



State of the City Address

Mayor Linda Buchanan

Delivered on June 4, 2025

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here today for my annual State of the City Address.

I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territories of the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. These nations remain deeply connected to these lands and waters and as we gather and build community, it is critical that we honour and acknowledge that this has been their home since time immemorial. I thank them for sharing their territory with us.

Thank you to the Urban Land Institute of BC for hosting today's event, to the Pinnacle Hotel staff for their support, and the event sponsors: Cascadia Green Development, Anthem Properties Group, and RealTech Capital Group.

It is wonderful to see familiar faces and new ones here today. Allow me a moment to express my gratitude to Council. Together, we form a cohesive team, and I feel privileged to collaborate with each of you.

Today's gathering is an opportunity to assess our progress as a City and celebrate our achievements as a community. Before I get into that, I would like to take a moment to reflect back on our City's history.

Incorporated in 1907, the City of North Vancouver quickly became a vital industrial hub, earning the "Ambitious City" moniker for our bold vision rooted in prosperity, industrial urban life and growth.

This ambitious spirit persisted despite some setbacks, including the 1913 recession and Great Depression, driving urban renewal, cultural expansion, and environmental innovation. Challenges never dimmed our drive.

The City pioneered electric street lighting and streetcars before Vancouver, and was among the first to generate local hydroelectric power for homes, businesses, and transit—and even our municipal ferry. Positioned as a gateway to B.C.'s resources, our deep-water port and proximity to Vancouver made us ideal for resource industries, especially shipbuilding, which became our economic backbone and played a key role in Canada's wartime production. The Wallace Shipyards—later Burrard Dry Dock—employed thousands during both World Wars but eventually closed, leaving the area in disuse—a reminder of an era gone by.

Today we see a striking metamorphosis from industrial roots to a vibrant, mixed-use district.

Our economy has diversified, transitioning from heavy industry to include port services, film production, and high-tech sectors while maintaining our working waterfront identity.

In this moment of Canadian history—shaped by trade tensions, our sovereignty, rising unaffordability and more—our City continues forging forward like our forefathers, unafraid to chase bold visions and imagine better solutions.

Understanding our origins, and our present, is essential to unlocking our potential. Our history does not shape us—it guides us forward.

Nowhere is our transformation more visible than at The Shipyards, which honours our shipbuilding legacy while ushering in new waterfront possibilities. It has rapidly become one of the region's most vibrant and beloved destinations.

In 2024, we celebrated the Shipyards fifth anniversary, welcoming 7.5 million visits and 264 event days—up 20% from 2023. The new Shipyards Christmas Market drew 200,000 visitors over 26 days, boosting local businesses like the Polygon Gallery gift shop by 48 per cent.

Overnight stays at North Shore hotels rose by 5 per cent last year, with annual occupancy reaching an impressive 82.6 per cent—outpacing the Greater Vancouver average of 80 per cent. That kind of demand speaks for itself, and it is why we believe the time is right for a new hotel in Lower Lonsdale to support our growing visitor economy and vibrant waterfront district. In addition, we will look to the possibility of a Central Lonsdale hotel to support regional recreational activities, hospital visits and short-term business travel.

Revitalizing our waterfront has not come at the expense of industrial activity at our ports—quite the opposite. We envision a community where a robust port economy thrives alongside a world-class public realm amenity. Port activity in the City supports \$380 million in annual economic output, nearly \$11 million in property tax, and hundreds of family-supporting jobs.

Over the past year, port businesses in the City have demonstrated remarkable leadership in maritime innovation and growth.

A major milestone came in March when the Government of Canada awarded a \$3.15-billion contract to Seaspan to build Canada's first heavy polar icebreaker in over 60 years, supporting over 1,000 local jobs and 800 companies nationwide.

At the same time, Novarc Technologies, which saw its start in the City, secured \$50 million to scale up its cutting edge AI-powered welding robots. Partnering with Seaspan since 2017, their technology modernizes shipbuilding at our drydocks, improving productivity, and reducing costs.

