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STRENGTHENING PROVINCIAL RESPONSE TO EXTORTION VIOLENCE

In response to extortion shootings and gang violence, the Province is expanding the Provincial Forensic Firearms Lab, which plays a crucial role in supporting police investigations related to organized crime, gangs and gun-related violence.

"We are ensuring that police have the tools, resources and intelligence support they need to hold these offenders accountable," said Nina Krieger, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. "Expanding the capacity of the Provincial Forensic Firearms Lab will enable police to prioritize forensic testing of weapons in critical criminal files, helping accelerate extortion and other criminal-related charge approvals."

Demand for the services provided by the lab is increasing. More than \$600,000 in new funding will improve efficiency and assist in the timely delivery of forensic results, which will help police agencies throughout B.C. reduce gun violence and hold violent



offenders accountable more quickly.

Provincial Forensic Firearms Lab expansion

The Provincial Forensic Firearms Lab allows police to analyze weapons used in criminal activities and seized by police, helping investigators in their efforts to identify and arrest suspects.

With increased de-

mand has come the need for the lab to have a larger space.

The expanded lab will be able to prioritize forensic testing of crucial investigative files and expedite extortion-related charge approvals, while producing provincewide data on guns used in criminal activity to support intelligence-led policing strategies.

The funding, through

the federal Gun and Gangs Violence Action fund and administered by the Province, includes money for overtime costs at the lab. This investment builds on government's ongoing efforts to address extortion and organized crime by reinforcing initiatives underway and bolstering support in key areas, such as enforcement, community

awareness and prevention.

Quick Facts:

Expansion of the Provincial Forensic Firearms Laboratory is expected in the coming months. The Provincial Forensic Firearms Laboratory was created in 2021 as a centralized firearms intelligence hub for investigations throughout B.C.

During the 2024 calendar year, the lab received nearly 870 exhibit submissions, an increase from 625 exhibit submissions received in 2023. The Provincial Forensic Firearms Laboratory is working on a project that aims to link B.C. gang conflict incidents through ballistic evidence.



Chal Chaliye
SABZI MANDI
Chal Chaliye ...

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Canada's conservative leader faces leadership test - and grapples with widening his appeal

By Nadine Yousif

Canadian Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre faces a crucial test of his leadership this week, but what lies ahead is a bigger challenge: convincing Canadians that he is the best person to guide the country through its uncertain future.

Party delegates will vote on whether Poilievre should remain leader on Friday at the Conservative convention in Calgary. It is part of an automatic review that is triggered after an election loss - in this case, Poilievre's defeat last April.

Poilievre appears to have wide support heading into the convention, party members have told the BBC, and is expected to win handily. But he has struggled to broaden his post-election appeal beyond the party and against Prime Minister Mark Carney, especially on how to handle US President Donald Trump. That is an issue front of mind for many Canadians.

At the convention, winning anything above 80% in his leadership review will be considered a success for Poilievre, said David Coletto, founder of polling firm Abacus Data.

That number is in line with recent polling undertaken by Coletto, which shows that a strong majority of the Conservative party base support Poilievre as their leader.

They applaud his ability to hammer the Liberal government's shortcomings on domestic issues like housing and affordability, and his success with younger voters.

Surveys of the broader Canadian public, however, tell a different story, with more than half of Canadians saying they hold a negative view of the Conservative leader. A major challenge has been his tone, which critics often describe as overly combative.

That "deeply polarised" perception of Poilievre will be the main hurdle to overcome if the Conservatives want to form the next government, Coletto said.



The leadership review comes after a difficult year for the Conservatives, marked by a bruising defeat to the Liberals in April's federal election as well as the loss of Poilievre's own seat in an Ottawa-area constituency at the same time.

Two Conservative members of parliament also defected late last year to the Liberals, who under Carney have adopted more centrist policies, inching his government closer to a majority.

In recent months, Poilievre has been faced with questions over his ability to clearly define what his party would do differently when dealing with Trump. The US president is deeply unpopular with Canadians, and is viewed by many as an existential threat due to his targeting of country with tariffs and his repeat references to it as the 51st US state.

