

**Speaking Notes for Minister Colin Hansen  
Vancouver Board of Trade.  
Thursday September 28, 2006**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Good afternoon. Thank you Wynne (Powell - President, London Air Services) for the introduction. It is my pleasure to welcome everyone here today, especially my colleagues at the head table.

The B.C. of today is a whole lot different from the B.C. of a few years ago. Because of a vision and commitment, B.C. is back on track to prosperity.

Thanks to the vision and commitment of our Premier, Gordon Campbell, increasingly people – and businesses – now choose B.C. as a premier destination to visit, to work, to live and to invest.

You can feel the confidence of British Columbians. It's in the air - it's such a different climate from five years ago. Investment spending has taken off, rising \$4 billion since 2003 to a projected \$17.8 billion this year.

Corporate profits soared to over \$20 billion from \$12-and-a-half billion in only two years. Manufacturing shipments climbed 33 per cent between 2003 and 2005. Export earnings rose 16 per cent in 2004 and 2005. We have an increasingly diversified economy. B.C. is becoming less dependent on the U.S. market – both as a customer for its goods and as a source of tourists.

Since 2002, full-time jobs have risen 12 per cent while part-time jobs have declined three per cent, a dramatic reversal from the NDP years when part-time employment grew at twice the rate of full-time. The Major Projects Inventory – our latest inventory has reached a value of over 100 billion dollars for the first time - an increase of 23 per cent from just one year ago - another example of our incredibly successful economy.

Business in B.C. is booming, we're experiencing unprecedented economic growth, and since coming to office in 2001 - in just 5 years - our government has reduced regulations by more than 40 per cent.

This year for the first time ever, when over 90% of all public sector contracts were set to expire -- all of them -- 100 percent -- were renegotiated before they expired - ensuring labour stability through 2010.

But we're not resting on our laurels.

We plan to keep outperforming other jurisdictions with a concerted effort to use strategies for success business people have been using for decades.

The first of those is to have a vision — with specific goals in place to get us there.

The second strategy for success is to consult with the experts. We have done that.

The third strategy: build partnerships and alliances. I'm referring to our new economic agreement with Alberta: the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement.

The final strategy for success is to celebrate your accomplishments. My friends, the decade will end with a celebration like we have never seen before!

But first, let me take you back to that vision.

**THE FIVE GREAT GOALS**

Five Great Goals for a Golden Decade define our agenda and provide a clear path towards success.

1. Make B.C. the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.
2. Lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness.
3. Build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, those with special needs, children at risk and seniors.

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4. Lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none.
5. And – the goal in which my ministry has the most direct involvement - Create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada.

**ASK THE EXPERTS**

One of the best strategies for remaining competitive is to consult the experts.

Recognizing that our future lies with strengthening our ties to the Asia-Pacific, we convened the Asia Pacific Trade Council, a panel of experts to advise us on how to best take advantage of our proximity to the Asia Pacific region. The Council submitted the first of several reports in June, this one from the Market Advisory Group for China. If you haven't had a chance to read it, go to our web site and check it out – it's a great piece of work.

At the same time, the Competition Council – which worked closely with the Asia Pacific Trade Council – recognized the same thing: the Asia Pacific is key to B.C.'s competitive future.

The first Asia Pacific Trade Council report contains some well-thought-out suggestions for strengthening our ties with that region. In fact, some of their suggestions have already been put into place. For example, both the Asia Pacific Trade Council and the Competition Council want B.C. to have more of a presence on the ground in the Asia Pacific.

Officials in my Ministry have sought out individuals with experience in Asian markets who can represent our province and our unique strengths overseas. We'll have in place four representatives in four different areas by the end of the year. These full-time reps will focus on promoting British Columbia as a globally competitive location.

In addition, both Councils recommended that the Provincial Nominee Program be expanded to bring in more skilled workers and more investor immigrants from outside Canada. We are doing exactly that!

We are working with the federal government. Citizenship and Immigration Canada has agreed to help us identify potential business immigrants to B.C. and make them aware of our Provincial Nominee Program, which contains provisions to fast-track visa applications.

We recognize that we're going to have to import much of the talent that's going to keep our economy going strong into the future. Improvements to programs like PNP, and enhancing our presence in the Asia Pacific will enhance our ability to fill those needs into the future.

Those are just two of the recommendations from the two Council's reports. There are in total over 120 recommendations like those, and government is working on all of them.

We expect further reports from the Asia Pacific Advisory Council in the future: Japan, India, South Korea, Taiwan and South East Asia.

**TRAINING TAX CREDIT**

Asking the experts also means consulting with the business community on how best to develop B.C.'s labour market. With a million job openings and only 650,000 graduates over the next ten years, training and labour market enhancement is very much an economic development issue.

The Provincial Nominee Program is one way we can bring in people from outside the province to fill our skilled worker shortage. We also need to make sure that people who are already here get the training and skills they need in our fast-growing economy.

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In February Carole Taylor announced a \$90-million tax credit program, to be designed in consultation with industry, to expand training opportunities. We look forward to implementing this tax credit - which was also a recommendation of the Competition Council.

- We've taken that approach of collaboration and partnership with Industry Training itself. The ITA is acting on another Competition Council recommendation: to expand Industry Training Organizations.

