



CITY OF BURNABY
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
MIKE HURLEY
MAYOR

State of the City Address 2026

Good afternoon.

It is an honour to be here with residents, businesses, community leaders, partners and staff as we reflect on where we are today and where we are going together as a city. As others have acknowledged... we're gathered on the traditional, unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Kwikwetlem Peoples, and I want to sincerely thank each Nation for their stewardship of these lands for many generations.

Today marks my 8th State of the City Annual Address – and I am proud to say with the support of my Council colleagues and the staff at the city, and our hosts the Burnaby Board of Trade – we are leading the way!

I want to take this moment to acknowledge and thank my council colleagues who have helped to shape Burnaby into the great city that it is today. They are all here today, so please stand...

Pietro Calendino, Sav Dhaliwal, Alison Gu, Joe Keithley, Richard T. Lee, Maita Santiago, Daniel Tetrault and James Wang.

Can I please ask Sav, Pietro and Alison to stay standing.... Sav and Pietro were both first elected to Burnaby City Council in 2002 and have each served our city for more than two decades! Please join me in thanking them for the years they have given to Burnaby and the lasting impact they have had on our city.

And Alison, who was the youngest City Councillor elected in Burnaby's history. You have brought a deep sense of purpose and conviction to Council—and I know you will continue contributing to public life and our community in meaningful ways in the years ahead.

Last but not least, I also want to take a moment to acknowledge an organization that for over 30 years has reflected the very best of Burnaby—a community-driven, volunteer-powered initiative that brings people together in one of our most cherished public spaces, Confederation Park.

Please join me in giving a round of applause to our guests today, the volunteers behind Burnaby Central Railway! Their work mirrors our city's commitment to community, to innovation, and to the places that make Burnaby special.

Burnaby is a city that continues to grow, evolve, and lead the way at the very heart of the Lower Mainland.

We are leading the way in building a strong, resilient local economy.

We are leading through record investments in civic infrastructure, leading in how we are expanding housing and childcare opportunities, and leading in enhancing public safety.

We are leading in how we plan and deliver as a city—let me be clear: this does not mean doing less, it means managing our finances responsibly so we can continue to invest in what matters most, even in the most challenging times.

Fixing our community centres before they close, repairing roads before potholes become hazardous, and maintaining a balanced approach to taxes—so residents are not hit hard all at once or passing the burden on to future generations. Even when faced with many challenges that originated beyond our city borders, we are demonstrating what can be achieved. When we truly work together to deliver for all the vibrant and diverse communities and demographics that make up this great city. When we focus on actionable solutions, commit to clear and strong advocacy, embrace innovation, and continuously reflect on how we can do even better—this is how we lead the way.

At the core of this leadership over the past year has been the work of our Economic Task Force, record investments in infrastructure, the responsible management of our reserves, and our total commitment to efficient and sustainable capital project delivery.

Last year, right here on this stage, I announced the Mayor's Task force on Economic Growth and Resilience. We were entering into a geo-political environment that we had never seen before. It was a time when we needed to re-strategize and stock up on the advantages we have as a community and rise to those challenges.

I am thrilled that shortly after announcing the Task Force, we acted! The task force formed with strong interest—with a shared aim to improve Burnaby's local economy and position us as leading the way.

If I can have you turn to the screen, to hear directly from our members!



Video: Mayor's Task Force – State of the City

I'd like to ask the task force members here today to stand so we can thank them for their volunteer hours and commitment to our city over the past few months. The task force just wrapped up its final at the end of May and a final report that will help set a new economic strategy for the City will be unveiled in the upcoming weeks.

In the meantime, I can share some of the themes identified by the interim findings...

Throughout the process, two innovation-driven sectors emerged as major economic engines for Burnaby. Life sciences and digital media. Life sciences employ about 16,700 people locally—roughly 10% of all jobs—representing about 13% of Greater Vancouver's life sciences workforce and 8% provincially. The sector is anchored by strengths in medical devices, semiconductor and electronic components, navigational instruments, and

medical equipment manufacturing, with companies such as STEMCELL Technologies who are the largest biotechnology company in Canada, based and expanding from right here.

Digital media and entertainment employs about 9,500 people in Burnaby, or roughly 6% of the local workforce, across software publishing, gaming, computing, and film and television production. Burnaby is home to major studio infrastructure such as Lake City Studios—North America’s largest purpose-built film and television production studio—and a broader network of facilities that together account for nearly two-thirds of Metro Vancouver’s total studio space. Reinforcing Burnaby’s reputation as “Hollywood North.”