At times, Poilievre's populist approach to politics has even drawn comparisons to Trump, which has not helped his likeability, Coletto notes.

"Once people have a negative view of something, it is hard to change their mind over time," the pollster says.

Carney's advantage on

Trump recently came into view following his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, which was widely lauded by fellow Western politicians and observers as one that clearly defined the US president's impact on the world and how Canada intends to respond.

Shortly after, the Liberal Party shared an old clip on their social media accounts of Poilievre saying that his ministers "would be banned from participating in the World Economic Forum" should the Conservatives form a majority government in Canada.

Carney's Davos speech has been a win for the Liberals, whose support has since grown to 47% among decided voters, the latest polling released on Wednesday by Léger indicates.

That polling would translate in an election into enough votes for the Liberals to form a government.

Notably, the Liberals' gain did not come at the expense of the Conservatives, who themselves rose two points to 38% from previous polls, suggesting the party's own base support remains solid. Instead, support eroded from smaller third parties, like the separatist Bloc Québécois.

Ben Woodfinden, Poilievre's former communications director, acknowledges that the Conservative Party needs to further define its response to Trump to meet the geopolitical moment and broaden its support.

"I don't know when the next election would be, but I would bet that Trump will be president when it happens and his shadow will still loom over it," Woodfinden told the BBC.

But Woodfinden and other Conservatives say that they do not believe the party's current polling deficit falls squarely on the shoulders of Poilievre - who, despite his election defeat, has managed to grow its base to record numbers.

"His support within the party remains quite strong, and he himself has revitalised the party around his brand of conservatism," said Amanda Galbraith, a Conservative strategist and co-founder of the Toronto-based Oyster Group.

Poilievre has kept the pressure on the Liberals on his key issues - like scrapping the consumer price on carbon or tightening immigration levels - and his pressure paid off with some policy shifts from the governing

party, Galbraith noted. As for the path forward, some pundits say they are already noticing a welcome shift in tone from the leader, particularly in his response to Carney's Davos speech.

In a long statement, Poilievre offered rare praise for the prime minister, calling the speech "well-crafted and eloquently delivered". But he also heavily criticised the Liberals for failing to reduce Canada's reliance on the US.

"Unfortunately, after a decade of promises and grand speeches, Liberals have made our economy more costly and dependent than ever before," Poilievre said. In recent days, Poilievre has also signalled his willingness to co-operate with the Liberals on certain domestic issues, like a grocery tax rebate for lower-income Canadians and bail reform.

Poilievre is expected to deliver a speech to the party faithful just before the vote on Friday.

Woodfinden said he would be among those watching the address closely, to see what hints it would offer on how Poilievre intends to meet the challenges ahead.

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Trump threatens tariffs on Canada planes and nations selling oil to Cuba

By Adam Hancock

US President Donald Trump has threatened to impose 50% tariffs on Canadian planes in retaliation for Canada "wrongfully, illegally, and steadfastly" refusing to certify a number of planes made by US firm Gulfstream.

In a social media post, Trump also said he was "decertifying... all Aircraft made in Canada", although the White House later reportedly walked back that claim.

Also on Thursday, the president pledged new tariffs on countries that sell oil to Cuba, as the US steps up its pressure on the Caribbean nation's communist leadership.

The proposed new levies were outlined in an executive order, although no details were given about specific tariff rates or which countries could be targeted.

Trump said the US would decertify all Canadian aircraft, including planes from its largest aircraft maker, Bombardier.

"We have taken note of the post from the



President of the United States to social media and are in contact with the Canadian government," Bombardier said in a statement.

But a White House official later told the Reuters news agency that Trump was not suggesting decertifying Canadian-built planes currently in operation.

The BBC has contacted the White House, the

US Federal Aviation Authority and the Canadian government for comment.

Trump's latest threats against Canada come at a time of heightened tensions between the neighbouring countries. Earlier in January, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney made global headlines for his speech at a World Economic Forum event in Davos

in which he indirectly called out Trump for a "rupture" in the postwar world order.

