

Check Against Delivery

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Resource Expo 2005

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Good morning to everyone here today. I'd like to thank you for inviting me here again to speak. This is the second time I've been able to open your conference, and I want to begin by thanking the elders, the Chiefs, the leaders, and all the representatives who've come here today, and yesterday, to share their wisdom with us.

I also want to bring regards from the Premier of the province of British Columbia, Premier Campbell. He wishes you well in all your deliberations on issues that you moved forward with that are all-important to each and every one of us, regardless of who we are or where we live.

It's also a pleasure to see on your agenda that the Senator from the Northwest Territories, Nick Sibbeston, who is also a former Premier, the Premiers of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory, Paul Okalik and Joe Handley and Dennis Fentie will be here to actually have some discussions. Dennis Fentie and I are friends from a long time ago, working in the same industry while he lived in Watson Lake and I lived in Fort Nelson.

Also I think it will be interesting to hear what the governor of Alaska, Frank Murkowski, has to say to you tonight.

Today at the Resource Expo we're here to talk about entrepreneurial spirit on many fronts. Entrepreneurial spirit thrives on many things, but two very integral elements are trust and relationships. Recently you have probably heard about the New Relationship that we are forging with First Nations and Aboriginal people throughout the province. Premier Gordon Campbell addressed this in his talk to the First Nations Summit just a few weeks ago. He said, and I quote: "We certainly won't have Canada's strongest economy in the country if First Nations do not share in economic prosperity, in jobs and opportunities." He said these words require action to back them up and noted that we have 300 agreements with First Nations covering economic development, forestry, oil and gas, parks and a number of key social sectors. "But we must do more and we will," he said.

It's opportunities like this, the Resource Expo, where we can learn in forging new relationships with Aboriginal people founded on reconciliation, recognition and respect. Gatherings like these help build foundations to settle issues that have impeded resource development in British Columbia and First Nations opportunities for many years.

I want to just briefly touch on the first topic, and that is something that's near and dear, I think, to everyone, regardless of who we are, and that is environmental issues. I just want to highlight a couple of projects that are underway in British Columbia as we speak.

First we have the Peace Moberly planning tract. This mining initiative involves the Salteaux and West Moberly First Nations in developing a sustainable resource management plan in an area of high importance to these communities and the ministry. The Peace Moberly tract, located south of Fort St. John, has high oil and gas potential and an established gas field on its eastern boundary.

Through this detailed planning process the First Nations interests around land management in the area can be better addressed. In addition, exploration requirements of existing tenure holders can be met, and future tenure holders will have certainty around the service development requirements.

Another project under the environmental policy program in my ministry is the First Nations Special Sites Inventory and Identification. This project pilots the recording of First Nations special sites. These sites will be entered into a confidential First Nations geographic information system database. From this database, site locations will be forwarded as required to appropriate government agencies for protection from surface disturbances.

The fine work between industry and First Nations in British Columbia is being recognized in other ways also. Just this last month the Oil and Gas Commission, which is the regulatory body for oil and gas exploration in the province of British Columbia, presented its new Journey Towards Excellence awards. These awards are oil and gas industry excellence in four areas: wise practices and innovation, environmental protection and conservation, healing the land and development of collaborative relationships.

Very appropriately, industry and First Nations shared two of the awards. Petro-Canada and Halfway River First Nation won the development of collaborative relationships category. Petro-Canada and the Halfway River First Nation met to implement the streamlined communications process that served the needs of both parties. Their

initiative reduces the time required to review applications at the community land office, resulting in better understanding and improved working relationships. Congratulations to Chief Roslyn Pokiak of the Halfway River First Nation.

In the environmental protection and conservation category, Calpine Canada and Doig River First Nation shared the award. Calpine and Doig River First Nation won the award for working collaboratively in proactively addressing environmental concerns in the Chinchaga Lake project in northeastern B.C. Innovative and wise practices using First Nations input were developed and used to protect and conserve the environment and the land base. Congratulations go to Chief Garry Oker and the Doig River First Nation.

There are also lots of opportunities in British Columbia for First Nations involvement in the industry. The Fort Nelson First Nation demonstrated that by becoming a 50-percent partner in a brand new drilling rig in northeastern B.C. - it's the first time for British Columbia that that's happened - between themselves and Ensign Drilling and have a contract with EnCana Corporation to keep that rig busy in northeastern British Columbia. That brings opportunities to the band for commercial investment, for involvement and also opportunities for employment.

