reduce the quality of BC's natural environment and recommended increased funding for inspection stations.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The Committee received recommendations from across the province to increase the budget for BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC. Comparing BC to Alberta, the Elders Council for Parks in BC noted that Alberta funds its parks department at \$20 per hectare whereas BC Parks is currently funded at approximately \$5 per hectare with a total budget of \$69.6 million, and recommended that the budget in BC be increased to \$100 million. Outdoor Recreation Council of BC was also of the view that BC Parks should have an annual budget of \$100 million while Recreation, Sites and Trails BC should be provided an annual budget of \$20 million. To increase revenue, the Commercial Bear Viewing Association suggested implementing a park use permit process while the BC Lodging and Campgrounds Association recommended that BC Parks increase campsite fees to help cover operating costs. Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society suggested that more educational resources could be provided to help students learn about the biodiversity in these parks.

Organizations highlighted issues with the maintenance of parks and recreation sites, requesting more funding to address their concerns. Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society noted that parks are some of the world's last remaining carbon sinks and are invaluable; however, access to these parks relies on up-to-date maintenance cycles to keep the trails in good condition, remove waste, and keep signage updated to highlight biodiversity and safety issues. Similarly, the Kettle River Museum explained that recreational tourism is important for small and rural communities along the Trans Canada Trail but each year the museum hears complaints that the trail is deteriorating, and repairs are needed to ensure that tourism continues in the Kootenay area. The Caledonia Ramblers Hiking Club and the Prince George Backcountry Recreation Society stated that although BC Parks has received small budgetary increases, it is not enough to fill budgetary shortfalls, requiring the organization to rely on volunteers to maintain trails, backcountry recreation sites, and facilities. They also noted that there are only 60 staff for Recreation Sites and Trails BC who are responsible for all the maintenance work on 80 percent of Crown land, adding that only two people look after all the recreation sites and trails in the Prince George and Mackenzie Forest Districts. They recommended more funding, an additional staff member for the Prince George Mackenzie Forest Districts, and a staff member dedicated to consultation with First Nations. Additionally, Friends of the South Slopes Society commented on the extensive effort and

cost required to safely maintain and support recreational trails and infrastructure and requested increased grants and funding for volunteer organizations that maintain parks and trails.

The Committee heard about the need to improve access to parks and recreation sites. The Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC explained that several roads are washed out and backcountry sites need repairs and upgrades. The federation explained that many of the access roads are in poor condition due to washouts and failing infrastructure. The federation called for funding to repair and maintain access roads and infrastructure to improve access to provincial parks, trails, and recreation sites. BC Snowmobile Federation requested dedicated funding of at least \$2 million for road infrastructure providing access to parks, recreation sites, and trails.

The Outdoor Recreation Council of BC explained the role and importance of both BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC has evolved with added duties to consult with First Nations, conduct more rigorous environmental and cultural heritage impact studies, and adapt infrastructure to deal with climate change; however, neither agency has the resources to deliver on their mandates proactively and effectively. They noted the need for additional funding to ensure BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC can fulfill their new duties.

The Committee also heard from the BC Recreation and Parks Association about aquatic programming. The organization explained that since the pandemic, programming rates for aquatics are running at 30 percent of the pre-pandemic capacity and that investment in programming will prevent drownings or injuries. The association noted that funding is needed to ensure more adoption of aquatics, and for the recruitment and retention of aquatic staff, the association explained that this is particularly important for a province that is coastal and abundant with many natural bodies of water widely enjoyed for recreation.

RECYCLING AND WASTE

With respect to the production and management of waste, Zero Waste BC explained that resources are finite, and even those that are renewable are being harvested more quickly than they can be replenished. The organization added that BC must find ways to reuse its waste and that investments in a circular economy strategy can help BC better use resources. The Nanaimo Recycling Exchange Society raised concerns about the levels of plastic waste in BC, noting that the Extended Producer Responsibility annual reports show

that less plastic is being recycled today than in 2018 and recommended shifting from recycling to a circular economy focused on reusing items coupled with financial disincentives for plastics.

Several organizations highlighted that BC could enhance its extended producer responsibility programs to help reduce waste. The Retail Council of Canada noted that British Columbia has the most robust and inclusive system of producer obligations for the end-of-life management in North America; however, uneven enforcement of producer obligations means that businesses who are not complying with their obligations are able to sell their products cheaper. The council recommended increasing the budget for compliance and enforcement. The Revelstoke Chamber of Commerce explained that the costs of recycling, particularly in remote or rural communities, are often too high for businesses to manage, and a large amount of waste is ending up in the landfill. The chamber recommended more support for businesses in their recycling efforts and adequate funding to expand the existing provincial extended producer responsibility program to include industrial, commercial, and institutional waste. The Surfrider Foundation Canada shared that abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear is a major issue on BC shorelines, and vastly exceeds the volume of single-use plastic packaging material and other types of plastic. The foundation further expressed concerns that manufacturing plants in the Lower Mainland are discharging plastic nurdles into BC marine environments and devastate the environment and marine life as they are often ingested by seabirds and fish, causing malnutrition and starvation. They called for improved environmental monitoring and extended producer responsibility programs for fishing gear and programs to manage cigarette butt waste.

The Committee heard that as use of electric vehicles increases in BC, demand for recycling the critical minerals used in lithium-ion batteries will increase. Teck indicated that its Trail operations already recycles lead batteries but requested support in developing an electric vehicle battery recycling facility. The Surrey Board of Trade explained that BC and Canada have made significant commitments to electrify passenger and light industrial vehicles over the next few years. The organization explained that BC could become an innovator in electric vehicle battery recycling, noting that over 180,000 tons of lithium, cobalt, nickel, and manganese could be recovered by 2030 through Li-ion recycling, which has a significant economic value. The Surrey Board of Trade

recommended commissioning a study and developing an action plan for the implementation of electric vehicle battery recycling across BC coupled with investments to help existing recycling plants increase their capacity.

SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

The British Columbia Trucking Association noted that greenhouse gas emissions from medium- and heavy-duty transportation in BC have increased by 27 percent in the past decade. The organization supported policy measures that accelerate medium- and heavy-duty vehicle fleet turnover to achieve sustainable mobility goals such as PST exemptions on newer vehicles, incentives to retire high greenhouse gas vehicles, cleaner vehicle purchase incentives, and incentives to purchase emissions reduction technology. The association also identified a need to support integrated infrastructure and mixed-use development upgrades for charging and refueling stations for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles. The association further explained that this will increase industry demand for low- to zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles. One individual also called for the vehicle testing stations to be reopened, noting the California smog inspection program in which heavy-duty trucks and buses must meet minimum standards or have their vehicle exhaust system fixed to control carbon emissions.

The Cement Association of Canada and Concrete BC discussed the concrete industry's sustainability efforts. Concrete BC shared that in the fall of 2022, the concrete industry, along with the federal government, announced a roadmap to net-zero concrete. To support the industry's effort, Cement BC recommended the development of lower-carbon concrete standards and creation of performance-based specifications to allow the concrete industry to determine how best to reduce emissions rather than outlining specific parameters. Concrete BC also recommended using locally produced, low-carbon concrete for infrastructure investments.

WATER

The Committee received input from several organizations and individuals to improve stewardship of BC's freshwater through an expansion of the Watershed Security Fund with many organizations making recommendations to increase the provincial investment in the fund to \$300 million. MakeWay Foundation stated that while the Watershed Security Fund

will create a watershed endowment, it will only generate \$5 million for watershed projects and that without additional investments from provincial and federal governments, the impact will be limited. The Vancouver Island Water Watch Coalition and the Okanagan Basin Water Board described some of the challenges to stewardship, including poor development planning, climate change, resource development, and recreation use. The BC Watershed Security Coalition noted that the watershed sector in British Columbia is a major employer and economic driver, generating over 47,000 direct and indirect jobs and contributing \$5 billion to the GDP. Watersheds BC, Rivershed Society of British Columbia, and the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association noted additional funds from the federal government and private sector would also be sought to establish a \$1 billion Watershed Security Fund endowment.

Nechako Watershed Roundtable highlighted the importance of prioritizing Indigenous knowledge into collaborative efforts to preserve and protect watersheds. The organization noted that opportunities for collaboration with Indigenous communities are critical to advance real reconciliation and called for more support for local reconciliation efforts through capacity and relationship building by making watershed groups a priority.

The Committee also received over 280 emails from individuals recommending funding for the implementation of the coastal marine strategy. This was also supported by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, British Columbia who explained that an investment from government can help ensure the success of the strategy's implementation and support the economies and well-being of First Nations and coastal communities who depend on healthy coastlines. Blueprint for the Coast explained that BC has experienced catastrophic declines in salmon populations, ocean acidification and hypoxia, and mass die-offs of marine life. They noted that funds are necessary to extend capacity for Indigenous communities to participate and co-develop the coastal marine strategy.

The Committee also heard about the specific water needs of communities across BC. The Collective for Lower Elk Aquifer Restoration explained that in 2017, BC Hydro stopped maintaining the Elko dam's head pond at 917 metres which led to the water aquifers and surface water at Elko and Baynes Lake area to be largely depleted. The organization requested support to restore water and to recharge the aquifer inlets located adjacent to the Elk River at Elko. The organization

also called for funding to develop a workshop focused on the challenges and solutions in a dry region. Additionally, the Okanagan Basin Water Board explained that climate change has caused significant fluctuation in water levels, and that the Okanagan Dam, located near Penticton is approaching the end of its life. To address these concerns, the Okanagan Basin Water Board requested \$1 million per year funding for four years for the review of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System and Operating Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee commented on the importance of resilience in the face of significant environmental changes stemming from climate change. Members discussed climate change as impacting all areas of the province, including public safety, food security, infrastructure, and health. Members agreed on the need to fund and support climate change mitigation efforts. They stressed the importance of the provincial government coordinating with regional and sub-regional groups, working with stakeholders in multiple sectors, and enhancing First Nations and other Indigenous groups' capacity to ensure they can participate as partners in finding solutions.

Members noted that as BC continues to push to meet its emissions targets, electricity will be increasingly relied upon. Members acknowledged that BC's power infrastructure is susceptible to damage during natural disasters and highlighted the importance of protecting the electrical grid. They also noted the need to build out the transmission system and study how to best minimize power disruptions for BC communities. They further discussed the need to find innovative solutions to improve energy storage, and expand micro power grids to help communities remain operational should they become disconnected.

The Committee agreed that more needs to be done to incentivize and expedite the retrofitting of BC's buildings to help meet net-zero emission commitments. Members highlighted that heat pumps can help reduce emissions and help British Columbians save money on their power bills and acknowledged the need to improve affordability and accessibility of installation. The Committee further stressed the importance of keeping electricity affordable for low-income British Columbians and noted that, by amending the Step 2 rate, BC Hydro could significantly promote the transition to sustainable, decarbonized homes.

The Committee agreed that government should enhance its capacity for land use planning and noted that more support should be provided to Indigenous communities to create, negotiate, implement, and modernize land use plans. The Members stressed that land use decisions need to be data driven and transparent so British Columbians can track progress. Members also agreed that it is great to see youth engaged in environmental issues and supported more funding for the Indigenous Guardians program to help Indigenous communities in their stewardship of the environment.

Members noted that surrounding jurisdictions spend significantly more on fish and wildlife management. The Committee appreciated that hunting and conservation groups would be willing to see an increase in licence fees and fines as long as all of these fees and fines are dedicated to fish and wildlife management. Additionally, while reflecting on the challenges facing the BC Conservation Officer Services, Members agreed that the units need to have increased capacity and enhanced enforcement policies to better protect BC's wildlife.

The Committee expressed concern about collapsing salmon stock and reflected on the approach taken by Washington State. Members agreed that more resources and supports, such as the creation of a provincial salmon recovery office, is needed. The Committee also acknowledged the economic challenges experienced by independent fish-harvesters, and noted that Atlantic provinces have loan boards so that fish-harvesters can access capital that's not tied to the fish processors.

The Committee stressed the need to implement stronger controls on invasive species in BC. In particular, the Committee expressed frustration that nurseries across the province are still openly and legally selling invasive species. Members were concerned about the impact climate change will have on exacerbating the problems of invasive species. They further raised concerns about the impacts zebra or quagga mussels could have on BC's waters, noting that these species destroy ecosystems and are incredibly difficult to get rid of once they have rooted into a waterway. They noted that the economic impact of failing to adequately address invasive species in the province will be significantly more than any investment required to improve regulatory tools, enhance inspection facilities, and increase enforcement, and strongly recommended significant investments to address these issues.

Reflecting on the increase in outdoor recreation in BC, Members noted that the budget has not kept up with the increased use and highlighted opportunities for additional revenue by increasing fees for campsites which have not changed since 2016. The Committee also noted that trails and backcountry sites have seen significant damage from flooding and wind, leaving many trails potentially unsafe and that much of the maintenance work is done by volunteers who are having a hard time keeping up. In particular, Members noted that the Trans Canada Trail has seen degradation and partial closure in parts of BC and is entirely maintained by volunteers. The Committee acknowledged and expressed appreciation for these volunteer groups and noted the need for them to receive increased support.

While discussing recycling, the Committee highlighted that electric vehicles are increasing in adoption and there is need for recycling facilities to deal with end-of-life batteries. Members noted that these batteries are full of critical minerals that can be recycled and circulated back into use. Members also discussed how these facilities should be distributed across the province to ensure that people in rural and remote areas can benefit from battery recycling. They further recognized that the current Extended Producer Responsibility program has some gaps and could be improved.

Regarding plastics, Members reflected on the presentation by Surfrider Foundation Canada regarding commercial fishing and aquaculture gear that is discarded into the ocean. They discussed how plastics will never be phased out of use but

ensuring that there are extended producer responsibility programs or gear registration programs for fishing gear could help prevent gear loss and support gear recovery from the marine environment.

With regard to reducing emissions, Members discussed the importance of helping trucks and buses reduce their environmental impact. They noted that annual safety inspections are already required for these larger vehicles, and implementing emission testing as a part of annual servicing can help the province meet its emissions targets. Similarly, the Committee noted that concrete is a large emitter of greenhouse gases and acknowledged the need for the industry to determine how to best reduce emissions such as developing lower-carbon concrete standards.

With regard to water, the Committee emphasized the importance of this vital resource. Members recognized that the Watershed Security Fund was recently introduced and funded at \$100 million and also noted that there may be opportunities to leverage additional investments. Members expressed concerns about the current conditions of Elko Dam and highlighted the need to create the conditions to restore water in the inlets surrounding Elk River. While reflecting on the presentation by the Okanagan Basin Water Board, Members noted that the lives and the economy of the communities surrounding the dam are at risk if infrastructure is not up to date to deal with severe weather events, and agreed to recommend funding for a review of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System and Operating Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Climate Change

45. Increase efforts to mitigate climate change, including by funding programs to rapidly decrease greenhouse gas emissions, supporting sub-regional modelling and planning, implementing necessary policy changes, and working with specific sectors like agriculture and forestry.
46. Ensure resiliency of BC's power grid by funding the acceleration of the buildup of the transmission system, funding a study with the goal of minimizing disruptions of the power grid due, and analyzing the use of micro grids with energy storage in developing a resilient energy infrastructure.

Energy Efficiency

47. Support energy efficiency in buildings by:
 - a. developing a building retrofit strategy to ensure all buildings in BC meet climate resilience and net-zero emissions commitments;
 - b. integrating the Energy Conservation Assistance program into an expanded CleanBC Income-Qualified program;
 - c. supporting the Property Assessed Clean Energy program;
 - d. providing rebates and incentives for deep retrofit; and
 - e. encouraging heat pump installation, particularly in low-income households.
48. Eliminate BC Hydro's Step 2 rate.

Environmental Protection

49. Increase the budget for land use planning, including to: enhance provincial capacity through staff and resources and provide support for Indigenous nations to create, negotiate, implement, and modernize land use plans.
50. Fund Indigenous Guardians and on-the-land youth programs to ensure effective stewardship and governance of lands and waters.

Fish and Wildlife

51. Increase fees for licences and violations and dedicate all funds to maintain and restore fish, wildlife, and habitat.
52. Study and report on the establishment of a provincial salmon recovery office, in consultation with key stakeholders, to oversee and support policies and watershed-level efforts related to wild pacific salmon recovery in BC.
53. Create a BC Fisheries Loan Board in consultation with fish-harvester organizations in BC, financial institutions, and the Provincial Loan Board developers in the Atlantic provinces.
54. Increase the capacity of the environmental enforcement and investigation units within the BC Conservation Officer Service so they can effectively enforce the 11 values outlined in the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, including enforcement against corporate infractions such as the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*.

Invasive Species

55. Address the threat of invasive species by:
 - a. Implementing and enforcing invasive species regulatory tools;
 - b. Funding prevention, early detection, and immediate response; and
 - c. Providing dedicated staff and funding to address the effective rehabilitation of fire and flood-impacted areas.

Parks and Recreation

56. Provide increased, long-term funding for BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC to support:
 - a. Long-term planning, development, and maintenance of trails, day-use sites, and campsites;
 - b. Partnerships with First Nations on recreation projects;
 - c. Improved accessibility of recreation facilities;

- d. Maintenance of roads and infrastructure;
- e. Climate change mitigation efforts; and
- f. Timely approval of applications for trail and site developments and maintenance from volunteer-led recreation groups.

57. Increase revenue in the BC Parks system by implementing a one-time inflationary province-wide increase of \$3-5 per night for provincial campsite fees.

58. Provide increased grants and funding to volunteer organizations that maintain provincial parks and trails.

Recycling and Waste

- 59. Include industrial, commercial, and institutional material in the Extended Producer Responsibility program to make it fair and inclusive for retailers, small businesses, offices, and schools.
- 60. Develop a program, such as an extended producer responsibility program, deposit refund, or gear registration, for commercial fishing and aquaculture gear used in British Columbia industry that will reduce gear loss, support recovery of gear from the marine environment and enable proper processing and end-of-life management of retrieved materials.
- 61. Encourage electric and zero-emission vehicle battery recycling by establishing incentives for vehicle battery recycling programs; commissioning a study and action plan; and providing investment for current recycling plants to increase their capacity.

Sustainability Efforts

- 62. Institute vehicle testing to control carbon emissions and air pollutants from heavy trucks and buses.
- 63. Develop and adopt lower-carbon concrete standards and move towards performance-based specifications to allow the concrete industry to determine how best to reduce emissions while remaining competitive globally.

Water

- 64. Create the conditions to restore water and to recharge the aquifer inlets located adjacent to the Elk River at Elko.
- 65. Allocate \$25,000 to fund a South Country workshop focused on the challenges and solutions in a dry region.
- 66. Provide \$1 million per year funding for four years for the review of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System and Operating Plan.

FISCAL AND REGULATORY POLICY

The Committee received a number of recommendations with respect to specific taxation measures including the carbon tax and PST. Regulations on gaming and cryptocurrency were also highlighted by organizations. Other key themes included tax and labour costs for small businesses as well as the use of the Municipal and Regional District Tax.

BUDGETARY AND TAXATION POLICY

The Committee heard several calls to balance the provincial budget and increase accountability. The Association for Reformed Political Action Canada stated that accumulation of debt puts governments in an increasingly precarious position and increases risk of a default. Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia advocated for a budgetary framework that includes spending and debt limits, the flexibility to deal with different economic events, independent monitoring, and a result that is easy for the public to understand.

Regarding public spending, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, BC Office stated that evidence shows that spending on public services comes with major economic benefits including increasing productivity, spurring private investment, and adding jobs. The organization also noted underinvestment in the public sector has exacerbated crises in health care, housing, poverty, and climate change, among others. As such, the organization supported increased provincial operating spending to address urgent social, environmental, and economic needs. Additionally, CUPE British Columbia shared that the growing gap between the wealthy and the remainder of society has created a widespread affordability crisis that continues despite substantial government investments. They therefore advocated for a review of the structure of tax exemptions and credits, including their definitions, allowances, exceptions, and rules, to ensure that tax policy outcomes align with future fiscal goals.

The Committee heard about the need for increased consultation and a review of taxes and fiscal policy. To

increase transparency, the Kamloops and District Chamber of Commerce discussed the need to involve a peer-selected advisory group of professionals, experts, not for profit organizations like chambers of commerce, and non-governmental organizations regarding fiscal policy. Similarly, Canadian Bankers Association stated that a review should be comprehensive, encompassing income taxes, commodity taxes, and other forms of taxation, and avoid the application of sector-specific taxes. The Surrey Board of Trade stated that with costs increasing and high provincial debt, a comprehensive tax review may reduce debt and drive down inflation.

CARBON TAX

Organizations discussed the impacts of carbon tax on different industries. The Quesnel Cattlemen's Association shared that with higher carbon taxes and generally higher fuel prices, it is getting harder for ranchers to make a living. The BC Seafood Alliance noted that BC is the only Canadian province who does not provide commercial seafood harvesters with a tax concession from the motor fuel and carbon tax used in commercial fishing. The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada stated that chemistry is an emissions intense trade exposed industry and an increase in the carbon tax will not only impact the competitiveness of existing facilities but could also impact the ability to attract new, low-carbon investments. The association recommended directing a portion of proceeds from the new provincial output-based pricing program back to individual companies for decarbonization projects. Lastly, Wine Growers BC advocated for the application of a carbon tax to wine imports from regions that do not have a climate pricing regime to protect the competitiveness of local products.

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers called for the adoption of an output-based pricing system to replace BC's carbon tax for large emitters to protect economic competitiveness and avoid job losses. The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade also noted the creation of an output-based pricing system, and recommended implementing a made-in-BC carbon-pricing system for industry that incentivizes emissions

reductions and accelerates private sector investment and innovation. The Committee also heard requests to transition the cement industry and mining industry to the output-based pricing system.

Some organizations called for clean fuels to be exempt from the carbon tax. Canfor stated that, in addition to supporting clean economic growth, eliminating the carbon tax on clean fuels would further support the integration of sustainable fuels into BC's supply chain. Additionally, Parkland explained that the cost implications of the carbon tax have become challenging for producers manufacturing lower carbon fuels and exempting low carbon fuels would bridge the competitive gap between BC produced fuels and American produced fuels. The Committee also heard from Advanced Biofuels Canada that BC exempts specified alternative fuels, such as hydrogen, renewable natural gas, and electric vehicles, from the carbon tax but applies the full carbon tax to clean liquid fuels. Regarding aviation fuels, Canadian Council for Sustainable Aviation Fuels and Air Canada called for sustainable aviation fuels to be exempt from the carbon tax in order to make its production viable in Canada.

With respect to rural and remote communities, the Fort Nelson Chamber of Commerce stated that the carbon tax continues to unfairly impact residents in northern BC. The chamber elaborated that northern communities face several challenges including limited public transportation, extremely cold winters, and having to generate their own power, typically using diesel generators. The chamber advocated for exemptions to the carbon tax or the implementation of a northern BC living allowance, like the federal northern living allowance, to offset some of the disparity in taxes and the cost of living in the north.

INFRASTRUCTURE

With respect to infrastructure, BC Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association shared that the impact of climate change is causing infrastructure to deteriorate, citing how the 2021 atmospheric river stopped transportation across the province and slowed down BC's economy. The association emphasized that continued investment in resilient infrastructure is necessary to prevent this from happening again. The organization also recommended improving the procurement process for infrastructure projects and continuing to implement the aspects of the Community Benefits Agreement that support workforce participation of

Indigenous peoples, women, and other equity-seeking groups. The Committee also heard from the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association that the insurance industry's investment capacity should be leveraged to expand and accelerate long-term infrastructure projects by structuring projects to attract long-term investors with a focus on climate change risk adaption, preparation, and education.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Municipal and Regional District Tax was highlighted by many organizations. The Committee heard from the Destination Greater Victoria that the tax enables continued recovery and investment in building a sustainable and resilient tourism economy and recommended continued support for the tax. An individual noted that increased tourism contributes to the housing deficit, so additional funding for housing as well as investments for critical infrastructure in tourism dependent communities is required. They recommended that a larger portion of the Municipal and Regional District Tax be returned to communities to support housing projects and critical infrastructure. Additionally, Tourism Industry Association of BC expressed concerns that some municipalities have looked to use a portion of their Municipal and Regional District Tax to fund infrastructure projects that are not related to supporting the visitor economy or local housing needs for tourism workers, thus, creating a real potential of jeopardizing multi-year marketing investments critical for tourism recovery. The association called on government to protect the integrity of Municipal and Regional District Tax for its original purpose.

The Committee also heard specific requests on the topic of funding and support for local governments. The City of Vancouver discussed the need to modernize the municipal funding framework to reflect current costs of housing delivery and basic infrastructure to support needed growth. The Kelowna Chamber of Commerce highlighted the impact of crime on municipalities and recommended that the provincial government work with local governments to assist businesses in high crime areas. Additionally, Métis Nation BC requested funding to support critical governance activities, cultural protection, strategic programming, and reconciliation efforts to help their Nation to grow and thrive.

PROVINCIAL SALES TAX

Regarding the PST, several organizations and individuals advocated for rebates and exemptions. For example, the Automotive Retailers Association highlighted that employers and business owners can write off tool purchases but employees cannot do the same, which causes barriers to entry to these professions, and requested that purchases of trade tools be exempt from PST. The Tax Executives Institute called for several PST exemptions including: pollution prevention and control equipment; for BC-based businesses obtaining legal services provided in BC relating to a jurisdiction other than BC; and for exports to mirror the GST and HST rules that allow for customers exporting tangible personal property using their own conveyance. The Committee also heard from Thorsteinssons LLP about a need to include a new provision in the Provincial Sales Tax Exemption and Refund Regulation to allow an exemption for goods sold to First Nations if the goods are delivered to a reserve by the vendor. Lastly, one individual recommended that PST be eliminated on the purchase of used vehicles as in other provinces.

On the topic of online marketplaces, Thorsteinssons LLP explained that transactions between related corporations are exempt from PST but the exemption does not apply to online marketplace services including those purchased by First Nations. They recommended PST exemptions for online marketplace services provided to related parties and to First Nations. Additionally, the Canadian Commodity Tax Committee of Tax Executives Institute shared that fees charged by financial institutions for online services and in-branch services remain non-taxable for PST purposes which should include other non-taxable services, such as web-based surveys, web-based training and testing, and web-based payroll processing.

SMALL BUSINESS

With respect to small businesses, the Committee heard concerns about the impact of taxes and regulations. Restaurants Canada noted that recent labour policies, including the employer health tax, five paid sick days, and a new statutory holiday, have significantly increased labour costs for the hospitality industry, and recommended the introduction of a statutory holiday rebate for the hospitality industry to help small businesses. Regarding tax impacts on small businesses, the Retail Council of Canada noted that it is imperative that government contributes to the fight against inflation by examining consumer price impacts of policy

initiatives so that government is able to factor those impacts into their decision-making. Similarly, the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce stated that many new and increased taxes affect businesses and consumers, and advocated for the creation of a peer-selected advisory group regarding fiscal policy to ensure that amendments are fair and equitable. Additionally, the Convenience Industry Council of Canada recommended a consulting process for proposed policy and regulation changes relating to the convenience industry.

Regarding the employer health tax, several organizations and individuals recommended that the exemption threshold be raised to decrease the burden on small businesses. The British Columbia Chamber of Commerce stated that the \$500,000 threshold creates a strong disincentive for businesses to grow and increase employment and is difficult on labour-intensive industries that have large staff numbers and small margins. The Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce noted that since the employer health tax was introduced, wage costs have increased and the threshold is no longer reflective of many small businesses' payroll costs.

The Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce noted that in the most recent Collective Perspectives Survey by the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, 87 percent of businesses reported the cost of doing business had worsened in the past year, and 76 percent specifically referenced increasing labour costs. Canco expressed concerns that rising labour costs are making the price of goods and services more expensive, noting that limiting further increases in the minimum wage until current inflation and labour cost pressures are brought under control will help businesses. Additionally, the Burnaby Board of Trade advocated for more certainty and predictability in the minimum wage, allowing for some flexibility for businesses during times of extreme inflation. One individual also recommended the creation of a student minimum wage to incentivize businesses to hire and train youth.

Electrical Contractors Association of BC explained that contractors and subcontractors regularly wait 60-90 days after submitting an invoice to get paid. The association further added that the contractors and subcontractors, in the meantime, must pay their workers and suppliers first which results in them having to take out loans to cover their costs. The organization called for prompt payment legislation to be enacted as has been done in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

The Committee heard from Futurpreneur which is an organization that helps young entrepreneurs in Canada launch their businesses through free resources, coaching, and loans. They explained that with an investment of \$1.35 million over three years, it could help launch at least 360 new businesses.