Later in the month, Carney visited China where he announced a "strategic partnership" with Beijing, and agreed to reduce some tariffs. This prompted Trump to threaten a 100% tariff on Canadian goods if the country struck a trade deal with China.

Trump has also continued his campaign against Cuba, threatening tariffs on countries that supply oil to the Caribbean island nation.

On Tuesday, Trump said Cuba "will be falling pretty soon", as long-time ally Venezuela no longer sends oil or money to the country after President Nicolás Maduro was seized by US forces on 3 January. Previously, the South American nation was believed to be sending about 35,000 barrels of oil a day to Cuba.

In an executive order on Thursday, Trump said "the policies, practices, and actions of the Government of Cuba constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat".

He also accused Havana of hosting "dangerous adversaries of the United States".

The tariffs may target countries "that directly or indirectly sells or otherwise provides any oil to Cuba".

Trump has previously ordered Cuba to "make a deal, before it is too late", although he has not

specified the terms of a deal or the consequences that the island nation could face.

At the time, Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel said Washington had no moral authority to force a deal on his country.

The Trump administration's tactic of confiscating sanctioned Venezuelan oil tankers has already begun to worsen a fuel and electricity crisis in Cuba.

The country has faced rolling blackouts, with Cubans struggling to cope without reliable electricity supplies.

Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodríguez recently said that the Caribbean island nation had "the absolute right to import fuel" from any willing exporter "without interference or subordination to the unilateral coercive measures of the United States".

The BBC has contacted the Cuban Foreign Ministry for comment.

Trump threatens Canada with 100% tariffs if it 'makes a deal with China'

US President Donald Trump has threatened to slap a 100% tariff on Canadian goods if the country strikes a trade deal with China.

"If Canada makes a deal with China, it will immediately be hit with a 100% tariff against all Canadian goods and products coming into the U.S.A.," Trump said on Truth Social.

It is unclear what deal Trump is referring to in his social media post. Last week, Canada's Prime Minister Carney

announced a "strategic partnership" with China, and agreed to reduce tariffs.

At the time, Trump called the move "a good thing". But tensions between the US and Canada have grown in recent days, after Carney said in a speech in Davos that the US-led world order had been ruptured.

Carney also urged other "middle powers" to band together in the face of economic coercion by "greater

powers", though he did not mention Trump by name.

Trump responded to the remarks in his own speech the next day, saying: "Canada lives because of the United States."

The US president also withdrew an invitation for Canada to join his new Board of Peace.

On Saturday, Trump said in his social media post that if Carney "thinks he is going to make Canada a 'Drop Off Port' for China to send

goods and products into the United States, he is sorely mistaken".

The BBC has contacted the White House and Carney's office for comment.

Canada's US trade minister Dominic LeBlanc said in a statement: "There is no pursuit of a free trade deal with China."

"What was achieved was resolution on several important tariff issues."

LeBlanc said the government was focused

on building a stronger Canadian economy and strengthening trade partnerships "throughout the world".

Canada has been seeking to diversify trade away from the US, its largest trade partner, following the uncertainty caused by Trump's on-again-off-again tariffs.

Under the agreement reached between Carney and Chinese President Xi Jinping last week, China will lower levies

on Canadian canola oil from 85% to 15% by March, while Canada will tax Chinese EVs at the most-favoured-nation rate, 6.1% - down from 100%.

The deal was seen as a breakthrough after years of strained ties and tit-for-tat tariffs, and could see more Chinese investments in Canada.

Carney said the progress made with China sets Canada up "well for the new world order".

Launching mental-health screening tool to support people in crisis

Police agencies, health-care providers and people in crisis on South Vancouver Island will benefit from the launch of HealthIM, a digital public-safety tool to support officers' responses to people in crisis.

"HealthIM has proven to be a valuable asset to help police officers safely and effectively de-escalate complex situations by promoting safer interactions with people in crisis," said Nina Krieger, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. "Our government will continue to make meaningful investments to support law enforcement in responding to a mental-health or substance-use emergency. I am pleased to see this initiative being implemented in police departments across South Vancouver Island."

