

Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia

Premier Gordon Campbell

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Tonight I want to thank all of you in mineral exploration in British Columbia. I want to say thanks because you hung in there with us — not just with us as a party, but with the province of British Columbia.

You're talking in your conference, your round table, right now about striving for excellence in exploration, and that title in itself says Reach for what's best in you, reach for what's best in your province, reach for what's best in what you do, and take pride in what you do. And everybody who's in this room, who's part of B.C.'s mining and mineral exploration industry, should recognize that this province is where it is because of your initiative, your endeavours.

Now, Rob introduced my colleagues, but let me just say that the people in my caucus have been dedicated to turning the mining industry around, opening it up again to make it a stable, secure place for people to invest and to know that your provincial government will take as much pride in your accomplishments and your contributions as you rightly should. So I just want to take a moment again to ask Dick Neufeld and Bill and Pat and Barry to stand, because they are your advocates in government, and I think they've done a great job.

One of the things that's important as we celebrate an industry or a sector is to recognize leadership. I can remember as leader of the opposition asking Norman Keevil "Where do we have to get to?" because the industry kept on being pushed down and and regulated and there was a lot of uncertainty in the industry.

And Norman said to me: Well, we have to get our exploration back up. We have to get up to over \$220 million a year if we're going to have an opportunity to discover what we really need to discover, so we can actually move on to metal mining development and other mineral development across the province.

This year, in less than five years, we have got to the \$220 million investment in mineral exploration.

Tonight you're going to honour people in your industry who have been leaders. You're going to honour Ed Balon whose research has paved the way for new gold discoveries in the Merritt-Lillooet area. Gold. Now who in the room doesn't like that word? Gold. I can tell you in British Columbia we're going to get used to gold. We've got the Olympics coming in 2010. We might as well win as much gold as we possibly can.

Jim O'Rourke. You can honour Jim O'Rourke and recognize all the work that he has done as he's extended mine lives across the province. When you don't do the exploration you need you can't do the mine development you need, and if you don't do the mine development you need, eventually the mine will close, and when mines close, families suffer because of it. So if we're going to keep an industry that's ongoing and that's sustainable, you have to have the exploration that allows us to open new mines on a regular basis.

We didn't have that for a while, but we're moving in that direction again in British Columbia, and that's important, because the mining industry in British Columbia is important to our overall economy. There is no sector of our economy that isn't important, but mining itself creates a base, a solid foundation, that allows us to build economic opportunities for people across the province, jobs for people and secure public services.

Just think of what you've been able to accomplish as this economy has grown. We went from being a 'have-not' province to a 'have' province. We now have more jobs being created in the province of British Columbia, more jobs in absolute numbers, than any other province in the country and we are at record low levels of unemployment.

You know, it's not unusual for people to say they're tired of people in urban centres not understanding what the resource industries do to allow these centres to thrive. But here you are in Vancouver, here you are generating jobs throughout this province, and what's really important to recognize is every single region of this province has the lowest level of unemployment they've had in 30 years.

In 2004 alone there were 650 exploration projects taking place across the province. We had a 38-percent jump in exploration. We've watched as that's gone up again in 2005. As we look at the end of 2005, we're going to discover that that's gone up again.

Sometimes when things go well, everyone thinks it just happened by accident. This did not happen by accident. It happened because your association had the leadership, the commitment and the drive to say to those of us who happen to be fortunate enough to get elected in government, "We need you to do this." And many times, we've been able to do it.

We decided that it was important for us to try and clarify and make our land use patterns in British Columbia more certain. That made a difference. Our flow-through taxes have made a difference. How we're moving forward in terms of supporting Geoscience has made a difference. Last year in this room I announced a \$25 million commitment to Geoscience in the province of British Columbia. There are 11 separate projects right now that are moving forward and providing you with the tools you need so you can be successful, so you can explore, so you can move forward, and we can open mines in the province.

The industry keeps growing in every region of the province: \$11 million and 300 jobs in the southwest; \$30 million and 300 new jobs in the northeast; \$13 million and 500 new jobs in the Kootenays; \$30 million and 750 jobs in central B.C.; \$36 million and 800 jobs in the Thompson-Okanagan; and, in northwest B.C., the great northwestern sector of this province, \$100 million and 1,300 new jobs in British Columbia.

Those jobs are going to continue to build as we invest in our mineral future in this province, and I want to congratulate those of you who have taken the leadership in doing that, who have taken on the risks.

Who would have imagined three years ago, even in some cases two years ago, the kinds of shortages that we are anticipating as we go forward? It's been estimated that by 2010 there will be 8,500 more jobs in exploration and mining than we have people to fill them. Tonight I can tell you that we will be committing an additional \$2.3 million to expand mining and mineral exploration training programs across British Columbia so we can fill those jobs.