**INDUSTRY TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS**

- These are sector-specific industry bodies – where the industry sector itself - supported by the ITA - takes on lead responsibility for the training programs and occupational standards it needs to develop its work force.

We have added \$13 million to the training budget in each of the next three years – now over \$90 million per year, our largest training budget ever. As of Aug 31, there were 29,213 registered apprentices and trainees in B.C. – more than doubled from 2004 when the ITA was established. We have a target of 35,000 by 2007-08. There are nearly 9,000 employer sponsors currently offering placements to apprentices in B.C., up 32 per cent since 2004.

Through programs in our secondary schools, we're encouraging more youth to get a head start in their trades training. Right now there are approximately 4,200 youth participants, up from 861 in March 2004 – that's up nearly 400 per cent in just over two years.

It's no surprise that training and skills development was at the top of the agenda of the Competition Council when it submitted its report to government this past June.

**COMPETITION COUNCIL**

- Developing our human resources and growing a skilled labour force was one aspect of the Report. You will remember the Competition Council was chaired by Dan Miller and David Thomson[VK1], submitting a far-ranging report a short three months ago.

- We are committed to working through the recommendations of the Competition Council in education, immigration, trade and investment promotion, treaty agreements with First Nations, research and development of new forest products, tourism and more.

- Right now we've got those 13 Ministries working on a measured, focused plan for implementation of both the Competition Council recommendations and the Asia Pacific Trade Council recommendations.

- This brings us to the next strategy – Building Alliances.

**TILMA**

- I have just returned from a visit to Alberta to talk about the progress we have already made on our Trade Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) with Alberta, signed just five months ago.

- Our two provinces have taken a leadership role in removing harmful barriers to trade, investment and labour mobility. We're sending a clear message to investors that our region is serious about building an even more highly competitive and attractive place for people to invest, carry on business, work and live.

I probably don't need to explain the TILMA to this crowd: the Vancouver Board of Trade has been a valued supporter of this agreement, which creates an economic powerhouse out of the two

**Speaking Notes for Minister Colin Hansen**  
**Vancouver Board of Trade.**  
**Thursday September 28, 2006**

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Westernmost provinces. With this deal we are now the second-largest economic region in Canada – next to Ontario.

•Of course, signing an agreement like this one isn't the end of a process. It's just the beginning. TILMA is slated to go into effect on April 1, 2007, but in reality we are already in a transition period – we're already acting as if the agreement is in force. We have committed to improve the links between us, and work together to reduce any remaining barriers to trade, investment and labour mobility. Both governments are mandated to make all changes by April 2009.

•It's only been a few months since we signed the agreement; we are now working hard on implementing it and we're making some real progress. We've already made progress on:

- common securities regulations;
- shared access for the oil and gas sector;
- streamlined business registration and reporting requirements; and
- opening up access to government procurement.

•Some of our most enthusiastic early support so far has come from the professions in the area of credential recognition, because under the agreement, no extra steps will be needed to work in one province if you are already recognized in the other. I'm most encouraged by the positive – “let's roll up our sleeves and get this done” – attitude of those responsible for credentials recognition.

•Now it looks like the Western approach to eliminating barriers is spreading. At the meetings of the Committee on Internal Trade in Halifax earlier this month TILMA was certainly the talk of the meeting. Already Saskatchewan is looking to meet and explore what the implications would be for Saskatchewan signing on to this agreement. There are at least three other jurisdictions that are actively kicking the tires as to whether or not they should sign on as well.

•So we're hoping that we can achieve a much more open economy in Canada through this route in a way that we have not been able to achieve through the marginal, incremental approach that has been tried to broaden the scope of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

### **VANCOUVER 2010 OLYMPICS**

•So let's recap:

1. we have in B.C. an economy that's outperforming the competition, and we want to keep it that way;
2. we have a vision and a clear set of goals for our Province;
3. we've joined with our neighbours in Alberta to create an economic powerhouse; and
4. we are consulting with the experts on how to get there and we are firmly establishing B.C. as Canada's Pacific Gateway.

•After a decade of progress we will have much to celebrate in 2010. The 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games are not just a sporting event; it's a celebration of who we are!

•The Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games have received a lot of airtime lately, and I'm not here to give the ins and outs of the accounting involved. It's all there – open and transparent for anyone to see – we are by all accounts on time and on budget for this project.

•I just want to say this: there were no new costs identified in the Auditor General's Report recently, but there are differing definitions of what gets lumped in as an “Olympic cost.” People ask: “What will

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it cost me as a taxpayer to stage the Games?” Answer: via the provincial government - \$600 million. We are well within that budget.

- Whatever definition of “Olympic cost” is used: there are both immediate and long-lasting benefits to hosting the Games. Intervistas Consulting has estimated that up to \$10 billion in economic benefits can be realized as a result of the Games.

- The international exposure just from our efforts in Torino with our BC-Canada Place was estimated at the equivalent of \$30M in media coverage. In fact, Games benefits are recognized within the financial communities, and were factors in the recent upgrade to the Province’s credit rating.

2010 will be a celebration of B.C. as the best place on earth to visit, to invest, to live and to raise a family.

- In conclusion, let me say that ultimately outperforming other jurisdictions isn’t about GDP and buildings and roads – it’s about people, jobs and keeping our outstanding quality of life.

- Here in British Columbia, we look forward with confidence and with a clear, purposeful vision to future growth and prosperity for all to share. Thank you.

- 30 -