Strengthening mental-health police response

HealthIM is a digital public-safety system to improve emergency police response in



mental-health and addiction crisis situations, increasing safety for first responders, health-care providers and the person in crisis. By facilitating better communication, HealthIM aims to help officers gain insight into the factors behind a person's behaviour, leading to more informed and compassionate interactions.

"When someone is in crisis, being met with understanding and compassion can make a big difference,"

said Josie Osborne, Minister of Health. "HealthIM is a collaborative and co-ordinated approach that helps police officers work with health-care professionals to make assessments and respond faster with more information to better support a person in need. This innovative tool will save lives and is an important step to building a more compassionate, responsive and integrated mental-health and substance-use care

system." The responding officer is guided through a series of questions using HealthIM to help facilitate a better assessment of the person in crisis. The system also improves communication with health-care partners by using consistent clinical language and provides critical information to doctors and nurses immediately. Other benefits include:

the assessment of risk of harm to self or

others, which helps determine the best way that person can receive help. It provides specific safety and de-escalation information about the person to facilitate a trauma-informed response, leading to better outcomes

alerts health-care partners to incoming people escorted by emergency responders and flags instances of weapon possession and/or violent behaviour. A risk of harm-analysis history can be developed over time, providing insight into how to assist those with previous police interactions.

Working with community partners

As part of its commitment to building safer communities, the B.C. government provides \$2 million annually to the BC Association of Chiefs of Police to support the rollout of HealthIM in municipal police departments and RCMP detachments throughout the province."

with Victoria General and Royal Jubilee hospitals, HealthIM launched in Central Saanich, Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria on Dec. 16, 2025, and will be available to surrounding RCMP detachments in the coming months, ensuring that individuals in crisis receive timely and appropriate care.

"HealthIM is changing how British Columbia responds to mental-health crises," said Deputy Chief Andrew Chan, president, BC Association of Chiefs of Police. "The south Island launch marks a critical step toward a co-ordinated, provincewide system where police and health care operate from the same information in real time. This shared approach strengthens public safety, reduces system strain and ensures people in crisis are connected to the right care more quickly and consistently across the province."

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B.C. launching competitive process for clean power in high-demand sectors

The Province and BC Hydro are launching a new competitive process for artificial intelligence (AI) and data centres, to help manage rising electricity demand, while creating a clear, transparent approach for future projects.

"Clean electricity is essential to B.C.'s economic success, and demand is growing quickly," said Adrian Dix, Minister of Energy and Climate Solutions. "By managing demand carefully and directing power to projects that deliver the greatest long-term benefits, we will build our province, while protecting affordability and reliability for British Columbians. At the same time, we are creating a clear path for emerging industries, like AI, to quickly and efficient-



ly get the power they need, positioning British Columbia as a leader in innovation and data sovereignty." B.C.'s AI sector is rapidly growing and there is growing rec-

ognition of the importance of data centres to protect and secure Canadian data. At the same time, to responsibly manage the growth of AI and data centres, and balance

critical energy needs, the Province has made changes that will prioritize electricity service to projects in these emerging sectors that provide the greatest benefits and

jobs for people in British Columbia, and do so at an appropriate pace.

Competitive selection for emerging high-load industries.

Through Bill 31, the Energy Statutes Amendment Act, and a new regulation, there is now a requirement for prospective AI and data-centre projects to take part in a competitive selection process to access clean electricity. This requirement does not apply to traditional industries, such as mining, liquefied natural gas (LNG), forestry, manufacturing or hydrogen for domestic use.

The new approach enables projects that support job creation, reduce emissions, maintain affordability and contribute to long-term economic

development. In alignment with the objectives of the Look West strategy, this will ensure B.C. is protecting electricity capacity needed by long-standing industries, while supporting strategic growth in newer sectors that align with provincial priorities, such as data sovereignty and innovation.

BC Hydro will implement this legislation through the 2026 call for demand for emerging industries. The process provides a clear and predictable path, from application and screening to feasibility studies and final bids. Projects will be assessed based on price and their economic, community, data sovereignty and environmental benefits.