Together, these developments highlight how our community is driving innovation in traditional shipbuilding and next-generation manufacturing—laying a strong foundation for continued economic growth and global competitiveness.

Last year we launched the Lonsdale Great Street Project to revitalize Central Lonsdale and support economic development through policies, investments, and partnerships that foster vibrant street life. We have completed Phase 1, which saw the City's largest public engagement to date, and I commend staff for their exceptional work in reaching such a broad audience.

The feedback was clear—the community cares deeply about this neighbourhood. They value green space, gathering places, diverse local businesses, and a clean, safe, walkable environment. There is strong support for thoughtful growth that respects neighbourhood character while enhancing public spaces and maintaining affordability.

Phase 2 launches this summer with concept scenarios, evaluation frameworks, and pilot projects, all while keeping community feedback at the heart of this work. Lonsdale Avenue is already a vital commercial spine for the North Shore—but we want to go further. We want Lonsdale to be the place to live, work, shop, and connect.

This winter, Steamworks injected new energy into Central Lonsdale with the opening of its first North Shore location. Restaurateur Carl McCreath has delivered a dynamic dining experience that blends local charm with 'Steamworks' signature character. Community connection is central to their business's values, and it is great to see that commitment enrich this neighbourhood.

We are creating conditions along Lonsdale for entrepreneurs—especially small and medium enterprises—so they can thrive, so people want to invest here, bringing new amenities and experiences.

'Great Streets' are more than busy roads—they are places people remember. They are vibrant, inclusive, and reflect the spirit of the community. Our vision is to make Lonsdale that street—the heart of our city and a destination for all.

While local businesses are vital to our community's vibrancy, we are equally committed to supporting innovators who are fueling growth in emerging sectors. Innovators like Think Tank. Think Tank, one of the top world-ranked schools in 3D animation, game art and VFX, is a proud City institution shaping digital artists while driving creative tech growth and strengthening our local creative economy.

With an expanded Esplanade production lab serving nearly 600 students from 65+ countries, Think Tank emphasizes mentorship by industry professionals. They have been a true North Vancouver success story for over 2 decades, and now Think Tank is exploring white-labeling its proprietary learning platform, turning innovation into scalable products.

More than a school, Think Tank is a launch pad for global talent and a hub of industry-connected learning. A special shout-out to Scott Thompson and Marty Hasselbach who are with us today—your leadership continues to inspire and elevate what is possible.

We are also honoured to have Amy Lang here from North Shore Studios, which employs over 1,500 people. In 2022, just before the widespread industry disruptions of the past 2 years began, productions injected \$235 million into our city, supporting 831 local businesses.

While the Bosa Centre for Film and Animation at Capilano University and North Shore Studios are not formally linked, they share a strong connection through B.C.'s film industry—where the University plays a vital role by producing skilled graduates who fuel the sector's growth.

Access to local talent is essential for sustainable business growth. Creative industries are not just part of our identity—they are foundational to it.

Their impact on our local economy is significant and reinforce our city's position in the global digital economy. As we look ahead, we must be bold and intentional in finding new ways to grow and future-proof this vital sector.

Metro Vancouver's vibrant and competitive life sciences ecosystem, the fastest growing in Canada, continues to be one of the biggest drivers of our provincial economy.

Fueled by strong research, government support and highly skilled talent, some of the most impactful breakthrough discoveries and innovations are happening right here in our region, making our life sciences industry a global hub of excellence.

As a former Public Health Nurse, I have seen firsthand how this work can transform public health and offer hope for cures once thought impossible. The long-term outlook for this ecosystem is incredibly promising.

Lions Gate Hospital, the fourth busiest in the region, serves a population of over 270,000 and was the first in B.C. to fully digitize its health records. With the addition of the Paul Myers Operating Tower, the hospital continues to lead by integrating cutting-edge technologies that enhance patient care and operational efficiency.

Our City is well positioned to build a health and biosciences cluster, leveraging Lions Gate Hospital as a natural anchor and the 750+ health-related businesses in Central Lonsdale. This growth will attract investment, create jobs, and enhance the quality of life for people while supporting the broader regional and provincial health economy.