The British Columbia Chamber of Commerce highlighted that First Nations in BC do not have the same level of financial support for investment and business ownership, in the form of loan guarantees for eligible projects, available to them compared to Indigenous peoples in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. The chamber elaborated that this puts Indigenous communities, and potential new resource projects, at a disadvantage. The organization advocated for the establishment of a loan guarantee program, or other financial mechanisms, to facilitate Indigenous investments and ownership in major projects within the core economic sectors of British Columbia.

SPECIFIC REGULATORY MEASURES

The British Columbia Gaming Industry Association shared that illegal gambling operators are accessing the province's prospective tax bases and eroding revenues to legal providers. The association explained that Crown corporations and regulators have been unsuccessful in combating illegal operators through either market capture strategies via platforms like PlayNow or enforcement. Similarly, GeoComply stated that offshore online sportsbooks continue to be accessible and desirable to British Columbians. Both organizations advocated for more regulations and restrictions on illegal gambling providers. Also with respect to gambling, British Columbia Gaming Industry Association explained that, through the Facility Investment Commission and Minimum Investment Requirement program, operators earn commissions based on the execution of an investment plan agreed upon at the time of signing the Operational Service Agreements. The association highlighted the need to increase the Facility Improvement Commission under the current Operational Service Agreements from five percent to 10 percent to ensure that operators can build for the long-term, even in the face of substantive new cost pressures.

Regarding cryptocurrency, one individual stated that without proper regulations for cryptocurrencies and blockchain, there is a risk of fraud, market manipulation, and other illegal activities. They shared that a regulatory framework would help mitigate these risks and create a stable and transparent

environment for businesses and individuals to participate in the crypto and blockchain ecosystem. The individual also discussed the need for collaboration with industry leaders, government, and academia to provide valuable insights into emerging trends and best practices as well as blockchain education and training programs for MLAs and the public.

On the topic of insurance, the Insurance Bureau of Canada shared that British Columbians pay approximately \$1,382 per year for car insurance -- more than any other no-fault province. To improve the system and lower premiums for drivers, the organization stated that government should introduce choice by allowing any insurer to sell coverage that repairs your car.

SPECIFIC TAXATION MEASURES

CUPE British Columbia stated that creating additional tax brackets for incomes above the current maximum of \$240,076 at rates higher than 20.5 percent would help British Columbians participate equally in the economy and provide the necessary resources to invest in programs and services. Similarly, BCGEU advocated for an increase to the marginal personal income tax rates for high earners. The union were of the view that BC is out of step with other provinces and needs to introduce new, significantly more aggressive income tax brackets at the higher end of earnings to address growing inequality.

The Committee also heard support for the implementation of a wealth tax, the development of a plan to reduce and eventually eliminate premium-based taxes as well as a review of the luxury PST rate to ensure it does not undermine middle class affordability.

CONCLUSIONS

Members reflected on input they received regarding fiscal responsibility in government's budgetary decisions and public spending. The Committee discussed the need to balance budgets and pay debts as well as including accountability measures into budgets while also acknowledging the importance of public spending in times of crises.

Regarding the carbon tax, Members noted the need to ensure that the carbon tax is not hindering the competitiveness of BC products, especially for emission intensive trade exposed industries. They discussed the opportunity of the output-based pricing system to support the global competitiveness of these industries. The Committee acknowledged that British

Columbians in rural, remote, and northern communities have been disproportionately impacted by the carbon tax compared to the rest of the province. Additionally, Members discussed the need to ensure that BC products are not at a disadvantage to imported goods due to the additional costs related to carbon tax. Further, Members expressed support for the use of carbon tax as a tool to fund and support decarbonization projects.

Members expressed concerns about increased illegal online gaming. The Committee noted that illegal gaming diverts revenue from BC with respect to and could affect the Community Gaming Grants program. Members also expressed concerns about the safety and risk of fraud related to online gaming and noted the need for increased regulations and enforcement in this area to protect British Columbians.

While reflecting on permitting processes, the Committee noted that slow regulatory measures and processes impact several areas including housing, natural resource development, and mining. In addition to the recommendation in the economic development chapter of the report specific to permitting, Members agreed all ministries and agencies need to evaluate

their regulatory and approval processes to ensure that they are timely, predictable, and effective.

Members discussed the impact of the application of PST can have on affordability. In particular, the Committee highlighted that the application on used vehicle purchases, as well as the higher rate on vehicles priced over \$55,000, may have consequences for low- and middle- income individuals and should be reviewed. The Committee also discussed how a PST exemption on tool purchases for registered apprentices and technicians could be a mechanism to reduce the burden on those entering the trade profession.

With respect to small business, the Committee noted the pressure being felt by small businesses due to rising labour costs and inflation. Members agreed that the threshold of the employer health tax should be reviewed to be reflective of current labour costs. Additionally, Members highlighted that prompt payment legislation is an important mechanism to support and provide certainty for small businesses. Members also agreed on the importance of supporting young entrepreneurs and new businesses through organizations such as Futurpreneur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Carbon Tax

67. Review the application of the carbon tax with a view to ensuring competitiveness between BC-based and imported products, examining impacts on and ensuring equity between different regions of the province, and promoting and supporting decarbonization.
68. Develop an output-based pricing system in consultation with stakeholders to improve the competitiveness foundation for BC's leading export sectors and avoid lost benefits and job losses linked to carbon leakage.

Provincial Sales Tax

69. Review the application of the PST on used vehicles sales and on vehicles over \$55,000 to support affordability.
70. Exempt tool purchases from the PST for registered apprentices and technicians.

Specific Regulatory Measures

71. Evaluate the regulatory and approval processes across all ministries and agencies to ensure timeliness, efficiency, and predictability, including by working with the federal government to align processes.
72. Address illegal online gaming through a strong regulatory and enforcement regime, with the aim of keeping gaming revenue in BC and supporting the Community Gaming Grants program.

Small Business

73. Review the employer health tax exemption threshold for small businesses to address impacts related to rising wages and inflation.
74. Enact prompt payment legislation.
75. Provide funding for programs and organizations that support young entrepreneurs and new businesses, including providing \$450,000 in loan capital per year for three years for Futurpreneur.



The input received by the Committee with respect to health care highlighted concerns related to staffing, access, and seniors care. Other key themes included funding for the treatment and diagnosis of chronic and complex diseases, improved supports in hospices and palliative care, and improved coverage for medical devices and supports.

CHRONIC DISEASES AND COMPLEX CONDITIONS

The Committee heard from several organizations and individuals about the challenges of living with chronic and complex diseases.

The Arthritis Society Canada noted that arthritis is one of the major health challenges facing the health care system. The society highlighted that people with arthritis need timely access to many care providers as well as reduced wait time for joint replacement surgeries. The Arthritis Society Canada explained that surgery delays can lead to associated comorbidities, weight gain and other conditions, like mental health challenges. The society advocated for access to treatment options, culturally relevant arthritis programs, investing in arthritis specific primary and community care, and reducing wait times for joint replacement surgeries. Arthritis Research Canada noted the need to address mental health challenges for those with arthritis as people with arthritis are more likely to experience anxiety and depression than people without arthritis.

With respect to autism, AutismBC advocated for a provincial autism framework so that BC can benefit from federal initiatives resulting from the recently passed *Federal Framework on Autism Spectrum Disorder Act* which provides for a national autism strategy. Additionally, AutismBC advocated for an adult autism assessment program to diagnose adults who were not assessed and supported as children. The organization noted that downstream costs associated with not supporting adults with autism include high unemployment and underemployment rates, as without a

diagnosis, adults with autism are not entitled to employment accommodations.

Merck Canada noted that the provincial government's 10-year Cancer Action Plan should be developed in collaboration with stakeholders including treating oncologists, patient group representatives, researchers and innovators developing cancer technologies to ensure concrete positive results are achieved. The organization further highlighted that the implementation plan should include specific performance targets with timelines on screening, diagnosis, and treatment for a broad range of cancers as well as a monitoring and reporting system to track progress made against the targets. Merck Canada also encouraged government to further increase funding in cancer care to help meet these targets including with respect to the CAR-T cell therapy and dedicated treatment centres.

Regarding dementia, the Alzheimer Society of BC shared that a provincial dementia strategy is urgently required as close to 85,800 people are living with dementia across the province. The society shared that a clear clinical path is lacking for individuals following a dementia diagnosis and that receiving a timely diagnosis allows better treatment. The society also advocated for greater access to community-based supports for people affected by dementia.

Diabetes Canada expressed concerns about the cost of treating diabetes and its complications and recommended the development of a comprehensive provincial diabetes strategy to improve prevention (for type 2 diabetes), screening, treatment for all types of diabetes, and health outcomes. The organization also noted that a diabetes management plan should always be individualized but that the BC PharmaCare policy often reflects a one-size fits all approach, with administrative and cost barriers to access needed medications, devices, and supplies. The Committee also heard calls for increased coverage of diabetes medications and devices such as access to insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitoring systems.

Several organizations and individuals outlined challenges related to ME. One individual, who has been diagnosed with ME, described their own symptoms, including severe fatigue, cognitive dysfunction, and significant pain. ME/FM Society of BC shared that BC has one provincial resource for those diagnosed with ME which has a waitlist of over 24 to 30 months, and only offers a one year program. Additionally, it was noted that the lack of specific ME diagnostic code hides the prevalence and devastating impact of ME because patients are not tracked in the system and specific counts and statistics are not collected. The Committee heard that this lack of ME-specific data in BC impedes access to research funding and negatively impacts clinical priorities. Accordingly, ME/FM Society of BC and several individuals made recommendations regarding increasing research and awareness of ME, and funding treatment options.

MS Canada shared that as multiple sclerosis (MS) worsens, costs incurred outside the health care system, such as informal care and productivity losses, continue to increase until they comprise about two-thirds of all costs. The organization highlighted the need for individualized treatment options for people diagnosed with MS as people respond differently to different medications, which makes it important to have every treatment available. MS Canada further shared that ensuring individuals have access to a wide array of therapeutic options may significantly decrease disability progression and reduce overall costs to both the individual and the social and health care systems.

The Committee also heard from the Parkinson Society BC which advocated for specialized staff and health professionals to better support patients with Parkinson's disease, highlighting that BC lags behind other provinces in terms of population to surgeon ratio who can perform deep brain stimulation, a neurosurgical procedure for patients with advanced Parkinson's Disease. The society also recommended timely access to innovative medications and therapies. The society explained that managing Parkinson's Disease progression requires a team-based approach including neurologists, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, and exercise professionals. Additionally, the society advocated for timely access to new therapies and medications that demonstrate benefits for patients and help keep them independent.

COMMUNITY CARE AND SENIORS

The Committee received several submissions regarding the need for more residential care facilities. Save Our Northern Seniors noted that a lack of space within care homes and assisted living units forces some seniors to stay in hospital, decreasing the number of beds available for acute care. BC Care Providers Association and EngAge BC shared that according to the Office of the Seniors Advocate, there were 3,430 seniors waiting for publicly funded long-term care beds last year, and the long-term care waitlist has more than doubled in the past five years. Additionally, Kootenay East Regional Hospital District requested support for the replacement of the F.W Green Memorial Home long-term-care facility in Cranbrook as the hospital board is waiting for provincial funding to begin this project.

Regarding facility oversight, CanAge recommended increased transparency and accountability in long-term care. The Committee also heard from Action for Reform of Residential Care BC that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the under-resourced long term care system with systemic problems has worsened the capacity of facilities to support resident quality of care and quality of life. To address the issues with the system, the organization suggested the creation of a diverse multi-sectoral long-term care advisory forum to develop a comprehensive plan for a reformed long-term care system focused on resident quality of life, a supportive work environment, independent family councils, strengthened standards, and increased accountability for care and public funds.

Several organizations and individuals discussed solutions regarding aging in place including funding for home care and respite, better access to service, and increased funding for medical equipment. The British Columbia Seniors Living Association stated that independent living is a crucial part of the housing continuum of care and advocated for financial assistance for seniors in BC to support their chosen living arrangement and services. The association elaborated that independent living provides social benefit, fosters social interaction, and combats the isolation and mental challenges often faced by seniors residing alone. To empower seniors to live independently, Motion recommended increased funding for seniors with disabilities by expanding the Home Renovation Tax Credit for seniors and persons with disabilities to include the cost of mobility-equipment supports and a broader provincial refundable tax credit of up to \$2,500 for

seniors for home health care. BC Care Providers Association and EngAge BC stated that the majority of Canadians 65 years of age and older plan on supporting themselves to live safely and independently on their own for as long as possible, stating that providing seniors with choice as to who and how their home support is provided is paramount. Therefore, they recommended the establishment of a tax credit, which allows seniors to access services when, where, and how they need them.

Regarding the Medical Services Plan, the Committee heard from an individual that the province's senior population is growing rapidly; however, for most, extended medical care coverage is not available, making services such as physiotherapy, dental, chiropractic and massage therapy too expensive to access. Therefore, they called for an extended medical services program for senior citizens.

DENTAL

The British Columbia Dental Association stated that beginning in 2025, just under 1.2 million British Columbians will be eligible to access the national dental plan, triggering a surge in demand for dental care. The association stated that the launch of the national dental plan is an opportunity for the provincial government to re-evaluate its existing plans to ensure maximum benefit for British Columbians. Additionally, the British Columbia Dental Association highlighted that the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's dental plan has not changed in almost 20 years. The association recommended implementing measures to address the dental staff shortage prior to the full implementation of the Canadian dental care plan and including oral health care in BC's health human resources strategy. The Canadian Society for Disability and Oral Health highlighted the difficulties in providing dental care to people with disabilities, and recommended the creation of special purpose dental operating rooms in hospitals and general anesthesia dental clinics near hospitals.

HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES

The Committee heard about the need to improve recruitment and retention of health care professionals to improve access to health care services. Many individuals highlighted understaffing in hospitals and clinics which have led to long waits to see a doctor or receive diagnosis and treatment. They explained that this is exacerbated by the fact that many British Columbians do not have a family doctor. The Hospital

Employees' Union stated that investment in recruitment and retention is a significant issue in health care as fewer people are being attracted to the sector and existing staff are experiencing burnout due to staffing shortages and heavy workloads. The Health Sciences Association of BC also discussed the need to address the shortages of health science professionals that cause long waits for diagnosis and treatment in the public health care system through recruitment and retention incentives to increase staffing levels.

The Canadian Association of Physician Assistants shared that incorporating physician assistants into the health care system, although not a replacement for physicians, can help physicians manage more patients and improve outcomes. The association advocated for the development of a physician assistant education program in BC, providing funding to hire 50 physician assistants over the next three years and regulating physician assistants under the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia. The Canadian Association of Physician Assistants noted that there are currently only three accredited physician assistant education programs which meet national standards with a combined total of 69 seats. The association noted that by developing a physician assistant education program at University of British Columbia or the future Simon Fraser University medical school, British Columbians could be educated in their home province and go on to provide health care savings over the course of their careers.

Several organizations and individuals discussed recruitment and retention efforts with respect to specific professions. The Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists BC noted that BC is experiencing increasing demand for medical imaging and radiation therapy services and called for education programs to train more medical radiation technologists, financial supports for new students and graduates, and financial and other workplace incentives to help retain medical radiation technologists. With respect to midwifery, the Midwives Association of British Columbia noted that midwives play an integral role in closing the gap of families seeking health care services and are critical in delivering accessible, culturally safe, and effective health care. The association further explained that there are not enough registered midwives in BC to meet demand and recommended increasing access to midwifery education programs and enhancing programs for Indigenous midwives to address this issue. One submission discussed how expanded access to chiropractic care can help British Columbians who experience

persistent pain as well as those who may be living with or are at risk of substance abuse. Additionally, Speech and Hearing BC shared that there is a critical shortage of speech language pathologists and audiologists in BC, leading to long wait times and limited access to essential services. The organization recommended increasing the number of advanced education seats in speech language pathology and audiology as well as investing in access to these professions.

MOSAIC explained that BC has lots of internationally trained health care professionals that are unable to work in the province and recommended that the province increase the number of training seats and invest in bridging programs that allow newcomers to quickly apply their skills in BC. The organization added that while the provincial government added 602 new nursing seats last year, only 35 were designated for internationally educated nurses, with only three post-secondary institutions in BC offering this type of program. A recruitment practice highlighted by a few individuals was improving the credential recognition systems for out of province health care workers including by increasing training seats for bridging programs for internationally educated nurses and providing funding for completion in BC of any minor gaps in training.

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

Several groups discussed the need for funding for hospices including for services such as counselling and supports for those dealing with grief and bereavement. With the aging population and the continued increase of deaths due to chronic conditions, Elk Valley Hospice stated that British Columbia will continue to see an increased need for hospice and bereavement care services. Further, Victoria Hospice Society stated that sustainable funding will help hospices respond to changing demands, build upon current resources and programs, maintain and train volunteer support, and deliver education resources. The Greater Trail Hospice Society shared that it depends on funding for operations, volunteer training and support, and community education. These organizations advocated for increased funding for this sector, in particular to provide grief and bereavement education and support.

MEDICAL DEVICES AND EQUIPMENT

Many presentations and submissions described the need for increased funding for medical devices and equipment. Home Medical Equipment Providers Association of BC highlighted that mobility equipment is absolutely essential and the lack of necessary equipment can result in higher medical costs down the line. Disability Alliance BC stated that in BC, most financial coverage available for adults for assistive devices is for people receiving disability assistance and those who do not qualify for financial coverage are left to purchase expensive medical equipment on their own or to seek out help from not for profit organizations and charities. Motion stated that many people are forced to either go without or search for additional funds to make up for the increasing gap between the funding cap and the actual cost of equipment. The organization further elaborated that for people with disabilities and mobility constraints, the added cost of equipment that they need to function is far too often out of reach and assistance from government is not available. Additionally, Speech and Hearing BC noted barriers to accessing needed equipment for individuals who are hard of hearing once a hearing loss is detected. The organization stated that introducing funding for hearing aids in BC would be a crucial improvement in quality of life. The Prosthetics and Orthotics Association of BC noted that BC does not have an adult funded orthotic program and that funding policies are inadequate which create barriers for emergency repairs, sometimes leading to injuries while waiting.

PRIMARY CARE

The Committee heard about the need for more funding for urgent care centres, with adequate staff for full hours, as well as increased access to family doctors. An individual noted that when walk-in clinics are closed on the weekend or during the afternoon, British Columbians cannot access treatment and end up in emergency rooms. The Kootenay Boundary Patient Advisory Committee and Community stated that targeted funding is needed for patient engagement within clinics and primary care networks to provide education, capacity building, and honoraria for patients. The organization elaborated that this would enable them to participate more fully in their own care and be included on key primary care networks committees and clinic advisory panels.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The Public Health Association of BC stated that worsening threats to public health, like climate change and the drug toxicity and overdose crisis, mean it is important to invest in the public health system and ensure it is equipped to face these challenges. The association elaborated that important steps forward include better population health surveillance, better preparation for emergency management, and being able to act on early detection of disease and the wider determinants of health. The association recommended increasing the percentage of the provincial health care budget allocated to public health infrastructure to at least six percent, from three percent. One individual discussed the need to allocate funds to preventative medicine to minimize demands on medical professionals while another highlighted that reluctance to provide preventative interventions may lead to additional costs down the line that far exceed the price of the preventative interventions. Additionally, the BC Recreation and Parks Association advocated for a three-year scaled investment to support a pilot project in conjunction with health authorities to provide free recreation to those 14 to 25 years old as a form of preventative health care.

With respect to vaccinations, Merck Canada advocated for enhancing public health funding for vaccine procurement in anticipation of new vaccination programs that will further protect the health of British Columbians including BC's HPV immunization program. The Committee also heard from organizations and individuals regarding the shingles vaccination. GSK Canada shared that in the absence of a publicly funded immunization program, many older British Columbians will remain unprotected from shingles despite the availability of an effective vaccine. The organization supported the creation of a shingles immunization program to help those 65 years and older avoid needing care associated with a shingles outbreak. Similarly, Immunize.io Health Association recommended providing coverage for two-dose recombinant zoster shingles vaccine in the BC public immunization program at no cost for BC residents over 65 and suggested they should be available at local pharmacies.

Many organizations and individuals raised concerns about air quality. The British Columbia Lung Foundation noted that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. The foundation, along with BC Lung Association, advocated for the creation of a radon action plan to mitigate the impact of radon. Individuals noted that clean air standards and

regulations would help mitigate against the effects of wildfire smoke, viruses like COVID-19 and other airborne hazards. One individual noted that indoor air standards and effective filtration systems can reduce viral spread, reduce health hazards from pollution and wildfire smoke, and create an accessible and safe environment for those who are immunocompromised. Recommendations in this area included: creating air quality standards; funding for ventilation and filtration programs and initiatives; and ensuring public buildings, such as hospitals and schools, have clean air through providing carbon dioxide monitors, HEPA filters and adequate ventilation.

The Committee also heard about taxation on vaping products. The Canadian Cancer Society stated that BC has witnessed a dramatic increase in youth vaping, which has led to a new generation of youth becoming addicted to nicotine. With respect to increased vaping amongst youth, BC Alliance for Healthy Living stated that BC teens cited that when vaping products are more expensive it is harder for them to purchase them. The alliance, along with the Canadian Cancer Society, advocated for increased taxes on vaping products.

RESEARCH

Regarding research initiatives, Michael Smith Health Research BC highlighted the need to continue to build on the momentum in the health research and life sciences sector in BC by remaining engaged, continuing to invest in research, and supporting new opportunities as they emerge. Praxis Spinal Cord Institute noted that provincial funding has helped support spinal cord injury research and innovation in BC and advocated for strategic investments in support of BC's life sciences sector and organizations like the Praxis Spinal Cord Institute so that BC continues to advance as a global life sciences hub. Vancouver Prostate Centre highlighted its work developing an improved COVID-19 vaccine using Deep Docking and requested funding for the continuation of this work as well as to explore its new model of drug discovery for BC, which will incur better health outcomes for patients and clear economic benefits. Additionally, PolyCan Health Centre described how stem cell research can speed up recovery after cancer treatment; the organization recommended investment in PolyCan's cancer prevention, screening, and rehabilitation centre in order to ease the burden on BC Cancer and hospitals.

RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Organizations in rural and remote communities discussed their unique challenges including issues accessing services. The Kootenay Boundary Patient Advisory Committee and Community stated that without local services, rural residents are faced with large expenditures associated with travel for health care. They explained that a 2021 study found that rural residents pay an average of \$2,044 trying to access health care, including costs for meals, accommodation and specialist services. The Kootenay Boundary Patient Advisory Committee and Community advocated for funding to support local rural hospitals by training more nursing students, speeding up the approval process for foreign trained healthcare workers, modernizing rural hospitals, increasing incentives to work in rural hospitals, and increasing access to specialists in rural communities. The BC Rural Health Network emphasized that community-driven engagement in rural health and health policies tailored specifically for BC's rural populations are paramount to ensuring the system responds to the nuanced needs of diverse rural communities. This organization, along with South Shuswap Health Services Society, highlighted community health centres as a model of care in rural communities that integrates primary care, social services, and programs, and recommended funding for community-operated health centres.

SURGERIES

The Committee heard concerns about surgical wait times. BC Anesthesiologists' Society discussed pre-habilitation, which is the optimization of patient's physical, nutritional, medical, and mental health before surgery, and recommended prioritizing pre-habilitation within the surgical portfolio and creating a provincial preoperative care standard that is established into a digital tool. Also, individuals noted the backlog of the surgical system and offered suggestions on how to address this issue, including offsite operating rooms and public surgical day centres to expand ambulatory care for relevant day surgeries.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee recognized the significant input it received regarding chronic and complex diseases. Members highlighted the need to provide funding for clinics and care hubs in general to help treat and support individuals with chronic and complex diseases. Additionally, the Committee noted several of the programs, strategies, and treatments to address particular

diseases and disorders. The Committee highlighted the importance of providing a strong provincial response to both dementia and diabetes and noted the importance of provincial strategies to improve prevention, screening, and treatment of these disorders. Members also reflected on the amount of input they heard regarding the lack of support and awareness for ME and discussed the need to increase awareness and create billing codes to improve the lives and treatment of those diagnosed with the disorder. Additionally, the Committee recommended improving supports and access to treatment for multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.

Regarding community care and seniors, the Committee discussed the increasing seniors population in the province and the importance of ensuring that there are enough care facilities to address the rising need. Members supported increased oversight and hours of care in order to ensure the sector is meeting seniors' expectations of care. In particular, Members expressed support for the F.W. Green Memorial Home in Cranbrook. The Committee also highlighted the importance of enabling seniors to stay in their homes and age in place. They noted aging in place can be supported through increasing and standardizing funding for home care and respite, including eliminating current regulated daily rate copayments.

The Committee acknowledged the challenges with staffing in the health care sector. Members expressed interest in several suggestions to improve recruitment and retention, including improving the recruitment of health care providers and workers outside of BC by streamlining credential recognition and funding the completion of minor training variances for internationally trained professionals. The Committee also agreed that more education seats in several areas are needed to address health care staff shortages. Members also discussed how physician assistants could be used in the health care system and supported their regulation under the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia.

Regarding hospices and palliative care, Members noted the challenges in this sector and the important supports they provide to British Columbians, including bereavement services, and the need to support these services especially for youth. Further, the Committee supported the creation of a provincial database for palliative care metrics and reporting capabilities to increase awareness of services available through the province.

In discussing medical equipment and devices, Members expressed concerns about the lack of coverage and accessibility. Members noted that current coverage of devices is not reflective of current costs which can leave those who need them unable to get the necessary devices. The Committee agreed that funding should be increased to ensure British Columbians are getting the supports they need to improve quality of life.

Members agreed that rural and remote areas have unique health care challenges. The Committee noted that British Columbians in these areas often face increased costs especially in terms of traveling for medical needs. The Committee acknowledged that solutions need to be community-driven and expressed support for community-operated health centres and specific recruitment and retention incentives to tackle the unique needs of these communities.

Regarding public health, the Committee agreed that the provincial government should implement a vaccine program for both HPV and the two dose shingles vaccine. Members noted the impact shingles has and how vaccinations could prevent pain and suffering for many while also decreasing the

strain on health care system due to treatment. Additionally, the Committee supported expanding the HPV immunization program to reach more people and continue to prevent spread, particularly due to the link to cancer. Also regarding public health, the Committee noted the need to address rising vaping rates as well as tobacco use in the province, particularly for youth. Solutions in this area included increased taxation as well as education on the risks.

Committee Members reflected on the input they received regarding the need to address surgical wait times. They noted that day centres could be used for day surgeries, such as joint replacement surgeries, which could help remove strain from hospitals while also ensuring British Columbians are getting necessary surgeries within an appropriate time.

During their discussions regarding medical research. Members noted the need to continue supporting BC's health research and life sciences sector in British Columbia. The work of Praxis Spinal Cord Institute, ADSC stem cell research and development, and Vancouver Prostate Centre were highlighted by Members as examples of research that needs to be funded and supported in the province.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Chronic Diseases and Complex Conditions

76. Fund complex and chronic illness clinics or care hubs, such as the Centre for Complex Chronic Diseases at BC Women's Hospital, for those with chronic illnesses and co-morbidities.
77. Resource the development and implementation of a provincial dementia strategy.
78. Invest in the development and implementation of a provincial diabetes strategy to improve prevention (type 2), screening, treatment, and health outcomes for all types of diabetes.
79. Improve access to multiple sclerosis treatments through public funding of ocrelizumab and ofatumumab.
80. Improve supports and services for those diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis by establishing guidelines, developing specific billing codes, and training medical professionals to increase awareness.
81. Improve treatment of Parkinson's disease by maintaining and expanding specialized staff, training health professionals to better support patients, and providing timely access to innovative medications and therapies such as deep brain stimulation.

Community Care and Seniors

82. Provide funding to expand residential care facilities.
83. Provide funding to residential care facilities to meet a minimum of four hours of daily care per resident and improve oversight, transparency and reporting.

84. Move forward with the replacement of the F.W. Green Memorial Home long-term care facility.
85. Support seniors to age in place by increasing and standardizing funding for home care, home support, and respite.

Health Human Resources

86. Address staff shortages in the health care sector through:
 - a. recruitment and retention incentives;
 - b. streamlining credential recognition for out-of-BC health care providers;
 - c. providing funding for the completion of minor training variances for internationally trained professionals; and
 - d. increasing post-secondary seats in areas such as nursing, medical radiation technology, midwifery, and speech language pathology and audiology.
87. Regulate physician assistants under the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia to allow for physician assistants to be incorporated in the BC health care system.

Hospice and Palliative Care

88. Address gaps and barriers in hospice and palliative care treatment and support by:
 - a. providing equitable, predictable, and stable funding;
 - b. increasing funding for grief and bereavement services and training; and
 - c. establishing a provincial database for palliative care metrics and reporting capabilities.