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Expanding mental-health, addiction supports for youth in B.C.

More youth in B.C. will benefit from increased access to mental-health and substance-use supports as Foundry centres expand service to Pemberton, West Kelowna, Summerland, 100 Mile House and Port McNeill.

“Young people face more pressure and stress every day, and it’s important they have a safe place to turn when life feels overwhelming,” said Josie Osborne, Minister of Health. “With the expansion of Foundry services into five smaller communities, youth will have easier access to the trusted mental-health services and programs Foundry provides. These new locations will help young people and their families access support closer to home.”

In these communities, young people between 12 and 24 and their caregivers will have access to free, confidential and low-barrier supports in person or by connecting virtually to their nearby Foundry centre. Foundry services include drop-in counselling, peer support, physical and sexual health care, access to groups and workshops, and support with education and employment. Service availability at



each new space may vary and will be determined alongside youth and families to reflect community needs.

“Providing more young people with confidential, same-day access to mental-health and substance-use supports within small communities will ensure that youth experiencing challenges can easily connect to supports when they need it,” said Amna Shah, parliamentary secretary for mental health and addictions. “Expanding Foundry services in smaller communities is an important part of the work we

are doing to ensure more young people feel seen, supported and cared for in their own communities.”

Helping more youth in B.C. Once established, each new location will operate within an existing community space and be an extension of a Foundry centre in a neighbouring city or town. The same local organization connected to the neighbouring Foundry centre will be operating services at the new location to ensure consistency in programs and services.

Pemberton: Operated

by Sea to Sky Community Services and connected to Foundry Sea to Sky

West Kelowna: Operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association Kelowna and connected to Foundry Kelowna

Summerland: Operated by OneSky Community Services and connected to Foundry Penticton

100 Mile House: Operated by Cariboo Chilcotin Child Development Centre and connected to Foundry Cariboo Chilcotin

Port McNeill: Operated by North Island Crisis and Counselling Centre Society and connected to Foundry Port Hardy.

The Province is providing \$1.7 million to Foundry centres to expand service availability in nearby communities, and annual funding toward operations and service delivery to ensure young people have the support they need when they need it.

“Foundry Sea to Sky has been a place where I felt supported during a time when accessing help felt overwhelming,” said Catie Filippelli, youth participant, Foundry Sea to Sky. “Having youth-centred services in one welcoming space made it easier to reach out and stay connected.”

The Province is com-

mitted to expanding Foundry services throughout B.C. Enhancing supports for youth living with mental-health and substance-use challenges is an integral part of creating a seamless continuum of care for people in B.C.

Quick Facts:
There are 19 Foundry centres in operation in communities throughout the province: Vancouver-Granville, North Shore (North Vancouver), Campbell River, Abbotsford, Ridge Meadows, Kelowna, Prince George, Victoria, Penticton, Terrace, Burns Lake, Comox Valley, Langley, Richmond, Cariboo-Chilcotin (Williams Lake), Sea to Sky (Squamish), Port Hardy, Surrey Central and East Kootenay (Cranbrook). Sixteen more Foundry centres are in development in Burnaby, Chilliwack, Fort St. John, Kamloops, Snuneymuxw (Nanaimo), Port Alberni, qathet (Powell River), Quesnel, West Shore, Sunshine Coast, South Surrey - White Rock, Tri-Cities, Vancouver, Vanderhoof, North Okanagan (Vernon) and Kooteenay-Boundary.

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MEDIA GROUP

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DELTA OFFICE:

#3 7953 120 St. Delta BC., V4C 6P6

Ph : 604-312-5678

EMAIL:

punjabijournal@gmail.com, connect@asianjournal.ca

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By Alan Samuel

(PG)****

Clueless?

Stark. Bold. And engaging. Words like this can barely do justice to *A Private Life*. Easily a front runner for foreign picture of the year at this year's fast approaching Oscars if this film was a book it would be the ultimate page turner. Oh wait a minute. This newly released Sony Pictures Classics movie presented by Mongrel Media may just have been inspired by real events. Any way you slice it *A Private Life* is a very good film and well worth checking out at the Fifth Avenue Cinemas in Vancouver and select Cineplex Cinemas and Landmark Theatres across B.C.

