
NEWS RELEASE

Provincial Budget Is Preparing for Recovery

Supporting people and businesses in addressing the pandemic's immediate impacts and to prepare the province for recovery.

Abbotsford, B.C. – April 20, 2021: Today, Finance Minister Selina Robinson tabled the 2021 provincial budget amid COVID-19 financial pressures. The budget funds a range of new measures to protect the health and safety of British Columbians while supporting people and businesses and preparing for recovery from the pandemic.

The budget generates a \$9.7 billion deficit in 2021/22, dropping to \$5.5 in 2022/23 and \$4.3 in 2023/24. The budget includes a significant reserve to assist with unexpected needs related to the pandemic.

In the 2021/22 budget, the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF) receives a 4.65% increase to core budget. This \$4.4 million lift is primarily directed to expand work on the *Buy BC*, *Feed BC* and *Grow BC* initiatives (\$3.41 million for each of the next 3 years, a total of \$10 million).

In addition to the increase to MAFF's core budget, several announcements in other ministries will impact B.C. farmers and ranchers. The most directly felt support is \$35 million in 2021/22 for the continued support for the centralized quarantine program for foreign workers arriving in B.C. This program has and will continue helping farmers keep workers and communities safe.

Government is also carrying forward \$7 million from last year's budget to support the development of food hubs, farm innovation and food processing.

The Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation is allocating an additional \$7.5 million to Agritech initiatives that applied for funding last January.

The government continued support for the development of rural infrastructure. This includes investments in roads, as well as internet and cellular connectivity. These investments are critical for B.C. farmers and ranchers if they are going to compete in a global market and supply the products that consumers are looking for.

"Preparing a budget in these tumultuous times is extremely challenging," says BCAC Executive Director, Reg Ens. "BCAC appreciates the investments being made by the provincial government to help farmers keep workers safe and improve infrastructure for rural B.C."

As the economic opportunity study completed last year by MNP for the industry highlighted, in addition to growing and raising amazing products that we all enjoy, B.C. farmers and ranchers play an important role in the economic health of the province and can be a key contributor during the road to economic recovery.

Looking Forward:

While the Sector is well positioned to adapt to the present-day crisis and to play a larger role in contributing towards the province's economic recovery efforts, how food is produced and procured will require change and even further adaptability given the lessons learned from COVID-19.

"As our governments shift their focus from COVID-19 emergency response to the task of supporting food systems, the B.C. agriculture sector is uniquely positioned to contribute solutions that will assist government mandates related to key public issues," says BCAC President, Stan Vander Waal. "It is critical we play a part in future plans for stabilizing the food value chain in B.C."

BCAC will be taking a more in-depth review of the new budget and will be meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries to discuss paths forward.

-30-

Background:

- [BCAC's full pre-budget submission.](#)
- [Canada's Food Price Report, 11th Edition](#)
- [Study of the British Columbia Agriculture Sector \(PDF\)](#)

Media Contact:

Danielle Synotte, Director
Communications and Stakeholder Engagement
BC Agriculture Council
604-854-4454 | communications@bcac.ca