Major employers such as Electronic Arts further reinforce the city’s position as a regional hub for creative and technology industries.

It was also consistently noted throughout the Task Force’s work that small and medium-sized local businesses are a critical foundation of both economic vitality and community stability, with immigrant-owned businesses forming a crucial part of that ecosystem. In Burnaby, our diversity and the richness of cultures represented in our city are our greatest strengths. And everything we do as a City must serve everyone who calls this city home.

Another consistent theme throughout the Task Force’s work was the clear connection between economic stability and public safety, emergency preparedness, and resilient infrastructure. As a former firefighter of 30 years, I can tell you, the value of preparedness can never be understated.

Many businesses experienced significant disruption during COVID-19, and Burnaby—like other communities in the region—faces known risks such as seismic events. Without proper preparation, these risks can lead to prolonged closures and significant economic loss.

Across our city, however, you don’t have to look too far to see that progress is already taking shape. And no project in this city happens in isolation. Whether we invest through the Burnaby Housing Authority, or in world class new community centres, or in crucial public safety infrastructure, we are also supporting the economic growth and resilience of our city and the local businesses who rely on this progress.

Although we cannot control external circumstances, we can proactively prepare, implement effective measures, and take action to ensure that Burnaby remains, in my view, an outstanding municipality for families, seniors, youth, and businesses. A great place to

visit, study or invest in. And we are doing it while staying grounded on what matters the most: building complete, connected and welcoming communities for everyone who calls Burnaby home.

I want to take this opportunity to provide all of you with an update on some of our key projects.

The City created the Burnaby Housing Authority Corporation as a municipal housing authority to help deliver more secure, purpose-built housing in Burnaby, including non-market and market rental ... and potentially non-market ownership. The advantage of the Burnaby Housing Authority is that it is nimble, innovative and bold—able to act like a developer while delivering housing for public benefit and helping fill gaps in Burnaby's housing supply. Work is now underway on their first two approved projects which will deliver 387 new rental homes across Burnaby—including 183 rental townhomes in partnership with Mosaic—to help meet the growing demand from families in our city.

Let's be clear, we can't do this on our own!

This is all progressing in the backdrop of the Province's "one-size-fits-all" approach to housing through Bill 44, and the decision in BC Budget 2026 to indefinitely pause new funding through its primary affordable housing program. We are committed to collaborative, innovative and locally driven approaches needed to truly address housing affordability.

The Burnaby 2050 Official Community Plan was the largest public consultation in Burnaby's history. There were 61 events, workshops or meetings. As well as more than 3,500 survey responses and almost 24,000 comments informing the final plan. After four years of deep community consultation, we delivered this plan last December. It is the City's long-term plan for how Burnaby grows and changes over time, setting city-wide direction for land use, housing and infrastructure, as well as guiding zoning decisions.

We are incredibly excited that the three cornerstone, community centre projects in our capital construction program have now surpassed 50% completion. This is not only the largest capital construction program Burnaby has ever undertaken, but one of the largest municipal investments in community facilities anywhere in Canada.

Once complete, the replacement Cameron Community Centre and Library will be one of the largest community centres in Western Canada. The new complex is designed to meet the growing needs of northeast Burnaby and includes dedicated youth and seniors' spaces.

The Burnaby Lake Recreation Centre will be the largest aquatic facility in Western Canada. The Project includes a new 10-lane 50 metre pool, 6-lane 25 metre pool, and an NHL-sized rink, plus improved connectivity and parking. All adding to the growing reputation of Burnaby Lake as the competition capital of British Columbia – or even Canada. Which is so exciting as we know sports tourism brings people into our city, supports local businesses, encourages further investment, and attracts companies who want to locate where high-quality amenities exist for their employees.

The new theatre at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts will deliver a new 364-seat, modern performance theatre with flexible seating and specialized program space, supporting a wide range of community, cultural and professional arts programming.

While construction is also underway on the Brentwood Community Centre – serving one of the fastest growing neighbourhoods in the city.

We are also working hard to improve emergency management in Burnaby – in terms of preparedness, alerting, training and wildfire readiness. The City is planning a multi-agency, full-scale emergency exercise on Burnaby Mountain next year, which is intended to test emergency procedures, equipment, facilities, training and inter-agency coordination.

