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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
Her Honour the Honourable Iona V. Campagnolo, CM, OBC

SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2006

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

Prayers.

Hon. M. de Jong: Madam Speaker, in anticipation of the Governor General's access to this chamber, I move that we do recess from this chamber.

Deputy Speaker: The House will recess until such time that the bells will summon the arrival of the Governor General.

The House recessed from 10:05 a.m. to 11:13 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, guests, would you please rise for the arrival of Her Excellency the Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada.

Her Excellency the Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, having entered the chamber, took her seat on the throne.

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

On behalf of all members and on behalf of all British Columbians, I would like to welcome you here to Victoria and to the legislative chamber. We are honoured to have you here. I would like to invite you, Her Excellency the Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean, to say a few words.

**Address by Her Excellency
the Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean,
Governor General of Canada**

Rt. Hon. M. Jean (Governor General): Premier, Chief Justice, Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, Your Worship, distinguished guests, chers amis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[1115]

It's really a great pleasure to start my first official visit to British Columbia here in Victoria. I so appreciate the warmth, in every sense of the word, of your welcome.

It is easy to understand why — despite your distance from what is considered the business, financial and political centre of this country — British Columbia remains the destination of choice for many Canadians, particularly those who seek greater balance in their lives and also a deeper connection with the physical environment. Indeed, Victoria's longstanding tradition of counting blossoms helps to remind the rest of the country of how important it is to stop and smell the roses. And I confess that since my first visit to Vancouver, I have imagined that if I were to choose to live anywhere outside of my home province of Quebec, it would certainly be here in B.C. — not just because of the glorious physical surroundings. The dynamism and energy of your province and its people is equally arresting.

On this trip my travels are confined to your two southernmost metropolitan centres. But I know that Vancouver and Victoria are not reflective of the entire province, as I'm sure many of you in this chamber would be quick to point out. So let me assure you that I am equally eager to visit the other corners of your great province — to bear witness to the quiet grandeur of Haida Gwaii and the ancient traditions of its people; to bask in the bright Okanagan sunshine and sample its world-famous produce and wines; to explore and experience B.C.'s north, its coast and its interior.

Serious students of history know that Canada would not be Canada were it not for British Columbia. By becoming the sixth province to join Confederation in 1871, B.C. played a transformative role, complementing our Atlantic heritage with a Pacific orientation that has helped to redefine us in significant ways. The manner in which your entry was negotiated exemplifies the bold pioneer spirit that continues to thrive here.

Si vous trouvez qu'il est difficile de nos jours de représenter, à Ottawa ou même à Victoria, un comté du nord de la Colombie-Britannique, imaginez-vous ce que cela pouvait être, il y a plus d'un siècle. En effet, pour se rendre d'ici jusqu'à notre capitale nationale en 1871, la délégation de la Colombie-Britannique devait voyager par bateau à vapeur jusqu'à San Francisco et, de là, prendre le train jusqu'à Chicago, puis la voiture à cheval jusqu'à Ottawa. Un périple qui durait deux semaines.

Une fois arrivée à Ottawa, la délégation de représentants de la Colombie-Britannique avait prévu demander à Sir John A. Macdonald de faire construire une route pour les voitures à cheval reliant leur province au reste du pays. C'est alors que George Étienne Cartier, le lieutenant québécois du premier ministre du Canada, les prenant à part, leur a dit, avec la ruse qu'on lui connaissait : "Non, non, non! Soyez plus ambitieux. Soyez plus ambitieux, demandez un chemin de fer!"

Cartier ne se rendait pas compte que, en leur faisant cette recommandation, il nouait entre les politiciens de la Colombie-Britannique et du Québec un lien qui a perduré de manière assez étonnante.

[1120]

As challenging as it is to represent a northern B.C. riding in Ottawa or even Victoria today, you should consider the task more than a century ago. To get from here to our national capital in 1871, the B.C. delegation had to travel by steamboat to San Francisco, across land by train to Chicago and then by wagon to Ottawa. It took them two weeks.

Once in Ottawa, the delegation planned to ask Sir John A. Macdonald to build a wagon road to B.C. as a means of connecting it to the rest of the country. But George-Etienne Cartier, the Prime Minister's wily Quebec lieutenant, took the weary B.C. politicians aside and insisted: "Non, non, non! You must be more ambitious. You must ask for a railway!" In delivering this advice, Cartier established a special bond between B.C. and Quebec politicians that has persisted in surprising ways ever since.

The delegation, of course, acted on his words, and the rest of the story constitutes our shared history. The daring, expensive promise extracted from Sir John A.

