

**Premier Gordon Campbell  
Address to the Vancouver Board of Trade's  
Greater Vancouver Community Leadership Summit 2001  
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*Check Against Delivery*

Leadership is a word people normally use when they're telling someone else what to do. And when you're in public life, there's no end of people telling you what you should do.

As you start your day-long discussion about where you'd like this city to go and what you'd like it to do, remember: This is a great city. There is not a city in the world where I would rather live than Vancouver. There is not a province I'd rather be in than British Columbia. And our most important assets are the community, its people and its spirit. And as you talk about what could be, remember what we already have. If we forget what we have – if we don't work to preserve and protect what we have – we're likely to lose it.

I first worked for the City of Vancouver in 1969. Many things have changed since 1969. Almost all those changes took place because someone – or some small group of people – said, "We have an exceptional asset here that we want to develop." And they were not afraid to go out and talk about their idea, even though they didn't think everyone would accept it.

Close your eyes and think of the parts of this city you take particular pride in. When I bring people to Vancouver, I usually show off False Creek. When I first got involved in the city 30 years ago, False Creek was an industrial slum. Go and walk along that sea wall today. Look at those neighbourhoods; visit Granville Island. How many people here think Granville Island is a mess – something that never should have happened? Does anyone here think that?

There were people who fought, month in and month out, against changes to Granville Island. But we had a group of people who said, "No, this is important. This is something we're excited about. This will make the city a bigger, more wholesome, more cosmopolitan place for us to live and to work."

For years we looked at the Burrard Inlet waterfront, and it seemed to exceed our grasp to decide what we could do with it and how we could make it work better. But because there were a group of people who focused on it and drove it forward – not just year in and year out, but literally decade in and decade out – changes are finally taking place. When you take visitors down to the Burrard Inlet waterfront, they tell you what an incredible place it is, and how lucky you are to live in a city with all those residences right next door to downtown.

If we're going to be real leaders, we have to get outside the box that holds us back. We have to get outside the ideas that we're all used to and we're all comfortable with – that don't challenge us, or what we're doing, or what our values are. Here's a conference where you lose nothing by saying exactly what you want and then talking about exactly how you will get there.

In 1984 I listened to debates at city council in Vancouver during the lead up to Expo 86. You'd have thought Expo 86 was the worst thing that could ever happen to the place.

I thought to myself, "You can sit outside this and say, 'Why aren't they thinking about the good things; why are they only thinking about the problems?'" You can complain about that or try and do something about it." So I decided to run for office. I thought it was a way to make a contribution. But I want to emphasize that it's only one of the ways you can make a contribution to strengthening your city and your community. Opportunities to participate are there for all of us.

When I worked in Nigeria, I recognized the difference between living in Canada and British Columbia and Vancouver and living in a place that doesn't make you free to pursue your goals. We have inherited an exceptional gift: any single one of us can decide what you want your city to be like.

In 1978, before I was involved in politics, there was a big debate in the city about where we should put the multiplex. Does anyone here remember the multiplex? The multiplex was going to be a huge project, right in the middle of a single-family neighbourhood in the northeast part of the city.

Grant Iredale, a very active member of the Board of Trade, came to me and said, "This makes no sense. Why don't we start thinking about building our urban core? Why don't we start taking advantages of the things that are downtown already? Here's my idea. What if we put a stadium downtown instead of putting a stadium out at the PNE in the middle of a single-family residential neighbourhood?"

One of the examples he gave was parking spaces. I think the number he used at the time was 22,000 parking spaces that you wouldn't have to build because they were already there downtown. They were just minding their own business at night, hardly doing anything at all.

Grant Iredale was just creamed. People said, "Are you nuts – a stadium downtown? You can't think of a worse thing." May Brown – a very good friend of mine – ran in the civic election, saying, "We should think about putting a stadium downtown." She was clobbered, too. But Grant Iredale and May Brown kept on saying, "This is the right idea; this is what we should be doing."

Because they stuck with that and they focused on it and they worked on it, eventually someone said, "Yes, we could do that. And if you do that stadium, maybe we should do a transportation exhibition. And if we do a Transpo, maybe we should have some rapid

transit – and what about a convention centre? We'll get the transit system to take you to the convention centre..." – and so on." And suddenly we have the city we know today because one small group said, "This is what's right for my community."

Vancouver is a much better place today because a citizen decided to take some leadership, to take some action, to focus attention on where he thought we should go. Any one of you can have one of those seminal ideas that will help drive our city forward.

People in Vancouver have done a great job in taking ideas and pushing them further than next month or next year. They're thinking about what we'd like the city to feel like and be like a decade from now – in 2010, say, when we host the Winter Olympics and Paralympic games in Vancouver and Whistler.

People pushed that idea and they drove that idea. They were patient and they were thoughtful and they got excited and they got more people excited about it. The mayors helped move it along. The province is there now, and so is the country.

And guess what's going to happen when we combine our energy, our talent, our resources and our creativity? We're going to win those Games, they're going to help change the city, they're going to help make it a better place, and they're going to give everyone something to celebrate and to be proud of. They'll be something to help us remember what an exceptional place we live in.

I want to say a couple of things before you engage in your discussions. First, I hope you'll make them regular discussions, not once every 10 years. You've got to be involved in these discussions about where you want to go and how you want to get there year in and year out.

There's something else I think we all need to do. We have to talk about things we don't really like to talk about. We have to find ways to engage one another in conversations and discussions and dialogue about the enormous challenges we face.

Our world is changing dramatically. It's changing just as we sit here. It's changing because of the demographic mix. It's changing because we're getting older. It's changing because our economies are changing. But there's one thing I believe won't change, and that is the necessity for us to live in communities that are strong, that are vital, that are driven by ideas and by the exchange of ideas.

We should not be afraid of public debate. We should not be afraid of challenging the status quo, because at the end of the day that is what leadership is about.

There is not a person involved in public life in Canada who won't tell you candidly that our health-care system is in crisis. And we haven't discovered how we can even start talking about that problem yet.

We look at our education institutions, which are huge assets in our very midst. The University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser, BCIT, Emily Carr, Langara and Capilano colleges are presenting us with enormous opportunities. How do we open them to us, how do we spread their benefits, how do we generate new ideas? How do we challenge ourselves and challenge our institutions?

Those are the tasks that lie ahead of us. They should be exciting tasks that allow us to develop our full potential. At the end of the day, leadership is reaching out, grasping the nettle of change and making sure you shape it so it reaches the goals that you have set for yourself and for your community.

People in this city have created a great place to live. A week ago Friday, as I sat with President Clinton, he told me what a great city this is and how much we have to offer not just to our citizens but as an example to the world.

That does not mean that everything's easy or there are no problems. It means that as we've approached our problems, we've kept a focus on what our values are as a city.

If we confront the facts of the day and look for solutions, that will put us in a leadership position. Leading means being first, it means being out front, it means taking some risks and it means recognizing as you take those risks and move forward you indeed can create a better community, a better city, a better world.

Let me say one last thing. There are no simple answers. You have to focus, you have to commit, you have to decide and then you have to pursue the dream. You have to pursue it relentlessly, because as you move to grasp the opportunities that change presents, all sorts of barriers will be put in your way.

It's not always easy. But as I said to people after my climb up Kilimanjaro, as you move up that mountain and wonder whether you'll ever get to the destination, if you keep going – if you keep focused – you will get to the summit. And the view from the summit is exceptional. It is something you will never forget.

Thank you.