

UNBC Opening of Northern Health Sciences Centre
Premier Gordon Campbell

August 17, 2004

Check Against Delivery

This is an exceptional day for me, as well as all of you because today is the day where you recognize what a great place we live. As Charles Jago and Shirley Bond have both said, this didn't start in government; this started, right here, on the ground floor in Prince George. It started with 7,000 people coming and saying that they needed to have a better response to the challenges that they face in terms of delivering health care.

To all those 7,000 people who made their voices heard, they should know they started this; they lit the flame that is the new medical school in the University of Northern British Columbia, and we should give them their thanks for their energy and their commitment.

As we all gather here today, we should recognize that that commitment that the community came forward with, that energy, that idea they came forward with, really was only possible because you had a community leader here at your university who was willing to tear down the boundaries that often separate institutions. That was because of the leadership, vision, imagination, and creativity of Dr. Charles Jago who has done an exceptional job on behalf of all of you.

I also want to thank the northern mayors who consistently drove this project. In particular, your mayor here from Prince George, Colin Kinsley, never lost sight of the goal and the dream. I want to say, Colin, thank you for your contribution as well; it was really exceptional.

As we move this ahead, I should tell you that there were MLAs from the north that never lost sight of the goal. We're joined by a number of them today. Shirley Bond and Pat Bell certainly never lost sight of this. But we're also joined today by Blair Lekstrom, the MLA for Peace River South, and Paul Nettleton, the MLA for Prince George-Omineca, and I hope you'll give them your appreciation, as well.

Because the drive behind this came from you, I want to say thanks again to you for that, but the drive also comes from the people that you elect to carry your message down to Victoria and to encourage that investment and encourage that commitment. I'm very pleased to say that all MLAs did that. Without question, they knew how important this was for the entire north of our province. They knew how important it was that we created not just the educational opportunities but we created the infrastructure and the support to keep the doctors that we train here in the north.

We all wish this could happen overnight. These students that we have with us today are about to enter in September of this year a medical program that will take them four years

to complete. That four years will only get them to the point where they can carry out their residency programs, which will take them two years to complete.

If you think back, the community had an idea in the year 2000. We committed to that in the election, and we made the announcement we were going to invest the funds in August of 2001. The first students will enter in September of 2004, and it won't be until 2010 that they actually have completed their training and their education so that they can meet your needs.

It is important for us to remember that this is also an exceptional commitment from the people who have agreed to become physicians in the province of British Columbia. I want to say thanks to all of you for making that lifelong commitment to the people of our province.

Finally, I want to say thank you to the physicians and the nurses, the professionals who helped bring this together. Without the commitment of your doctors here in Prince George, your physicians who are willing to make this program work, we would not be able to deliver the top-quality education that you require and deserve. So I want to thank all of the physicians here in the north, all of the doctors in Prince George who have committed their time and their energy to make sure that this promise could be brought to fruition.

It is about leadership, and as is so often the case, the leadership has come from right here, at home, in Prince George and from across the north of British Columbia.

The commitment we've received from corporations to provide support for these students is exceptional. The gift that you are giving the future is exceptional.

Let me simply say I think it's a real honour and a pleasure to be here today as we announce the opening of the first northern medical school in British Columbia. Thank you all for doing it.