What can you say about Jodie Foster? Whenever she takes on a role or gets behind the directors chair she always delivers the goods and rarely if ever disappoints. Ms. Foster again rises to the occasion and then some this time out as Lilian Steiner. Respected by most as a busy psychiatrist this well meaning doctor has a diverse clientele in Paris.

Little does she know that someone may be a bit on edge and that uncertainty ultimately becomes a problem for her practice - and her life.

With the news of a death of a friend Steiner becomes just a touch unhinged and goes on what some may say is a wild witch hunt to track down a killer. Scary. The real driving force behind *A Private Life* is really not knowing who did it and the countless minefields cast this well meaning psychiatrist's way as she tries to solve a seemingly unsolvable puzzle. And crime.

Superb pacing and a layered performance from Foster make *A Private Life* thoroughly engaging from start to finish. It's a terrific small movie with huge performances. Among the standouts are Daniel Auteuil who plays Steiner's former husband Gabriel Haddad with former 007 nemesis Mathieu Amalric (*Quantum of Solace*) playing a rogue.

A Private Life



IMRAN KHAN TO MAKE A COMEBACK WITH BHUMI PEDNEKAR

Aamir Khan's nephew Imran Khan, once a star in *Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na*, is missing in action for ten years. Back in 2010, Imran was seen as the Next Best Thing alongside Ranbir Kapoor. Imran had the best of roles rolling out at his feet. He decided to turn his back on stardom.

Imran is now all set for a comeback with a hush-hush project. Some digging revealed Imran's return vehicle is a Netflix film. Imran Khan and Bhumi Pednekar will play a husband and wife in a marital crisis.



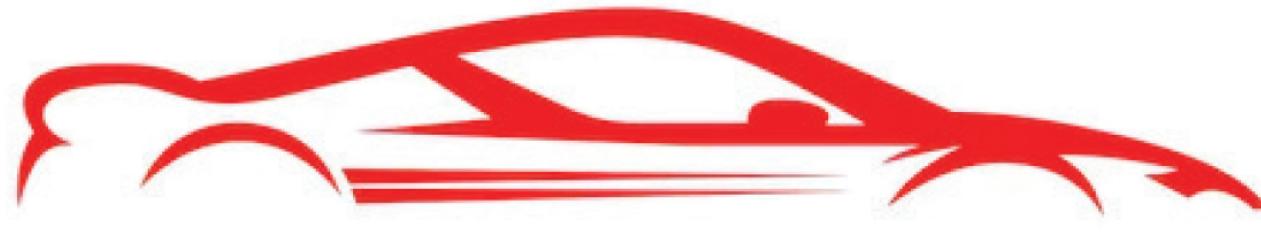
9 MINUTES EDITED OUT OF DHURANDHAR ON NETFLIX

The playing time for *Dhurandhar* in the movie theatres was 3 hours and 34 minutes. It is reduced to 3 hours and 25 minutes on OTT. Hence nine minutes of playing time have been curtailed on the digital platform.

While no explanation is available officially, a source informs this writer that the decision to trim this epic film was taken unilaterally by Netflix

without the director Aditya Dhar's consent.

Dhurandhar released in theatres last year on December 5. The film is still running with quite a few shows all over the country. It has turned out to be the all-time highest Hindi grosser by earning close to Rs. 900 crores. Its worldwide figures easily surpassed Rs. 1300 crores gross.



AUTO TRENDS

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2026 Kia Sportage Plug -In Hybrid: Popular CUV Shines!