Over the coming months I will be meeting with key stakeholders to help shape our path forward.

Invest Vancouver is the region's economic development service and I am proud to serve as the Chair of the Management Board. Working alongside leaders from a variety of different sectors and with other levels of government, we are building an economy that is industrially competitive, resilient, and globally attractive.

Recent successes, in collaboration with others, include securing the global Web Summit Conference, which brought 15,000+ attendees to Vancouver and spotlighted our tech sector to investors and entrepreneurs worldwide—capped by a night summit event at The Shipyards showcasing our City to the world.

Building on this momentum, I was thrilled to open up Day 2 of the BC Pavilion with a focus on Life Sciences and announce Invest Talent, a pilot program supported through a \$480,000 investment from the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

Invest Talent, a workforce development program will provide training to people and bolstered by AI, will match talent with industry needs, contributing to a workforce that is ready for the future.

Trade tensions and the introduction of tariffs have raised urgent concerns about the potential far-reaching economic fallout. The B.C. government has warned that the provincial impact could be the loss of over 140,000 jobs and shed nearly \$70 billion in GDP.

These figures represent real families and communities facing persistent economic challenges. While residents struggle with affordability, our committed social support agencies—many here today—continue meeting people's needs despite being stretched to capacity.

As B.C. faces a nearly \$11 billion deficit and increasing pressure to restore fiscal stability, municipalities have a vital role to play. In the City we are taking comprehensive action to support businesses and workers alongside federal and provincial responses to US trade tariffs.

On March 10, Council unanimously supported my motion for a Team Canada approach, directing staff to explore local procurement opportunities and 'buy local' initiatives, assess trade exposure, and update our sustainable purchasing policy.

We are establishing an internal roundtable with local stakeholders for rapid response and staff are reviewing regulations to ease doing business. Over five years, 99% of City spending—nearly \$760M—has already supported Canadian vendors.

COVID-19 showed governments can act with speed and agility, and we are bringing that same urgency to this challenge.

As a City, we remain a popular destination for residents, tourists, and businesses. Business license growth is strong, with Avison Young's Q1 2025 report showing North Shore office vacancy at just 3.3 per cent.

Last week, we welcomed King Taps' 10,000 sq. ft. flagship at Lonsdale Quay, marking the Cactus Group's homecoming and demonstrating confidence in our economy.

In December, I attended the Blue Grouse Gondola opening—a \$35 million Northland Properties investment in their regional attraction. With plans for year-round recreation including a lift-accessed bike park and mountain coaster this summer, these projects will drive economic growth throughout the North Shore.

Over the past year, we have made meaningful strides supporting builders by clarifying, modernizing, and streamlining permitting processes. A major change is the new Pre-Application Review process, where technical staff pre-screen building permit applications for completeness and quality, reducing back-and-forth during the formal review. Launched in January, staff have completed over 250 reviews, improving efficiency.

We are also driving innovation through Building Information Modelling (BIM). Already used in several complex projects, BIM is now part of a provincial pilot—one we are actively supporting—to help standardize this digital approach across B.C.

On development cost charges (DCCs), staff updated Council in November on work to revise DCCs and create Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs), presented also to the Urban Development Institute.

The goal is to balance resident and developer needs by aligning service standards, distributing costs fairly, and ensuring transparent stakeholder engagement.

Draft DCC rates and bylaws have been developed, aligned with new provincial guidelines released in March. A revised approach goes to Council June 23, with final adoption expected before August.

We have made significant progress in supporting the delivery of new housing all while responding to the provincial legislation mandated to cities. Since 2020, the City has added nearly 3,000 new housing units, with annual completions peaking at 774 units in 2023.

This steady pipeline of new housing reflects our commitment to addressing housing demand through strategic, intentional, and informed planning, which our City has delivered for decades.

The housing industry is at a critical inflection point. To navigate today's challenges—labour shortages, high construction costs, supply chain volatility, and a growing regulatory burden—innovation is no longer optional, it is essential.

As the City eases building processes, we are seeing private sector innovation in action.