Medical Devices and Equipment

89. Improve the coverage and accessibility of medical devices and equipment, including:
 - a. re-evaluating equipment funding for adults to ensure comprehensive support;
 - b. introducing funding for hearing aids;
 - c. creating a seamless orthotics funding plan; and
 - d. reviewing the Legislative Funding Cap for Ceiling Lift Systems.
90. Consider amending the Employment and Assistance Regulation to align with current market pricing for scooters and lifts.

Public Health

91. Enhance BC's HPV immunization program by expanding the functionality of ImmsBC to provide HPV vaccines and extending HPV vaccination coverage to all genders up to and including age 26.
92. Fund two doses of shingles vaccine for older British Columbians and ensure the vaccination is available at community pharmacies.
93. Increase the sales tax percentage for e-cigarettes and vaping products and participate in the federal government's e-cigarette tax framework and invest in tobacco and vaping education for children and youth.

Research

94. Continue to support health and life science research, including investing in the Praxis Spinal Cord Institute, ADSC stem cell research and development, and the Vancouver Prostate Centre's new model of drug discovery.

Rural and Remote Communities

95. Ensure equitable access to health care services for rural and remote communities by:

- a. funding community-operated health centres;
- b. expanding funding for and access to medical travel for rural and remote residents;
- c. implementing recruitment and retention incentives for health care workers;
- d. investing in digital health solutions;
- e. providing funding to expand services for patient navigators; and
- f. shifting towards community-driven planning.

Surgeries

96. Invest in surgical day centres to expand ambulatory care for day surgeries such as joint replacement surgeries.

HOUSING



Concerns about British Columbia's housing supply and affordability were highlighted throughout the consultation. The Committee heard from British Columbians about how increases in the price of housing over the past few years are impacting many areas of the economy in all parts of the province. Several suggestions were put forward including significantly increasing non-market housing, updating incentives for first-time home buyers, and providing more support for social and supportive housing.

DEVELOPMENT AND DATA

The Committee heard about obstacles to developments and how this drives up the costs of construction. The Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver explained that with a near-zero percent vacancy rate, communities are desperately in need of new purpose-built rental buildings while noting that such projects are financially difficult. The Victoria Residential Builders Association stated the need to update municipal taxes, fees, and regulations to lower the cost of development. The Canadian Bankers Association called for a coordinated housing policy involving all levels of government. Mortgage Professionals Canada and the Association of Interior Realtors called for a permanent roundtable on housing to streamline development and policy. Several individuals noted the need for more creative development solutions and densification, such as tiny house communities and co-operatives.

The BC Real Estate Association supported the recent change to municipal zoning approaches but noted that increased density can create stress on local infrastructure and called for coordination between different levels of government and stakeholders. Revelstoke Housing Society, BC Real Estate Association, and the City of Vancouver recommended government help municipalities pay for updating and increasing the utilities and services needed to expand housing.

The Committee also heard about access to real estate data. The Association of Interior Realtors raised concerns that in smaller communities, realtors, and consumers are having to

wait an extensive amount of time for property documents because they are not available in an easily accessible digital format. The Appraisal Institute of Canada – British Columbia noted that access to real estate data supports a healthy real estate market and noted that a housing strategy will only be successful with comprehensive data.

HOME OWNERSHIP

On the topic of the PTT, the Committee heard about issues with the exemption threshold for the first-time homebuyers' program. Mortgage Professionals Canada shared that the threshold was increased for newly built homes to \$750,000 in 2016 but not for existing homes which created a disadvantage to first-time home buyers looking to enter the housing market, particularly given the lower inventory of available housing. The organization, along with the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, recommended that the first-time homebuyers program PTT exemption be increased especially for resale homes. The Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver also recommended that the PTT revenue from homes priced at more than \$750,000 be used to fund financial incentives to renters buying missing middle homes.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs highlighted that not for profit housing societies must pay PTT to purchase property that will become affordable rental housing. The centre noted that exempting not for profit societies from the PTT would reduce future rents agencies must charge, helping more low-income households. Also with respect to affordable housing, Housing Central requested funding to offset the PTT of co-op lease renewals and Rental Protection Fund Beneficiaries as well as an exemption for not for profit housing providers by updating the classification of not for profit housing properties from BC.

Regarding the introduction of a flipping tax, the BC Real Estate Association noted that property renovations and deep retrofits can help refurbish older uninhabitable homes and bring them back on the market, increasing both market and rental supply.

The organization stated that the flipping tax should exempt renovations that add units as part of the missing middle initiative or replace older units with units more suitable for middle- and lower-income residents and are energy step code compliant. Similarly, the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver recommended including exemptions to avoid penalizing those most likely to move, as well as exempting new home construction to ensure it does not discourage investment in secondary suites. One individual also called for the Speculation and Vacancy Tax rate be raised to two percent.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Several individuals and organizations raised the issue of housing affordability in their communities, with many noting that finding adequate affordable housing is a constant financial stress. CUPE Okanagan Mainline District Council explained that working-class people are unable to buy into the housing market including in rural and remote areas. The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff at UBC highlighted the negative impact of housing affordability on BC workers, explaining that several highly trained professionals have been lost to more affordable provinces while the Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training noted that BC is the highest priced jurisdiction in Canada. Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia explained that 82 percent of chartered professional accountants have identified housing prices as a major challenge. To contextualize the issue, the Canadian Bankers Association stated that buyers need to devote over 74 percent and 98 percent of their incomes to home ownership in Victoria and Vancouver, respectively. The organization added that BC needs to build an additional 570,000 units above current construction trends to restore housing affordability by 2030. Similarly, Food Stash Foundation advocated for increased funding for, and removal of obstacles, to develop more affordable housing.

The Committee received several recommendations to improve the development of non-market housing. CUPE Kootenay District Council suggested the development of a new crown corporation or similar agency, to build publicly owned high-quality non-market housing. The Disability Alliance BC also raised concerns about the lack of accessible non-market housing, noting that only 23 percent of the non-market developments on BC Housing's list are wheelchair accessible. Outlining barriers around not for profit housing construction, Revelstoke Housing Society noted the need to improve not

for profits' access to provincial funding to build housing and streamline the application process. The Vancity Community Foundation highlighted that not for profit, co-operative, and community groups can play a role in improving housing stock but require access to the early-stage funding required to advance projects.

The BCGEU and the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition called for an expansion of direct and aggressive public investment in increasing the housing stock to immediately build 25,000 new public, co-op, social, and non-market housing units annually. Noting the disproportionate impact of housing affordability on Indigenous peoples in BC, Housing Central called for \$176 million to support the Aboriginal Housing Management Association's Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy.

RENTAL HOUSING

Several individuals and organizations explained that unaffordability in the housing market has been especially pronounced in the rental market. CUPE Metro Vancouver District Council explained that the 2022 average asking rent for vacant units in Vancouver was 43 percent higher than the average rent for occupied units. The Together Against Poverty Society noted that the rapid increase in rental prices has resulted in a simultaneous rise in two-month eviction notices based on "landlord use of property." The society suggested that limiting rent increases between tenancies would reduce the economic incentive for landlords to evict tenants. The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals also noted that the lack of pet friendly accommodations in BC puts additional pressure on pet owners.

Regarding the rental market's impact on senior citizens, one individual noted BC Housing needs to radically change its calculation for the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters subsidy to align with the actual cost of rentals. 411 Seniors Centre explained that in October, the average one-bedroom was \$1,675 a month but SAFER only pays \$873 a month. Collingwood Neighbourhood House similarly raised concerns about the number of seniors losing their rental-homes, often due to eviction.

SOCIAL AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

The Committee also heard about the difficulties facing people reliant on social and supportive housing, with several groups noting that social and supportive housing units are vital to the community. Coast Mental Health explained that social and transitional housing programs offer access to support groups and life skills training, enabling individuals to reintegrate into society successfully. The organization raised concerns about funding, explaining that there are discrepancies between organizations with a Complex Care designation and those without. The City of Vancouver explained that Vancouver provides 75 percent of the metro-region's shelter and supportive housing units and called for a regional approach to mental health and affordable housing. The Committee also heard from Pacifica Housing that the current funding model is unable to keep up with increased operating costs and building maintenance, and as such, organizations are forced to increase rent in order to cover operating expenses. The organization called for adequate funding and more investment in housing. YWCA Metro Vancouver urged the prioritization of multiple funding streams to address construction and insurance costs associated with building social housing. Noting that 15 percent of the province's homeless population are youth, Covenant House Vancouver called for an appropriate portion of supportive and complex care housing to be dedicated to vulnerable youth. The Downtown Victoria Business Association explained that the launch of complex care has been slow due to insufficient supports for agencies to address the behavioral or criminal actions of clients. The association suggested involuntary care would enable complex care to be delivered effectively and would reduce street disorder.

The Committee received several recommendations to overhaul supports for unhoused populations to help them get back into safe housing. Comox Valley Regional District explained that the number of people experiencing homelessness in the Comox Valley has doubled since March 2020. As a result, all supportive and transitional housing in Courtenay is full, with significant waitlists. The City of Kelowna noted that it has 273 shelter spaces but nearly 250 individuals continue to reside on the streets. The city explained that the Provincial Strengthening Community Services Program helps fund these spaces but is set to expire in July 2023. Archway Community Services explained that throughout BC, communities are lacking appropriate housing options for those who are unhoused, and the community-based outreach and support services are underfunded. The City of North Vancouver noted

that homelessness, mental health, and addiction-related issues have reached a critical point in BC cities and called for all levels of government to work together to deliver appropriate housing and support for people with overlapping mental health, substance use, trauma and acquired brain injury issues. The city recommended implementing a single-point-of-entry and housing-first model as well as providing temporary or permanent self-contained accommodation with 24-hour on-site supports. Describing shortcomings in the current shelter funding models, Kelowna's Gospel Mission explained that temporary winter shelter contracts only last three months. These shortened contracts require organizations to use significant resources to restart them each year, whereas purpose-built buildings offer more stability for the people who use them and those who operate them.

STRATA

The Committee also received input related to the management of strata corporations. The Insurance Bureau of Canada explained that if reforms have not been undertaken to help reduce the risk facing strata corporations, and to improve the maintenance and repair of the province's strata stock, the strata insurance market will destabilize. The organization noted that reforms are needed to define a standard unit, enhance depreciation reports and reserve fund requirements, limit loss assessments, and make risk management education mandatory for strata council members. **The Association of Interior Realtors further noted that the *Strata Property Act*, which outlines fees and timelines for obtaining strata documents which could be shortened based on the digitization of most records, has not been reviewed since 2000. The association noted that shortening these timelines would mean that consumers get the information they need quickly and eliminate the need for realtors to pay exceedingly high rush fees to obtain strata documents.**

CONCLUSIONS

Committee Members acknowledged the significant concerns raised about housing affordability and the need to address the housing supply shortage. They highlighted that housing of all types must be available to those who need it and at a price they can afford. The Committee emphasized the opportunity to leverage established programs, such as VanCity's Affordable Community Housing Program + Accelerator Fund, to build affordable housing. Members discussed how incentives need

to be available to accelerate the creation of non-market and affordable housing to address the housing supply issues and that the development of all types of housing, including tiny homes, need to be supported. In regard to the role each level of government plays, Members noted the need to work with all levels of government to address this issue and noted that some smaller communities may lack the capacity to address this issue on their own. The Committee also noted that smaller municipalities may face challenges to increase and update infrastructure to accommodate increased housing demand, and as such, may need supports in this area.

With respect to data, the Committee discussed the importance of consistent, comprehensive, and up-to-date data and documents related to real estate. Members noted that digital access to such documents is necessary and would help expedite the time to deliver documents.

Regarding the first-time home buyers program, the Committee acknowledged that the PTT threshold is not reflective of current market prices in much of the province. Members noted the discrepancy between the threshold with respect to resale and newly built homes. To make home ownership easier to first time buyers, Members agreed that this threshold should be raised to ensure the First-Time Home Buyer program is

effective. They further noted that this threshold should be annually reviewed to ensure it is reflective of market prices.

The Committee also discussed the role of addressing rental costs to address housing concerns. The Committee agreed that incentives should be provided to vulnerable renters to improve affordability and provide stability. Members also noted that the province is lacking in pet-friendly rental options which can lead to families and individuals having to give up pets in order to get housing. Also regarding rental housing, Committee Members discussed the need to ensure seniors have affordable housing, noting that some seniors are having to choose between rent and other necessities, and that means testing thresholds to access affordable housing is not keeping up with the increased costs of rentals.. They agreed that the current Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters is not reflective of current rental costs and needs to be increased.

With regards to social and supportive housing, the Committee discussed the need for year-round funding for shelters so operators are not required to re-establish shelters every winter and can provide housing all year for individuals in need. Members agreed shelters need to have the appropriate supports to enable individuals to get the necessary help to transition into permanent housing. The Committee also supported accelerating the delivery of complex care housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Development and Data

97. Support smaller local governments and municipalities in updating and increasing the infrastructure and services needed to accommodate increased growth.
98. **Ensure consistent, comprehensive, and up-to-date data and documents related to real estate, such as real estate transactions, property documents, and inspection reports, are readily available, including ensuring local government have the resources to provide digital access to documents.**
99. Include details about tiny homes in the BC Building Code.

Homeownership

100. Improve and expand incentives for first-time home buyers including increasing the First Time Home Buyers program's property tax transfer exemption threshold and reviewing it on an annual basis to reflect changing market conditions.

Housing Supply

101. Increase the full spectrum of housing supply in partnership with municipal and federal governments by:
 - a. implementing incentives to build housing, including non-market housing;
 - b. partnering with community organizations and foundations;
 - c. increasing investments in supportive housing; and
 - d. providing funding to address rising costs.
102. Coordinate a housing policy across all levels of government to remove barriers to housing supply, including creating a housing development and affordability dashboard to measure availability and progress.

Rental Housing

103. Provide means-tested support to targeted renters, including persons with disabilities and low-income households.
104. Provide additional support for pet-friendly not for profit housing through BC Housing and engage with landlords and other stakeholders to find cooperative solutions to increase the availability and affordability of pet-friendly housing with appropriate protection and timely dispute resolution for landlords, strata, and co-operatives.
105. Improving housing supports for seniors by providing more affordable housing options, increasing the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters and adjusting income thresholds for accessing means-tested affordable housing to ensure it is reflective of market conditions.

Social and Supportive Housing

106. Support people experiencing homelessness by providing year-round funding for permanent shelter services that include appropriate, comprehensive supports to transition to permanent housing.
107. Accelerate the delivery of complex care housing.

K-12 EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

During the Committee's consultation, challenges with K-12 education operational and capital funding, including growth and maintenance, were highlighted. The Committee also heard from numerous school districts, organizations and individuals about staffing shortages and the need to increase supports for students, especially the most vulnerable. Many organizations and individuals additionally noted challenges related to child care in schools and accessing affordable child care.

CAPITAL FUNDING

The British Columbia School Trustees Association advocated for increased capital funding, noting that capital projects and maintenance have been chronically underfunded, and that sufficient funding and processes for the proactive acquisition of school sites are imperative. Similarly, School District No. 36 (Surrey) recommended eliminating the requirement that local school districts contribute up to 50 percent of capital funding on major capital projects for new spaces as it creates significant budgetary pressures and is becoming increasingly unsustainable. School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) highlighted that over the past two years, it has added over 70 classroom spaces including approximately 20 portables using its own funds which are redirected out of the classroom when facility land acquisition and infrastructure funding is insufficient. As a result, the school district support limiting school district contributions towards capital projects. Additionally, School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows) explained that the current capital funding model does not include funding for the administrative or maintenance facilities required to support the delivery of educational services in school districts. They further emphasized the need for funding to address all school district capital needs, including portable classrooms, additional specialized spaces in schools, administrative and maintenance buildings.

The Committee also heard about some specific capital needs. To address the issue of lack of access to schools in regions of large population growth and new housing developments, the BC Retired Teachers' Association recommended prebuilding

schools in areas where planners have already indicated there will be new or infill housing. The Institute for Public Education BC added that government needs to develop a more comprehensive and collaborative approach with school districts and municipalities for the building of new schools which better considers projected population growth, including large scale immigration into the province. School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) spoke to the need for a new capital fund for the purchase of portable classrooms, stating that their schools were already nearing capacity with over 50 portables in service with an additional 2,000 students projected in the next ten years. They also highlighted that each portable costs \$350,000 and can only be funded from operational funding. West Vancouver Schools requested targeted capital support for technology demands and general increases to address inflation noting that classrooms and facilities require robust infrastructure to support modern digital tools and solutions including connectivity, online learning, and personal devices. Finally, School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) recommended additional resources for projects in the carbon neutral capital plan. The school district stated that the funds currently available to districts were inadequate to cover the cost to electrify and change a single school to a heat pump which ranges from \$750,000 to \$2.2 million while the district's direct funding from government for carbon neutral projects per year was approximately \$350,000.

School districts along with parent and teachers' associations advocated for additional capital funding for the seismic mitigation program. School District No. 38 (Richmond) noted that currently 16 elementary schools and four secondary schools in the district remain unsupported for mitigation. Vancouver School District highlighted many Vancouver schools have H1 seismic ratings, meaning they would suffer irreparable damage. The Greater Victoria Teachers Association added that provincial funds for new builds and upgrades should fully cover all costs and provide the best environmentally sound, modern buildings without making sacrifices to space and functionality. All three of these organizations, along with the

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, recommended increased funding for seismic upgrades.

The Committee heard from school districts calling for capital investment to complete needed maintenance along with modernization to address aging infrastructure. School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows) stated that deferred maintenance costs continue to accumulate while the condition of schools continues to deteriorate. Similarly, West Vancouver Schools noted that since capital funding has not kept pace with inflation, it has become increasingly difficult for them to cope with deferred maintenance. School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) highlighted that in rural districts, the students' learning environment, and the health and safety of all employees suffers due to aging facilities and an elevated risk of failure of some key safety systems. They school district requested targeted funds to bring portables to an energy-efficient standard and to ensure that portables and aging infrastructure have HVAC systems in place to meet evolving health and safety needs. West Vancouver Schools also remarked that school districts now face additional challenges requiring capital funds such as covering technology costs in excess of \$1 million annually and modernizing washrooms to accommodate and make students of all genders welcome.

The Committee also heard a specific request from Wells-Barkerville Parent Advisory Committee regarding its aging school building, which is owned and operated by the municipality. An assessment of the building identified deferred maintenance, health and safety issues, and upgrades totaling approximately \$1.1 million. The community is at risk of having the building shut down and requested funding for the necessary maintenance upgrades.

Regarding funding for new schools, recommendations addressed issues of population growth and capacity. School District No. 38 (Richmond) noted that a 15.2 percent growth in total enrolment across elementary schools in Richmond City Centre led to the deployment of eight portable classrooms and that investment will be needed for two new elementary schools, 23 additional classrooms, and additions to existing schools to accommodate the projected population growth. School District No. 36 (Surrey) recommended funding for new school space capital projects in Surrey as one of their most significant challenges is the continued enrolment growth and critical shortage of school and classroom capacity to accommodate students. The City of Surrey added that to meet the classroom space needs of the new 1,200 students arriving

each year would require two new elementary schools to be constructed every year and urged an increase in funding and to make funding more predictable for school infrastructure in Surrey. The Greater Victoria Teachers Association noted that money for new builds will only cover the current student population which often results in schools being at or over capacity as soon as they are built. In response to school and classroom capacity shortages, School District No. 36 (Surrey) explained that they had to convert other specialty educational spaces such as computer labs and multi-purpose areas into classrooms and acquire portables to meet student growth demands. Additionally, the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils remarked that when it comes to building new schools, discussions with the Ministry of Education and Child Care, and all stakeholders about what the area's future will look like are crucial, otherwise brand-new schools will continue to exceed capacity, and portables will need to be deployed.

The Committee also heard the importance of funding zero-emission school buses. For Our Kids expressed concern about the health effects of diesel exhaust. The organization recommended increasing funding so that all new school buses can be electric by default.

CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Some organizations called for general increases to child care and early education funding. The BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association advocated for funding the true associated costs for school-based child care programs including leadership and administrative time, and staffing to effectively manage the new programs and responsibilities. First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society highlighted that barrier-free drop-in programming and child care can help combat isolation for families with young children. The society recommended accelerated investments in quality child care, including a wage grid for early childhood educators (ECE), and increased funding for early intervention supports, therapies and programs. Additionally, IATSE Local 168 remarked that many of its members work outside of the traditional nine-to-five workday and that the live arts industry is not the only sector that works 24-7. To address this gap, IATSE supported an expanded child care program available on evenings and weekends.

In relation to the \$10 a Day Child Care Program, two individuals advocated for adequate funding for programs across the province providing regional parity and allowing programs to recruit and retain qualified educators. The Centre for Family Equity highlighted that there are currently only 12,729 spaces at \$10 a Day Child Care Programs and recommended the expedited completion of the \$10 a Day Child Care system, including before- and after-school care at school locations to increase capacity. YWCA Metro Vancouver stated that the requirement for providers of new child care spaces to operate for one year prior to being eligible for \$10-a-day funding puts unnecessary pressure on not for profit operators, leaving them uncertain about the financial risk of opening new facilities. Therefore, the organization recommended eliminating the one-year period to encourage the opening of more child care facilities.

Regarding subsidies, BGC Canada similarly noted that current funding and limits on fee hikes have made participation in the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative unsustainable for not for profit providers. Currently, operators are prevented from increasing fees in line with inflation, forcing them to operate spaces at a loss which increases financial pressures on the organization, and severely limits their capacity to expand into new locations to meet growing demand. BGC Canada stated that a solution would be to work with existing not for profit providers to ensure that the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative funding models are sustainable. Finally, the Revelstoke After School Society proposed an increase to the maximum income eligible to receive affordable child care benefits to \$200,000, noting that many families struggle to make ends meet, including those whose income exceeds the \$110,000 threshold for the current affordable child care benefit program. Committee Members also heard from the Revelstoke After School Society recommending funding for a summer camp subsidy. The society stated that access to affordable summer camps enables parents to work and would provide a valuable form of respite for parents, who often face additional stress during the summer months when children are out of school.

The Committee heard from the YWCA Metro Vancouver about aging child care centres and the reality that capital upgrades fall on not for profit operators, diverting funds from other essential services. To mitigate this need, the YWCA recommended the creation of a capital replacement fund to enable operators to replace aging infrastructure. Additionally, individuals highlighted the importance of a capital budget and planning process to create new child care facilities and the

need to stop the current practice of relying on an inequitable application-based process for child care expansion. They further noted that this approach would be more sustainable and that it would also allow for the implementation of design standards that create quality indoor and outdoor spaces for children and align with CleanBC. The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC remarked that fewer than 25 percent of children have access to a licensed space and that waiting lists remain years long while demand for child care continues to grow. To address this situation, the Coalition advised introducing a capital budget and plan to build high quality, climate-resilient new child care facilities with public, not for profit, and Indigenous partners.

Regarding child care providers, BGC Okanagan remarked that recent changes brought to the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative have come at the cost of many child care providers, with fees not considering the costs of staff recruitment and retention as well as rising operational costs. The organization recommended eliminating restrictions on child care providers' fees by basing the formula on the true costs being incurred by providers. Another recommendation to reduce costs to child care providers, proposed by CEFA Early Learning, revolved around funding the tax portion of additional rent paid to landlords for early learning and child care operators. CEFA Early Learning stated that this type of subsidy would make it more attractive for providers to open much needed spaces in the province, especially in new developments. Finally, BGC Okanagan noted that by shifting responsibility for child care to the Ministry of Education and expanding the role of school districts, additional pressures such as large rental fee increases have been placed on not for profit providers and communities have been cut out of local child care decisions. BGC Okanagan stated that by prioritizing not for profit child care providers and requiring school districts to follow a cost recovery model when renting space would enable not for profit organizations to continue to provide affordable child care to their communities.

The need for increased capacity and additional investment for child care in schools was another key theme. School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) noted that with the addition of child care to the education mandate, school districts are being asked to take on an unfunded mandate or to spend education-focused funds, which is a barrier to creating and expanding much-needed child care spaces. CUPE Fraser Valley District Council noted that public child care in schools means fewer transitions and better care for kids and a single drop-off and

pickup location for parents. CUPE Kootenay District Council added that if parents are unable to find licensed spaces, they are faced with anxiety and guilt over having to place their children in unlicensed child care spaces, or they cannot work, which impacts the entire family. Several CUPE district councils advocated for investment in the creation of seamless and integrated child care, operated in-house by school districts to create thousands of new, affordable, and accessible child care spaces. With respect to before- and after-school care, Revelstoke After School Society recommended increased funding, stating that the cost of after-school care can be a significant financial burden for low-income families, and more space is needed in existing programs.

The Committee heard about the need to address recruitment and retention in the child care sector. BGC Canada and BGC Okanagan recommended a workforce strategy for the sector, highlighting the need to expand the pool of qualified staff. CUPE Vancouver Island District Council advocated for funding for increased hours for educational assistants (EAs) by delivering school aged child care publicly through school districts to reduce precarious work and labour shortages. Further, the Summit Community Services Society noted that wage discrepancies between ECEs and EAs is exacerbating worker shortages. The society recommended providing permanent wage top-ups and benefits for ECEs to incentivize more people to enter the field. YWCA Metro Vancouver added that funding a competitive, equitable wage grid with benefits is crucial to address ECE shortages while the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, along with two individuals, advocated for the implementation of a wage grid for ECEs in the range of \$30-\$40 an hour. The Coalition also recommended funding existing \$10 a Day Child Care Programs to ensure regional consistency of ECE compensation and providing a three-year plan with funding to transition interested operators into the program using an equitable funding formula. The Committee also heard that funding education could help recruit new ECEs. CEFA Early Learning stated that the cost of schooling is a barrier for many, especially when ECE wages are still far below where they need to be, and they proposed fully funding tuition for any individual looking to enter a ECE program at either a college or university. Alternatively, YMCAs of BC suggested that the ECE workforce could be increased by scaling up the Work Integrated Learning program, with a revised financial model that compensates providers for their supervision and mentorship of students.

INDEPENDENT AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

SelfDesign Learning Foundation recommended increasing per-learner funding for independent, group 1, provincial online schools to levels received prior to 2020 to allow the most vulnerable learners to get the support they need. The organization explained that its school, which is the largest school of record for children with support needs in BC, does not receive additional funding for students diagnosed with high-incident support needs. Therefore, the school must support these vulnerable learners with general per learner funding. Conversely, School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast) argued that it was necessary to reassess and recalibrate funding allocations for private schools to redirect a portion of the resources into the public school system, stating that this could provide a sustainable solution to manage inflationary pressures while providing high-quality public education. One individual asked for high-tuition private schools funding to be permanently frozen at 2022 budget levels.

OPERATIONAL FUNDING

Several individuals and organizations recommended increases to operational funding. CUPE Local 728 advocated for funding to help school districts address structural shortfalls, noting that the current funding formula, based on student numbers, fails to properly account for the fixed costs, inflationary environment, and the additional funding needed for students with support needs. Several organizations advocated for increased operational funding specifically tied to inflation. The British Columbia School Trustees Association stated that with no funding to help offset additional costs caused by rising inflation, districts are being challenged to balance their budgets, and funding that should go to students is being diverted to cover inflation. School District No. 60 (Peace River North) added that while budgets were increased to cover the full cost of the negotiated wage settlement for union staff, inflation was not a consideration in the budget allocations. Similarly, the School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast) highlighted how inflation continues to pose challenges in funding capital projects and meeting student needs.

Some organizations highlighted the need for funding related to programming for educators. The Greater Victoria Teachers Association advocated for paid training for provincially mandated initiatives. School District No. 38 (Richmond) added that to effectively implement initiatives they would need funding to support classroom resources, release time

for professional development, staffing support, new staffing positions, and adequate support for students with disabilities and diverse abilities. With respect to creating a more inclusive environment, BCEdAccess Society sought funding for curriculum supports for teachers around ableism, accessibility, and disabilities and to address obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and UNDRIP.

Organizations and individuals also shared the need for funding related to programming for students. MOSAIC highlighted that due to a recent surge in hate crimes, racist incidents are occurring in schools every day and called for dedicated funding for anti-racism education in schools and communities. With a concern for inclusivity, the Diverse Abilities Programs recommended funding for disability awareness programming, such as aDAPT programs, tailored by grade. Others were concerned about introducing a climate curriculum. Pearson College UWC launched the Climate Action Leadership Diploma, a two-year, pre-university course, and is now looking to adapt the curriculum so that it can be applied and used in public and independent schools. In line with this goal, the College recommended supporting the development and implementation of a climate curriculum to ensure that youth are equipped with the knowledge and skillsets required to address climate change.