Review by Veeno Dewan

The popular Kia Sportage compact CUV is a popular seller in Canada and therefore any new edition is eagerly awaited. For 2026 there is a mid-cycle refresh with a new "Starlight" exterior headlight design, new taillights and new front and rear fascia's along with fresh wheel designs. Interior updates include dual 12.3-inch integrated screens for driver info and infotainment, a new two-spoke steering wheel, available 10-inch head-up display on the top tier versions, and over-the-air (OTA) updates are now available. Further technology options include Highway Assist Driving 2, Digital Key access with mobile app capability and more. The Kia Sportage arrives in either a gasoline, hybrid (HEV), or PHEV version with multiple trim lines. The gasoline engine model uses a 2.5L four-cylinder engine that makes 187 horsepower and 178 lb-ft of torque. It is paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission. The Kia Sportage Hybrid and PHEV is powered by a 1.6L turbocharged engine, two electric motors, and a 13.8 kWh lithium battery to produce a combined 268 horsepower output and 268 lb-ft of torque. A six-speed automatic transmission with a rotary-style shifter and paddle shifters is standard in the hybrid variant which has an AWD-only drivetrain. The Sportage PHEV has a range of 55 km on all electric mode before the gas engine takes over. In



terms of charging, the 13.8 kWh battery takes approximately 2 hours to replenish using a Level 2 home (240V) charger or about 11 hours using a standard Level 1 household outlet. DC fast charging (Level 3) is not supported. The 2026 Kia Sportage gasoline version starts with the LX with FWD at \$31,995, and ends with the top tier X-Line Limited AWD at \$45,245. The Hybrid Sportage starts at \$38,145. The Hybrid Plug-in Model lists for \$46,245 for the EX AWD and ends at \$52,745. Freight and PDI: is \$2,100. As with all Kia's, equipment levels remain very

high. As standard on all models are heated front seats, Leather wrapped steering wheel, 17-inch wheels, LED headlamps, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Standard safety includes forward collision-avoidance assist, lane-follow assist, lane-keep assist, rear-occupant alert, and smart cruise control with stop-and-go capabilities. There is also Blind-spot monitoring, rear cross-traffic alert, and rear parking sensors. 360° Surround View Monitor and Remote Smart Park Assist are available on higher trims. Interior features on mid

-range models include: Heated and Ventilated Front Seats, Extended Panoramic Sunroof, Heated steering wheel and Dual-Zone Climate Control. Technology updates include: Wireless Phone Charger, Kia Connect: connected services and App features. Interior wise, the PHEV version offers good detailing around the cabin, with high quality plastics, gloss black, metal detailing, and premium textiles. The seats themselves are comfortable and supportive with decent bolstering. Interior room is good with more than adequate room to stretch out. At the

rear an adjustable cargo floor can be set to two positions, the lower of which provides a maximum cargo space of 1,121 litres with the rear seats up and 2,098 litres with them folded flat. On the road, the 2026 Sportage PHEV's new bump in horsepower offers a combined gas/electric rating of 268 horsepower meaning performance is better with extra oomph from the electric motors to make it more responsive and peppier. The electric motor obtains power from a 13.8 kWh battery pack. The ride proves to be relaxed and stable whether on the

highway or around town and is agile enough for the cut and thrust of urban driving. The transition between the hybrid electric motor and the gasoline engine is seamless. Steering is well-calibrated with good feel and direct feedback. The driver can select from four drive modes: Eco, Sport, Smart, and Snow (AWD-only). Few negatives here, it's not the sportiest driving SUV, but is a competent, safe, and easy to drive.

The PHEV switches between gasoline, electricity, or a combination. Opt for Electric mode and you gain a rated 55 kilometres on electricity alone. Once that depletes, the system reverts to the gasoline engine. The PHEV offers decent NRCan fuel economy figures with 6.7 L/100 km in combined driving. 6.3 on the Highway and 6.7 in the City.

Downsides include some engine noise, scratch-prone piano black interior trims and the complicated HVAC controls. The hybrid models' towing capacity is limited to 2,000 lbs. To sum up, the 2026 Kia Sportage PHEV offers great fuel economy, a roomy upscale cabin, and desirable features. Add to this Kia's excellent warranty and the very good as standard equipment list and it is hard to beat. Highly recommended

2026 Kia Sportage Plug In Hybrid: Priced from \$46,245 - \$52,745 plus delivery and PDI.

More info at www.kia.ca



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