Macdonald by British Columbia became an essential part of our national dream. Successive generations of British Columbians have never stopped building on that dream. As a result, 135 years later Canadians across the country continue to benefit from your presence in Confederation.

The abundance of your spectacular landscape has inspired artists for centuries, and it attracts tourists from around the world. The attention paid to developing your rich resources has yielded enviable prosperity for generations. And now the means that you are developing to balance the two remind us all of the fragility of this small planet we share and the respect we owe it and each other.

Respect manifests itself in many ways. Just let me speak to one of these. As an immigrant to Canada who has been honoured with the opportunity to serve its citizens, I am particularly moved to be here in your Parliament Buildings. British Columbia has a long tradition of electing members from immigrant and minority communities who have ensured that this Legislature has led the way in reflecting the rich diversity of your province's and Canada's population.

In this chamber Frank Calder, the first status Indian to be elected to the Legislature, gave voice and dignity to the concerns of aboriginal British Columbians. As Speaker, Emery Barnes, the first black Speaker in any Canadian Legislature, ably served not just his community but the entire province. Since then, members of this House of Chinese and Southeast Asian heritage have continued to make visible the multifaceted inheritance of your citizens.

In 2000, B.C. made Ujjal Dosanjh Canada's first non-Caucasian and first Indo-Canadian provincial Premier. In this process your Legislature has demonstrated in a tangible and high-profile way the warm welcome that B.C. embodies — the symbol of hope, the symbol of opportunity that your province continues to represent, not just to the rest of this country but to the rest of the world.

[1125]

Your multicultural cities, where English-as-a-second-language students often outnumber the Canadian-born, are really a beacon of what's possible, a model of how diverse communities can live and prosper together. We may not be able to package this or put a price tag on it, but it nevertheless remains one of our most remarkable commodities. Surely, in the context of a new global environment still rife with misunderstanding and violence, the capacity to create communities that thrive on trust and consensus is among our most important collective responsibilities.

I have pledged to use my office to really focus attention on breaking down solitudes, the differences of all kinds that continue to separate us — those imposed by geography and age, by gender and ethnicity, by language and religion and by poverty and ignorance. Only by working together can we eliminate the barriers that prevent skilled immigrants from fully contributing to their new country. Only through collaboration can we find meaningful solutions to the social alienation that drives some young people to isolation and despair.

J'estime que la marginalisation d'un être humain, quel qu'il soit, est une perte pour nous tous. Car il n'y a rien de plus indigne, dans une société aussi fortunée que la nôtre, que de laisser pour compte ou de ne pas soutenir les plus vulnérables d'entre nous. Je pense aux enfants. Je pense aux jeunes. Il y en a une quantité d'autres. N'oublions pas qu'ils représentent non seulement notre avenir, mais notre présent. Nous avons envers eux un devoir sacré; celui de leur laisser en héritage un monde meilleur. Il nous incombe aussi de veiller à ce qu'ils puissent l'apprécier et s'apprécier les uns les autres, dans le respect et en se montrant justes, en se montrant responsables.

Ce devoir fait aussi partie de notre rêve collectif. C'est un exploit dont peu de sociétés peuvent se vanter. Alors nous, qui sommes sur le point de réaliser à plus d'un titre ce rêve, ne pouvons nous permettre de prendre cette tâche à la légère ou de prétendre qu'elle ne relève pas de nous.

The marginalization of any human being is a loss to us all. Nothing in our affluent society is more disgraceful than our failure to nurture and support those who are most vulnerable. Children and youth represent not only our future but also our present. We have a profound duty to them, not only to pass on a better world but also to ensure that they have the capacity to embrace it and each other with respect and responsibility. This, too, is part of our collective dream and an achievement that has eluded many societies. Close to realizing it in so many ways, we cannot afford to take it for granted. We cannot afford to assume that it's someone else's task. Every one of us, with every action we take and every attitude we express, has an opportunity to foster respect, to promote dialogue and to nurture cooperation.

[1130]

During this first official visit to British Columbia, I really look forward to speaking with you and speaking with your fellow citizens about this and many other issues. The conversation we start this week will be but the first chapter in our ongoing dialogue. This is what I'm hoping for. I know that you and the people you represent have important matters to discuss, inspiring stories to share and also valuable lessons to teach me. So I'm here to listen.

Merci beaucoup. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Your Excellency. I'd like to call on the Hon. Gordon Campbell, the Premier of British Columbia, to say a few words.

Hon. G. Campbell: Let me start by saying thank you to Your Excellency for taking the time to come to British Columbia and to speak to us in the House.

Je voudrais remercier Son Excellence d'avoir pris le temps aujourd'hui de nous rendre visite dans l'édifice de l'Assemblée législative.