It's pretty hard in today's energy world when you talk about what's happening and what's going on, to not talk about offshore oil and gas. We have a division in my ministry that deals with offshore oil and gas. It's a small division, but they've been a busy group. Just a few of the things that they've accomplished since being formed in January of 2003, they've held about 80 meetings with first nations and first nations organizations. We have invested in educational and informative initiatives about \$2 million in that period of time, and over the past two years I have led two teams of First Nations and coastal community leaders on fact-finding missions around the world, one to Cook Inlet in Alaska and the other to the Gulf of Mexico, giving participants a first-hand view of the industry at work in communities.

We've remained committed to the principles that exploration and development of offshore oil and gas must be done in an environmentally and scientifically sound manner. Our Premier said that, and we stand by it. As well, we're committed to promoting prosperity and economic opportunities for First Nations and cultural communities.

Just recently the government signed a protocol agreement with the Nisga'a Lisims Government, and the offshore division is starting to deal with issues as they relate to offshore oil and gas with that First Nation community.

B.C. is a tremendously busy place, as I said when I started speaking earlier. There are huge opportunities, regardless of where you want to go in the province of British Columbia and, in fact, to our neighbours just east of us, Alberta and Saskatchewan also, mostly relating to, obviously, oil and gas tar sands. But in British Columbia we have a huge opportunity, I think, all of us, by working together.

Mining is taking off in British Columbia like never before: Energy development, whether it's oil and gas...has taken off like never before. Energy development in hydro electricity or wind generation, alternative energies, hydrogen, all those forms of energy are there, and they are sources of energy that we all need, all consume on a daily basis regardless of who we are and regardless of where we live. Those industries touch our daily lives on a constant basis, and we ought to be able to collectively work together with industry, government and first nations, take every advantage that we possibly can, remembering that we want to be environmentally sound in the province of British Columbia, but to take advantage of all those opportunities.

I was talking before the program started today to Kelvin who from the first time I met him, has always intrigued me. He is a person with great vision, a person who works hard to make sure that First Nations are involved, that there are opportunities for First Nations regardless of what we want to do. Let me tell you, if you've not talked to Kelvin about some issues you should talk to Kelvin about some of these issues. There are opportunities there. It's just that we have to be careful about how we make those opportunities work for all of us in the province.

Job fairs are another thing that we've done throughout the province. Alberta has found and British Columbia has found that along with this economic opportunity and the growth there is a huge demand for jobs, for specialized jobs in some cases. But all jobs in today's world require training. So what we did, what we've normally done in the province is said well, there's lots of things - and I'll use the northeast for example, there's lots of things happening in the mining industry and in the oil and gas industry in northeastern British Columbia. If you want a job, go up there and get it.

Well, sometimes that 's easier said than done. Sometimes it's pretty hard to jump in your car in Smithers and drive to Fort St. John, to a strange place, and say, "Hey, I'm here. I've got these qualifications. Who's going to hire me?" and sometimes you're not going to get a job. So what we thought of was a different way to do it, and we designed job fairs.

What we did was take the service sector industry and the oil and gas industry, and we led it with government and we visited about 14 or 15 communities across the province of British Columbia in September and October, with a group of people. We went to

different communities. We advertised that we'd be there, and they could talk about the industry, they could talk about the opportunities not just in jobs but there's huge opportunities in investments for those folks that want to actually go forward and invest money and equipment in the service sector or whatever you want to do - actually in the drilling industry or in the production industry if you want to do that.

We went to those communities. Instead of asking people to come from those communities in northeastern B.C. we went to those communities. It was absolutely unbelievably successful. In 14 communities we had 2,300 people to actually hear and to listen about things that are happening in northeastern British Columbia as relates to mostly oil and gas but also mining. Many people found jobs on site. They don't specifically have to move from their communities. Actually many of these jobs are out in the bush in a camp atmosphere where you may go out for two or three weeks and then you're off for two weeks and you can live in other parts of the province. People are able to find that.

But they were also able to find out that there are lots of family-supporting jobs in British Columbia in these industries, and people can earn actually phenomenal amounts of money working in this industry. It's just a matter of getting the training, and we're working on those things in the province of British Columbia, providing training and the opportunity to actually get a job and know you have a job before you go there to a strange place that you may not have ever been to.

Unfortunately, my ministry is a small ministry, but because it's so busy in British Columbia right now I have a person working with me called the Minister of State for Mining. His name is Bill Bennett. He helps me an awful lot, and that is great for the mining industry in the province of British Columbia. He has a good story to tell about mining and the opportunities in it. I wish he were here also to talk to you a little bit about that. But I'll maybe just mention a few things that are happening in the mining industry in the province.

We've had unparalleled exploration these last couple of years. When we took office in 2001 there was about \$25 million a year spent in exploration in mining. As of last year we had about \$150 million in mining. That's just over the last two years it's increased that much, and we expect it's going to increase substantially this coming year as people see the opportunities that there are in the province, especially with great mineralization and the opportunity to actually exploit that mineralization across the province.