Regarding human resources, funding requests revolved around training to better prepare educators for new roles and training relating to specific groups and skills. The BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association noted that current labour shortages have seriously affected the education system and to bolster the ranks of school leadership, educators are being placed in their roles with little or no training. To address this issue, the BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association recommended increased funding for long-term leadership development. One individual proposed funding for the mentorship of classroom teachers in their first five years, remarking that new teachers can easily become isolated and the attrition rate for this group is very high. Dyslexia BC, supported by several individuals, recommended implementing legislation, policy, and teacher training for mandatory remediation programs, which can be accessed by both general and special education populations. Other individuals advocated for mandatory special education training for all teachers so that they would understand disabilities and be better equipped to teach kids with learning differences.

The Committee also heard calls for funding for Indigenous students. Pearson UWC noted that the new climate action leadership diploma program has helped to attract more Indigenous students from Western Canada than ever before in the college's history. The College advocated for the development of new programs to provide financial supports to offset costs for Indigenous students to participate in a broad range of educational opportunities. An individual recommended funding so that Indigenous education workers could invite both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children to take part in their planning stating that the best way to combat racism and discrimination is to ensure everybody is included.

With respect to rural and remote communities, School District No. 60 (Peace River North) shared that supply and delivery costs to bring items to the north have increased above inflation levels and explained that funding revisions addressing northern factors that influence equity were required to remedy the situation. The Wells Barkerville Parent Advisory Committee stated that the lack of policy guiding funding allocation through the Elementary Small Community Funding - Small Remote Schools meant that the school and community were left under-resourced and disadvantaged as the designated funds were absorbed into the district's general operating budget. Therefore, the organization recommended a policy that ensures funds allocated for rural schools are spent in a way that truly benefits the children of the communities that they serve. The Wells-Barkerville Parental Advisory Committee also advocated for the K-7 classroom at the school to be split into two classes with two teachers to better serve the needs of the primary and intermediate students.

Finally, an individual highlighted that teachers in small rural schools face many challenges and need more support including counselling services for students, preparation time and support to innovate, they stated that improving the one-size-fits all funding model for small rural schools would ensure K-12 students have access to a strong, well-supported education system that ensures inclusion and learning for all students.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Committee heard about recruitment and retention challenges across the K-12 education sector. The BC Teachers' Federation stated that more than four out of five of its members reported feeling effects of staffing shortages, including higher workloads, less time to prepare lessons, and

skipping personal leave or sick days they felt they needed, and advocated for a recruitment fund to relieve the shortage of certified teachers and fill projected labour needs. Similarly, the BC Retired Teachers' Association recommended adopting a plan to increase the number of qualified teachers. School District No. 59 (Peace River South) favored the idea of reducing financial barriers and processing delays for out-of-province teacher certification as it would address workforce shortages and could encourage the return of BC residents who have completed their education outside of the province. School District No. 59 Board of Education (Peace River South) further noted that flexible recruitment incentives, including return of service bursaries, are needed to cover the high cost of moving skilled education staff to northern communities. The Greater Victoria Teachers Association supported an increase in the number of teacher counsellors, learning support, inclusive education teachers and teacher librarians noting that these specialists support students and enhance the programs classroom teachers provide. Finally, with regards to retention, 16 percent of BC Teachers' Federation members said they would likely leave teaching within the next two years, with more than half reporting poor working conditions or mental health concerns. In consequence, the federation advocated for the creation of a retention fund for experienced teachers.

In relation to rural and remote areas, the School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast) discussed the need to implement comprehensive strategies to address recruitment and retention challenges in rural school districts. The school district added that on the Sunshine Coast, the high cost of living combined with a scarcity of affordable housing options creates hardships for staff, hinders their well-being and complicates recruitment and retention efforts. School District No. 60 (Peace River North) highlighted that unaddressed teacher shortages in rural and remote communities impact equity of access to quality education and student outcomes. The Institute for Public Education BC suggested that the shortage of qualified teachers should be addressed by recognizing qualified and experienced immigrants, and expanding teacher education programs, with a particular focus on attracting teachers to rural areas. School District No. 59 (Peace River South) spoke to the need for enhanced accessibility to teacher education in northern, rural and remote communities through further expansion of online and hybrid teacher education programs to allow more teachers teaching on letters of permission in schools to do their teacher education program online. Finally, BCEdAccess Society reported that there were around

80 uncertified teachers working in rural and remote areas and advocated for improved workforce planning for EAs and teachers, especially specialist teachers, in these areas.

Aside from teacher recruitment and retention issues, the Committee heard that EAs also face recruitment and retention issues as they struggle with lower incomes, higher workloads, and less-than-full-time work, along with the seasonal nature of an EA's job, all creating tremendous pressures on workers. An individual also requested funding for classroom EAs to address the changing role of teachers who now act as a hub for access to broader social and community services. Additionally, CUPE Local 728 and CUPE Vancouver Island District Council shared that trades wages in the K-12 sector are 9 to 12 percent lower than those paid for the same positions in the municipal sector, putting school districts at a disadvantage and leading to much higher costs as they are forced to contract externally. They therefore recommended addressing staff shortages and retention challenges in public education by funding solutions to the structural issues forcing workers out of the K-12 sector.

STUDENTS WITH SUPPORT NEEDS

Increased funding and resources for students with support needs were recommended by many school districts, parents, and organizations. School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) advocated for increased special education funding stating that in the 2022-23 school year, approximately 16.2 percent of the district's students were identified as having diverse abilities or disabilities and requiring additional support, and that in the same year, the district received \$10.5 million in special education funding but expended over \$15.8 million. One individual added that the number of children getting designated with support needs is increasing but funding is insufficient to meet their needs and as a result it is important to make sure this increased funding is specifically allocated to them, just like funding for Indigenous learners is kept separate in the budget.

The British Columbia School Trustees Association recommended that the funding formula for inclusive education be evaluated, and funding increased to continue to support vulnerable students adequately. Similarly, the BC Teachers' Federation recommended closing the gap between the actual cost of inclusive education and provincial funding provided to school districts targeting funding to increase equity across the system, by ensuring special education funding can be accessed

by any student who needs it in any district. First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society called for improved supports for school-age children through increased K-12 public education funding to reduce inequities. The society noted that additional staff and more professional development was needed to deal with increased student needs and highlighted that when supports are insufficient in the school setting, children are sent home, denying them their right to education.

The Vancouver School District explained that only about 20 percent of its schools are fully accessible due to the prohibitive costs of reconstruction and equipment installation in older buildings. As a result, the school board recommended reinstating the former special education equipment grant so children with mobility challenges can access all areas of schools including washrooms, labs, classrooms, and food areas. Similarly, with respect to access and equity, an individual highlighted the need for funding so that children with disabilities can attend school full-time and be included in field trips with their peers without placing undue burden on their parents.

Several stakeholders advocated for funding for early identification and intervention. A parent noted that the failure to support children when they first show additional needs leads to increased frustration, anxiety and a lack of personal growth and academic achievement. The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils proposed increased funding for early identification and intervention for students with diverse learning needs and disabilities. School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge -Pitt Meadows) reiterated the need to support early intervention, programming, and assessments. The District also noted that many early primary students are awaiting medically based assessments due to long wait lists and that additional funding would expedite assessments for students with support needs, support the increased and evolving needs of students, and enhance access to community-based programs for students with diverse needs. Similarly, the BC Retired Teachers' Association advocated for increasing and targeting funding for psychoeducational testing to reduce wait times noting that developing appropriate educational programs for all students requires that testing be available when it is needed.

With respect to dyslexia, two individuals noted that schools are not currently providing the supports that children with dyslexia need and recommended that schools instead offer structured literacy programs for students with dyslexia and all struggling readers. Dyslexia BC highlighted that individuals

diagnosed with dyslexia are more likely to become homeless, are prone to addictions, unemployment, mental health issues, and are over-represented in the incarceration system. Considering this, Dyslexia BC recommended implementing legislation and policies to support children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities in the education system including switching to structured literacy and mandatory training for teachers in remediation programs. Dyslexia BC, along with several individuals, also advocated for funding for mandatory screening of children for dyslexia in kindergarten citing that early screening and prevention will change the trajectory of many youth.

BCEdAccess Society remarked that Inclusion BC and Family Support Institute are overwhelmed by requests from parents and families of children with support needs. The organization highlighted the importance of having knowledgeable people to support parents or children when they need to navigate the education system. The organization recommended a \$3 million investment to appoint an advocate per district to help parents and children in this area.

VULNERABLE STUDENTS

Some organizations advocated for additional supports for newcomer and refugee students. West Vancouver Schools stated its classrooms are increasingly diverse and require skilled professionals who can differentiate curriculum and provide individualized support. As such, West Vancouver Schools recommended funding to enable school districts to equitably support and prioritize funding to support English language learners and inclusive education. The English Language Learners Consortium asked for financial support to school districts that provide settlement supports for newcomers to Canada who are ineligible for federal funding, including refugee claimants and temporary foreign workers, noting that in some districts, between 30 to 50 percent of students receiving settlement supports in school are not being funded by the federal government. The organization further elaborated that these supports would include including removing the five-year limit on K-12 English Language Learning Funding and providing per-pupil funding retroactive to the date of enrollment to districts for all newcomer students who enroll after the September enrolment count. Additionally, School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) identified that increased support for vulnerable students, including those with special needs, mental health challenges, learning loss, and those in

need of CommunityLINK services would be crucial to students' academic success.

The need for school food programs was another key theme with School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows), the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, and the Breakfast Club of Canada recommending investments in school food programs. Organizations emphasized that all K-12 students need daily access to healthy food and school programs should meet guiding principles such as health promotion, universal accessibility, connection to curriculum, and community economic development. Additionally, the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food highlighted that pilot programs leveraging existing food hub assets within communities and supporting local farmers have been very successful for K-12 institutions in the United States, and recommended establishing a pilot project in four to five school districts to test the potential impact and effectiveness of local food procurement incentive programs at K-12 schools. First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society highlighted that food programs should focus on meeting the nutritional needs of low-income children.

With respect to mental health supports, two individuals advocated for increased funding for counselling services offered at schools noting that better mental health supports educational outcomes and would allow schools to hire more staff who could then take a more preventive and proactive approach. First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities for low-income students and children with diverse learning needs and that as such, funding for improved mental health services was required. The Vancouver School District recommended targeted professional development and support for education staff, adding that students' mental health outcomes are greatly influenced by that of adults around them, including educators.

The Committee also received recommendations regarding increasing seamless funding for youth both inside and outside of the education system to invest in their future success; additional funding for adequate technology infrastructure in all school districts; enhanced cybersecurity; artificial intelligence guidance; and funding to support school boards and parents who are feeling left out of the school system to better know their rights so that they can play an active role in keeping their kids in school.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee acknowledged challenges faced by school districts with respect to capital funding relating to capacity and portables. Members discussed how capital funding needs to be proactive and responsive to ensure that portable use is temporary and that infrastructure meets community needs. They also discussed the consequences of districts having to fund portables from operation budgets, taking away funding from other important areas and supported targeted funding for the purchase and maintenance of portables. The Committee also recommended continued funding for the seismic mitigation program to ensure that no existing capacity is lost within the school system and that aging infrastructure is safe for students.

Members additionally highlighted the value of zero-emissions school buses and emphasized the importance of provincial funding, so that school districts do not have to use funding intended for student supports. Members noted that there is made-in-BC technology for zero-emissions vehicles and suggested this should be used for school buses.

With respect to child care and early childhood development, Members acknowledged the significant input they received regarding improving accessibility to child care and the work that is ongoing in this area. Similarly, Committee Members recognized that summer camps provide child care for a large number of people enabling them to continue to work when their kids are not in school during the summer. In order to make them more accessible as a part of seamless child care, the Committee supported a means-tested summer camp subsidy.

As it relates to independent and private schools, Members noted that some students are better served by alternative methods of learning. The Committee discussed how the per learner rates for independent, group 1, provincial online schools, were decreased in 2020 and despite subsequent increases, have not returned to those levels. The Committee supported increasing funding for these schools, noting that the public school system does not work for many students, especially children with support needs.

With respect to operational funding, Committee Members emphasized that anti-racism education, disability awareness programming, and inclusive reconciliation activities are paradigm shifting educational programs and their important content requires adequate training and funding. The

Committee encouraged further examination of how education is delivered in rural settings and emphasized that all children have the right to an adequate education. Further, Members acknowledged the value and necessity of community-owned and operated institutions and recommended they receive funding for necessary maintenance upgrades, highlighting the example of the school of Wells-Barkerville.

Committee Members emphasized the need to close the gap between the actual cost of inclusive education and provincial funding provided to school districts to better support students. They recognized the importance of reducing wait times for psychoeducational testing as it poses a significant challenge for many students and families. Members considered ways to support inclusion and accessibility with dignity in schools. To do so, they agreed that funding is needed for the special

education equipment grant so that children with disabilities can go to school full-time and be included in field trips. Finally, Committee Members highlighted the need to support children with dyslexia across the province by funding structured literacy programs and mandatory screening for dyslexia starting in kindergarten to help students to reach a level of literacy that allows them to have a full and productive life.

With respect to vulnerable students, the Committee also acknowledged the need to support school districts that provide ELL services and settlement supports for newcomers to Canada who are ineligible for federal funding, including refugee claimants and temporary foreign workers. Members noted that schools are community hubs and often a first contact for newcomers and school-based settlement programming maximizes integration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Capital Funding

108. Provide targeted funding for the purchase, maintenance and relocation costs of portables and establish clearly defined timelines to ensure their use is temporary.
109. Allocate necessary capital funding for the seismic mitigation program.
110. Increase funding for zero-emission school buses so that all new school buses are zero-emission.
111. Acknowledge the value and necessity of community-owned and operated schools and provide funding for necessary maintenance upgrades including Wells-Barkerville Elementary.

Child Care and Early Childhood Development

112. Provide funding for a means-tested summer camp subsidy.

Independent and Private Schools

113. Increase per learner funding for independent, group 1, provincial online schools.

Operational Funding

114. Provide funding for anti-racism, disability awareness, and inclusive reconciliation programs.

Students with Support Needs

115. Close the gap between the actual cost of inclusive education and provincial funding provided to school districts.
116. Reduce wait times by increasing and targeting funding for psychoeducational testing.

117. Support the inclusion of students with support needs by reinstating the special education equipment grant so children with mobility challenges can access all areas of schools with dignity and increasing the ability for kids with disabilities to go to school full-time and be included in field trips with their peers.
118. Support students with dyslexia by offering structured literacy programs and providing targeted funding and mandatory dyslexia screening starting in kindergarten.

Vulnerable Students

119. Provide financial support to school districts that provide settlement supports for newcomers to Canada who are ineligible for federal funding, including refugee claimants and temporary foreign workers.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Improving access to mental health services and supports as well as addiction treatment and recovery were key themes in the input received by the Committee. Many organizations and individuals advocated for expanding these services and eliminating financial, geographic, and other barriers to accessing services. Others discussed the financial challenges experienced by organizations providing these services. The Committee also heard about a need to improve the response to mental health crises and to increase access to mental health services specific to children and youth.

ADDICTION TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

Multiple organizations and individuals recommended increasing funding for addiction treatment and addressing barriers to access. The Umbrella Society emphasized a need for more publicly funded treatment beds across the province, with a variety of different approaches, and including long-term recovery house beds for all genders. The Society also expressed concern that people are dying while waitlisted for detox, treatment, or a recovery house, and supported providing easily accessed detox beds with no wait times. The Kelowna Chamber of Commerce recommended investing in urgent care beds, expressing concern about property crime and the impacts of decriminalization. One individual emphasized the importance of investing in both inpatient and outpatient treatment throughout the province, so that people do not have to wait to detox or get treatment. The Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce expressed concerns about downtown safety and highlighted how mental illness and access to housing intersect with this issue. The Chamber stated that law enforcement will not solve these challenges and recommended establishing treatment and recovery beds in Victoria. Some individuals and organizations made suggestions about different approaches to treatment, with the City of Kelowna recommending using the Red Fish Healing Centre as a provincial model. Coast Mental Health emphasized that transitional and supportive housing programs provide necessary stability to people in recovery, and suggested

investing in dedicated safe, stable, and appropriate housing. Also with respect to treatment, the Realistic Success Recovery Society identified a need for reliable data on publicly funded treatment services, adding that such a system would be useful to informal operational and strategic decisions and to ensure that treatment services are available and accessible.

A number of organizations raised concerns about the \$35.90 per diem paid to registered supportive recovery homes for each eligible income assistance client. Multiple organizations shared that their daily costs per client far exceed the per diem. The Committee heard that the last time the per diem was increased was four years ago and that publicly funded not for profit organizations providing treatment and recovery services face financial challenges. Multiple organizations recommended raising the per diem to at least \$60 per day, with the Realistic Success Recovery Society specifying this should be done urgently.

The Committee also heard from organizations with specific funding requests related to addiction treatment and recovery. Multiple organizations highlighted barriers faced by people seeking treatment in northern BC, including having to travel to communities hours away to access care and facing long waitlists. The Council of Canadians - Terrace Chapter explained that there is no detox centre in northwest BC, with the nearest one being nine hours away in Prince George, and additionally no second-stage treatment for women, meaning that many women who return to Terrace relapse. The City of Prince George noted that demand for specialized mental health and detox services in the city far exceeds what is available, and recommended increasing the number of in-patient mental health and detox treatment beds.

Additionally, Canadian Addiction Treatment Centres discussed the barriers facing people seeking treatment who do not receive employer health benefits and who are not eligible for the financial assistance provided to people receiving income assistance. The organization suggested that having the monthly alcohol and drug fee paid by government for all

patients seeking opiate addiction treatment services would remove a financial barrier to seeking treatment.

CRISIS INTERVENTION

The Committee heard from multiple organizations regarding a need for additional crisis line funding. The BC Crisis Line Network noted that BC crisis centres are currently only able to answer half the calls they receive. The Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays, which operates the Interior crisis line network, cited similar issues with unanswered calls. Both organizations requested increased annual funding to help increase capacity. In addition to increasing crisis line capacity, the BC Crisis Line Network identified other needs, including funding to support the Network's efforts to build protocols with 911, police, BC Ambulance, health authority teams, and peer-assisted crisis teams. The organization noted that recent investments into integrated services means that integration also needs to take place with crisis lines so that these other services do not have to hire their own staff to direct and triage calls. The BC Crisis Line Network also requested investment in the Crisis Centre of BC re-development project, which would involve buying adjacent properties and developing a multi-use building to hold a crisis centre and affordable housing.

Several organizations provided input related to other services that respond to mental health crises. The Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division identified a need for greater investment in community-based mental health crisis care. The organization noted that peer-assisted care teams provide a community-led, trauma-informed, and appropriate response to mental health crises that diverts patients from the expensive and overwhelmed health care and criminal justice systems. Regarding the role of law enforcement in mental health crises, the National Police Federation noted that police are often the first responders in mental health crisis events and supported investing \$80 million over two years to improve response to mental health, addictions, and other complex social issues, including through expanding Mobile Crisis Response Teams and integrating mental health professionals into 911 call centres. Additionally, the City of Prince George requested funding for the HealthIM application, which provides police and first responders with information during mental health calls about the requirements of the *Mental Health Act*, as well as its mental health response team, Car 60.

HARM REDUCTION

Regarding harm reduction, the Committee heard that providing a safer supply of drugs reduces overdoses and deaths and that safe consumption sites reduce overdoses and deaths by providing medical staff on-site. One individual emphasized the importance of providing nuanced education to physicians and pharmacists regarding the prescription of safer supply, as well as convenient and dignified access for people accessing safer supply across the province. Several individuals recommended expanding access to safer supply, safe consumption sites, and opioid agonist therapies. One person recommended increasing access to drug-checking, including by providing free fentanyl testing strips at BC pharmacies, and emphasized that the stigma of addiction is not what kills people but rather the toxicity of the drug supply. Additionally, the City of Fort St. John requested funding for a drug decriminalization ambassador program, stating that it would increase confidence for those accessing services and provide a sense of safety to businesses and communities.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

The Committee heard from many organizations and individuals in support of increased funding for mental health services and supports. The Community Connections Society of Southeast BC recommended providing consistent funding for additional walk-in mental health clinics. One individual suggested establishing free mental health treatment centres that can be accessed through self-referral. The BC Schizophrenia Society and AbbVie focused on services and supports for serious mental illnesses, including community-based supports, hospital-based supports, and medications. Community Connections (Revelstoke) Society emphasized the importance of local services over centralized, regional hubs. The Committee also heard about the need for specialized employment, education, and training programs for people with mental illness as well as mental health literacy funding.

The Hope and Area Transition Society highlighted a need for investments in mental health and substance use services and supports in rural areas. The Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division also identified geographic disparities in mental health services, and requested funding to provide equitable service across the province. One individual emphasized the long-term impacts of many mental health conditions and highlighted how difficult and expensive it can be to access services and medication coverage. They

recommended making psychiatric medications free and including counselling services under the Medical Services Plan. Another individual described some of the logistical barriers that people face navigating bureaucracy when trying to access mental health and addictions services. They suggested combining the health authorities into one or requiring all health authorities to follow the same procedures regarding access to services. Take a Hike Foundation and Men's Therapy Centre both made recommendations about making it easier for mental health organizations to access government funding.

Additionally, the Committee heard from organizations with concerns about specialized mental health services and supports. The BC Schizophrenia Society emphasized the significant social challenges that schizophrenia can cause affected individuals, and suggested that family members can save the health system money by providing continuity of care for their loved ones as they shift from a psychiatric hospital to outpatient services. The Society recommended increasing collaborative partnerships between families and the mental health system, especially for people with schizophrenia. The BC Schizophrenia Society explained that the provision in the *Mental Health Act* allowing for judicious use of involuntary treatment provides an important option for people who have mental illness, require treatment, pose a risk to themselves and others, and cannot be admitted voluntarily. OpenCircle discussed utilization of mental health resources in the construction industry and expressed support for more employer-led mental health resource programs. Further, Battered Women's Support Services identified a need to expand gender-responsive substance use and addiction supports and mental health supports focused on trauma- and violence-informed care.

Multiple organizations presented on the work done by Blueprint, a not for profit organization based at the University of British Columbia that aims to improve the well-being of men and boys. Blueprint explained that its First Responder Resiliency Program helps first responders strengthen their resilience in the face of life-or-death situations. The BC Professional Fire Fighters Association described how frequently fire fighters are exposed to traumatic events and noted that the association has been collaborating with Blueprint since 2016. In addition to requesting stable funding for the First Responder Resiliency Program, Blueprint highlighted the benefits of its fatherhood research program and the need for a building to house the organization's work.

In terms of specific funding requests, Men's Therapy Centre, which provides trauma therapy for masculine-identifying, gender non-conforming, and Two-Spirit community members, explained that it has no shortage of program-specific funding but lacks operating funding. The organization requested sufficient operating funding, in addition to program funding, and recommended the same be provided to other not for profit organizations. The Canadian Men's Health Foundation discussed mental health challenges facing men and requested funding for some of its digital programming, such as the MindFit toolkit, the Don't Change Much Podcast, and Move for Your Mental Health. The Community Connections Society of Southeast BC expressed concern about a lack of funding for mental health supports and requested \$100,000 in funding.

PREVENTION

Regarding prevention of mental health and addictions issues, the Committee heard that early intervention is cost-effective. The Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division noted that the last provincial budget emphasized treatment and recovery, which are downstream measures to address some of the challenges in communities, and additional interventions should focus on improving access to the full continuum of mental health and substance use care in BC. Men's Therapy Centre also expressed a need for investments in upstream approaches, noting that trauma is the root cause of the issues that Men's Therapy Centre works to address. Additionally, the Dawson Creek Chamber of Commerce emphasized the intersections between the economy and preventative mental health care, recommending that the provincial government work with the municipality to find solutions to the challenges facing vulnerable people, particularly regarding the toxic drug and overdose crisis.

YOUTH

Take a Hike Foundation expressed concern that there is a long-standing youth mental health crisis that was made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization supported increasing funding for scalable, evidence-based, school-based early intervention, and prevention mental health supports. The BC Association for Child Development and Intervention supported the full implementation of the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions' Pathway to Hope strategy, expressing concern that the implementation has taken too long and relied too heavily on pilot projects. One individual described how

youth do not have sufficient access to ongoing services and recommended increasing funding for child and youth mental health throughout the province, particularly in Vancouver Coastal Health.

In terms of specific funding requests, the Chilliwack Youth Health Centre requested additional funding for their organization noting that organizations chosen for Foundry funding receive more and are therefore able to provide more services. Additionally, the Chilliwack Youth Health Centre recommended its mental health literacy work receive funding and be considered as a potential provincial model. Take a Hike Foundation noted most of its funding comes from philanthropists and described the success of its programs, namely that 92 percent of grade 12 participants graduate high school. The organization requested \$2 million in annual funding. The City of Prince George requested that government confirm its support and funding for the planning and development of a regional child and youth centre of excellence in Prince George, which the City stated will reduce wait times and improve health outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee expressed concern about the number of calls that crisis lines are not able to answer. Members emphasized that access to a crisis line is an upstream intervention that can prevent more serious harms. The Committee also discussed how capacity challenges may arise for crisis lines in rural areas as crisis lines move to a shared network. Members suggested that funding should take into account the needs of crisis lines throughout the province, such as the Interior crisis line network operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays. The Committee also acknowledged that many crisis lines are currently run by volunteers and that hiring professional staff is a significant cost.

Members recognized that they received significant input related to access to addiction treatment and emphasized the importance of both inpatient and outpatient treatment. Members also noted the distances that some people need to travel to access treatment and expressed support for people being able to receive treatment where they live. The Committee acknowledged the important work done by registered supportive recovery homes and supported a significant increase in the per diem and also identified that the per diem should be tied to inflation to ensure sustainable funding in the future.

The Committee acknowledged the scope of input it received related to enhancing mental health services and supports and emphasized the importance of making such investments. Members noted the importance of counselling and indicated that it should be standardized to ensure that people receive appropriate, high-quality services. Members reflected on the challenges they heard from individuals trying to access mental health services between different health authorities. They emphasized that access to mental health and addictions services should be seamless and that this can be enhanced through improved communication, information-sharing, and sharing of best practices. The Committee discussed the need for services and supports that address serious mental illness, including increased cooperation with families, hospital- and community-based services, and existing provisions regarding involuntary treatment. Members emphasized that existing provisions of the *Mental Health Act* regarding involuntary treatment are an important option that protects people who are a danger to themselves and others. Additionally, the Committee highlighted the importance of supporting first responders and emphasized its support of Blueprint's important work.

The Committee discussed the importance of funding evidence-based, school-based, and preventative mental health supports for children and youth. Members further highlighted the importance of connections between school-based mental health supports for children and youth and external agencies. Additionally, the Committee recognized the funding challenges faced by organizations that provide similar supports as Foundry but do not receive the same funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Addiction Treatment and Recovery

120. Ensure timely access to addiction treatment and recovery services across the province by investing in inpatient and outpatient services and increasing the per diem for registered supportive recovery homes to \$60, indexed to inflation.

Crisis Intervention

121. Provide sufficient funding of at least \$5 million to the BC Crisis Line Network to enable crisis centres to answer all the calls they receive and invest in the BC Crisis Line Network's efforts to build consistent protocols with 911, police, ambulance, health authorities, and peer-assisted crisis teams.

Mental Health Services and Supports

122. Increase funding for and access to mental health services and supports throughout the province, including:
 - a. making psychiatric medications financially accessible;
 - b. regulating counselling services and providing them as a benefit under MSP; and
 - c. ensuring services are seamless and consistent across all health authorities.
123. Provide stable funding for Blueprint's First Responder Resiliency Program and fatherhood research program.
124. Ensure proper resourcing for hospital and community-based serious mental illness services and supports including protecting the provision under the *Mental Health Act* that allows for the judicious use of involuntary treatment, and increasing collaborative partnerships with families within the BC mental health system.

Youth

125. Increase funding for evidence-based child and youth mental health supports throughout the province, including school-based supports and early intervention and prevention mental health supports.
126. Provide funding to organizations that provide similar youth health and wellness services as Foundry, such as the Chilliwack Youth Health Centre.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE

A number of organizations identified a need to increase funding and supports for survivors of gender-based violence and sexual assault. Another key theme was preparation for and response to natural disasters and other emergencies, particularly given the impacts of climate change. The Committee also heard about a need to improve legal aid, emergency communications, and correctional services.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND LEGAL AID

Many organizations raised concerns about access to legal aid for family law matters. Multiple organizations highlighted that people seeking child or spousal support or negotiating a parenting agreement cannot receive legal aid, even if they have low or no income. Other organizations, including the Centre for Family Equity and Ishtar Women's Resource Society, identified barriers in accessing legal aid for the areas of family law that are eligible: restrictive income cut-offs exclude many applicants and, for those who do qualify, the number of hours provided is not enough to meaningfully address complex cases. They highlighted that survivors of violence are made particularly vulnerable by these barriers. West Coast LEAF and the Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch both noted the effectiveness of investments in legal aid in reducing other government spending, such as on the downstream costs of poverty. These organizations recommended a number of improvements to legal aid for family law, including increasing funding and available hours, expanding the legal issues eligible for assistance, and providing specific funding for survivors of domestic violence.

