

**Address to the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities  
Premier Gordon Campbell  
March 26, 2004**

*Check Against Delivery*

It was eleven years ago that I first spoke to the AVICC in Port Hardy. I traveled up to the North Island then and I visited Zeballos and Tahsis and Gold River. You name it. If there was a community up here I visited it.

While I've been touring the North Island this week, I haven't been able to touch all of you. But the encouraging thing for me over the last couple of days was to see and to hear what people's plans are for their communities. Up in Port Hardy, they are very excited about their potential and what they can do. I was in Port McNeill, now just imagine this: 11 years ago I was in Port McNeill and I arrived with the staff from UBCM. There were two folks from there, Bill and Barb. They brought me in and I had worked with Gerry Furney on local government taxation and Gerry welcomed me to his town. Gerry did something that any of you have gone to Port McNeill have gone through – he gave me a four-hour tour of Port McNeill. When I was there this week it was the first time in 11 years that Gerry has actually allowed me to be in Port McNeill when he wasn't there. I sort of feel like I'm an honorary citizen for that tribute.

The interesting thing for me as you travel across the North Island is to see the resilience of the people in the communities, to hear their ideas about what they can do and how they can do it. I had one mayor who said: "You know, I don't want any money; I just want government to allow us to do the things we want to do." I've got a tip for you: if that's your message, I want to hear it as often as I possibly can.

The AVICC is the oldest association in the UBCM umbrella. Back in 1950, when this organization started, the world was quite a bit different. There were 144,000 people on all of Vancouver Island. There was no such thing as B.C. Ferries. In fact, if you wanted to go from Victoria to Vancouver you had to get on a ferry at midnight and it was about six and a half hours before you made it across to the mainland. So things have changed quite a bit. But some things haven't changed – the leadership of local government and the commitment of MLAs to their communities and the ridings that they serve.

I am very pleased that we have such a strong caucus on Vancouver Island in our government. You know, five of the B.C. cabinet members are from the Island. Many of them have a background in local government. Murray Coell from Saanich North and the Islands is now the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, and I did that for a reason. Murray is one of the few people that have been able to get along with UBCM president Frank Leonard for almost his entire life. I thought that would be an important sort of characteristic for the new minister. I think everybody in the province have been incredibly impressed by the work of Graham Bruce, former North Cowichan mayor. He's now the Minister of Skills Development and Labour. Ida Chong is here from Oak Bay-Gordon Head. She is a former Saanich councillor and she's now the Minister of

State for Women and Seniors' Services. Susan Brice is here from Saanich South, the former mayor of Oak Bay and the Minister of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services. Stan Hagen, the MLA from the Comox Valley, is the Minister of Human Resources. Rod Visser from the North Island and Judith Reid from Nanaimo-Parksville are here.

I should just tell you that Judith has decided that she's not going to seek office again. She was elected first in 1998, and there couldn't have been a better MLA than Judith Reid. She served the province incredibly well. She was a great Minister of Transportation, and I want to say thank you in front of all her peers for the work that she has done. Thank you, Judith.

One of your long-time friends, a long-serving mayor of Port Alberni, Gillian Trumper, is here today from Alberni-Qualicum. Mike Hunter is here from Nanaimo. Mike is doing a great job on our behalf. Brian Kerr is with us from Malahat-Juan de Fuca. Arnie Hamilton is here from Esquimalt-Metchosin. Jeff Bray is here from Victoria-Beacon Hill. Harold Long is here from Powell River-Sunshine Coast and Sheila Orr is with us as well from Victoria-Hillside.

I want to tell you that one of the reasons that you have so many MLAs here is that we really value the advice we get from the associations and from the UBCM. There are very few organizations in the province that have as broad a reach, that have as much front line on-the-ground experience. It is important that you know that these MLAs are here to listen to you and to learn from you, to share information with you and to work with you as we build an even brighter future for British Columbia. They are a great group of people, and they certainly never lose sight of the importance of Vancouver Island and our coastal communities as we build an even more prosperous future for British Columbia.

Just a while ago I was in Port Alberni for the B.C. Winter Games. Ken McRae was there and led not just his town but his entire community and region in providing an incredibly successful B.C. Winter Games for all of us. I don't know if Ken is here today, but I just wanted to say thanks for bringing together everyone, first nations, community groups. Ken, good to see you. It was a truly gold medal performance.