Let me tell you, it's not downtown Vancouver. It's not under this hotel that you are going to find that. You're going to find that in rural B.C. That's where I live, in fort St. John. That's where most of the First Nations communities are situated, on that land

base. They've lived there for thousands of years, so they have some expert advice to give us and advice that we should listen to, but also there are huge opportunities for those First Nations to actually access that industry, the mining industry or the oil and gas industry as it is around the province of British Columbia and to have their communities better off for it.

We funded, in fact, last year, 25 First Nation representatives from across the province from 14 different bands to come to Vancouver to the Mineral Exploration Roundup Conference. It's the second-largest conference in North America, and it's where people come from all over the world to talk about mining in the province of British Columbia and the opportunities that are there in British Columbia but also their provinces and states across North America. It's a great place to actually start learning about those kinds of things.

We've involved First Nations in developing the mining plan, which we have in the province now, and a big part of the mining plan is devoted to developing First Nations opportunities in the mining industry. We've provided almost \$400,000 to the Smithers Exploration Group to support prospector training for First Nations in communities. We've approved a \$100-million construction aggregate quarry called Eagle Rock, creating jobs and economic certainty in the Alberni Valley. This is yet another great example of a joint venture between First Nations and the private sector. Again, those opportunities are not just in the north. They're right there on Vancouver Island. Another recent success is the completed memorandum of understanding between Pan Pacific Aggregates and the Sechelt Indian Band. In the summer of 2005 the B.C. & Yukon Chamber of Mines released its new publication. It's called *Mineral Exploration, Mining and Aboriginal Community Engagement*.

I think those are good solid steps towards the future where we actually involve all British Columbians in the bountiful resources that we have here in the province.

I mentioned at the start that Premier Campbell said having a strong economy in the country depends on First Nations sharing in economic prosperity, jobs and opportunities. As a provincial government we set five great goals for the next decade. The goals are ambitious goals. They're not going to be easy to reach, and we're absolutely sure we're not going to reach them if we don't involve First Nations. We recognize the Crown's legal and moral duty to consult where decisions impact constitutionally protected aboriginal rights and title, and we're committed to actively working with First Nations to support their participation in the mining and energy sectors.

The government has committed \$100 million to a First Nations new relationship fund just since last September. The fund will be used to support a long-term vision of economic prosperity for all first nations communities in British Columbia. It will provide the support needed to build ability and expand capacity concerning the land and resources and possibly eliminate the need for outside advisors.

We will be investing in First Nations and Aboriginal communities by providing the tools, training and skills development needs to create self-reliant certainty and prosperity. So often, First Nations have told me in northeastern British Columbia where we have agreements to provide about \$12 million a year to seven First Nations to deal with the impact of oil and gas and the mining industry in northeastern British Columbia, and rightfully so, First Nations tell us - and they've told the Premier many times - that they get so many ideas and so many permits and so many requests at each First Nation band office for things that are happening on the land base that it's impossible for them to keep up. What happens is that the hiring of outsiders to help ensure that First Nations can understand what's happening is usually what's done.

The Premier wants to actually work with First Nations where we can actually take this \$100 million and start building the capacity within First Nations communities and the understanding of what the industry is - if they don't have that understanding - so that we can all work together to actually make that process happen better, to actually understand First Nations' concerns on the land base and to understand industry's concerns on the land base.

I think it's a great step forward, and it's a step forward that the Premier made, as I said, just recently in trying to encourage that development on the land base that will benefit all of us.

But I'll tell you, the province recognizes that the challenge of the developing mineral and energy resources will be partnerships with First Nations and industry. That will be a challenge. I don't think for a moment that it will be an easy process. But I've often said if we can't sit down at the same table and even if we have differences, talk about them, we're never going to come to any resolve about any of these issues. So whether we agree on all the issues or not, it's the ability to be able to sit down and talk about those issues that will make a difference.

So we're committed to working with you, neighbour to neighbour, government to government, to find solutions to ensure we all benefit from the development of this province's rich mineral and energy resources. We all know that British Columbia is a land with exceptional opportunity and promise. That's the opportunity for everyone

and the promise for everyone if we can work together to find those places where we can find common ground to do this.

I thank you very much for inviting me here today to speak to you briefly about what the government's doing as it relates to Energy and Mines, my portfolio. I wish you well in the rest of your deliberations today. I'm sure that, as I said earlier, you've got some pretty dynamic speakers coming and some panels that will inform greatly.

I wish you well in the rest of the day and to all of you. Thank you very much for inviting me.

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