According to Public Safety Canada, between 2000 and 2020, compared to the previous two decades, Canada experienced a 38 percent increase in natural disasters and 400 percent increase in recovery cost. Just in 2024 5.2 million hectares were burned across this country. What we do know is - that every dollar invested in pre-disaster mitigation can save between \$7 and \$13 dollars in post-disaster assistance.

And we have seen not only the savings of investing in pre-disaster mitigation but saving the lush forests that we all cherish and make Burnaby the natural beauty it is. Early this year, we led the way and implemented the City's first ever early wildfire system in partnership with SFU. This was a strategic investment to enhance the protection of Burnaby Mountain, where timely warnings and notifications are sent to our fire department to help reduce wildfire risk. With the support of latest technology, we have smoke detection cameras and ground sensor nodes capable of identifying heat and smoke in near real time.

Last month, we saw this technology in action for the first time—working exactly as intended. In the middle of the afternoon, in an area near local businesses, the system alerted us to a fire before we received any calls from the public, allowing our team to prepare before the first report came in. This is what you call proactive response and

mitigation.

Meanwhile, the City and the RCMP are working together to build a new three-storey, 129,000-square-foot detachment to replace the existing facility on Deer Lake Avenue. Built in 1967, the current building is another example of critical infrastructure that simply had to be replaced. Burnaby RCMP is one of the largest detachments in Canada, and construction of the new Community Safety Building is now over 50% complete as we continue to prioritize public safety across our city.

We have also invested in our city's north-south connections, which have historically been challenging, especially for non-drivers. This includes the new Burnaby Lake Overpass—an engineering feat that now provides a safe crossing for pedestrians and cyclists. The fully built, 400-tonne overpass being lifted into place over Highway 1 overnight, felt like a milestone not only for the project but for Burnaby.

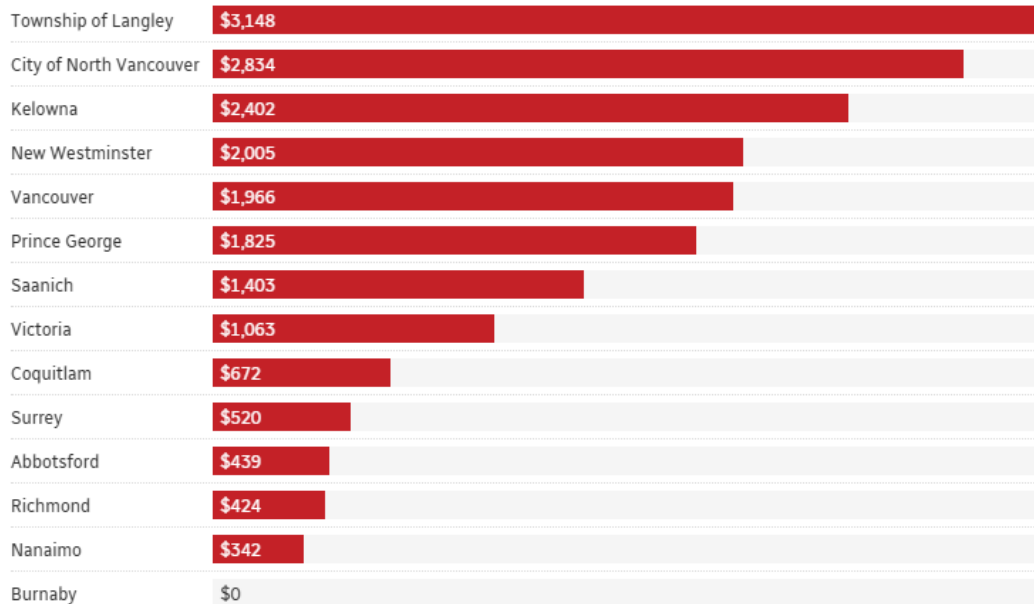
Another example is the four-lane overpass crossing the rail lines at Holdom Avenue, which once completed, will improve traffic flow and safety, and increase trade capacity and efficiency.

Leadership is not only measured by what we build today. It is measured by what we leave for future generations. Last year on this very stage, I provided an update on the City's reserves and reserve funds. Yes—we have been using these for what they are intended for. Or more accurately, as they are required to be used.