Throughout 2003 we saw some times where British Columbians, not government per se but British Columbians, did a truly exceptional job. We went through the worst forest fire season in the history of our province. We had the second largest evacuation in the history of our country and not one person that we all worked to protect lost their lives. Unfortunately three people who were trying to ensure that the public was protected did lose their lives in serving the public. But the public service did an incredible job through that incredibly trying time.

As for the 50,000 people that had to vacate their homes and wondered what their future held for them day in and day out, week in and week out through that horrible month of August 2003, I can tell you one thing that strengthened them, one thing that gave them a sense of confidence in themselves and their future. That was British Columbians. They

knew there were 4.1 million British Columbians wondering what they could do to help. Could they send a blanket or a toy or a phone card or a computer? What should they do? What could they do to help people get through that difficult time? I think every British Columbian knew that was a time for all of us to come together, and we were recognized for the success that we provided throughout that great trial.

We also had an incredible triumph in 2003. On July 2, 2003 we were awarded the 2010 Winter Olympic Games – not just for Vancouver and Whistler, not just for British Columbia, but for Canada. It was an incredible experience for me to be there and watch as that team of people that were presenting put aside whatever personal egos they had and whatever they thought that they might get out of it and say: what do we have to do to present the best possible picture we can?

I was standing in the hallway with Wayne Gretzky just before he went in for that presentation, and Wayne said two things to me. He said: "You know, I've never worked harder for a three-minute speech in my entire life." The second thing he said was: "I think we're going to win."

It was that commitment that we saw from Wayne, that we saw from Charmaine, from Catriona LeMay Doane, from Steve Podborski, from John Furlong, from Jack Poole - all of those people - and from the four first nations who were there sharing that with us. Again, because we came together, because the whole province came together, because people here on Vancouver Island, whether it was in Saanich or in Comox or in the North Island... We all saw the potential of us working together to take advantage of that. That's when British Columbia does its best. And that's what we do when we work together. The UBCM and the AVICC are municipal associations that always recognize the strength of working together with common purpose and common objectives. I think that each of you should take some credit for the work that you do in your communities.

We've gone through some difficult challenges over the last two to two and a half years. As of June 5 of this year we will have been in government for three years. We've had to make some difficult choices, and we've had to make difficult decisions as we've gone ahead. Some are subject to criticism, and some are subject to agreement. I think that's healthy. It's healthy for each of us to think about whether the course that we laid out is one that has led to the results that we were after.

I can tell you I am feeling a growing sense of confidence in the province. For the first time in six years we had a net inflow of people into British Columbia. We've seen people start to come back to our province, and they're looking for investment opportunities, and they're looking for ways that they can build a brighter future.

As I go up north and I talk to the people of Port Hardy, they're talking to me about the opportunities that are presented by the daily ferry service, about the great opportunities that are presented by a ring road of tourism and opportunity up the east coast of Vancouver Island, across the strait to Bella Coola and up to Prince Rupert, then across the north, across the great Skeena scenic route and down Highway 97 or even as far as

Jasper and down through Banff and back to the Lower Mainland, through Highway 1. All of those things are part of what people are starting to see and starting to envision about their future. Here on Vancouver Island I think there is a particularly bright future as we look at the array of opportunities that are laid out in front of you.

Today I met with some people in Campbell River. One of the forest companies said to me: "You know, things have changed. We can't find the workers we need to put them back to work." We've brought in market pricing systems in forestry, and those market systems have put almost 90 per cent of loggers in the region back to work. That's critically important to the long-term sustainability of our communities. As we look at the new era of forest opportunity and competition, there are going to be community forests, there are going to be more woodlots, there is going to be first nation involvement and inclusion, and everyone is going to work together and we are going to have the most competitive forest industry in the world that will be globally recognized for its sustainability and the way that we manage our forests. There's going to be a forest of opportunity for young people in this province who want to be involved in forestry, who know that forestry is a great thing to be part of, and it's going to strengthen our communities in every single region of this province, including Vancouver Island.

As I talk with people up and down the coast, they are excited about the new potential in aquaculture in this province; 4,000 to 5,000 thousand are currently at work there. We have the highest standards in the world, but we are creating an opportunity that is generating today between \$500 and \$600 million as an economic activity, and it will grow in the future as we manage that and move it forward.