Several organizations discussed the important role that child and youth advocacy centres play in responding to child abuse with a coordinated and trauma-informed approach. Kootenay Boundary Community Services Co-operative and Encompass Support Services Society highlighted a recent social return on investment study that found that for every dollar invested in child and youth advocacy centres, \$5.54 in value is returned to the community. The BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres and the Treehouse Child and Youth Advocacy Centre

noted that child and youth advocacy centres primarily receive funding through one-time grants and donations and emphasized a need for ongoing, sustainable funding.

The BC Notary Association described how notaries already practice in non-contentious areas of the law and recommended this be expanded through modernization of the *Notaries Act*. The organization also highlighted how notaries perform the same functions as lawyers in the renewal of a consumer mortgage but do not have the same rights.

The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of the University of British Columbia raised the issue of wait times for the Human Rights Tribunal, sharing that some of its members have waited more than a year and that delays negatively impact people's mental health, and the ability and willingness of witnesses to come forward. Pacific Legal Education and Outreach Society explained that the provincial government does not currently provide any funding to public legal education. The organization encouraged the provincial government to match the federal funding provided to lawfornonprofits.ca, a digital platform that is designed to prevent legal crises for not for profits.

CONTRABAND TOBACCO

Organizations highlighted the impacts of contraband tobacco and called for increased enforcement and public education. JTI-Macdonald shared that illegal tobacco in BC is a significant challenge that funds organized crime, undermines public safety, and reduces tobacco tax revenues by diverting demand to cheaper illegal products. They shared that the public is largely unaware of the dangers posed by illegal tobacco, including that the products are unregulated and often contain dangerous ingredients, and that they are connected to organized crime, and highlighted Quebec's ACCES Tabac program as a model for BC. Similarly, the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco called on the provincial government to create a contraband tobacco enforcement team as well as launch a public awareness campaign to

disabuse people of the idea that buying illegal cigarettes is a victimless crime. Rothmans, Benson, and Hedges shared that, with increasing inflation and affordability concerns putting additional burdens on British Columbian smokers, there is an increased risk that they may turn to the contraband market. In turn, this may impact tax revenue from tobacco products and add additional health risks for smokers consuming contraband tobacco. Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited was of the view that it would be reckless to increase taxes before the issue of contraband tobacco is addressed. Therefore, these organizations discussed the need to freeze or adopt a prudent taxation approach until contraband tobacco is under control.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Prisoners' Legal Services raised a number of issues regarding the treatment of incarcerated people, as well as supports for those re-entering the community. The organization emphasized that policing and incarceration cannot solve the underlying causes of repeat encounters with the criminal legal system, and pointed to the commitment made in government's Safer Communities Action Plan to devote funding to intervention as well as enforcement. The organization recommended funding community-driven resources for mental illness, trauma, poverty, homelessness, racism, colonialism, and substance use, and stated these investments should be prioritized over funding for policing and incarceration.

Regarding transitioning back to living in community after incarceration, Prisoners' Legal Services supported hiring Indigenous patient navigators through the health authorities to address the worsened health outcomes that can result from incarceration as well as the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in provincial custody. Additionally, Prisoners' Legal Services expressed concern about the harms of solitary confinement. The organization noted that some individuals are held in solitary confinement because they are waiting for a bed at the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, which is the only treatment facility for people certified as an involuntary patient while in provincial custody and where the number of beds has not been increased in 15 years.

The Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Literacy Committee identified a need to guarantee access to basic education in correctional centres across BC by adequately funding K-12 education as a special program fund for districts that have a correctional centre. The organization emphasized that this program reduces the likelihood of re-offending.

Circles of Support and Accountability – Vancouver Fraser Valley discussed the services it provides to reduce recidivism among people who have been released from prison after serving time for a sexual offense. The organization provides individualized circles to ensure the released offender is supported and held accountable, focusing on mental health, addictions, and other risk factors, helping them reintegrate successfully and keep the community safe. The organization requested funding that recognizes its contribution to public safety and ensures it is sustainable, based on the number of people the organization is supporting and recognizes the cost-effectiveness of community-based programs compared to probation, parole, or incarceration.

Some organizations raised concerns regarding repeat offenders. The Downtown Victoria Business Association cited increases in property crime and emphasized the cost to businesses. The Kelowna Chamber of Commerce expressed concern about public drug use. The organizations emphasized that repeat offenders should be prosecuted more quickly and held longer while they are waiting for trial, and supported providing resources for courts, corrections, probation, and prosecution services.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Committee heard about several issues regarding emergency communications in BC. E-Comm 911 identified that call volumes are growing because of population growth, an aging population, increased use of cellphones, the toxic drug and overdose crisis, mental health challenges, and extreme weather events. Emergency Communications Professionals of BC highlighted that call volumes increased 39 percent between May 2022 and May 2023 and staffing levels have not kept pace. The organization also noted that E-Comm is contractually obligated to abide by certain standards, including answering 911 calls within five seconds; in 2021, callers began to be placed on hold on the ambulance cue without an operator present. Emergency Communications Professionals of BC recommended providing funding to ensure that BC's 911 service is restored to recognized standards and to increase staffing levels at E-Comm 911. Both organizations also emphasized that 911 services are too costly and complex to be funded and managed by local governments. They recommended creating a cell phone levy for emergency communications services to provide stable and predictable

funding. E-Comm 911 additionally supported implementing a provincial mandate for 911 services as well as the Special Committee to Reform the Police Act's recommendations regarding police emergency communications and mental health response.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Many organizations and individuals advocated for stable funding and increased supports for survivors of gender-based violence. The Ending Violence Association of BC noted that rates of gender-based violence and femicide are increasing. Sardis Doorway for Mothers & Children Society recommended providing additional resources for education, support programs, counselling, food security, safe housing, and job-retraining resources to address this issue. Family Services of Greater Vancouver emphasized a need for additional core funding for trauma counselling and victim support programs, noting that most programs receive insufficient, short-term funding and many have waitlists. Multiple organizations expressed concern about wait times and insufficient funding for the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General's PEACE (Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment) programs, the only free, confidential counselling program to address witnessing family violence for children and youth in BC. The Ann Davis Transition Society added that the Ministry's Stopping the Violence program also lacks adequate funding.

Battered Women's Support Services recommended providing resources directly to people fleeing violence, in the form of a lump-sum payment that is income-tested and in addition to social assistance. The Ending Violence Association of BC noted that previously the BC Coroners Service led a death review panel on intimate-partner violence, and suggested that another review committee on intimate-partner violence be convened, this time led by the community. One individual recommended fully advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through implementing the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The Committee also heard from organizations concerned with coordination and staffing in the anti-violence sector. The Ending Violence Association of BC stated that anti-violence workers, who support survivors of gender-based violence, are paid less than other support workers in the social services

sector. The Prince George Sexual Assault Centre Society added that many anti-violence workers do not have health benefits or pensions, and that these issues, plus wage disparities, make recruitment and retention difficult. In addition to supporting increased wages and benefits, both organizations recommended funding coordination initiatives in the anti-violence sector. The Prince George Sexual Assault Centre Society emphasized the importance of coordinating between the different services that survivors access and added that coordination work does not currently receive funding.

Many organizations expressed a need to expand transition housing and provide other housing supports to people experiencing violence. Archway Society for Domestic Peace noted that the average stay in a transition house is three months; after such time, many of the women will return to their abusive partners due to the inability to secure safe affordable housing. The Ann Davis Transition Society shared that across the province, women are turned away from transition housing due to lack of space. The organization recommended increasing transition house spaces and providing adequate operations and administrative funding. Ishtar Women's Resource Society shared that women have pointed to housing as the number one issue that keeps them trapped in poverty and the number one external factor that prevents them from leaving violent relationships. Multiple organizations supported expanding the continuum of housing supports available to women experiencing violence, including purpose-built housing, second-stage housing for women with children, and prioritized rental supplement programming. Battered Women's Support Services suggested that women, girls, and gender-diverse people should be allowed to apply for subsidized housing options while they are still living in violence. Additionally, the Community Connections (Revelstoke) Society noted that options for supportive and second-stage housing is limited or does not exist in rural and remote communities and recommended that housing funding and operating agreements reflect the needs of the community.

Several organizations discussed BC Housing's Homeless Prevention Program. The BC Society of Transition Houses indicated that after leaving transition homes, only four percent of people moved to affordable housing. West Coast LEAF added that only five to 10 percent of women experiencing violence currently receive rental supplements in BC. The organizations recommended increasing funding for the Homeless Prevention Program, with some suggesting it should

be expanded to all transitional housing programs in the province.

My Voice, My Choice highlighted the prevalence of sexualized violence and sexual assault in Canada and supported funding for sexual assault centres. The organization also identified a need to upgrade government websites with comprehensive, accurate, and multi-lingual information about services for survivors.

Multiple organizations discussed the need for sexualized and gender-based violence prevention programs at post-secondary institutions. The Alliance of BC Students cited a 2019 Statistics Canada report that found 70 percent of students either experienced or witnessed unwanted sexualized behaviours in the preceding year. The Kwantlen Student Association noted that sexualized violence disproportionately affects women, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples. Multiple organizations recommended providing annual funding to sexualized violence prevention programs on post-secondary campuses. Next Gen Men emphasized that reducing violence perpetrated by men requires addressing root causes and engaging men and boys.

The Committee also heard from organizations with specific funding requests. The Victoria Women's Transition House Society and the Archway Society for Domestic Peace both expressed concern with increasing costs and requested reliable, multi-year core funding to support the populations they serve. The Ann Davis Transition Society also described a lack of adequate operational or program funding, and suggested funding for their housing programs.

GROUND DISTURBANCE

The BC Common Ground Alliance emphasized the importance of addressing reckless underground disturbance activities, stating that they create outages for hospitals, homes, businesses, banks, and emergency service providers. The organization suggested that a cross-ministry task force, including the BC Common Ground Alliance, is necessary for the safety of all British Columbians and to protect billions of dollars in underground infrastructure. Additionally, the BC Common Ground Alliance described the ground disturbance training that it provides to Indigenous pipeline workers and recommended the provincial government partner in the delivery of this training.

NATURAL DISASTERS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Committee heard concerns about natural disasters and emergency preparedness. Multiple organizations highlighted the relationship between climate change and extreme weather events, including wildfires, floods, and extreme heat. Regarding emergency preparedness for local government, the Comox Valley Regional District expressed concern that government's approach of providing emergency management funding to local governments through grants restricts their capacity to plan for disaster response and consult with Indigenous partners. The Regional District of East Kootenay discussed the increased need for emergency management due to floods and fires. Both regional districts recommended increasing emergency management funding for local governments.

Other organizations identified specific issues where further emergency preparedness work is required. The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals expressed a need to include domestic animals and other animals held in captivity in emergency planning and response legislation and regulations. The Tourism Industry Association of BC cited that despite an increase in natural disasters, regional tourism organizations have decreased capacity for emergency management because of a lack of provincial funding. The organization suggested providing annual funding to the BC Regional Tourism Secretariat for this purpose. One individual also identified risks to cultural institutions like museums during disasters, and suggested that funding for an emergency preparedness and response plan should include funding for heritage institutions.

Regarding preparedness and mitigation related to specific types of natural disasters, the BC Dairy Association emphasized that prioritizing flood mitigation infrastructure investment is necessary for the stability of the agricultural industry. Also related to flooding, the Emergency Planning Secretariat expressed concern that some of the recovery work after the 2021 flood is repeating the same mistakes that were made initially, such as putting dikes back in their original positions. The organization recommended providing funding to support sub-regional and regional floodplain tables and for First Nations participation. The Insurance Bureau of Canada shared that flood and water damage are the biggest sources of insurance claims and financial losses. Insurance providers have developed tools that provide coverage for flood risk but they

are unavailable to those most at risk. The Insurance Bureau suggested increasing investment in an earthquake resilience strategy and flood mitigation, including floodplain mapping, in order to prioritize investments. Regarding wildfires, one individual recommended purchasing more helicopters and skimmers to effectively extinguish fires, pointing to cost savings by avoiding lengthy firefighting efforts, saving timber, and preserving trees that sequester carbon. Another individual described the impact of wildfires on people in affected areas and identified a need to establish a group that focuses on prevention.

Additionally, the Committee heard from organizations and communities that had specific requests regarding emergency preparedness. The Gingolx Village Government shared that the waterways near their village are sometimes impassable, and that the impacts of climate change mean the village needs a plan to ensure residents' safety. The village has planned an emergency operations centre, which will include a residence for Elders, and requested support with its development. The village also requested support with the purchase of a Model 290 boat, training for two captains, and efforts to secure a junior Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue unit. The Air Rescue One Heli Winch Society, which aims to provide helicopter rescue whenever needed, shared that it has struggled with a lack of helicopters, winches, and pilots. The organization requested \$10 million to purchase a used, H1-capable, night-vision rescue helicopter. Additionally, United Way British Columbia requested funding for its emergency response plan to help at-risk communities as well as for its work to support communities recovering from the 2021 fires and floods.

The Committee heard from one individual that insurers providing domestic earthquake coverage have recently increased both earthquake coverage premiums and the levels of deductibles. To address this issue, they recommended the establishment of a supplementary insurance program to permit those with earthquake insurance to cover their high deductibles.

POLICING

Regarding policing, the National Police Federation expressed concern that funding for the BC RCMP has not kept up with population growth, increased equipment costs, and increased complexity of public safety threats. The Federation noted that despite the announcement of funding to fill

277 BC RCMP vacancies, 242 positions remain unfunded. The organization recommended funding these positions to bring the province back to its 2012 authorized police strength. The City of Fort St. John shared that municipal RCMP services are often dispatched to rural areas to support calls but are predominantly funded by the municipalities and suggested changing the funding formula to address this. Regarding governance structures, the National Police Federation suggested providing funding to implement the recommendation of the Special Committee to Reform the Police Act regarding the establishment of police committees. One individual recommended creating a provincial police force and requiring municipalities with more than 100,000 people to have a municipal police force.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Multiple organizations discussed restorative justice, specifically regarding a need for adequate long-term funding of restorative justice programs. The North Shore Restorative Justice Society described how restorative justice has been used to decrease harm, rehabilitate those who have committed crimes, improve access to justice, address systemic racism and the overrepresentation of certain groups in the criminal justice system, and increase public safety. The Vancouver Island Region Restorative Justice Association discussed support for the use of restorative justice, including by the BC Human Rights Commissioner. qathet Community Justice Society highlighted how much time its staff spend working on grant applications, often for small amounts. The organization recommended providing increased, stable funding to restorative justice organizations.

SEX WORK

Living in Community identified a need to increase supports for sex workers, including funding for front-line organizations that deliver peer-led and person-centred programming. The organization also requested funding for the bad date and aggressor reporting system it has developed with other sex work organizations, which allows sex workers to share safety information with each other. Living in Community also recommended making significant investments in public services, such as expanding affordable housing, raising social and disability assistance rates to the poverty line, implementing free public transit, and addressing the toxic drug and overdose crisis, to support sex workers' rights.

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding access to justice, Members highlighted how the income threshold for legal aid eligibility is restrictive and prevents people from accessing services. They reflected on the passionate input they received about the experiences of survivors of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and noted how legal aid can be a necessary support for some individuals trying to leave a relationship. Additionally, the Committee highlighted the important role of child and youth advocacy centres in minimizing the re-traumatization of children who have experienced abuse. Members also discussed the work of notaries and supported expanding their scope of practice.

The Committee discussed contraband tobacco and highlighted its links to organized crime. Members noted that a focused contraband enforcement team has been successful in other provinces in increasing the effectiveness of enforcement efforts. The Committee emphasized that efforts to limit the prevalence of contraband tobacco should align with efforts to reduce smoking.

Regarding correctional services, Members highlighted the presentation from the Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Literacy Committee. Members were impressed by the outcomes of the educational program in correctional centres considering the limited resources and time this program has for its students. The Committee supported funding in this area to ensure that teachers have adequate support to provide education in correctional centres.

The Committee supported establishing a cell phone levy as a means to provide stable funding for emergency communications services. Members noted that the 911 system was originally funded through a levy on landlines, which has become a less stable funding source as landline use has declined and noted that other provinces have a cell phone levy. The Committee indicated that such a levy would provide a dedicated source of funding for emergency communications, and emphasized that providing effective emergency communications is a critical support to address mental health challenges.

The Committee discussed the importance of providing holistic supports to survivors of gender-based violence to ensure that they can transition out of unsafe environments in a safe and appropriate manner. Members noted that coordination efforts are one step in reducing re-traumatization of survivors. The

Committee affirmed that providing a flexible continuum of housing supports is an important piece of supporting survivors of gender-based violence. In particular, Members noted the demand for transition housing and how women with children have special requirements, such as being close to schools and other resources. Additionally, the Committee highlighted the work done by the PEACE program and the need to expand it across the province, and the importance of undertaking violence prevention efforts, including cross-cultural violence prevention education. The Committee also emphasized the importance of providing easily accessible and effective information for survivors of sexual assault about the different resources available to them.

Regarding natural disasters and emergency preparedness, Members emphasized the importance and cost-effectiveness of continued flood mitigation efforts, noting the billions of dollars of damage in places like Abbotsford. Members recognized the important work done by regional districts in coordinating emergency response, noting input from the Regional District of East Kootenay on the increased time that its emergency operations centre is open every year. They agreed that funding to regional districts to support this work is needed. The Committee also discussed the value of having an effective rescue helicopter and highlighted the important work done by the Air Rescue One Heli Winch Society.

The Committee recognized that the funding formula for policing has been consistently raised by municipalities. Members acknowledged smaller communities and nearby rural areas both experience challenges with paying for policing and supported finding an equitable solution.

The Committee reflected on the important work done by restorative justice organizations and how having a restorative justice strategy could support the justice system. Members supported providing funding to a range of organizations while also noting the potential difficulty of having accurate information about the workloads of restorative justice organizations.

Members discussed the importance of peer-led supports for sex workers. The Committee expressed support for providing funding for these programs, including the BC bad date and aggressor reporting system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Access to Justice and Legal Aid

127. Improve access to legal aid, particularly for family law matters, by increasing funding and reviewing the income threshold for legal aid eligibility.
128. Provide ongoing, sustainable operational funding to child and youth advocacy centres in the province.
129. Expand BC notaries' scope of practice to non-contentious areas of the law by modernizing the *Notaries Act*, including ensuring ongoing professional development and education, and include notaries alongside lawyers in the current *Mortgage Services Act* so that they enjoy the same rights when performing the same function.

Contraband Tobacco

130. Address contraband tobacco through increased enforcement, including creating a contraband tobacco enforcement team and working with other provinces and the federal government to prevent illegal tobacco shipments.

Correctional Services

131. Guarantee access to basic education in correctional centres across BC by adequately funding K-12 education as a special program fund for school districts that have a correctional centre.

Emergency Communications

132. Create a cell phone levy for emergency communications services to provide stable and predictable funding for the province's emergency communications centres.

Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Assault

133. Provide comprehensive supports to people experiencing gender-based violence, including funding for coordination initiatives in the anti-violence sector and increased funding for and access to a flexible continuum of housing supports.
134. Increase funding to the Stopping the Violence and PEACE (Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment) programs.
135. Support survivors of sexual assault by increasing funding for sexual assault centres across BC and ensuring comprehensive, accurate, and multi-lingual information about services is available to survivors.
136. Invest in violence prevention, including committing annual funding for sexualized violence prevention offices, programs, and initiatives at post-secondary campuses across BC and allocating funding for primary male violence prevention efforts engaging men and boys.

Natural Disasters and Emergency Preparedness

137. Prioritize investment in flood mitigation efforts, including for building appropriate infrastructure, conducting floodplain mapping, investing in an earthquake resilience strategy, and providing funding for sub-regional and regional planning with First Nations participation.
138. Provide \$6.75 million in base funding to regional districts for emergency management.
139. Purchase a used, H1-capable, night vision rescue helicopter.

Policing

140. Re-examine the funding formula for policing to ensure equitable payments are being made by rural areas that utilize municipal RCMP services.

Restorative Justice

141. Provide increased, ongoing funding to community-based restorative justice organizations with consideration for distributing funding based on the workload of each organization.

Sex Work

142. Increase funding for front-line organizations across BC that deliver peer-led and person-centred programming for individuals who engage in sex work and provide sustainable funding for the BC bad date and aggressor reporting system.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Committee heard from various organizations and individuals describing a need for more funding across the social services sector. Key themes included the need for stabilization funding to address operational deficiencies along with increasing administrative caps for social service contracts from government. The Committee also heard about the need to improve supports for child and youth in care and with support needs, with organizations and individuals requiring more direct funding to better address the individual needs of children as well as reducing the barriers to accessing support services.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE

Many organizations and individuals emphasized the need for more direct funding to support children and youth in care. West Coast LEAF highlighted the need for wrap-around supports and services that are child- and family-centred, localized, and integrated. The organization added that investment in prevention and support services should centre on child and family well-being by addressing barriers such as poverty, scarcity of harm reduction for substance use, and inaccessibility of services. The organization also stated that to further reconciliation, funding should be provided to Indigenous nations and communities to ensure there are resources to provide support to families in accordance with cultural traditions and practices.

With regard to kinship caregivers, Fairness for Children Raised by Relatives explained that the Child in Home of Relative program, which was discontinued in 2010, still supports 240 children as of December 2022. The organization noted that this program has not received a rate increase since being discontinued and is significantly less than other Ministry of Children and Family Development family support programs. Fairness for Children Raised by Relatives additionally raised concerns over the inability of families to claim certain benefits due to the Ministry of Children and Family Development's 54.01 and 54.1 family support programs. These programs are designed to provide financial assistance to kinship

caregivers who have been transferred guardianship of a child but these families are ineligible to receive any children's federal benefits as the Ministry claims these benefits under the federal *Children's Special Allowance Act*. Citing the BC Ombudsperson's 2022 report *Short-Changed: Ensuring Federal Benefits Paid to the Province reach Caregivers of Children with Disabilities*, which highlights the impacts of the Ministry's policies on 54 program children, the organization recommended all 54.01/54.1 families receive all federal benefits or an equivalent top up.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH SUPPORT NEEDS

The Committee heard from numerous organizations requesting stability funding and more direct or individualized funding to help reduce barriers to services and better support children and youth with support needs. Okanagan Similkameen Neurological Society Child and Youth Development Centre shared that with increased funding, organizations can increase service delivery for mental health, wellness, and family supports which can alleviate financial and emotional burdens on families. The BC Association for Child Development and Intervention stated that significant commitments were made towards the support services sector in the 2023 budget but these commitments have yet to reach the sector. The association recommended expediting the flow of these funds to allow community-based agencies to meet demand, along with distributing future resources more equitably and efficiently. BC Complex Kids Society discussed the need for robust investments and policies that recognize a spectrum of family situations and create equitable opportunities by moving to an on-demand, direct funding style for families of children with support needs. Similarly, the British Columbia Association for Behaviour Analysis discussed the need for a direct, individualized funding model, explaining that such a model would enable families of children and youth with support needs who are unserved by the current system to

select specific combinations of supports and services to best suit their needs.

Regarding the support needs of children and youth with autism, Children's Autism Federation of BC advocated for the continuation of individualized funding. The organization noted the importance of choice that individualized funding provides families, as not every family has access to centre-based support systems. AutismBC discussed the passing of *Federal Framework on Autism Spectrum Disorder Act*. The organization emphasized the need for a provincial autism framework to provide a coordinated vision of support and services for people with autism, and to ensure BC is included in the new funding, research, and engagement resulting from this federal autism strategy.

With respect to access to services, the British Columbia Association for Behaviour Analysis discussed the need to reduce wait times, noting that delay in access to critical services can often leave families in positions to lose employment, experience marriage breaks downs, and face financial challenges. Autism BC additionally advocated for the elimination of waitlists for publicly funded autism assessments, stating that waitlists for assessments can be over two years, during which time children are developing without the necessary supports. The Down Syndrome Society of British Columbia reiterated similar concerns noting that a lack of timely access to interventions, therapies and educational supports can greatly impact a child's development.

Regarding staffing and human resources, the Committee heard that waitlists act as barriers to accessing support and that improvements are needed to increase staffing in the sector. Child Development Centre of Prince George and District described a growth in the demand for its occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech language pathology services and requested additional funding to hire more staff and properly compensate child development providers.

Several organizations sought to expand the At Home Program. The Cerebral Palsy Association of British Columbia shared how the At Home Program provides essential supports including medical benefits, respite care, adaptive equipment funding, and nursing care. The association recommended an increase eligibility to from 19 to 24 years old, noting that youth with special needs who age out of the program face barriers to access and find new supports. The British Columbia Association for Behaviour Analysis described the need to include children with Down syndrome in the At Home Program along with

allowing medically complex children to access school aged extended therapy through the program. Advocating for robust funding for accessible vehicles and homes within the program, BC Complex Kids Society highlighted that the At Home program does not support accessibility vehicles and features minimal home accessibility equipment coverage.

DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Several individuals were of the view that Canada is experiencing a democratic decline, and advocated for supporting civic programs which would provide residents opportunities to actively participate in civic life. The Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue discussed the need to invest in civic education that emphasizes the voices of equity-seeking communities while North Shore Community Resources described a need for government to invest in the participation of democratic life, highlighting its "Democracy Café" program. Several organizations and individuals supported the creation of a Strengthening Democratic Participation Fund to promote innovation in collaborative decision-making and enabling equity, accessibility, and inclusion in government decision-making along with providing funding for civic education. CityHive Youth Engagement Society expressed that it is the role of democratic institutions to support civic programming that supports democratic engagement. Additionally, GLOCAL Foundation of Canada advocated for more support for civic social innovations and youth participation, noting the need to provide civic education and improve participation among youth from marginalized groups and those living in rural and remote areas.

NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Committee heard from numerous not for profit organizations about the need for consistent funding to stabilize the sector. Vantage Point shared that BC's not for profit sector continues to be a safety net for communities by providing services not offered or available by government but with rising demand and increasing service delivery costs, the sector requires additional funding. Terrace Women's Resource Centre Society similarly highlighted a lack of funding for the sector, sharing how the inconsistent year-to-year funding prevents organizations from being able to make long-term commitments due to having to shift priorities to meet funding requirements. Community Connections described the

difficulty when dealing with multiple funders and different application processes, procurement demands, and reporting requirements. Community Connections (Revelstoke) Society similarly described increasing demand for services paired with restrictive guidelines on funding usage and advocated for responsive, reliable, and flexible funding streams to meet the evolving social needs of communities. Pacific Legal Education and Outreach Society advocated that the BC not for profit network be funded through a budget allocation similar to Innovate BC and Small Business BC to ensure consistent support for not for profit organizations.

Some organizations recommended that administrative caps be raised by increasing the permissible administrative ratios for not for profit government contracts. Kootenay Boundary Community Services Co-operative highlighted that caps on administrative fees are unrealistically low, leading to systemic service delivery issues, sharing that administrative costs can be up to 30 percent, while current caps average 10 to 15 percent. Similarly, Summit Community Service Society noted that the lack of administrative funding for not for profits has led to many organizations falling behind in the areas of human resource management, technology upgrades, and infrastructure maintenance. Family Services of Greater Vancouver highlighted that current administrative funding does not provide not for profits the opportunity to pay competitive wages, innovate, or market their services. The organization explained that more funding would enable not for profits to increase visibility of its services, as program awareness currently relies on word of mouth or direct referral. BC/Yukon Command of the Royal Canadian Legion discussed additional administrative burdens faced by not for profits, highlighting that each time there is a change in directors, a fee must be paid to adjust the names attached to liquor licences for all Legions. The organization advocated for removing this fee as most branches change directors every year, creating a significant yearly expense.

The Committee also heard about challenges with recruitment and retention in the social services sector. Summit Community Services Society shared that government contracts for community contract workers do not take education requirements into account, creating a disconnect between the levels of education and provided wages. The organization shared how similar positions in other sectors offer higher wages, leaving service providers unable to entice qualified staff. CUPE Local 1936 explained that underfunding has led to staff experiencing workload issues and dealing with increasing

complexities of the work of social services. The organization further noted that community social service workers are experiencing rising levels of burnout, mental health issues, and addiction issues due to working conditions. These organizations recommended providing adequate funding to community social service providers to address staffing issues within the sector. The Vancouver Foundation highlighted the need to support the retirement of the not for profit workforce due to the lower wages of the sector and advocated for the funding of a sector-wide pension plan to support not for profit workers.