B.C. homebuilders have a unique opportunity to pivot toward mass timber construction. Locally sourced, renewable, and increasingly cost-effective, mass timber offers a scalable, sustainable alternative that stabilizes supply chains and reduces reliance on volatile international markets.

Adera Development has been at the forefront of this shift. Their developments demonstrate how Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) can enhance structural integrity, lower carbon footprints, and support regional sustainability goals.

Their upcoming rental building at Lonsdale and 29th will add 60 rental homes built with CLT, six of which will be offered at mid-market rates—further demonstrating how affordability and sustainability can go hand in hand.

The City has been recognized by many, including the B.C. Minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing as the definitive leader in embracing mass timber technologies, with staff like Tim Ryce demonstrating incredible leadership and foresight.

Facing tariffs, rising costs, and urgent housing need, mass timber is both an environmental and economic solution. Embracing local materials and innovation helps to shield our housing sector from global disruptions while creating good-paying jobs and affordable, resilient homes.

With homeownership out of reach for many, Anthem Properties Group's introduction of a new Homeownership Accelerator Program is a timely example, aimed at reducing barriers through rent-to-own models, flexible deposits, and creative financing—meeting buyers where they are in today's market realities.

The future of housing lies in industrializing the building process, digitizing decision-making, and de-risking development through smarter policy and public-private collaboration. Innovation comes from stacking many small changes—each improving speed, cost, quality, and sustainability.

As we build our city, we are committed to deepening sustainability.

Lonsdale Energy, our city-owned independent utility, is taking a major step forward in clean energy innovation with the delivery of its new Sewer Heat Recovery Plant, set to be operational in 2027.

This ground-breaking facility will provide over 40 per cent de-carbonization for the current customer base—119 buildings across the City—significantly advancing our climate goals. As part of this initiative, Lonsdale Energy is also introducing a new “low carbon energy” rate that aligns with BC Hydro’s 98 per cent de-carbonization standard.

Developers will have the option to adopt this rate during the planning phase, allowing their buildings to be classified as “low carbon” without the added cost and complexity of installing heat pumps or BC Hydro infrastructure on-site.

Importantly, this plant is not being funded by development fees.

Instead, the majority of its funding comes from grants, including a \$17.5 million contribution from CleanBC, with the remaining costs covered by consumers over the long-term. Additionally, developers will no longer be required to include gas connections in their buildings, further streamlining the transition to cleaner, more sustainable energy solutions.

People who live, work, and play in the City should be proud of this community—we have good reason to be. Over the past few years, we have advanced a truly ambitious infrastructure agenda and forged strong partnerships to deliver on it.

We welcomed the new Paul Myers Operating Tower at Lions Gate Hospital and the ground breaking of a new elementary school in the Cloverley neighbourhood with a City investment of \$3.5 million for before and after school care.

We are adding or enhancing 4 City parks.

We made strong progress on our Urban Forest Management Plan, planting hundreds of trees, and advanced key priorities in DEI, Reconciliation, and public engagement.

We have advanced a respite care centre for seniors and their families.

We broke ground on a new North Shore Neighbourhood House and attainable rental building.

In July, we will open a new non-profit child care centre and field house at Mahon Park—putting us on track to meet our annual goal of spaces delivered to support families.

We saw the opening of The Fulmer Family Centre for Childhood Studies at Capilano University.

We cut the ribbon on a new lawn bowling clubhouse and adjoining greens.

We are building a pedestrian overpass over highway 1 and delivered new cycling infrastructure along St. Andrew’s and East 13th.

A new Public Safety Committee was introduced, and emergency planning focused on Extreme Heat Mapping to boost community resilience.

The RCMP responded to 27,000 calls for service.

Bylaws issued over 17,000 tickets, and Fire Services delivered 75 public fire prevention sessions—up from 49 last year—while responding to 4,772 calls.

We have made significant progress on the new Harry Jerome Community Recreation Centre.

And we continue to advance conversations and planning on larger development sites, the ICBC site and Waterfront Park.