The mining industry in the province, which was slowly closing down, is opening up again. We've more than doubled exploration. Again, first nations and non-first nations alike are looking at the potential of a new future and building that potential together.

Look at offshore oil and gas and the great potential for energy – we've said to people that we're going to manage that in a way that is scientifically sound. The Royal College of Scientists has said this can be done. We've heard it can be done in an environmentally sound, safe and secure way.

I want to just think of this. In 1998 in Norway, a country of 4 million people, they started their offshore oil and gas industry moving. Today, just six years later, there is a \$140-billion trust that is available to Norway that has come as a direct result of their offshore industry - \$140 billion, and 60,000 people at work in that industry. They can do it in Norway, they can do it in England, they can do it in Mexico, they can do it in Nova Scotia, and they can do it in Newfoundland. For goodness' sake, we can do it, and we'll do it even better in the province of British Columbia.

There are opportunities abounding in this province, and there are opportunities abounding on this Island. This afternoon I was at Comox for the expansion of the Comox Airport. We invested \$2 million in that expansion. But the critical part is that it's an open doorway to the world for that part of the Island. The new Immigration and Custom Services will

invite people to come and discover your community and make a contribution. When they come and they visit Vancouver Island, if they're visiting twice, three times or four times, eventually they're going to come here for good because there are few places in the world that are as good a place to live as Vancouver Island.

We have come some distance over the last two and a half. I want everyone to remember this. I can recall coming to local communities and they said: why can't the province do what we do? Why can't you guys be as economically responsible and financially responsible as we are? It was time that we balanced our budget. It was tough to get there, but this year for the first time in the history of our province, your provincial government has done what they required you to do every single year. We balanced our budget according to generally accepted accounting principles.

I want to just take a moment to remind people why that's important. You know, my generation has done a pretty good job of taking advantage of the opportunities that the last generation built for us. But there is another generation that is following us. I believe that we have an obligation to that generation to create an array of opportunities similar to the ones that we had.

I can tell you when I left university, there was a whole range of opportunities for young people to choose from. There was a whole range of not just economic opportunities but choices for me to make as to what I would do with my life. Families in British Columbia deserve that again. They deserve to know that if their young people work hard and they have dreams that they can pursue those dreams regardless of where they live, and they can capture those dreams and they can build an even better province.

We went through 20 of the last 25 years passing our tax burden and our cost burden to the next generation of British Columbians. That just wasn't right. So we have to make some difficult choices. I recognize that there are people who will agree with them and people who will disagree with them. There are some people who will understand them and some people who won't understand them. I honestly don't believe there is ever an easy time to impose financial discipline on an institution that is used to not having it. That is not a political statement. When you are talking about 20 of the last 25 years, you know that each of us would rather say yes instead of no.

How many of you go to a local council meeting and really are looking forward to saying no to someone who wants to do something that is worthwhile? We're in exactly the same position. So we didn't balance the books because that's why we wanted to run for office. We balanced the books because that allows us to start making some pretty important choices for the future and we've started to make some.

Let me tell you about some of the impacts we think they may have on the future of people on Vancouver Island. We've decided that it was important for us not just to create economic opportunities but also - this is critical - educational opportunities for British Columbians regardless of where they live. So we announced in February that we were going to expand the number of available seats in advanced education by 25,000 between

now and 2010. That's not a small endeavour. That is, in fact, the largest expansion of advanced education opportunities in British Columbia over the last 40 years.

I'm here today and it was mentioned that I graduated from public schools. I see Jack Wilson's here. Jack graduated from the same school that I did. He was way smarter. I can tell you this. If I had required a 92 per cent average to get into university I wouldn't have made it. In fact, my memory is going because I'm a little old now, but I think if I had to have an 85 per cent average I would have had difficulty. The fact of the matter is: that's not right. We want our young people to know that they've got an opportunity to go into advanced education institutions if they get a B or better. We want to make sure that we're providing people with opportunities to build their skills and build their trades and pursue their own goals and their own passions regardless of where they live in the province.

I want to tell you today that by 2010 we will be adding 4,000 new post-secondary spaces right here on Vancouver Island. Every time we add a seat we add an opportunity. Every time we add a seat we add another rung on the ladder for somebody to pursue their dreams.