Also with respect to staffing, BC CEO Network highlighted the salary compression and inversion being experienced between front line supervisors and their managers, which is contributing to the recruitment and retention issues. Similarly, Communitas Supportive Care noted the outflow of leadership from the social service sector and the inability to attract new leaders, identifying the need to implement effective succession planning to address impending leadership gaps. Both organizations advocated for addressing wage compression and inversion to make management positions more attractive within the social service sector.

Several organizations and individuals advocated for the establishment of an innovation fund to support community living organizations and strengthen the inclusion and resilience of people with intellectual and development disabilities. Mission Association for Community Living noted that people with such disabilities have unique and complex health needs, adding that the fragmentation of services and limited understanding of these support needs leave people with intellectual and development disabilities marginalized. Chilliwack Society for Community Living described how rising administrative costs have diminished the administrative structure required to provide social support services and recommended that government invest in the innovation fund to transform support services and respond to changing needs of the service organizations.

The Committee also received input related to resources for Community Living BC. BC Self Advocate Leadership Network Society shared that there are currently 27,000 people registered in Community Living BC, with an estimated 1,100 additional people entering each year. The society requested that funding for Community Living of BC be increased to address rising need. Individuals noted that Community Living BC cannot support all the families in need with its current

budget and recommended more funding be provided to the Crown corporation.

Additionally, the Retail Council of Canada shared that under the current provisions of the *Provincial Sales Tax Act*, a business providing an in-kind donation is subject to the seven percent PST on the value of the donation, which is inequitable relative to the treatment of cash donations. Therefore, the organization requested that these donations be PST exempt to encourage further giving.

The Committee also received requests from organizations to support their work. Vancity Community Foundation advocated for funding towards the organization's Centre for Social and Economic Innovation in the Downtown Eastside. The foundation shared that the facility houses 40 impact organizations, and seeks to upgrade the centre to advance reconciliation, resiliency, and community safety. Similarly, the Garage Community Space Society described the homelessness crisis being experienced by small communities like Terrace and recommended providing funding to upgrade its facility and hire additional staff. Additionally, Archways Community Services emphasized the need for additional funding towards community-based programs targeted at gang prevention. The organization noted the importance of these types of community programs as vulnerable individuals are unlikely to access services and supports provided by government and police organizations due to a culture of mistrust.

The British Columbia Funeral Association highlighted the need to increase the rate of the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's provincial burial program to reflect the true cost of service delivery. The association noted that the current rate of \$2,100 was set in 2008 when the program was established and has not seen a rate increase since. The association highlighted that funeral providers are not contractually obligated to perform this service but do so because many families have no other options.

POVERTY REDUCTION

A number of individuals provided written submissions to the Committee highlighting the difficulties faced by those who rely on income and disability assistance during this period of a rising cost of living. Submissions described the difficulty in affording and finding adequate shelter, covering medical expenses, and the poverty associated that many people with disabilities experience.

Several organizations and individuals recommended raising income and disability assistance rates. The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition identified a gap between income and disability assistance rates and the poverty line. The organization stated that this gap can place people who rely on income and disability assistance into inadequate living situations, food insecurity, and poor relationships. Disability Action of Canada shared that the current monthly provincial support level is \$1,410 while the official poverty level in Canada is \$2,202 per month. Additionally, YWCA Metro Vancouver shared that women and gender diverse people disproportionately experience high rates of poverty in BC and rely on assistance supports due to their concentration in low-wage, part-time, and precarious work. The organization acknowledged recent increases in income and disability assistance rates but deemed poverty reduction systems to still be regressive and failing to address systemic poverty. Disability Alliance BC detailed the limitations of existing support for low-income people with disabilities and advocated for directly supporting low-income individuals.

The Committee heard about challenges with the administration and eligibility criteria of income and disability assistance. Submissions noted that maximum earnings exemptions on additional income create barriers for people with disabilities, as exemptions disincentivize working additional hours because any money earned over the limit will reduce assistance payments. Another issue noted was the spousal cap, which restricts the income and disability assistance provided based on spousal income. Individuals emphasized how the current cap decreases the accessibility for extra income for people who receive support to meet their cost of living. The Committee also heard that the spousal cap may create a relationship of dependency, which can foster potentially dangerous situations. As such, many recommended removing the spousal cap and allowing people to retain their eligibility for financial assistance regardless of their relationship status.

To further reduce poverty, the implementation of various income programs was recommended to the Committee. Basic Income BC was of the view that existing social safety mechanisms have become outdated due to rapidly changing labour market conditions resulting from issues such as climate change, automation, and artificial intelligence, and as such, new support programs such as a basic income are needed. The organization further noted the social return of such programs, referencing pilot programs such as the

Manitoba Mincome and Ontario Basic Income Pilot which were stated to have seen cost savings in health care, justice systems, and municipal spending. Additionally, Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable highlighted that food insecurity disproportionately impacts those with low incomes and advocated for a guaranteed annual income to ensure household food security. Similarly, Food Stash Foundation identified the main driver of poverty in Canada to be inadequate household income and discussed how many working-age adults face preventable poverty and food insecurity.

Living Wage for Families highlighted the significant role government plays in local economies as an employer and advocated for a living wage policy for all government employees and contracted government staff. The organization stated that committing to paying a living wage would reflect government's commitment to poverty reduction and set an example for other employers in the province to provide a living wage.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee discussed the importance of keeping children and youth out of care and with their families whenever possible, noting the downstream impacts of placing children in government care. Accordingly, Members supported investments in prevention and family supports. With regards to kinship families, Members noted the need to end policies of claiming the federal benefits of kinship families and further discussed the lack of equitable benefits for kinship families. Additionally, Members noted that children in Child in the Home of a Relative program have not received a rate increase since 2010. They supported a rate increase for this program to bring it more in line with other similar programs.

The Committee acknowledged the challenges within support systems for children and youth with support needs and discussed the continuum of care and services. Members highlighted the lack of screening as a major impediment to accessing support, with Members noting that increasing the accessibility and capacity of early screening would make interventions more targeted, focused, and effective. The Committee additionally recognized the financial realities of supporting a child or youth with support needs, noting how parents' entire incomes can be dedicated to supporting their children's needs. The Committee supported increasing resources and supports to better help these families through

in-own-home child care contracts, increasing access and funding for respite care, and additional supports for complex care. It was emphasized by the Committee that early intervention support and access to services are needed to ensure families can adequately care for the support needs of each individual child. Members also agreed on the need to increase funding for the At Home Program to extend the cutoff age for services to better service children and youth with support needs. Specific investments were also highlighted by the Committee for child development centres to hire additional staff to address rising demand for their support services.

As it relates to not for profits, the Committee discussed the need for stable multi-year core funding and how a lack of administrative funding for not for profits draws away resources from programming and service delivery. The Committee agreed on the need to streamline grant processes and provide multi-year funding for not for profit organizations along with reviewing the allowable administrative ratios in contracts and exploring the provision of a portable sector-wide pension plan for not for profit workers. The Committee additionally supported specific funding for the Garage Community Space Society for facility improvements along with waiving fees associated with liquor licences held by not for profit organizations to reduce financial burdens.

The Committee reflected on the significant input it received regarding income and disability assistance rates. Members agreed that the rates should be increased and indexed to inflation to ensure they are reflective of current cost of living. Challenges with the administration of income and disability assistance were discussed by the Committee, particularly the spousal financial cap. Members recognized the need for fair and consistent treatment of people with disabilities by enabling them to continue to receive financial aid, regardless of the financial status of their partner, and supported a review of the spousal cap. They noted that the application of the spousal cap can create situations where financially dependent persons are forced to stay in relationships. Similarly, the Committee discussed restrictions on additional earned income by people who receive disability assistance. Members highlighted the inconsistency in the ability of people with disabilities to work and identified the use of a gradual scale towards earning exemptions as an effective mechanism to enable people with disabilities to work while providing assistance as a safety net. Lastly, Members discussed the need to increase the rate of the provincial burial program to address the rising costs associated with burial services.

Members identified the importance of community living organizations in supporting the inclusion and resilience of people with intellectual and development disabilities. The Committee also noted the work of community program

workers and supported providing funding to improve wages. Members also discussed the need to promote community living as a career option to ensure these organization have the staff they need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Children and Youth in Care

143. End the Ministry of Children and Family Development's policy of claiming federal benefits for 54.01/54.1 kinship families or provide an equivalent top-up, to provide equity with other family support programs.
144. Provide children still enrolled in the Child in Home of Relative Program the same financial monthly maintenance benefits as children in other support programs and foster care.

Children and Youth with Support Needs

145. Increase investment in the continuum of services for children and youth with support needs.
146. Increase access and funding to early intervention services and family supports for children with support needs, including expanding access to evidence-based screening and assessments.
147. Increase resources and supports for families of children and youth with support needs through increased funds for in-own-home child care contracts, increased access to and funding for respite care, and additional funding supports for parents of children with complex needs.
148. Increase funding to the At Home Program to extend the cutoff age for services for youth with severe disabilities to 24 years.

Community Social Services and Social Policy

149. Strengthen the inclusion and resilience of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by supporting community living organizations, providing funding for community program workers, and promoting community living as a career opportunity.

Not for Profit Organizations

150. Support the not for profit sector by streamlining grant processes, providing stable, multi-year funding, and reviewing the allowable administrative ratios in contracts and evaluating access to a portable sector-wide pension plan.
151. Provide funding to Garage Community Space Society to build a commercial kitchen and install security systems.
152. Waive the fee currently required when making a change to the directors on a liquor licence for not for profit organizations, including Legions, to reduce the financial burden.

Poverty Reduction

153. Improve support to individuals who receive income and disability assistance by increasing rates and indexing to inflation, increasing earning exemptions, creating a graduated scale, and reviewing the spousal cap.
154. Immediately raise the rate of the provincial burial program from \$2,100 to \$3,500 and index the rate to inflation.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT

A key theme in the input received by the Committee related to transportation was increasing access to and funding for active transportation and public transit. Many organizations and individuals highlighted the importance of moving away from car-focused infrastructure to mitigate climate change, as well as the health, social, and economic benefits of active transportation and public transit. Additionally, the Committee received input regarding decarbonizing other forms of transportation, like aerospace and marine shipping, and improving transportation infrastructure throughout the province in order to support a strong economy.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Several organizations and individuals supported increasing funding for active transportation programming and infrastructure. The BC Cycling Coalition noted that CleanBC sets a goal of having 50 percent of trips in 2050 made by walking, cycling, or transit and expressed concern that provincial budgets prioritize vehicle travel. The organization recommended increasing the budget of the BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program to reflect this priority. Capital Bike supported providing access to transportation options like active transportation and transit because they promote equity, by providing transportation options to newcomers, lower-income people, and people who cannot drive for various reasons including having a disability. The BC Alliance for Healthy Living emphasized that active commuting is an affordable way to get more activity and that children who walk or bike are more likely to maintain these habits into adulthood. The organization shared that safe and active routes to school are a gap in most small towns and cities across BC and recommended investing in related programming and infrastructure. The Connect the Coast Society specifically highlighted the lack of active transportation infrastructure on the Sunshine Coast, stating that cyclists, pedestrians, and people using mobility scooters are forced to use the narrow shoulder of the highway.

Multiple organizations and individuals recommended increasing funding to build safe and accessible active transportation routes between communities. West Kootenay Climate Hub stated that safe active transportation infrastructure between rural communities is extremely limited and suggested providing multi-year financing for accessible pathways between communities. The Trails Society of British Columbia emphasized that long-distance trails contribute to local economies and recommended additional annual funding for rail trails—multi-use trails built in former railbeds. The organization also described how the Kettle Valley Rail Trail has been damaged by flooding and heavy rain and identified a need to increase investment. Friends of Rails to Trails Vancouver Island noted that a study funded by the Federal Active Transportation Fund demonstrated that an active transportation trail on the Vancouver Island Corridor is feasible and would benefit tourism, the economy, and health and wellness. The organization therefore recommended the provincial government undertake a detailed assessment of the trail's potential costs and benefits. Friends of Rails to Trails Vancouver Island also suggested that active transportation routes should include secure bike storage near inter-city bus services.

The Committee heard about a need to expand bike lanes and paths. Capital Bike described how increasing demand for cycling and increasing construction costs necessitates more funding for building and maintaining cycling infrastructure. HUB Cycling emphasized the economic, social, health, and climate benefits of cycling, while advocating for investments in infrastructure in the south coast region. Multiple organizations and individuals highlighted the need for safe cycling infrastructure, particularly protected bike lanes and dedicated pathways, emphasizing that feeling unsafe makes many people hesitant to use active forms of transportation. One individual suggested that one way to make streets safer would be to ensure that pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is upgraded at the same time as provincial street maintenance. Several individuals suggested that cycling infrastructure should

be prioritized over widening roads for cars. The Committee heard that widening roads is expensive, costs more in maintenance, and makes driving easier while making walking and cycling more difficult—hindering BC's climate, financial, and road safety goals.

In addition to cycling infrastructure, organizations and individuals advocated for funding for cycling education and incentives. HUB Cycling stated that research shows promotional events and campaigns increase active transportation usage. Capital Bike stated that providing cycling education in schools is effective and that investments in programs like Everyone Rides Grade 4-5 need to be followed by investments in adult and pre-K education. Both organizations, along with the BC Cycling Coalition, recommended increasing funding for cycling education for children and adults. Regarding incentives, the Committee heard that the budget of the BC Electric Bike Rebate Program should be increased to match that of the electric vehicle rebate program because electric bikes have a smaller carbon footprint, are less expensive and more widely available, and require less extensive road and parking infrastructure. Multiple organizations also called for equity-oriented incentives such as subsidies for adaptive bikes.

Trelawny Consulting Group Ltd. requested funding for the Trip Reduction Program, a program that would require all large employers and major trip generators (such as schools, health authorities, and malls) to assess and attempt to reduce vehicle kilometers travelled and boost walking, cycling, and transit. The organization emphasized that the program would improve air quality, traffic congestion, affordability, health, safety, social cohesion, and road maintenance costs. The Camosun College Faculty Association suggested providing climate-forward rebates to employers who provide their employees with sustainable transportation options. An individual recommended giving municipalities incentives through BC's climate action tax credit to improve mobility among seniors, such as through improved and more accessible sidewalks, transit, and cycling paths.

AEROSPACE

The Vancouver Airport Authority discussed how some airports and short-haul airlines are looking to decarbonize their operations and recommended that government provide support. The Vancouver Airport Authority also shared that each new international flight that lands at YVR generates

\$38 million of economic activity in BC and creates 350 new jobs. The Airport Authority expressed concern that other jurisdictions are investing more in their aviation sectors and indicated that BC should develop financial supports to attract more international air services to BC.

The Canadian Council for Sustainable Aviation Fuels and Air Canada both supported financial and policy measures to stimulate domestic production of sustainable aviation fuels. The Committee heard that sustainable aviation fuel significantly reduces aviation emissions but can cost two to four times more than regular jet fuel. Organizations highlighted issues including loss of investment to the United States, high costs to meet requirements for carbon intensity, and a need for better collaboration with the federal government. Air Canada suggested delaying the proposed regulations related to aviation fuel under BC's Low Carbon Fuel Standard and the Canadian Council for Sustainable Aviation Fuels proposed deferring low-carbon fuel compliance provisions for aviation fuel until there is significant domestic production. The Vancouver Airport Authority recommended making investments to support its deployment of sustainable aviation fuels.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The Committee received input regarding charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. Parkland identified that the Low Carbon Fuel Standard is one of the largest incentives for installing charging infrastructure, and that reassurances that credits will be available for the lifetime of the chargers will encourage investment in charging stations. The Vancouver Electric Vehicle Association highlighted the need to work with remote, rural, and Indigenous communities to support access to charging infrastructure. The BC Lodging and Campgrounds Association stated that many existing charging stations are not designed for combination vehicles, like electric towables and electric RV combinations. The organization noted that private campgrounds could offer public electric vehicle charging options but need financial support from FortisBC and BC Hydro. ChargePoint Canada Inc. explained that BC Hydro's existing rate design includes demand charges for electric vehicle charging, which penalize investments in fast charging and can discourage investment by impeding cost recovery. The organization recommended directing BC Hydro to explore a specific electricity rate for public electric vehicle fast charging.

ChargePoint Canada Inc. emphasized a need for broad consultation regarding the development of the new Low Carbon Fuel Standard regulations, to ensure they are effective, fair, and support the capture of credits by providers of electric vehicle charging. The organization also supported reviewing and defining roles for how utility, government, and private sector participants can best support cost-effective deployment of electric vehicle supply equipment. First Things First Okanagan discussed the need to implement strong privacy protections if microgrids are used for electric vehicle charging.

PORTS AND MARINE SHIPPING

Global Container Terminals Inc. emphasized the importance of its terminals in providing reliable access to Asia-Pacific trade lines and shared that the company's decarbonization efforts, including LED lighting upgrades and light-duty electrification, have resulted in a nine percent reduction in its emissions since 2014. The organization stated that more financial support is needed for the marine sector to incentivize not only hydrogen usage but also renewable diesel production, which is not currently present in sufficient amounts to meaningfully reduce emissions from heavy fleets. Specifically, Global Container Terminals Inc. indicated that additional financial support for the marine sector, particularly for heavy-duty-equipment pilot project initiatives, would support BC's low-carbon supply chain positioning on a global scale. The Prince Rupert Port Authority highlighted its decarbonization efforts including the implementation of shore power at the Fairview Container Terminal, pilots of new technology, and development of more efficient operations. The Port Authority requested continued government support through CleanBC, Innovate BC, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and BC Hydro.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Several organizations and individuals recommended increasing spending on public transit. CUPE Fraser Valley District Council noted that transit systems provide sustainable and affordable mobility. The organization recommended increasing investments in public transit, including urban, suburban, rural, and intercommunity systems, and providing permanent funding for BC Bus North. Yellow Point Ecological Society compared relative expenditures on highway infrastructure, like the Keating flyover near Victoria, and public transit infrastructure and recommended increasing the provincial government's public transit budget. The Committee also

heard about the importance of ensuring that public transit is accessible, as well as providing public transit as an alternative for people who cannot use cycling infrastructure for accessibility reasons. The Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation identified a need for expedited access to federal public transit funding, and requested that the provincial government advocate for the Permanent Transition Fund to be launched two years earlier than planned.

Many organizations and individuals expressed support for increasing public transit between different communities, with a number specifying a need for an inter-community bus system. The Nelson and Area Action Group for Better Public Transportation emphasized that the lack of a provincewide bus network is a major gap in public services in BC. The organization suggested that such a network would help BC meet emissions targets, assist with transportation to hospitals and health facilities, enhance public safety, and allow people to consider employment and housing opportunities in other communities. Let's Ride: Make Public Transit BC Wide emphasized that when public transportation is not available, people may be forced to choose unsafe options such as hitchhiking, an issue that was raised in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Regarding public transit in rural communities, CUPE Okanagan Mainline District Council noted that most people in rural BC need to travel between communities for employment, education, and health care but public transit runs too infrequently to be dependable. West Kootenay Climate Hub explained that this forces people to rely on for-profit bus services, which only service high-traffic routes. Selkirk College highlighted how unreliable transit between communities in the West Kootenay region creates barriers to education. All three organizations supported increasing funding for public transportation in rural areas. Multiple organizations and individuals highlighted how access to transit in rural communities is an equity issue. CUPE Kootenay District Council emphasized that a lack of quality transit options in rural communities disproportionately impacts working people, members of equity-seeking communities, seniors, and students. The BC Society of Transition Houses recommended funding a system of accessible, safe transportation through BC Transit to ensure that women, children, and youth who have experienced violence in rural, remote, and northern communities in BC can access services. The Alberni Clayoquot Health Network supported investing in rural transit systems in order to connect Indigenous communities to employment and services.

The Committee also heard support for expanding rail infrastructure. The Railway Association of Canada highlighted a need for investment in both shortline railways for commercial goods and passenger railways. The association emphasized that encouraging the shift of passengers and goods away from vehicles reduces the strains on public infrastructure, eases congestion, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. One individual indicated that many jurisdictions around the world are expanding rail travel and suggested BC should do the same. Multiple individuals identified specific areas of the province in need of rail infrastructure as an alternative to driving, including Vancouver Island, northern BC, and the Lower Mainland.

Some organizations and individuals provided input about the funding model for public transit. The Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation expressed concern about the existing funding model, stating that it relies too heavily on regressive sources like fares and property taxes. The organization requested that the provincial government support its recommendation to the federal government to launch a tripartite national commission regarding public transit funding. CUPE Fraser Valley District Council and the Okanagan Transit Alliance emphasized that public transit should be publicly operated, rather than delivered by contractors. The Nelson and Area Action Group for Better Public Transportation expressed that the current funding model where BC Transit asks municipalities to match funding slows the expansion of public transit and recommended changing the funding structure.

The Committee heard from organizations and individuals in favour of expanding free public transit. The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition recommended extending fare-free transit to all riders, prioritizing low-income, elderly, and young people. Multiple organizations supported removing fares for youth up to age 18, noting that children 12 or younger already access free transit through the Get on Board program. The Centre for Family Equity cited research it conducted with the City of Vancouver that included an examination of the benefits of free transit for low-income and at-risk youth, showing that free transit access is a lifeline to shelter, food security, services, safety, and well-being. The Okanagan Climate Hub suggested that youth and HandyDART passengers should be exempt from fares, and that seniors should receive reduced rates. An individual recommended that people with disabilities be provided a free monthly bus pass, noting that doing so would improve affordability and reduce isolation. Yellow Point Ecological Society supported introducing a tuition program

for high school students to teach them how to ride the bus, referencing a similar program in Ontario.

Regarding HandyDART service, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724 emphasized that good paratransit service allows seniors and people with disabilities to live independently and noted that service levels have declined when accounting for population growth. The organization, along with the Vancouver & District Labour Council, recommended increasing HandyDART service levels and assessing whether it would be more effective to operate the service in-house rather than through a contractor. Both organizations also supported increasing funding for public transit infrastructure, including charging facilities for electric HandyDART vehicles. The Okanagan Transit Alliance suggested expanding HandyDART service to seven days a week, noting that the 50 percent taxi fare subsidy that passengers are offered on Sundays and public holidays, when HandyDART services are not offered, still leaves passengers paying more per trip.

Many organizations and individuals identified areas of the province in need of public transit investment. The Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation requested support to expand transit access in Metro Vancouver, including appealing to the federal government. Simon Fraser University recommended providing funding to complete the Burnaby Mountain gondola and the City of North Vancouver requested government commit to funding Burrard Inlet Rapid Transit. Individuals and organizations also highlighted a need for improved public transit in Kelowna, the West Kootenays, and between Langford and Victoria.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Regarding transportation infrastructure, the City of Kelowna explained that municipalities are facing higher costs to build transportation infrastructure as well as a gap between the timing of federal and provincial funding programs. The city also expressed concern about the unpredictable nature of application-based funding streams, and recommended providing long-term infrastructure and transportation funding. The BC Sustainable Energy Association suggested that spending on highway expansions should be reallocated to transit, electric vehicle initiatives, active transportation, and heavy freight decarbonization. The British Columbia Trucking Association indicated that efficient and reliable transportation corridors—including lanes, overpasses, and bridges that fit over-dimensional vehicles, as well as rest

areas with washrooms and showers—is necessary to reduce the sector's carbon footprint and enable women to enter the transportation industry.

The Committee also received input regarding roads and highways. The Quesnel Cattlemen's Association highlighted the vital role played by roads in allowing ranchers to receive supplies and get products to market, and recommended increasing funding for road maintenance. An individual suggested that some of the capital costs for road and bridge improvement could be covered by instituting tolls, following the Coquihalla model. Additionally, the Quesnel Chamber of Commerce requested that work on the AR1 North South Interconnector, a proposed highway route that would bypass the downtown core of Quesnel, be continued by starting the detailed design.

Additionally, organizations highlighted a need for transportation infrastructure investment in specific areas of the province, including Metro Vancouver, the Okanagan, and the South Peace. The Committee also received requests for funding regarding specific projects, including the twinning of the highway from the Alberta border to Fort St. John, the Haystack Bridge, and the Taylor Bridge. Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative noted that hundreds of large animals are killed in vehicle collisions every year, particularly along Highway 3 between Sparwood and Alberta; the organization recommended funding the Reconnecting the Rockies infrastructure project. The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade supported developing an economically enabling infrastructure plan, highlighting population growth in the region and the need to strengthen supply chains and transit systems.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee acknowledged that it received a significant amount of input in favour of increasing funding for active transportation, and noted how active transportation supports health and climate change mitigation. Members discussed the commitment in CleanBC to ensure that 50 percent of trips are made by walking, cycling, or transit by 2050, and supported increasing the funding of the BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program as a means to achieve this. Members also highlighted that active transportation infrastructure needs to be built in partnership with municipalities. Additionally, the Committee identified that consistent funding for active transportation pathways between different communities is a gap. Members also noted the high

demand for the e-bike rebate program and emphasized that the rebate should be provided to those who need it most. They discussed how increased e-bike use will require expanded infrastructure and other steps to promote safety.

The Committee recognized the importance of inter-community public transit and indicated that the current system for funding public transit between communities could be improved. Members noted that transit for individual communities is led by local government but that the provincial government should work to connect different communities. They pointed to the high uptake on the West Coast Express as an example of effective public transit between communities. The Committee also supported increasing access to public transit by providing free transit to children and youth under age 19 as well as people with disabilities. Members discussed how expanding free transit to everyone under age 19 may encourage teenagers to develop a habit of taking transit, which they are likely to carry on later in life. Additionally, the Committee discussed the current funding model for public transit and identified a need to advocate to the federal government for a tripartite national commission to consider a more resilient and equitable approach. Members also supported advocating to the federal government to move forward the launch of the Permanent Transition Fund by two years.

Regarding HandyDART operating hours, the Committee emphasized that provincial resources are required to expand service levels, particularly in smaller communities. Members emphasized the importance of making the transit system more accessible, one piece of which is expanding HandyDART services. They recognized that an inclusive transit system helps people feel like part of their community and move around more freely.

Members highlighted how airports are an integral part of BC and emphasized that supporting sustainable aviation fuel is an important step to mitigate climate change and a critical piece of CleanBC. They noted that BC is losing air traffic to other provinces that are making greater investments and suggested that investing in clean air travel may increase demand. Regarding ports and marine shipping, the Committee supported providing funding to help maritime industrial operations across the province become more sustainable. Members discussed how biodiesel is in short supply and noted that LNG can be used right now for marine shipping, while a transition to hydrogen will be more gradual.

Members expressed support for various infrastructure projects throughout the province. They discussed the impacts of collisions with wildlife, emphasizing the cost to human and animal lives. Members also noted the cost-effectiveness of projects that try to minimize collisions with animals, like Reconnecting the Rockies, noting that a significant amount in insurance claims are paid related to wildlife collisions. Members specifically highlighted the high rate of wildlife collisions in the Kootenays. The Committee reflected on the importance of the highway between Fort St. John and the

Alberta border. Members noted that it is the only connection between Dawson Creek and Fort St. John and remarked on the high volume of traffic and its importance for supply chain continuity. Members also noted that the narrow road is a safety issue in the winter. Additionally, the Committee supported the call from the Quesnel Chamber of Commerce to proceed with the development of the AR1 North South Interconnector, noting that enabling traffic to bypass the downtown core of Quesnel promotes safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Active Transportation

155. Reform fiscal planning policies to reflect government goals to achieve 50 percent of trips by walking, cycling, and transit by 2050 by increasing the budget for BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program.
156. Provide multi-year financing for accessible pathways for active transportation between communities.
157. Increase means-tested incentives for e-bikes.

Aerospace

158. Support progressive airlines and airports to decarbonize their operations, including investing in the Vancouver Airport Authority's efforts to accelerate the deployment of clean aviation fuels in BC.
159. Develop financial supports to build on BC's first-mover advantage and attract more international air services to BC.

Ports and Marine Shipping

160. Provide additional financial support for marine sectors, specifically heavy-duty equipment pilot project initiatives, in order to help maritime industrial operations across the province become more sustainable, and enable the expansion of pilots to incentivize hydrogen and renewable diesel production.

Public Transit

161. Establish public, high-quality, affordable, reliable, and accessible inter-community transit services that connect all communities in BC.
162. Advocate to the federal government to launch a tri-partite national commission with the provinces and transit agencies to develop a more resilient and equitable funding model for public transit and to move forward the launch of the Permanent Transit Fund by two years.
163. Increase funding to HandyDART to ensure services are available seven days a week across the province.
164. Provide free transit for all children and youth under age 19.
165. Provide a free monthly bus pass to people with disabilities.