Remember: whether by provincial legislation, City bylaw or Council policy designation, reserves and reserve funds are restricted to their defined uses. They can't be redirected for other purposes—to balance budgets or lower taxes. They can only be spent on precisely what they are held for; for example, major capital investments, land acquisition or equipment replacement.

Burnaby's disciplined and sustainable use of reserves and reserve funds has allowed us to invest at historic levels while consistently maintaining one of the lowest tax increases in the region. And when we compare our per capita debt per person—you can see the effect of this approach. We are certainly not in bad shape....

Authorized municipal debt per person, large B.C. cities



Source: 2021 Census Data & 2025 B.C. Municipal Finance Data (Justin McElroy/CBC)

See for yourself. Burnaby is one of the best run and managed municipalities.

So, over the past few years, Burnaby has delivered an unprecedented level of capital investment. This has driven significant progress while also creating an opportunity to pause and learn from delivering so many projects at once.

Many of these investments were necessary because core infrastructure had gone too long without renewal—the Burnaby Lake aquatic facility, for example, was more than 20 years overdue for replacement. Addressing decades of need requires a concentrated period of investment, but delivering at that scale brings challenges.

We now need to ensure that Burnaby does not face a similar catch-up situation again. Going forward, we must apply what we've learned to ensure capital investment is ongoing, efficient, and sustainable. Which is why the City commissioned an external and independent review of our capital project delivery—called Building Burnaby Better. It was released publicly last month. The report makes clear that Burnaby is in a strong position. It reflects positively on the City's capital project program and recognizes the professionalism and capability of our staff.

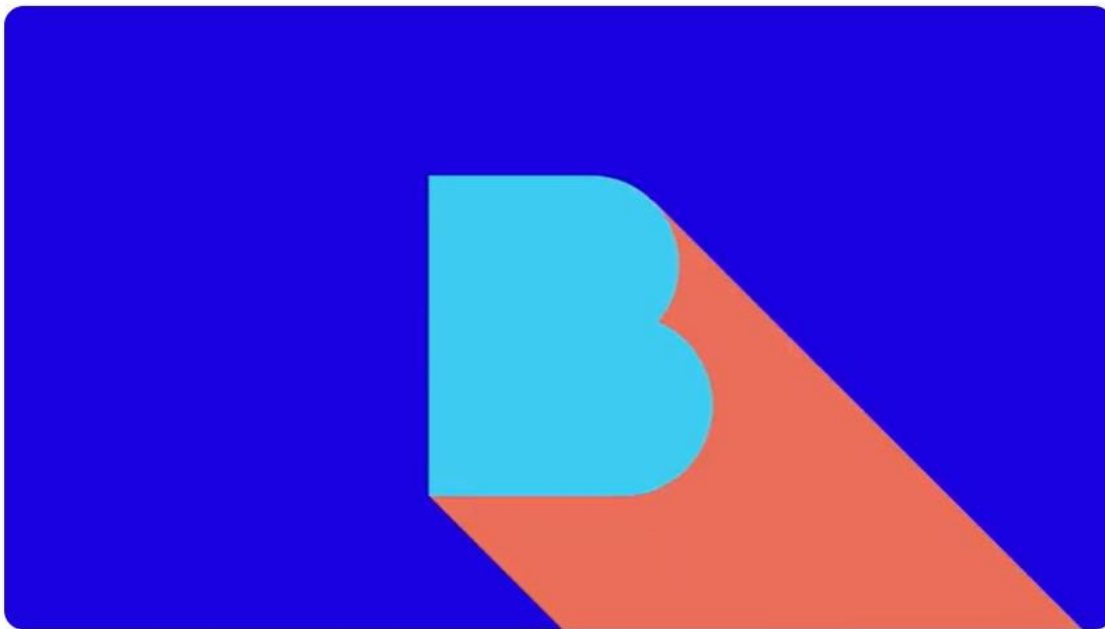
However, the report and recommendations show we can improve our project planning, deciding when assets need to be upgraded or replaced, and scheduling them well into the bright future we are planning for in Burnaby.

We are creating a future for everyone—that doesn't pit renters against homeowners or drivers against cyclists. It means a senior can afford to stay, a parent can find childcare, a young adult can see a future here.

That's the Burnaby we're building—sustainably, on time, on budget, together.

A balanced approach, in a complex and ever-changing environment. Ultimately, that is how we are leading the way.

Thank you.



Video: Mayor's Task Force members reflect on what makes Burnaby a Great Place to Be