There will be 1,100 new seats added to Malaspina College and its campuses in Parksville, Qualicum, Duncan, Nanaimo and Powell River. When Malaspina started in 1969, there were 638 students. Today there are over 10,000. We can add to that and we can add to the opportunities that they create for people in culinary arts, in agriculture, in tourism management. All of those opportunities exist at Malaspina.

We're going to be adding 250 new seats on the North Island to expand programs to meet local needs in tourism, aquaculture and nursing and engineering programs. There will be 550 seats added to Camosun College to expand nursing opportunities and engineering programs. There are going to be 1,900 new seats added to the University of Victoria to increase its full university opportunities for young people on Vancouver Island. That will be added to the \$134-million life sciences initiative that, for the first time, will see doctors trained and graduated at the University of Victoria, specializing in geriatric medicine. Those 24 students will start this September, right here on Vancouver Island.

I think it's time for us to stand up and take a look at ourselves and take a look at our province and take a look at how society is changing. In fact, just take a moment here and look at the person across the table from you. Just take a moment. Some of you still haven't looked at the person across the table. Now, does that person look younger than they did last year? We live in an aging society, and we should recognize that aging society creates new challenges as well as new opportunities for us.

Today I want to tell you one of the things that we would like to ask you in the AVICC and UBCM to help with. As we look at an aging society, we should look at the changing demands that aging places on us, because aging isn't about people becoming frail. It's about people becoming older. It's about people having different demands and different goals and different objectives in their lives. We built our communities around the fact

that most of us were young people growing up with kids and we used to have much larger families than we have today. But it was a different world.

I'll just use myself as an example. My mom and dad decided to have four kids. My wife and I decided to have two. That's actually not unusual any more. My dad died when I was relatively young, and my mom brought us up. Four kids and a single-family home. She went from a large single-family home to a smaller one. She then went into an apartment with the three of us boys. My sister was off at nursing. She then bought herself a little home in what is known in Vancouver as a 33-foot lot. But you know, my mom started getting older; she didn't want to garden, and she didn't want the upkeep. She didn't want the things that go with owning a single-family home. You know what she did want? She really would have liked to be able to live in her neighbourhood. But there were no choices. You lived in a single-family home or you didn't live in the neighbourhood. So she had to decide that she was going to move. And she moved to a neighbourhood not too far away in terms of what it looks like on a map, not too far away in terms of where it was in the city, but really a long distance away from what she was used to. It was a long distance away from the baker she went to and to the pharmacist that she went to. It was a long distance away from a lot of her friends.

We actually, as a society, failed my mother in that regard. We fail all of our mothers and fathers when we don't allow them to live and age in the communities that they were brought up in. We don't see those communities reflecting their needs.

One of the things that I think we should do is take a moment to stand back and understand how the rush of day-to-day activities and decision-making affect all of us. I do think we should take a moment to take a snapshot of the demands that older people are going to put on our lives. Do you know the two fastest growing pastimes in North America today? Gardening and golf. Do you have any idea why that might be? How many of you are out there on the ice rink bashing people around anymore?

The fact of the matter is that as we do age and we do change it doesn't mean we're not active. It doesn't mean we're not continually growing and learning. It just means we change. How are institutions going to change to reflect that? I have news for all of us. We're getting older. On Vancouver Island over the next 15 years it's expected that the population will grow on the Island and the coast by about 15 per cent. It's expected that those over 65 will grow by 50 per cent and the fastest growing age cohort we have in the province is over 90. That requires all of us to think, to have some new ideas and to have a good look at what's ahead

Today I'm pleased to announce that a \$2-million grant will be made to the UBCM to help us meet the challenge. Frank Leonard has said he is up to that challenge. He's going to work with Murray Coell, he's going to work with you and your communities, to be sure that we get ourselves prepared. Let's start to get ourselves ready for the changes in demographics and the changes in society that we must confront so that we can provide for them properly, so that seniors across this province know that they can live in their communities with confidence and with comfort. I want to thank you, Frank, for taking on

that responsibility and working with it as we move to make this the best place in the world for people to age and to grow older with their families in the communities that they live in.