Transportation Infrastructure

166. Invest in road and highway projects such as twinning the highway from the Alberta border to Fort St. John, the AR1 North South Interconnector, and the Reconnecting the Rockies infrastructure project.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

ADVANCED EDUCATION

Capital Funding

1. Invest in research infrastructure at BC's post-secondary institutions that is relevant to regional contexts and institutional expertise, such as the proposed centre for disaster-resilient infrastructure at UBC Okanagan.

International Students

2. Ensure cultural and economic benefits of international education for students, communities, and the province by creating a provincial strategy for international students, regulating international student tuition fees to provide predictability, and investing in international student supports.

Operational Funding

3. Complete the post-secondary education funding review and implement an updated funding model that:
 - a. equitably distributes financial resources based on regional needs;
 - b. ensures sufficient program funding to address labour needs;
 - c. expands access to student supports and health services, including trauma-informed sexual violence support, addictions support, counselling, and other mental health services for all students; and
 - d. enhances financial flexibility for institutions to use resources, such as net assets and surpluses, more effectively.

Program Funding

4. Increase funding for all regions across the province to expand programming and seats at all levels where needs are greatest given current or projected skill shortages, including in the trades.

Trades and Skills Training

5. Encourage careers in the trades by engaging stakeholders to break the stigma around skilled trades careers and promoting these professions and by providing permanent funding for the BC Centre for Women in the Trades to create trades liaisons in the public K-12 education system.
6. Allocate new skills training grants for workers to attain class 3 driver licensing.

Tuition and Financial Assistance

7. Improve access to post-secondary education through increased investment in the BC Access Grant to enable increases to the maximum amount given out per student and the grant cut-off threshold.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND SUPPORT

Arts and Culture

8. Increase the BC Arts Council budget to \$50 million annually with ongoing inflationary increases and work with the sector to create a sustainability plan to ensure the future health and vibrancy of arts and heritage.
9. Establish a multi-year designated fund for rural, not for profit, charitable community arts organizations, such as presenting arts organizations, who are not eligible for BC Arts Council funding.
10. Make a permanent \$30 million annual investment with ongoing inflationary increases into the BC Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund to continue supporting charities, not for profit organizations, and free community events.
11. Provide the Scotiabank Dance Centre with \$5 million in funding to help secure the future of the centre and the benefits they provide to the greater community.

12. Contribute toward Science World's five-year plan of \$80 million for critical infrastructure and \$35 million for classroom and gallery space.
13. Recommit to fairly compensating creators and publishers by paying the royalty rates set by the Copyright Board for materials used in schools.
14. Renew the BC book publishing tax credit for another five years.
15. Provide sustainable funding to museums and the heritage sector, including Provincial Heritage Properties.
16. Provide stable funding to Indigenous arts and culture, including an annual fund of approximately \$750,000 to support repatriation projects in Indigenous communities.

Public Libraries

17. Increase permanent funding for public libraries to \$30 million annually with ongoing inflationary increases, and support services to rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

Sport

18. Increase funding for amateur sport by \$15 million over three years.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture and Agri-Foods

19. Consult with farmers and industry partners to develop a long-term strategy that addresses the impacts of climate change and associated financial challenges, and ensures the sector's resiliency.
20. Review the *Assessment Act* by launching a government industry taskforce to review the minimum farm revenue threshold.
21. Support farmers to address water supply concerns by allocating sufficient financial resources, establishing an irrigation framework, and allocating resources to support farmers to complete applications for groundwater use licences.
22. Provide increased, multi-year funding to the BC Association of Farmers Markets for the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon.

23. Expand incentives for farmers to replant and modernize crops.
24. Increase meat processing capacity in BC by supporting infrastructure and training.
25. Implement policies and programs to address food insecurity, food waste, and unaffordability with specific attention to BC's most vulnerable.

Clean and Renewable Energy

26. Diversify clean and renewable energy, such as geothermal, hydrogen, fusion, solar, and wind, by:
 - a. incentivizing institutions to modernize electrical grids;
 - b. investing in the means to store and distribute energy; and
 - c. working with remote, rural, and Indigenous communities to increase access.
27. Simplify the existing geothermal tenure and well permitting processes to make geothermal solutions more accessible.
28. Commission an energy pathways assessment to look at BC's entire energy system, including electricity and natural gas.
29. Create a funding stream for district energy systems.

Labour and Immigration

30. Increase funding to the Employment Standards Branch and expand its mandate to conduct proactive investigations to ensure fair, timely supports and resolution.
31. Address labour shortages by working with the federal government to improve immigration processes, including:
 - a. implementing a streamlined foreign employer registry process;
 - b. increasing funding for credential recognition for foreign workers; and
 - c. increasing the resources and support available for immigrant settlement services and credential recognition and upgrading.
32. Increase investment in rural and remote employment services by focusing on the realities of delivering services in unique areas.

Mining and Natural Resource Development

33. Streamline and increase capacity for permitting for natural resources, and clean and renewable energy projects to ensure predictable timelines and process efficiency, including working with the federal government to align processes.
34. Expand resources and supports to First Nations to build governance, administrative, and technical capacity as it relates to resource development and extraction.
35. Develop infrastructure for LNG marine fueling and amend the Low Carbon Fuel Standard to reduce marine emissions and encourage transitions from bunker fuel.
36. Sufficiently fund and prioritize the implementation of a critical minerals strategy including funding for geological research through Geoscience BC and other organizations.

Technology and Innovation

37. Develop a provincial data strategy and a provincial data authority to harness the potential of government held data.
38. Fund a \$10.8 million capital investment to finish outfitting the TRIUMF wet lab space for the development of medical isotopes.
39. Support Envision BC and the Digital Global Innovation Cluster.

Tourism

40. Continue to invest in expanding accessible and inclusive tourism within BC in partnership with stakeholders.
41. Provide \$2 million per year to food and wine tourism marketing.
42. Provide \$25 million in funding for the construction of a new amphitheater on the Pacific National Exhibition grounds.
43. Provide \$5 million to support the development of the Clayoquot Sound biosphere centre.

Trade

44. Advance supply chain collaboration by ensuring the provincial goods-movement strategy is integrated with neighbouring provincial trade corridor requirements and federal initiatives, and investing in trade and transportation infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change

45. Increase efforts to mitigate climate change, including by funding programs to rapidly decrease greenhouse gas emissions, supporting sub-regional modelling and planning, implementing necessary policy changes, and working with specific sectors like agriculture and forestry.
46. Ensure resiliency of BC's power grid by funding the acceleration of the buildup of the transmission system, funding a study with the goal of minimizing disruptions of the power grid due, and analyzing the use of micro grids with energy storage in developing a resilient energy infrastructure.

Energy Efficiency

47. Support energy efficiency in buildings by:
 - a. developing a building retrofit strategy to ensure all buildings in BC meet climate resilience and net-zero emissions commitments;
 - b. integrating the Energy Conservation Assistance program into an expanded CleanBC Income-Qualified program;
 - c. supporting the Property Assessed Clean Energy program;
 - d. providing rebates and incentives for deep retrofit; and
 - e. encouraging heat pump installation, particularly in low-income households.
48. Eliminate BC Hydro's Step 2 rate.

Environmental Protection

49. Increase the budget for land use planning, including to: enhance provincial capacity through staff and resources and provide support for Indigenous nations to create, negotiate, implement, and modernize land use plans.

50. Fund Indigenous Guardians and on-the-land youth programs to ensure effective stewardship and governance of lands and waters.

Fish and Wildlife

51. Increase fees for licences and violations and dedicate all funds to maintain and restore fish, wildlife, and habitat.

52. Study and report on the establishment of a provincial salmon recovery office, in consultation with key stakeholders, to oversee and support policies and watershed-level efforts related to wild pacific salmon recovery in BC.

53. Create a BC Fisheries Loan Board in consultation with fish-harvester organizations in BC, financial institutions, and the Provincial Loan Board developers in the Atlantic provinces.

54. Increase the capacity of the environmental enforcement and investigation units within the BC Conservation Officer Service so they can effectively enforce the 11 values outlined in the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, including enforcement against corporate infractions such as the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*.

Invasive Species

55. Address the threat of invasive species by:

- Implementing and enforcing invasive species regulatory tools;
- Funding prevention, early detection, and immediate response; and
- Providing dedicated staff and funding to address the effective rehabilitation of fire and flood-impacted areas.

Parks and Recreation

56. Provide increased, long-term funding for BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC to support:

- Long-term planning, development, and maintenance of trails, day-use sites, and campsites;
- Partnerships with First Nations on recreation projects;
- Improved accessibility of recreation facilities;
- Maintenance of roads and infrastructure;
- Climate change mitigation efforts; and

- Timely approval of applications for trail and site developments and maintenance from volunteer-led recreation groups.

57. Increase revenue in the BC Parks system by implementing a one-time inflationary province-wide increase of \$3-5 per night for provincial campsite fees.

58. Provide increased grants and funding to volunteer organizations that maintain provincial parks and trails.

Recycling and Waste

59. Include industrial, commercial, and institutional material in the Extended Producer Responsibility program to make it fair and inclusive for retailers, small businesses, offices, and schools.

60. Develop a program, such as an extended producer responsibility program, deposit refund, or gear registration, for commercial fishing and aquaculture gear used in British Columbia industry that will reduce gear loss, support recovery of gear from the marine environment and enable proper processing and end-of-life management of retrieved materials.

61. Encourage electric and zero-emission vehicle battery recycling by establishing incentives for vehicle battery recycling programs; commissioning a study and action plan; and providing investment for current recycling plants to increase their capacity.

Sustainability Efforts

62. Institute vehicle testing to control carbon emissions and air pollutants from heavy trucks and buses.

63. Develop and adopt lower-carbon concrete standards and move towards performance-based specifications to allow the concrete industry to determine how best to reduce emissions while remaining competitive globally.

Water

64. Create the conditions to restore water and to recharge the aquifer inlets located adjacent to the Elk River at Elko.

65. Allocate \$25,000 to fund a South Country workshop focused on the challenges and solutions in a dry region.

66. Provide \$1 million per year funding for four years for the review of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System and Operating Plan.

FISCAL AND REGULATORY POLICY

Carbon Tax

67. Review the application of the carbon tax with a view to ensuring competitiveness between BC-based and imported products, examining impacts on and ensuring equity between different regions of the province, and promoting and supporting decarbonization.
68. Develop an output-based pricing system in consultation with stakeholders to improve the competitiveness foundation for BC's leading export sectors and avoid lost benefits and job losses linked to carbon leakage.

Provincial Sales Tax

69. Review the application of the PST on used vehicles sales and on vehicles over \$55,000 to support affordability.
70. Exempt tool purchases from the PST for registered apprentices and technicians.

Specific Regulatory Measures

71. Evaluate the regulatory and approval processes across all ministries and agencies to ensure timeliness, efficiency, and predictability, including by working with the federal government to align processes.
72. Address illegal online gaming through a strong regulatory and enforcement regime, with the aim of keeping gaming revenue in BC and supporting the Community Gaming Grants program.

Small Business

73. Review the employer health tax exemption threshold for small businesses to address impacts related to rising wages and inflation.
74. Enact prompt payment legislation.
75. Provide funding for programs and organizations that support young entrepreneurs and new businesses, including providing \$450,000 in loan capital per year for three years for Futurpreneur.

HEALTH

Chronic Diseases and Complex Conditions

76. Fund complex and chronic illness clinics or care hubs, such as the Centre for Complex Chronic Diseases at BC Women's Hospital, for those with chronic illnesses and co-morbidities.
77. Resource the development and implementation of a provincial dementia strategy.
78. Invest in the development and implementation of a provincial diabetes strategy to improve prevention (type 2), screening, treatment, and health outcomes for all types of diabetes.
79. Improve access to multiple sclerosis treatments through public funding of ocrelizumab and ofatumumab.
80. Improve supports and services for those diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis by establishing guidelines, developing specific billing codes, and training medical professionals to increase awareness.
81. Improve treatment of Parkinson's disease by maintaining and expanding specialized staff, training health professionals to better support patients, and providing timely access to innovative medications and therapies such as deep brain stimulation.

Community Care and Seniors

82. Provide funding to expand residential care facilities.
83. Provide funding to residential care facilities to meet a minimum of four hours of daily care per resident and improve oversight, transparency and reporting.
84. Move forward with the replacement of the F.W. Green Memorial Home long-term care facility.
85. Support seniors to age in place by increasing and standardizing funding for home care, home support, and respite.

Health Human Resources

86. Address staff shortages in the health care sector through:
 - a. recruitment and retention incentives;
 - b. streamlining credential recognition for out-of-BC health care providers;

- c. providing funding for the completion of minor training variances for internationally trained professionals; and
- d. increasing post-secondary seats in areas such as nursing, medical radiation technology, midwifery, and speech language pathology and audiology.

87. Regulate physician assistants under the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia to allow for physician assistants to be incorporated in the BC health care system.

Hospice and Palliative Care

88. Address gaps and barriers in hospice and palliative care treatment and support by:

- a. providing equitable, predictable, and stable funding;
- b. increasing funding for grief and bereavement services and training; and
- c. establishing a provincial database for palliative care metrics and reporting capabilities.

Medical Devices and Equipment

89. Improve the coverage and accessibility of medical devices and equipment, including:

- a. re-evaluating equipment funding for adults to ensure comprehensive support;
- b. introducing funding for hearing aids;
- c. creating a seamless orthotics funding plan; and
- d. reviewing the Legislative Funding Cap for Ceiling Lift Systems.

90. Consider amending the Employment and Assistance Regulation to align with current market pricing for scooters and lifts.

Public Health

91. Enhance BC's HPV immunization program by expanding the functionality of ImmsBC to provide HPV vaccines and extending HPV vaccination coverage to all genders up to and including age 26.

92. Fund two doses of shingles vaccine for older British Columbians and ensure the vaccination is available at community pharmacies.

93. Increase the sales tax percentage for e-cigarettes and vaping products and participate in the federal government's e-cigarette tax framework and invest in tobacco and vaping education for children and youth.

Research

94. Continue to support health and life science research, including investing in the Praxis Spinal Cord Institute, ADSC stem cell research and development, and the Vancouver Prostate Centre's new model of drug discovery.

Rural and Remote Communities

95. Ensure equitable access to health care services for rural and remote communities by:

- a. funding community-operated health centres;
- b. expanding funding for and access to medical travel for rural and remote residents;
- c. implementing recruitment and retention incentives for health care workers;
- d. investing in digital health solutions;
- e. providing funding to expand services for patient navigators; and
- f. shifting towards community-driven planning.

Surgeries

96. Invest in surgical day centres to expand ambulatory care for day surgeries such as joint replacement surgeries.

HOUSING

Development and Data

97. Support smaller local governments and municipalities in updating and increasing the infrastructure and services needed to accommodate increased growth.

98. Ensure consistent, comprehensive, and up-to-date data and documents related to real estate, such as real estate transactions, property documents, and inspection reports, are readily available, including ensuring local government have the resources to provide digital access to documents.

99. Include details about tiny homes in the BC Building Code.

Homeownership

100. Improve and expand incentives for first-time home buyers including increasing the First Time Home Buyers program's property tax transfer exemption threshold and reviewing it on an annual basis to reflect changing market conditions.

Housing Supply

101. Increase the full spectrum of housing supply in partnership with municipal and federal governments by:
 - a. implementing incentives to build housing, including non-market housing;
 - b. partnering with community organizations and foundations;
 - c. increasing investments in supportive housing; and
 - d. providing funding to address rising costs.
102. Coordinate a housing policy across all levels of government to remove barriers to housing supply, including creating a housing development and affordability dashboard to measure availability and progress.

Rental Housing

103. Provide means-tested support to targeted renters, including persons with disabilities and low-income households.
104. Provide additional support for pet-friendly not for profit housing through BC Housing and engage with landlords and other stakeholders to find cooperative solutions to increase the availability and affordability of pet-friendly housing with appropriate protection and timely dispute resolution for landlords, strata, and co-operatives.
105. Improving housing supports for seniors by providing more affordable housing options, increasing the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters and adjusting income thresholds for accessing means-tested affordable housing to ensure it is reflective of market conditions.

Social and Supportive Housing

106. Support people experiencing homelessness by providing year-round funding for permanent shelter services that include appropriate, comprehensive supports to transition to permanent housing.
107. Accelerate the delivery of complex care housing.

K-12 EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Capital Funding

108. Provide targeted funding for the purchase, maintenance and relocation costs of portables and establish clearly defined timelines to ensure their use is temporary.
109. Allocate necessary capital funding for the seismic mitigation program.
110. Increase funding for zero-emission school buses so that all new school buses are zero-emission.
111. Acknowledge the value and necessity of community-owned and operated schools and provide funding for necessary maintenance upgrades including Wells-Barkerville Elementary.

Child Care and Early Childhood Development

112. Provide funding for a means-tested summer camp subsidy.

Independent and Private Schools

113. Increase per learner funding for independent, group 1, provincial online schools.

Operational Funding

114. Provide funding for anti-racism, disability awareness, and inclusive reconciliation programs.

Students with Support Needs

115. Close the gap between the actual cost of inclusive education and provincial funding provided to school districts.
116. Reduce wait times by increasing and targeting funding for psychoeducational testing.
117. Support the inclusion of students with support needs by reinstating the special education equipment grant so children with mobility challenges can access all areas of schools with dignity and increasing the ability for kids with disabilities to go to school full-time and be included in field trips with their peers.
118. Support students with dyslexia by offering structured literacy programs and providing targeted funding and mandatory dyslexia screening starting in kindergarten.

Vulnerable Students

119. Provide financial support to school districts that provide settlement supports for newcomers to Canada who are ineligible for federal funding, including refugee claimants and temporary foreign workers.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Addiction Treatment and Recovery

120. Ensure timely access to addiction treatment and recovery services across the province by investing in inpatient and outpatient services and increasing the per diem for registered supportive recovery homes to \$60, indexed to inflation.

Crisis Intervention

121. Provide sufficient funding of at least \$5 million to the BC Crisis Line Network to enable crisis centres to answer all the calls they receive and invest in the BC Crisis Line Network's efforts to build consistent protocols with 911, police, ambulance, health authorities, and peer-assisted crisis teams.

Mental Health Services and Supports

122. Increase funding for and access to mental health services and supports throughout the province, including:
 - a. making psychiatric medications financially accessible;
 - b. regulating counselling services and providing them as a benefit under MSP; and
 - c. ensuring services are seamless and consistent across all health authorities.
123. Provide stable funding for Blueprint's First Responder Resiliency Program and fatherhood research program.
124. Ensure proper resourcing for hospital and community-based serious mental illness services and supports including protecting the provision under the *Mental Health Act* that allows for the judicious use of involuntary treatment, and increasing collaborative partnerships with families within the BC mental health system.

Youth

125. Increase funding for evidence-based child and youth mental health supports throughout the province, including school-based supports and early intervention and prevention mental health supports.
126. Provide funding to organizations that provide similar youth health and wellness services as Foundry, such as the Chilliwack Youth Health Centre.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Access to Justice and Legal Aid

127. Improve access to legal aid, particularly for family law matters, by increasing funding and reviewing the income threshold for legal aid eligibility.
128. Provide ongoing, sustainable operational funding to child and youth advocacy centres in the province.
129. Expand BC notaries' scope of practice to non-contentious areas of the law by modernizing the *Notaries Act*, including ensuring ongoing professional development and education, and include notaries alongside lawyers in the current *Mortgage Services Act* so that they enjoy the same rights when performing the same function.

Contraband Tobacco

130. Address contraband tobacco through increased enforcement, including creating a contraband tobacco enforcement team and working with other provinces and the federal government to prevent illegal tobacco shipments.

Correctional Services

131. Guarantee access to basic education in correctional centres across BC by adequately funding K-12 education as a special program fund for school districts that have a correctional centre.

Emergency Communications

132. Create a cell phone levy for emergency communications services to provide stable and predictable funding for the province's emergency communications centres.

Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Assault

133. Provide comprehensive supports to people experiencing gender-based violence, including funding for coordination initiatives in the anti-violence sector and increased funding for and access to a flexible continuum of housing supports.
134. Increase funding to the Stopping the Violence and PEACE (Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment) programs.
135. Support survivors of sexual assault by increasing funding for sexual assault centres across BC and ensuring comprehensive, accurate, and multi-lingual information about services is available to survivors.
136. Invest in violence prevention, including committing annual funding for sexualized violence prevention offices, programs, and initiatives at post-secondary campuses across BC and allocating funding for primary male violence prevention efforts engaging men and boys.

Natural Disasters and Emergency Preparedness

137. Prioritize investment in flood mitigation efforts, including for building appropriate infrastructure, conducting floodplain mapping, investing in an earthquake resilience strategy, and providing funding for sub-regional and regional planning with First Nations participation.
138. Provide \$6.75 million in base funding to regional districts for emergency management.
139. Purchase a used, H1-capable, night vision rescue helicopter.

Policing

140. Re-examine the funding formula for policing to ensure equitable payments are being made by rural areas that utilize municipal RCMP services.

Restorative Justice

141. Provide increased, ongoing funding to community-based restorative justice organizations with consideration for distributing funding based on the workload of each organization.

Sex Work

142. Increase funding for front-line organizations across BC that deliver peer-led and person-centred programming for individuals who engage in sex work and provide sustainable funding for the BC bad date and aggressor reporting system.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Children and Youth in Care

143. End the Ministry of Children and Family Development's policy of claiming federal benefits for 54.01/54.1 kinship families or provide an equivalent top-up, to provide equity with other family support programs.
144. Provide children still enrolled in the Child in Home of Relative Program the same financial monthly maintenance benefits as children in other support programs and foster care.

Children and Youth with Support Needs

145. Increase investment in the continuum of services for children and youth with support needs.
146. Increase access and funding to early intervention services and family supports for children with support needs, including expanding access to evidence-based screening and assessments.
147. Increase resources and supports for families of children and youth with support needs through increased funds for in-own-home child care contracts, increased access to and funding for respite care, and additional funding supports for parents of children with complex needs.
148. Increase funding to the At Home Program to extend the cutoff age for services for youth with severe disabilities to 24 years.

Community Social Services and Social Policy

149. Strengthen the inclusion and resilience of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by supporting community living organizations, providing funding for community program workers, and promoting community living as a career opportunity.

Not for Profit Organizations

150. Support the not for profit sector by streamlining grant processes, providing stable, multi-year funding, and reviewing the allowable administrative ratios in contracts and evaluating access to a portable sector-wide pension plan.
151. Provide funding to Garage Community Space Society to build a commercial kitchen and install security systems.
152. Waive the fee currently required when making a change to the directors on a liquor licence for not for profit organizations, including Legions, to reduce the financial burden.

Poverty Reduction

153. Improve support to individuals who receive income and disability assistance by increasing rates and indexing to inflation, increasing earning exemptions, creating a graduated scale, and reviewing the spousal cap.
154. Immediately raise the rate of the provincial burial program from \$2,100 to \$3,500 and index the rate to inflation.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT

Active Transportation

155. Reform fiscal planning policies to reflect government goals to achieve 50 percent of trips by walking, cycling, and transit by 2050 by increasing the budget for BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program.
156. Provide multi-year financing for accessible pathways for active transportation between communities.
157. Increase means-tested incentives for e-bikes.

Aerospace

158. Support progressive airlines and airports to decarbonize their operations, including investing in the Vancouver Airport Authority's efforts to accelerate the deployment of clean aviation fuels in BC.
159. Develop financial supports to build on BC's first-mover advantage and attract more international air services to BC.

Ports and Marine Shipping

160. Provide additional financial support for marine sectors, specifically heavy-duty equipment pilot project initiatives, in order to help maritime industrial operations across the province become more sustainable, and enable the expansion of pilots to incentivize hydrogen and renewable diesel production.

Public Transit

161. Establish public, high-quality, affordable, reliable, and accessible inter-community transit services that connect all communities in BC.
162. Advocate to the federal government to launch a tri-partite national commission with the provinces and transit agencies to develop a more resilient and equitable funding model for public transit and to move forward the launch of the Permanent Transit Fund by two years.
163. Increase funding to HandyDART to ensure services are available seven days a week across the province.
164. Provide free transit for all children and youth under age 19.
165. Provide a free monthly bus pass to people with disabilities.

Transportation Infrastructure

166. Invest in road and highway projects such as twinning the highway from the Alberta border to Fort St. John, the AR1 North South Interconnector, and the Reconnecting the Rockies infrastructure project.

