



Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the BC Government's Budget 2024.

Transportation - Transit

The BC government should -

- Invest heavily in public transit expansion
- Expand fare-free service to under 19
- Expand HandyDart service
- Provide reduced rates to seniors during off peak hours

In 2023, the BC government is only covering inflationary costs for increasing costs across the province, and not supporting transit expansions or additional hours of service. Kelowna is week-after-week achieving 110% of our pre-covid ridership levels. We are the highest performing large system in the province right (50w) now and are unable to improve our service levels without that being completely funded from taxpayers. A recent IPSOS survey showed 57% inf Kelowna say they would like to get around by public transit.

When under 19s receive free transit, it becomes equitable and affordable for families to commute via transit instead of cars; students have freedom to attend extra-curricular activities, visit friends, do social activities - all of which improve their mental health - and commute to jobs, etc.

HandyDart does not run on Sundays or Public Holidays, which forces people with disabilities/injuries to use taxis (subsidized), which is an inequitable financial burden.

Allowing seniors a discounted rate during off-peak hours incentivizes them not using/buying cars. We have a growing senior population and this would amount to massive reductions in emissions and wear and tear on infrastructure.

Funding is not increasing proportionately in cities or rural communities to achieve BC targets to double (walking, bicycling) public transit trips.

We need a new funding model for intercity bus service, \$5 million (recently announced) is completely insufficient. Intercity bus service affects the ability to go to hospital appointments, further education, etc. in nearby cities unless one owns a car.

Redirecting funding away from new road infrastructure and towards transit would stop induced demand (new roads fill up with more cars), and increase transit ridership, reduce car ownership, and improve affordability.

Home Retrofits and Energy Efficiency

The BC government needs to -

- Improve access to Heat Pumps
- Implement a basic Electricity Assistance Program
- Ensure commercial buildings switch to Heat Pumps

The government needs to spend \$400 million a year to support residential building retrofits across the province, end the use of methane gas in new buildings, and protect people against heat waves through the cooling power of heat pumps.

CleanBC states: Heat pumps can help people manage allergies by reducing airborne irritants like dust and **wildfire smoke**, and improve the overall air quality in the home.

Wildfire smoke has affected my health this past week. Currently, landlords do not qualify for any rebates to retrofit their homes/buildings with heat pumps. Qualifying homeowners have to jump through hoops to get rebates, and there are barriers, such as requiring additional expensive equipment, i.e. heat pump water heaters instead of electric water heaters to be eligible for rebates. Atlantic provinces provide 100% cost coverage for a heat pump to qualifying households. We propose a redistribution of funds from other CleanBC incentives that cater more to wealthy households.

Nearly 20% of Canadian households (BC must be at a similar level) experience 'energy poverty' due to the high cost of heating/cooling of their homes. Implementing a basic electricity assistance program for people who are unable to pay their bills or to complete a retrofit can be (200) modeled on the [Ontario Electricity Support Program](#). This is easy to access and would help people with low incomes, on disability, etc.

Achieving BC's commitment to reduce carbon emissions from the buildings sector by 59-64% by 2030 will require commercial buildings to be retrofitted with electric heat pumps, not just residential.

Climate Action

The BC Government must -

- Spend What is Needed to Tackle the Climate Crisis

Currently, the BC government is dedicating \$1.6 billion to climate action over the next 12 months, with funding going to both climate mitigation — actions to reduce GHGs— and climate adaptation — measures that prepare for climate-related impacts and boost community resilience.

Former World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern recommends that economies dedicate 2% of their gross domestic product annually to climate action. For BC, that would be \$8 billion.

The LGCAP (Local Government Climate Action Program) funding for Kelowna is \$420,000 each year for the next three years. This is so completely inadequate, it makes me want to weep. I am in regular contact with sustainability staff in Kelowna and am fully aware that with such little funding, it affects our ability not only to take the drastic action needed to reduce our emissions, but also to prepare for the unprecedented heat that Kelowna (specifically pinpointed by scientists) is forecasted to endure in the coming years, floods, wildfires, etc.

I reiterate what I said in my bullet point: Spend what is needed to tackle the climate crisis.

It is well-known that spending money on climate action is cheaper than paying for the disasters afterwards. The 2019 United Nations press release stated: For Every Dollar Invested in Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Six Dollars Are Saved. <https://press.un.org/en/2019/sgsm19807.doc.htm>

On behalf of the Okanagan Climate Hub, a volunteer group of concerned and anxious grassroots activists who take the time to educate themselves on climate matters in order to try to positively affect the future for the next generation and the next, and the next, we thank you for your consideration of our submission.