I want to say, Your Excellency, that listening to your words today in our House reminds us all of the

strength and the power of the Governor General in Canada. It reminds us of how much we have in common, of how much our history has built us to today and given us the opportunities that we all enjoy. As you mentioned during your comments, they are opportunities and rights and freedoms that we can never take for granted.

I have just come back from Europe, where I was with Her Excellency at Turin, and we both celebrated as the first quadriplegic ever took an Olympic flag and waved it. One of the things that touched me while I was there, Your Excellency, was the number of people who came and said to me: "This could never happen in our country." So as you talk of breaking down solitudes, of building understanding, of looking for bridges that include all Canadians and the opportunities that our country presents, you are talking of a dream to which we all aspire in this House, regardless of political party.

As you talk of the vast, open spaces of Canada, I think we should recognize that those vast, open spaces are reflected in the open minds and the open hearts of Canadians. Indeed, if we did not look to our deep history, where it was the open hearts of our aboriginal populations that welcomed us all as immigrants to this land, where those open minds and open hearts showed us the way to a better future.... If we can build on that, we can remove one of the longest-standing solitudes that Canada has experienced: the solitude between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians.

Tomorrow we will celebrate International Women's Day, and I know what a strong advocate you have been for women in Canada and around the world. It is an opportunity for us to reflect on what we can do to assure that all women, immigrant women and others, can reach their full potential in our country and in our province.

British Columbia is a province that proudly calls itself Canadian. We believe that we are no longer on the edge of Canada's future; we are at the centre of Canada's future. We are at the centre of our Asia-Pacific future. We are at the centre and, in fact, leading in terms of social innovation, of economic opportunity and of reaching out and including all British Columbians in the future that they deserve.

Today as I came with you up towards the Legislature and watched Your Excellency as you interacted with so many children, I saw the lights in the eyes of those children, and I thought to myself what a huge opportunity we have in this country. Those children are our present. Those children do represent a generosity of spirit that we should all embrace.

[1135]

As we look to the future, we look to work with you to eliminate the solitudes so that your legacy as Governor General will be one where people can look back and say: "We removed barriers. We built understanding. We strengthened this great country."

Today, on behalf of all of those of us in the House and the people of British Columbia, let me say thank you. Thank you for reminding us of the strength of our country. Thank you for reminding us of what we have in common. Thank you for reminding us of the exam-

ple that we do set today and of the quest that we must still pursue to assure that Canada reaches its full potential and our national dream is truly realized. Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

At this time I'd like to ask the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, Ms. Carole James, to say a few words.

C. James: Your Excellency, it's great to be able to add my voice of welcome to British Columbia from Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

We were debating, as you mentioned, the weather. I know you'll be getting an official welcome from the mayor later, but we were debating who was responsible for the weather in British Columbia — whether it was the city or the province — so I want to pass on to you from both His Worship and myself, as the local MLA, that we were very pleased to arrange the sunshine so that you could truly see the blossoms and flowers that you mentioned earlier as you arrived in our city.

I also want to welcome you to an island. As you mentioned in your remarks, an island is very close to you and to your daughter. On behalf of an Islander, I'd like to welcome Her Excellency, as well, to Vancouver Island.

I also know that sand dollars have a particular personal connection for you, so I would like also to welcome you back sometime to Vancouver Island, as we are a home of sand dollars. It would be a wonderful opportunity for you to be able to visit and to connect with your talisman, as you've described it.

You mentioned youth, and I'd also like to thank you for raising the awareness and for setting as one of your priorities the issue of youth and their futures. I know, Your Excellency, that later in your visit in British Columbia you'll be meeting with a number of aboriginal youth. I'd like to thank you for setting that as a priority because, as others have said, youth truly are our future. They truly are the hope for all of us. I'm sure — as you experience, as we spend time with that generation — it gives all of us in this chamber hope that there is a future, that we do have strong voices coming up to follow us in this Legislature to make sure that democracy and the kind of values that you have described for British Columbia and for Canada will be strong and will be recognized in that future generation.

I'd also like to thank you for the role model that you provide to so many women and to so many others, immigrants to our country. I think it's very appropriate, Your Excellency, that you're here for International Women's Day, as an opportunity to be able to celebrate and recognize the achievement. That role modelling is very important for all British Columbians and for all Canadians.

[1140]

Your Excellency, welcome. I appreciate your first official visit, and I look forward to you coming back to British Columbia once again. Thank you. Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. James.
Would you all please rise for the departure of the Governor General.

Her Excellency the Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, retired from the chamber.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Hon. M. de Jong moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 11:41 a.m.

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