We are building a city for future generations through partnerships with the province, Board of Education, health authority, private sector, non-profits and so many others all while delivering the everyday core services and meeting the needs of residents.

The most important piece of infrastructure we want to see advanced next is the delivery of rapid transit to the North Shore and seeing the replacement of the Iron Workers Memorial Bridge.

While the bridge remains an ongoing dialogue with the province, we have made great strides towards delivering rapid transit to, through, and from the North Shore.

TransLink's Investment Plan, recently adopted by the Mayors' Council, marks a significant step forward in enhancing Metro Vancouver's transit system.

This comprehensive plan includes the largest bus service expansion since 2018, including dedicated funding to extend the R2 Rapid Bus from Park Royal to Metrotown set to be operational by 2027.

This is a critical step in meeting local demand, reducing congestion, and ensuring people can move more efficiently through our region.

Enhancing access to reliable, high-frequency transit is not just about transportation—it is about livable, connected communities.

Additionally, the plan advances the three prioritized Bus Rapid Transit projects, including the North Shore line.

In the coming months TransLink will launch the first engagement on Bus Rapid Transit for the North Shore.

Whether you are here today with the Board of Education, the Veterans Council, an NGO, or the BIA, as an entrepreneur, developer, or as a union leader, I can assure you that building consensus and support for this project is critically important.

Rapid public transit is a cornerstone of a strong economy. It connects people to jobs, education, and essential services, making it easier for businesses to attract and retain workers.

Efficient transit reduces traffic congestion, lowers transportation costs, and supports local commerce by enhancing goods movement and increasing access to retail and service hubs.

As our population grows and ages, investing in reliable, accessible transit is key to ensuring sustainable economic development and maintaining a high quality of life in our community.

On that note, I encourage everyone to visit MONOVA's upcoming Feature Exhibition, *Are We There Yet? A Sustainable Transportation Journey*, opening July 3. Sponsored by TransLink, this exhibit explores the past and present on how the ways we move—by SeaBus, bus, bike, car, or on foot—shape our environment, our communities, and our future.

North Vancouverites have long recognized the majesty that surrounds them—and now, the rest of the country is taking notice too.

I am very proud to say we ranked number 1 in the *Globe and Mail's* "100 Most Livable Cities" in Canada. I told this room last year, we would get there, and WE DID IT!

Late last year, the *Globe* published their rankings and while we have long preformed well, this is the first time ever that the City of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver came out on top.

This honour highlights our success in creating a city where life is truly about quality. We prioritize what makes people happy and healthy. We are not the most liveable city by chance. As I started out, we have a long history of being an ambitious city with a deep sense of civic pride and a progressive city with a bold vision. This has not changed.

Despite economic challenges, we continue to deliver services and infrastructure, add jobs, and build our ambitions. Getting to number 1 is one thing, but staying number 1 is another feat altogether. We want to build upon our successes so that our City continues to set a standard for livability across the country.

As we turn vision into action, I invite all of you to join us. When I look around the room and I see leaders... leaders in building, in finance, in transportation, in sustainability, in innovation, in education, in social support and so much more.

I see opportunity for all of us to collaborate, unite, and build a stronger economy that is truly resilient in the face of adversity. We will not let challenges deflect our vision!

In my mind, being named Canada's most livable city is not just a milestone—it's a call to action. It is a reminder that the choices we make today will shape our community tomorrow. As we look to the future, let's carry this momentum forward with purpose and pride.

My challenge to all of you, and I hope you will accept this challenge, is to be a catalyst for joy. Add joy in how you do business, in how you serve your communities, and in how you define our future.

I believe our future will be found in the laughter of children echoing through our parks, in the quiet strength of neighbours helping neighbours, in our innovation, and in the warmth of shared community spaces where everyone feels connected.

Our future will be shaped not by grand monuments, but by everyday acts of kindness. Let joy be the thread that stitches together our days and be the legacy we leave behind when generations yet to come look back on this moment.

For in joy, we find not only resilience, but the radiant spark of possibility—a future that welcomes all, an economy that works for all, and community that leaves no one behind.