We do live in an exceptional place. Sometimes it is important for us to see ourselves in others' eyes or, equally important, it's important for others to see what we believe our communities have to offer. I can remember back in 1986 when we brought the world here for Expo 86. It wasn't the site in Vancouver that people were impressed with. It was the province of British Columbia. It was going through the mountains; it was going up the coast and seeing all of the things that we have and we sometimes take for granted. Well, the thing that is important for us to know is that we do live in God's country. We do live in a very, very special part of the world. I want to make sure that we put the best picture of British Columbia forward.

We've put together a program that we call "Picture B.C." Again, we want you to help define our province. When I was a kid I used to lie there in front of the television watching *Hockey Night in Canada*. I don't know if any of you remember that, when there used to be six teams. I'm really aging myself here. There wasn't a team in Vancouver then. But I used to watch, and every once in a while the government of Canada would run an ad about Canada, and I really remember this as a young British Columbian. I looked at that ad, and I said to myself: when is it getting to B.C.? When is it showing what I know is important?

I think as we go out and we welcome the world with the 2010 Winter Olympics it's important for us to think of this. What is important to you? What is the exceptional place or thing that you know about that you think the world should actually see?

There are already 3.5 million British Columbians that don't know that there are 1,000 caves up in Quatsino. They haven't heard of the North Coast Trail yet. But I'll tell you: they're going to. They haven't heard of the thousands of whales that go up and down this coast all the time. They've heard of the great fishing probably, but they haven't heard nearly enough about the great landscapes, the great tourism products that we can offer. They haven't heard of the great museums and the great cultural centres we have.

I can't possibly live in all 173 communities across this province or every region of the province, but you do. You know your communities. You know what is special there. So the government is going to be contributing \$1.5 million to the Union of B.C. Municipalities to help us build an image bank, an image library of all of the incredible images across our province. We want to complement what you're doing in economic development; we want to complement what your ideas on tourism promotion are in your community. We want to work with you to do that.

Again, let me say it's because of the leadership of local government, it's because of the leadership of the AVICC and UBCM that I have complete confidence that people in British Columbia are not going to just put their best foot forward but the world is going to



see our province with your eyes and with your ideas and that's' going to attract them here in record numbers over the years ahead.

So let me close just with this. We do live in an exceptional province. Over the last two and a half years as I've been here as your Premier, I've had a chance to meet with an awful lot of you. I have had a chance to travel all over British Columbia. I'm the first to recognize that a lot of people have gone through a lot of difficult times. As we change our forest industry, as we try to resuscitate our mining industry, as we unleash our energy industry, as we build our technology industry and our tourism industry, I know that even though we've got a great vision for the future there will be lots of tough roads that we have to through to get there. But I'm equally confident that with the drive and commitment and energy of people in local communities working with us, we will, in fact, set an example that people hope we can follow.

You know, the Olympics are certainly about doing great in athletics and arts and culture, but it's much more than that. The Olympics – and any Olympian who stands on the podium and gets a gold medal put around their neck will be able to tell you this – are about teamwork. It's about support from your family and support from coaches, support from trainers. It's really about looking deep inside yourself and seeing what matters to you and what you're willing to commit yourself to. It's about being willing to go through difficult times to achieve something that is maybe higher and better than you ever expected.

The spirit of 2010 is really about that. It's about each of us in our communities looking at what we have that is special in our communities, what we want to build on in our communities and staying committed to it and focused on it and driving toward it until we finally accomplish not just the goal that we set but that we exceed that goal, that we do the best that we can possibly do, and we are the best we can possibly be.

I hope that on Vancouver Island and in the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities you remember this: you do live in one of the incredible parts of the world with enormous opportunities. We can be the best - the best in forestry, the best in agriculture, the best in aquaculture, the best in mining, the best in offshore oil and gas, the best in tourism, the best in education and the best in social cohesion of any place in the world. We can be the best if we ask the best of ourselves and we focus on that and lead in that way.

At local government you do that. I see faces here that have been serving your communities for years now regardless of their background, serving and trying to make sure that you live in communities that are exemplary not just in British Columbia and in Canada but in the world. You're making real progress. You're setting real examples. You're showing real leadership. I want to say thank you on behalf of myself and all my colleagues for the commitment that you have made.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you this: the best is yet to come in British Columbia, and the best is yet to come for all of us as we work together for an even brighter future for our province.

Thank you very much.