APPENDIX A: PRESENTATIONS

411 Seniors Centre, Marion Pollack (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Advanced Biofuels Canada, Doug Hooper (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Alliance of BC Students, Aryanna Chartrand (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Alma Mater Society (AMS) of the University of British Columbia (UBC), Erin Co (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Alzheimer Society of B.C., Jennifer Lyle (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Ambulance Paramedics of BC - CUPE Local 873, Troy Clifford (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Ann Davis Transition Society, Patti MacAhonic (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Appraisal Institute of Canada – British Columbia, Sandra Behm (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Archway Community Services, Shairose Jinnah (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
Arthritis Society Canada, Joanne DiNardo (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Association for Mineral Exploration, Kendra Johnston (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Association of BC Public Library Directors, Susan Walters (12-Jun-23, Virtual)
Association of Book Publishers of BC, Matea Kulic (12-Jun-23, Virtual)
Association of Fundraising Professionals Greater Vancouver Chapter, Neil McEachern (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Association of Service Providers for Employability & Career Training (ASPECT BC), Janet Morris-Reade (29-May-23, Victoria)
Atypical Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (aHUS) Canada / Rare Diseases, Bryant Harbourne (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Tunya Audain (31-May-23, Vancouver)
AutismBC, Julia Boyle (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Automotive Retailers Association, Adrian Scovell (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Battered Women's Support Services, Angela Marie MacDougall (29-May-23, Victoria)
BC Adaptive Snowsports, Will Davis (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
BC Alliance for Arts + Culture, Rainbow Robert (30-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Alliance for Healthy Living, Rita Koutsodimos (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Anesthesiologists' Society, Lindi Thibodeau (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Association of Farmers' Markets, Heather O'Hara (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Building Trades, Jeremy Allingham (30-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Care Providers Association & EngAge BC, Terry Lake (31-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Centre for Women in the Trades, Karen Dearlove (30-May-23, Vancouver)
BC CEO Network, Ernest Baatz (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, Samantha Gambling (12-Jun-23, Victoria)
BC Chiropractic Association, Dr. Zehra Gerretsen (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
BC Complex Kids Society, Brenda Lenahan (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, Chris Schultz-Lorentzen (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
The BC Crisis Line Network, Stacy Ashton (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Cycling Coalition, Michael Koski (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Dairy Association, Jeremy Dunn (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
BC Federation of Labour, Sussanne Skidmore (31-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Federation of Students, Jessie Niikoi (30-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Fruit Growers' Association, Peter Simonsen (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
BC Health Coalition, Usman Mushtaq (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Hockey, Cameron Hope (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Libraries Co-operative, Kevin Millsip (12-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Lung Association, Chris Lam (31-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Museums Association, Ryan Hunt (29-May-23, Victoria)
BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres, Brooke McLardy (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Pharmacy Association, Geraldine Vance (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Police Association, Ralph Kaisers (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, Rowan Burdge (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association, Brian Leonard (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
BC Professional Fire Fighters Association, Gord Ditchburn (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
BC Real Estate Association, Mark Sakai (30-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Recreation and Parks Association, Katie Fenn (30-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association, Kelly Scott (31-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Rural Health Network, Paul Adams (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
BC Schizophrenia Society , Jack Middleton (31-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Seafood Alliance, Christina Burridge (30-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Self Advocate Leadership Network Society, Michael McLellan (31-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Snowmobile Federation, Peter Doyle (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
BC Society of Transition Houses , Amy FitzGerald (30-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Sustainable Energy Association, Tom Hackney (29-May-23, Victoria)
BC Teachers' Federation, Carole Gordon (31-May-23, Vancouver)
BC Ultimate Society, Brian Gisel (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
BC Watershed Security Coalition, Coree Tull (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
BC Wildlife Federation, Jesse Zeman (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
BC Wildlife Federation Region 7B (Peace-Liard), Gerry Paille (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)
BCEdAccess Society, Tracy Humphreys (29-May-23, Victoria)
BGC Okanagan, Jeremy Welder (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

Blueprint, Dr. David Kuhl (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

Board Voice Society, Tim Agg (31-May-23, Vancouver)

Breakfast Club of Canada, Ryan Baker (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

British Columbia Association for Behaviour Analysis, Dr. Sarah Pastrana (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

British Columbia Association of Institutes and Universities, Nikki Macdonald (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

British Columbia Dental Association, Dr. David Lim (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)

British Columbia Funeral Association, Bradd Tuck (29-May-23, Victoria)

British Columbia Library Association, Rina Hadziev (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

British Columbia Library Trustees Association, Dr. Darra Hofman (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

British Columbia School Trustees Association, Tracy Loffler (31-May-23, Vancouver)

British Columbia Seniors Living Association, Graham Freeman (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Building Owners and Managers Association of British Columbia, Zach Segal (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

Burnaby Board of Trade, Paul Holden (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Caledonia Ramblers Hiking Club/Prince George Backcountry Recreation Society, Dave King (6-Jun-23, Prince George)

Camosun College Faculty Association, Lynelle Yutani (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

Canadian Addiction Treatment Centres, Amanda Claeys (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists-British Columbia, Sarah Erdelyi (29-May-23, Victoria)

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Geoff Morrison (29-May-23, Victoria)

Canadian Association of Physician Assistants, Lisa Stewart (12-Jun-23, Victoria)

Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch, Aleem Bhamal (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

Canadian Cancer Society, Charles Aruliah (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, BC Office, Alexander Hemingway (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Jairo Yunis (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Canadian Geothermal Energy Association, Alison Thompson (5-Jun-23, Kitimat)

Canadian International Dragon Boat Festival Society, Dominic Lai (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

Canadian Media Producers Association, BC Branch, Tracey Friesen (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Canadian Men's Health Foundation, TC Carling (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays, Natalie Hake (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division, Kim Mackenzie (12-Jun-23, Victoria)

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, British Columbia, Marina Mulligan (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Canadian Society for Disability and Oral Health, Joan Rush (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Group, Jason Arruda (29-May-23, Victoria)

Canuck Place Children's Hospice Society, Denise Praill (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)

Capilano Faculty Association, Eduardo Azmitia Pardo (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

Capilano Students' Union, Manpreet Kaur (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Capital Bike, Corey Burger (29-May-23, Victoria)

Cariboo Mining Association, Richard Wittner (6-Jun-23, Prince George)

Cement Association of Canada, Ken Carrusca (30-May-23, Vancouver)

The Centre for Child Development of the Lower Mainland, Gerard Bremault (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Centre for Family Equity, Viveca Ellis (31-May-23, Vancouver)

Nicole Charlwood (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia, Lori Mathison (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Kai Horsfield (29-May-23, Victoria)

Children's Autism Federation of BC, Cassandra Lopez (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

Chilliwack Youth Health Centre, Robert Lees (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Circles of Support and Accountability-Vancouver and Fraser Valley, Maureen Donegan (31-May-23, Vancouver)

City of Burnaby, James Lota (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

City of Dawson Creek, Jeremy Earl (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)

City of Fort St. John, Mayor Lilia Hansen (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)

City of Prince George, Cori Ramsay (6-Jun-23, Prince George)

City of Vancouver, Patrice Impey (31-May-23, Vancouver)

Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, Rebecca Hurwitz (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Clinical Pharmacists Academy, Dr. Alan Low (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

Coast Mental Health, Keir Macdonald (31-May-23, Vancouver)

Collective for Restoration of Lower Elk Aquifer, Karen Bergman (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

College of New Caledonia Students' Union, Jasvir Singh (6-Jun-23, Prince George)

College of the Rockies, Paul Vogt (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

College of the Rockies Faculty Association, Sheena Svitich (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Jennifer Gray-Grant (31-May-23, Vancouver)

Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society, Robyn Hooper (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)

Commercial Bear Viewing Association, Kathy MacRae (29-May-23, Victoria)

Communitas Supportive Care, Matt Dirks (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)

Community Connections, Sheena Wells (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)

Community Connections Society of Southeast BC, Gary Eisele (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

Comox Valley Regional District, Jesse Ketler (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)

Concrete BC, Tyler Thorson (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia, Annabree Fairweather (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Connect the Coast Society, Tannis Braithwaite (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

Blaine Cook (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Council of Canadian Innovators, Benjamin Bergen (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

Council of Canadians - Terrace Chapter, Dave Shannon (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC, Leslie Gaudette (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)

Covenant House Vancouver, Justin P. Goodrich (31-May-23, Vancouver)

CUPE British Columbia, Karen Ranalletta (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

CUPE Fraser Valley District Council, Tony Rebelo (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
CUPE Kootenay District Council, Michelle Bennett (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)
CUPE Local 1936, Sheryl Burns (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
CUPE Local 3799, Joyce Henley (6-Jun-23, Prince George)
CUPE Local 728, Tammy Murphy (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
CUPE Metro Vancouver District Council, Lee-Ann Lalli (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
CUPE North Area District Council, Jeanette Beauvillier (6-Jun-23, Prince George)
CUPE Okanagan Mainline District Council, Nicci Cabrejos (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
CUPE Vancouver Island District Council, Andrea Craddock (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)
Curl BC, Scott Braley (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Andrea Curtis (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Corey Cyr (31-May-23, Vancouver)
The Dance Foundation, Linda Blankstein (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
David Suzuki Foundation, Tom Green (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Dawson Creek & District Chamber of Commerce , Duncan Malkinson (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)
Dawson Creek Literacy Society, Michele Mobley (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)
Decoda Literacy Solutions, Sandra Lee (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Destination Greater Victoria, Paul Nursey (29-May-23, Victoria)
Diabetes Canada, Joan King (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
DigiBC, Loc Dao (29-May-23, Victoria)
Digital Global Innovation Cluster, Sue Paish (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Disability Action of Canada, William Leggat (12-Jun-23, Victoria)
District of Kitimat, Warren Waycheshen (5-Jun-23, Kitimat)
Diverse Abilities Programs and Training, Gina Martin (29-May-23, Victoria)
Douglas Students' Union, Bailey Cove (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Down Syndrome Society of British Columbia, Tamara Taggart (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Downtown Victoria Business Association, Jeff Bray (29-May-23, Victoria)
Dyslexia BC, Cathy McMillan (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Ecotrust Canada, Dylan Heerema (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)
Elders Council For Parks In BC, Wayne Stetski (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)
Electrical Contractors Association of BC, Matt MacInnis (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Emergency Communications Professionals of BC, Donald Grant (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Emergency Planning Secretariat, Gillian Fuss (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
Emily Carr Students' Union, Kamila Bashir (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Ending Violence Association of BC, Ninu Kang (31-May-23, Vancouver)
English Language Learners Consortium, Jen Mezei (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Fairness for Children Raised by Relatives, Shari Monsma (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Family Services of Greater Vancouver, Maria Howard (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
FarmFolk CityFolk, Abra Brynne (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, Monika Bittel (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Federation of Post-Secondary Educators, Brent Calvert (12-Jun-23, Virtual)
First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, Adrienne Montani (31-May-23, Vancouver)
First Nations Fisheries Council of BC, Astrid Niemann-Zajac (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
First Things First Okanagan, Henry Sielmann (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
For Our Kids, Ruth Kamnitzer (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Fort Nelson Chamber of Commerce, Bev Vandersteen (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Fort St. John & District Chamber of Commerce, Mitchel Chilcott (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)
FortisBC, Doug Slater (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Futurpreneur, Andrea Welling (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
The Garage Community Space Society, Sharon Bandstra (5-Jun-23, Kitimat)
Global Container Terminals Inc., Marko Dekovic (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Genome BC, Suzanne Gill (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Geoscience BC, Gavin Dirom (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Gingolx Village Government, George Moore, Claude Barton, John Moore, Arlene Lincoln (6-Jun-23, Prince George)
GLOCAL Foundation of Canada, Faye Ying (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Lori Goldman (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, Bridgitte Anderson (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Greater Victoria Alliance for Literacy, Janine Hannis (29-May-23, Victoria)
Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, Bruce Williams (12-Jun-23, Victoria)
Greater Victoria Teachers' Association, Ilda Turcotte (29-May-23, Victoria)
Richard Griffin (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
GSK Canada, Lisa Lovlin (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)
The Guide Outfitters Association of BC, Scott Ellis (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
Jenn Halldorson (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)
Health and Home Care Society of BC (Care BC), Inge Schamborzki (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Health Sciences Association of BC, Kane Tse (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada, Martin Luymes (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Home Medical Equipment Providers Association of BC, Evan Kellett (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Hope and Area Transition Society, Gerry Dyble (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
Hospital Employees' Union, Mike Old (30-May-23, Vancouver)
HUB Cycling, Erin O'Melinn (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Hydrogen BC , Matthew Klippenstein (30-May-23, Vancouver)
IATSE Local 168, George Scott (29-May-23, Victoria)
Immunize.io Health Association, Ajit Johal (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Inclusion BC, Karla Verschoor (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Independent Long-Term Care Councils Association of BC, Nola Galloway (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Innergex Renewable Energy, Julia Balabanowicz (6-Jun-23, Prince George)
Insurance Bureau of Canada, Greg Moy (29-May-23, Victoria)
Invasive Species Council of BC, Nadia Chan (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
Ishtar Women's Resource Society, Meredith Crough (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Island Coastal Economic Trust, Brodie Guy (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)
Justice Institute Students' Union, Lief Garrett (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Kamloops Art Gallery, Margaret Chrumka (12-Jun-23, Virtual)
Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, Dan Rogers (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
Kelowna's Gospel Mission, Carmen Rempel (8-Jun-23, Penticton)

Key City Theatre, Galen Olstead (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)
KidSport BC, Katelynn Ramage (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Kitselas Development Corporation, Bruno Belanger (5-Jun-23, Kitimat)
Kitselas Geothermal , Dr. David Try, Alison Thompson (5-Jun-23, Kitimat)
Kootenay East Regional Hospital District, David Wilks (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Kootenay Library Federation, Kevin Atherton (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)
Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Randall Heidt (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Kwantlen Student Association, Diamond Obera (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
LandlordBC, David Hutniak (30-May-23, Vancouver)
The Law Society of British Columbia, Don Avison (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Let's Ride: Make Public Transit BC Wide, Maryann Abbs (12-Jun-23, Virtual)
Margo Levae (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
LIFE Recovery Association, Coletta Holmes (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
Literacy Now, Patricia Tribe (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
Living in Community, Halena Seiferling (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Living Wage for Families, Anastasia French (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Cynthia Lockrey (12-Jun-23, Victoria)
Brenden MacDonald (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Literacy Committee, Elaine Yamamoto (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation, Mayor Brad West (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Medicines Access Coalition - BC, Dr. Alan Low (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Men's Therapy Centre, Nick Sandor (29-May-23, Victoria)
Métis Nation BC, Colette Trudeau (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
Metro Vancouver, Jerry Dobrovolny (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Michael Smith Health Research BC, Roger Francis (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Midwives Association of British Columbia, Bernice Budz (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Mining Association of BC, Michael Goehring (31-May-23, Vancouver)
MISCELLANEOUS Productions Society, Elaine Carol (12-Jun-23, Virtual)
Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, Civi Prest (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
MOSAIC, Olga Stachova (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Motion Picture Production Industry Association, Gemma Martini (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco, Rick Barnum (31-May-23, Vancouver)
National Police Federation, Brian Sauvé (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Nelson and Area Action Group for Better Public Transportation, Keith Wiley (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Nelson and District Arts Council, Sydney Black (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)
New Car Dealers of British Columbia, Blair Qualey (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
Sarah Newton (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)
North Island Students' Union, Carissa Wilson (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)
North Shore Community Resources, Murray Mollard (30-May-23, Vancouver)
The North Shore Restorative Justice Society, Mara Veneman (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Northern Confluence Initiative, Nikki Skuce (13-Jun-23, Virtual)
Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society, Lisa Scott (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
Okanagan Basin Water Board, Anna Warwick Sears (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society, Ian Graham (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
OpenCircle, Line Porfon (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
OSNS Child & Youth Development Centre, Heather Miller (8-Jun-23, Penticton)
Outdoor Recreation Council of BC, Louise Pedersen (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)
Pacific Canbriam Energy, Donald MacLeod (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)
Pacific Legal Education and Outreach Society, Martha Rans (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Pacific National Exhibition, David Crawford (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Pacific Salmon Foundation, Michael Meneer (30-May-23, Vancouver)
Pacifica Housing, Carolina Ibarra (12-Jun-23, Victoria)
PacificSport Fraser Valley, Stephanie Rudnisky (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Barbara Parkin (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Parkinson Society BC, Jean Blake (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
Pearson College UWC, Craig Davis (12-Jun-23, Victoria)
Pembina Institute, Jessica McIlroy (14-Jun-23, Virtual)
PolyCan Health Centre, Andrew Mai (12-Jun-23, Victoria)
Praxis Spinal Cord Institute, Bill Barrable (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Prince Rupert Port Authority, Kevin Moraes (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Prisoners' Legal Services, Claire Kanigan (31-May-23, Vancouver)
Professional Employees Association, Cliff Haman (29-May-23, Victoria)
Prosthetics and Orthotics Association of BC, Yvonne Jeffreys (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Public Health Association of BC, Juan Solorzano (30-May-23, Vancouver)
qathet Community Justice Society, Jane Waterman (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Quesnel Cattlemen's Association, Sage Gordon (6-Jun-23, Prince George)
Quesnel Chamber of Commerce, Rick Wittner (6-Jun-23, Prince George)
Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, Harriet Permut (30-May-23, Vancouver)
The Realistic Success Recovery Society, Susan Sanderson (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
Regional District of East Kootenay, Rob Gay (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)
Research Universities Council of BC, Max Blouw (29-May-23, Victoria)
Resource Works Society, Margareta Dovgal (29-May-23, Victoria)
Revelstoke After School Society, Joanne Gawler (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)
Revelstoke Chamber of Commerce, Caroline Lachapelle, Rowan Hargreaves (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)
Revelstoke Heritage Railway Society, Jim Cullen (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)
Revelstoke Housing Society, Kira Wolf (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)
Rivershed Society of British Columbia, Justine Nelson (8-Jun-23, Abbotsford)
Terry Robertson (6-Jun-23, Prince George)
Royal Roads University, Dr. Veronica Thompson (12-Jun-23, Victoria)
RUNVAN, Eric Chene (15-Jun-23, Virtual)
Save Our Forest Team Comox Valley, Gillian Anderson (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)
Save our Northern Seniors (SONS), Margaret Little, Jim Collins (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)
School District No. 38 (Richmond), Debbie Tablotney, Cindy Wang (1-Jun-23, Richmond)
School District No. 43 (Coquitlam), Michael Thomas (31-May-23, Vancouver)

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay), Chris Johns (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

School District No. 59 (Peace River South) , Chad Anderson (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)

School District No. 60 (Peace River North), Helen Gilbert (6-Jun-23, Dawson Creek)

School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) , Michelle Waite (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)

Science World, Tracy Redies (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

SelfDesign Learning Foundation, Amber Papou (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Selkirk College, Lareena Rilkoff (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

Seniors Services Society of BC, Alison Silgardo (31-May-23, Vancouver)

Simon Fraser University, Joy Johnson (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

Small-Scale Meat Producers Association, Julia Smith (8-Jun-23, Penticton)

South Shuswap Health Services Society, Sue McCrae (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)

South Vancouver Seniors Hub Council, Marion Hartley (31-May-23, Vancouver)

Speech and Hearing BC, Becca Yu (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Spinal Cord Injury B.C., Nancy Harris (6-Jun-23, Prince George)

Sport BC, Rob Newman (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

Sport Medicine Council of British Columbia, Robert Joncas (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

Standing Water Nation, Robin Tavender (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Students' Union of Vancouver Community College, Gabby Sarnoh (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Summit Community Services Society, Sarah Jacklin (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

Surfrider Foundation Canada, Lucas Harris (29-May-23, Victoria)

Surrey Board of Trade, Jasroop Gosal (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Surrey Hospitals Foundation, Jane Adams (1-Jun-23, Richmond)

Take a Hike Foundation, Gordon Matchett (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Terrace Women's Resource Centre Society, Brandi Trudell-Davis (5-Jun-23, Kitimat)

Vicky Thomas (6-Jun-23, Prince George)

Thompson Rivers University, Brett Fairbairn (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

Thompson Rivers University Students' Union, Anel Jazybaveya (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Trails Society of British Columbia , Ciel Sander (8-Jun-23, Penticton)

The Treehouse Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, Leah Zille (31-May-23, Vancouver)

Trelawny Consulting Group Ltd., Bruce Batchelor (29-May-23, Victoria)

TRIUMF, Dr. Nigel Smith (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

UBC Okanagan , Dr. Phil Barker (8-Jun-23, Penticton)

Umbrella Society, Evan James (29-May-23, Victoria)

United Way British Columbia, Lisa Cyr (7-Jun-23, Revelstoke)

University of British Columbia, Dr. Gail Murphy (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

University of Northern British Columbia, Geoff Payne (6-Jun-23, Prince George)

University of Victoria, Kevin Hall (12-Jun-23, Victoria)

Unlikely Allies, Kathy MacRae (29-May-23, Victoria)

Vancity Community Foundation, Alvin Singh (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Vancouver Airport Authority, Trevor Boudreau (30-May-23, Vancouver)

Vancouver Community College Faculty Association , Taryn Thomson (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

Vancouver Foundation, Kevin McCort (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Vancouver Island Region Restorative Justice Association, Richard Tarnoff (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Vancouver Island Regional Library, Ben Hyman (5-Jun-23, Campbell River)

Vancouver Prostate Centre, Larry Goldenberg (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Vantage Point, Cherie Payne (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

Victoria Conservatory of Music, Nathan Medd (29-May-23, Victoria)

Victoria Hospice Society and Vancouver Island Federation of Hospices, Shaun Lorhan (29-May-23, Victoria)

Victoria Residential Builders Association, Casey Edge (12-Jun-23, Victoria)

Victoria Women's Transition House Society, Makenna Rielly (12-Jun-23, Victoria)

VisionQuest Recovery Society, Megan Worley (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Watersheds BC, Zita Botelho (12-Jun-23, Victoria)

Wells Barkerville Parent Advisory Committee, Dawn Leroy (6-Jun-23, Prince George)

West Coast LEAF, Humera Jabir (15-Jun-23, Virtual)

Western Canada Theatre, James MacDonald (12-Jun-23, Virtual)

Christina Wiebe (12-Jun-23, Victoria)

Wilderness Committee (on behalf of the BC Climate Emergency Campaign's Just Transition Working Group), Peter McCartney (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

Wildsight, John Bergenske (7-Jun-23, Cranbrook)

Wine Growers BC, Miles Prodan (8-Jun-23, Penticton)

Solita Work (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Echo Wylie (29-May-23, Victoria)

Yellow Point Ecological Society, Guy Dauncey (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, Tim Burkhart (13-Jun-23, Virtual)

Youth Climate Corps BC, Ben Simoni (14-Jun-23, Virtual)

YWCA Metro Vancouver, Erin Seeley (31-May-23, Vancouver)

APPENDIX B: WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Abbott Laboratories co.	BC Soccer Association & Sport BC	Canadian Council for Sustainable Aviation Fuels
AbbVie	BC Sport Cheer	Canadian Home Builders' of British Columbia
Achieve Anything Foundation	BC Tech	Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association
Action for Reform of Residential Care (ARRC) BC	BC Wheelchair Sports Association	Canadian Welding Bureau Group
Advocis	BC/Yukon Command of the Royal Canadian Legion	CanAge
Air Canada	Danielle Bellefleur	Canco
Air Rescue One Heli Winch Society	Sudan Belton	Canfor
Alberni Clayoquot Health Network	Tessa Bendig	Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable
Alberni District Co-operative Association, Armstrong Regional Cooperative, Dawson Co-operative Union, Fort St. John Co-operative, Four Rivers Co-op, Otter Farm & Home Co-operative, Slocan Valley Co-operative Association	Barry Benner	Capitol Theatre Restoration Society
Alberni Valley Food Security Society	BGC Canada	Joanne Carman
Patrick Allard	Trevor Blogg	CEFA Early Learning
Scott Allen	Rocky Blondin	Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs
Amalgamated Transit Union local 1724	Blueprint for the Coast	Cerebral Palsy Association of British Columbia
Dave Anderson	Board of Education of School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast)	Gilles Chaput
Archway Society For Domestic Peace	Jane Boulton	Tar Charbonneau
Armstrong Fluid Technology	Mitchell Boyd	ChargePoint Canada Inc
Arthritis Research Canada	Barbara Bradbury	Iva Cheung
ArtStarts in Schools	Nancy Brindley	Child Development Centre of Prince George and District
Association for Reformed Political Action Canada	British Columbia Amateur Athletics Association	Chilliwack Society for Community Living
Association of Administrative and Professional Staff at UBC	British Columbia Blind Sports and Recreation Association	Leslia Chow
Association of Interior Realtors	British Columbia Chamber of Commerce	Ranjan Chowdhury
Michael Aze	British Columbia Co-operative Association	Rita Chudnovsky
B.C. General Employees' Union (BCGEU)	British Columbia Gaming Industry Association	City of Kelowna
Tyler Bacon	British Columbia Lung Foundation	City of North Vancouver
Basic Income BC	British Columbia Mainland Cricket Association	City of Surrey
Basketball BC	British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals	CityHive Youth Engagement Society
BC Agriculture Council	British Columbia Trucking Association	Kathryn Clouston
BC Association for Child Development and Intervention	Joey Broda	Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
BC Colleges	Chelsea Brown	Christine Coles
BC Common Ground Alliance	Lee Bryant	Comox Valley Food Policy Council
BC Employment Standards Coalition	Roger Bryenton	Ron Conroy
BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative	Jatinderjit Buttar	Conseil culturel et artistique francophone Colombie-Britannique
BC Hotel Association	Sue Cairns	Convenience Industry Council of Canada
BC Lodging and Campgrounds Association	Maxwell Cameron	Itend Corman
BC Notary Association	Laura Campbell	Shawn Corrado
BC Retired Teachers' Association	Canadian Bankers Association	Maria Costa
BC Rugby	Canadian beverage Association	Jay Cottrell
	Canadian Commodity Tax Committees of Tax Executives Institute	Red Cottrell
		Cowichan Green Community

Cowichan Valley Co-operative Marketplace	Gerald Gregoire	Nathalie Kos
Cowichan Valley Hospice Society	Sharon Gregson	Naomi Kulhawy
Karen Crosby	Dijana Gres	Christopher Lacroix
Sharon Cross	Gymnastics BC	Stephanie Lagace
Krista Cunningham	Bob Hall	Douglas Laird
Cycling BC	Wendy Hall	Lakes Literacy (Lakes District Literacy Task Force)
Nathan Davidowicz	Trisha Halpenny	Laurie Landry
Chris Davies	Diane Hannah	Janet Lauman
Lynne Davies	Maurice Harting	Kelly Lautt
Richard Dawe	Jessica Hebert	Yau Lee
Kati Debelic	Sam Herniman	Leeward Cafe Co Ltd
Ray Deller	Heather Hiebert	Penny Lehan
J Deroo	Nathan Hind	Heather Lenarduzzi
Desert Valley Hospice Society	HME Home Health Ltd.	Lin Lin
Disability Alliance BC	Terry Hogan	Locum Home Inc
Al Div	Doug Hopwood	LUSH Valley Food Action Society
East Kootenay Climate Hub	Hornby Island Water Stewardship	MakeWay Foundation
E-Comm 9-1-1	Housing Central	Hilary L Marks
ECUAD Faculty Association	David Howe	David Matijasevich
Elk Valley Hospice	Karyn Huenemann	Jennifer Mauritz
Allan Elliott	Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited	Heather McCann
Tory Ellis	Kelley Inden	Garry McCracken
Ursula Ellis	Institute for Public Education BC	Dawn McIntyre
Joy Emmanuel	Invasive Species Council of Metro Vancouver	Heather McKenzie
Encompass Support Services Society	Bill Irving	Liz McLardy
Nadia Eng	Roz Isaac	Anthea McLauchlan
Alison Etter	Siobhan Jackson	Terri McLeod
Fateh Care Charity	Pat Jamieson	ME/FM Society of BC
Lyne Filiatrault	JDRF Canada	Arun Mehta
Sean Finch	Debra Johnson	Merck Canada
Richard Flynn	Chris Johnston	Onni Milne
Food Stash Foundation	Steven Jones	Mission Association for Community Living
Force of Nature Alliance	Kim Joo Min	Twyla Monasch
Lisa Ford	JTI-Macdonald	Patricia Montpellier
Deborah Foster	Judo BC	Mortgage Professionals Canada
Tim Franko	Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce	Matt Mosteller
Jordanna Freeman	Sangeeta Kandola	Motion
Friends of Rails to Trails Vancouver Island (FORT-VI)	Oriana Kapusta	MS Canada (formerly Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada)
Friends of the South Slopes Society	Natalie Karam	Music BC
Laurie Friskie	Jennifer Kayzer	My Voice, My Choice
Richelle Funk	Ronald Kelly	Nanaimo Climate Action Hub
Joey Gabrick	Jennifer Kennedy	Nanaimo Foodshare Society
Don Gayton	Kettle River Museum	Nanaimo Recycling Exchange Society
Doreen Gee	Kitimat Airshed Group Society	Jane Nares
General Fusion	Elaine Klimke	Nature United
GeoComply	Rob Knight	Nechako Literacy Outreach
John Gibson	Claudia Knos	Nechako Watershed Roundtable
Gilead Sciences Canada, Inc.	Sandra Knowles	Melody Nelms
Carla Gilley	Stephanie Ko	Nadeane Nelson
Travis Gingras	Candace Koch	Robyn Newton
Kyla Gowenlock	Kootenay Boundary Community Services Co-operative	Next Gen Men
Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce	Kootenay Boundary Patient Advisory Committee & Community	Christine O'Fallon
Greater Trail Hospice Society		

Jericho O'Connell	Simon Fraser Student Society	West Kootenay Regional Arts Council
Okanagan Climate Hub	Darnell Simpson	West Vancouver Schools
Okanagan College Students' Union	Tobijs Sinats	Tracy Westfall
Okanagan Transit Alliance	Jennifer Skelton	Hunter Wild
Eliza Olson	Mike Smith	Mary-Ellen Wilkins
Sydney Pace	Pamela Smith	Frank Williams
Pallium Canada	Softball BC	Brent Wingham
Brad Palm	South Island Prosperity Partnership	Natalie Wood Atkinson
Lorrie Parent	Melissa Sperry	YMCAs of BC
Diane Park	Sport BC / Special Olympics BC	Mirzada Zahic
Parkland	Michelle St Germain	Zero Waste BC
Thomas G Pater	Jovan Stajic	Eric Zinovich
Pathways Abilities Society	Stand.earth	
Peatlands Protection Society	Chris Stevens	
Lynn Perrin	Catherine Strickland	
Brianna Peters	Students' Union Okanagan of UBC	
Powell River Public Library	Sunshine Coast Association for Community Living (SCACL)	
Anita Prest	Sunshine Coast Conservation Association	
Jesse Prest	Rafe Sunshine	
Cora Price	Surrey Public Library	
Prince George Sexual Assault Centre Society	Surrey Warriors Cricket Club	
Laura Pringle	Tax Executives Institute	
ProMOTION Plus - Sport BC	Marusha Taylor	
Railway Association of Canada	Teck	
Resource Municipalities Coalition	TELUS Corporation	
Restaurants Canada	Tennis BC	
Retail Council of Canada	Elizabeth Theriault	
Tina Reynolds	Thompson-Nicola Regional District	
Tyler Rice	Thorsteinssons LLP	
Richmond Arts Coalition	Together Against Poverty Society	
Richmond FarmWatch	Avril Torrence	
Elisabeth Robertson	Tourism Industry Association of BC	
Ian Robertson	Transition Kamloops	
Anne Ross	Triathlon British Columbia (TriBC)	
Rothmans, Benson & Hedges	Ingrid Turk	
Rowing BC	United Fishermen & Allied Workers' Union - Unifor	
Gabriella Rudolph	Janette Van Vianen	
Barb Ruscheinski	Amanda Vance	
Safe Schools Coalition BC	Vancouver & District Labour Council	
Sean Sallis-Lyon	Vancouver Electric Vehicle Association	
Sardis Doorway for Mothers & Children Society	Vancouver Island Water Watch Coalition	
Alysha Saville	Vancouver School District	
Joshua Saville	Laura VanZant	
Bryce Schaufelberger	Kelvin Vawter	
Jana Schiff	Victoria Golden Rods & Reels	
School District No. 36 (Surrey)	Victoria Symphony	
School District No. 42, Maple Ridge - Pitt Meadows	Volleyball BC	
Sea To Sky Invasive Species Council (SSISC)	Mark Warren	
K Sears	Anelyse Weiler	
Tamara Sears	Jane Welton	
Shell Canada Limited	West Coast Cricket Association	
Joelle Siemens	West Kootenay Climate Hub	