Three hundred thousand dollars will continue the northwest pilot project in mining education. It was a pilot project that's worked, a program where 80 percent of the people who graduated have found their job placements within their first year.

\$1 million will be committed to expand that program across the province, because if we're going to maximize the benefits of this resource, this has to take

place across the province. \$1 million will be focused on the Prospector and Environmental Teams program to train youth from First Nations and rural communities in prospecting and mine site reclamation.

Across this province, community after community, First Nations communities included, have felt left out of a lot of our resource opportunities in British Columbia. As we build the new relationship with First Nations, it's important for them to feel a part of this, whether it's in exploration, the mine development or Geoscience we can do that by working with them.

I was just talking with some of the folks from Galore Creek, and they were saying that they're working directly with the Tahltan so they can have the same opportunities at Galore Creek that others might have. We should understand this as an incredibly important part of our future. And we want to work with you to make sure that we can take full advantage of that for rural youth and First Nations youth because that's the future of British Columbia as well.

There are many of you in this room who I have met in the past, and I can tell when I talk with you how excited you are about what you do. One of the things that we have to do — and the organization's done a very good job of this — is reach out and tell kids in schools about the resource industries we have, about mining and about exploration. There's a whole bunch of young people that would like to be part of this industry. But we have to find ways to connect back into our schools so they see this as part of their future.

Again I want to point to Norman Keevil. Norman Keevil is known worldwide as a leader in this industry. We want to build leaders in the industry, and just as we must explore as much of the province as possible to develop the maximum of our mineral resource, so we have to touch as many young people as possible, so we can get those with talent and energy and imagination to be part of this industry.

Imagine what you would like the province to be like. Imagine what you would like your industry to be like. Imagine where we will be in ten years. Then let's commit ourselves to reach that goal. Let's think about how we travel that path. Let's look at this vast future that's lying before us and ask: "How do we capture that? How do we capture that future for our part of the province, for your enterprise? How do we capture that future for Canada?"

We've just had a federal election. They're talking about the west and about Mr. Harper being a Prime Minister from the west. We should get this: The country is

rebalancing, the world is rebalancing. The world is moving from the Atlantic to the....

Audience: Pacific.

Gordon Campbell: You guys are good.

The world is moving from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and we can take advantage of that. We are the gateway, we are the crossroads and we have the mineral resources. China— the fastest-growing economy in the world, is hungry for our mineral resources. India, with the fastest-growing middle class in the world, is hungry for our mineral resources. Korea is hungry for our resources.

The demand is there. We have to connect, whether it's with rail infrastructure or road infrastructure or port infrastructure, to make sure that those commodities are getting to those customers. And we have to think in different ways than we have in the past, because there are others that are going to be after the same markets.

The other day I pointed out that about 8 percent of China's softwood lumber is coming from Canada. That's up about 37 percent in the last year. It sounds great, a 37-percent increase. But think of this: 8 percent means there's 92 percent left for us to get. When we think of China and its demands we can't just leave the minerals here in the ground and hope that they're going to notice them. We've got to get them there.

As you explore, as you develop mines, it won't do you any good unless those mines have a market to go to. So all of us have got to be doing that together as we move forward. There are huge opportunities for us in British Columbia. You have to imagine them. You have to tell us what we need to do, and I mean that openly and sincerely. Tell us what we need to do to help you do your jobs.

Recognize that this is an open partnership. What is an open partnership? An open partnership is when you're comfortable telling us when we're doing things right and when we're doing things wrong, and when we're not doing things right you tell us how you think we can fix it. That's what we want to do, and that's what we're committed to doing.

It's because we've done that that we ended up with a two-zone system for improved land access. It's because we've done that that we've ended up with on-

line permitting to eliminate the kind of gauntlet you had to run when applying for mine permits. It's because we've done that that we have an extension of the 20-percent exploration tax credit to 2016. It's because we've done that that there's a new Geoscience centre in British Columbia. It's because we're in partnership with you that we've been able to do that.

Tonight, as we think about what kind of future we want I would like to ask you: Where do we want to be in five years? Five years ago when we sat and talked with people like Norman Keevil, he said to us: "You'd better get your exploration commitments in British Columbia up to about \$220, \$230 million a year or you're not going to go anywhere." Well, we finally got there, and that's great.

What do we have to do? What are the targets we have to set? How do we move forward together? I'll tell you: without people we don't get anywhere. So our commitment to training for rural and aboriginal youth, our commitment to explaining to young people the opportunities that exist in mining, our commitment to selling British Columbians on the value of the mineral resource for a brighter future and a better quality of life is a commitment that we share with you.

Tonight you honour people who have seen the opportunities that mining and exploration and that British Columbia represent. Let's look out and make sure that we continue to have world leaders who are part of this industry and are part of a province that recognizes the importance of mining, the importance of exploration to all of us.

Thank you very much.