

**THE HONOURABLE GORDON CAMPBELL
PREMIER OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Speech at Cabinet Swearing-In Ceremony
June 5, 2001**

Your Honour, distinguished guests, chiefs, friends and families, my caucus colleagues.

Let me start, your Honour, by saying I was hoping I could have had this appointment with you about five years ago! However, today as I look at my colleagues in both the cabinet and my caucus I can't tell you how proud and excited I am to be working with such a terrific group of women and men from across the province of British Columbia.

As is so often the case in this kind of endeavour, it's important to remember that none of us would be here if all of us hadn't worked to get us here. This has been and will be a team effort.

I want our new government to reflect a fundamental change in attitude. The Legislature is there to serve the people, and the cabinet is there to serve the Legislature. Our Legislature will be open. It will be a place where we all learn from one another. It will be a place where we strive to reflect the values of British Columbians and to unite our province in common purpose.

Your Honour, together your government caucus represents an incredibly broad range of backgrounds, communities, and experience as diverse, and rich, and remarkable as the constituencies they serve. We've been entrusted with an unprecedented opportunity to affect dramatic change. That opportunity carries with it an obligation to ensure that our government carries out this trust in a way that is always responsible to the people we serve.

Today, I have presented a new structure for government. There are 77 vital members who are part of our government caucus. Each and every one of them will play an integral role in the task of governing within a brand new structure of decision-making. The structure of cabinet I have announced today is a reflection of that reality.

For too long we have been wed to the structures of the past. This cabinet is founded on two fundamental principles: political accountability and improved public access.

There are twenty-one Ministers and seven Ministers of State. The Ministers of State will be full participants in cabinet, but they will work within their new Ministries. This will improve British Columbians' access to cabinet without adding to our bureaucratic burden. Ministers of State are an important innovation. They will spread the workload in Ministries and focus accountability without increasing the size of the public service. They will ensure emphasis on key government priorities.

No area of endeavour cries more loudly for changes in approach than health care. In my cabinet, there will be four Ministers whose responsibility it is to further our health agenda of providing care for people where they live and when they need it.

Few things are more critical than the establishment of a long-term health plan that will meet the critical human resource, capital, and technology needs of our communities and the people who live in them. Our new Ministry of Health Planning is planning for tomorrow today. Our Health Services Ministry will work to gather the forces of professional health management to ensure patients get the care they need.

I have asked two Ministers of State to focus on areas that are too easily forgotten: mental health and intermediate, long term, and home care. Too often the tyranny of the urgent has left the legitimate needs of older British Columbians and those with mental illnesses behind. Your Honour, those needs will not be forgotten by your government. They will be addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner by the new Ministry of Health Services.

The best preventative healthcare program developed so far is an excellent public education system. This government is dedicated to building a top-notch public education system for citizens of all ages. Three Ministries will share that leadership role.

This new cabinet and government structure also addresses the pressing needs of aboriginal British Columbians. The resolution of treaties is immensely important. It is time for a new era of reconciliation and inclusion. It is time to engage all British Columbians in this important endeavour. Aboriginal treaty negotiations have been moved to the Minister responsible for justice and protection of aboriginal rights, the Attorney General.

But as we move to resolve treaties we must not lose track of the day-to-day challenges and hurdles that many aboriginal British Columbians face, both on and off reserve. The Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services Ministry is meant to start resolving those daily issues. We have no time to lose. I am convinced that by creating a government that starts to meet the needs of aboriginal citizens across our great province, our new Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services will bring services critical to the day-to-day lives of British Columbians into focus.

BC intends to lead in the creation of sustainable environmental stewardship. The Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection will ensure environmental protection and prudence are of the highest standards. The application of sound science will help us sustain BC's commitment to environmental leadership. The Sustainable Resource Management Ministry brings information related to land use decisions together in one location for the first time. It integrates land use approvals and provides an essential platform for a sound balance between economic development and environmental issues.

Finally, your government has taken a different approach to economic development. We are committed to creating a competitive environment that allows BC entrepreneurs, and small businesses, and BC industry to thrive and to prosper.

We want to remove the unnecessary impediments to success for BC's companies, to work with small businesses across our province to eliminate unnecessary, ineffective, and thoughtless regulation that ties them down and holds them back. The Minister of State for Deregulation will work across government in pursuit of that goal.

The application of science to the modern world creates whole new vistas of opportunity for every British Columbian. We will develop and support a meaningful science policy in your government. We will liberate the creativity and entrepreneurship of tourism and the high-tech industries. The Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise will place British Columbians on a level playing field with other provinces so they can compete and succeed.

Our five new government caucus committees are another fundamental reform. The chairs of those five committees will not be cabinet ministers, but will report directly to cabinet on behalf of their caucus colleagues. They will develop policy, and work with British Columbians to find solutions to the challenges that confront us. Together with open cabinet meetings at least once a month, these new committees will revolutionize the way public policy is developed in the Province of British Columbia.

This new degree of openness and accountability will be complemented by other initiatives I have already announced. Free votes in the Legislature, fixed election dates, workable referenda and initiative legislation, active legislative committees, a constituents' assembly on electoral reform, and a referendum on the principles for treaties are all part of our plan to govern with the people of this province.

Truly responsible government is not just answerable to the Legislature. Truly responsible government invites public participation and open and honest dialogue. I sincerely hope that the two NDP members who will be sitting in the Legislature can play a meaningful role in helping us over the next four years. I have recommended that they receive additional resources so they can play an active role in finding solutions to the problems that confront British Columbians in their day-to-day lives.

The members of cabinet and caucus are important managers of our public business. They should be leaders in the finest sense, but they are not the only visionaries or crucial players in province building. All British Columbians have something valuable to add.

Your Honour, we will not shy from our vision, nor stray from our mandate. We will honour the people's trust in our commitments and support for our platform. We were elected to lead and above all to serve the people of British Columbia.

Today, we have all been granted a privilege. We've been given the unique chance to forge a better future for British Columbians. A future full of promise and boundless opportunity, a new era of common purpose rooted in the values that have united us as British Columbians and as Canadians: compassion for those in need; equality of opportunity and responsibility; community pride and spirit; private enterprise and public service. Those are just some of the touchstones that will guide our government as we work to build a future bright with promise.

In the next four years, our government will reach out as never before to ensure that all citizens can help shape that future and share its benefits, to revitalize our democracy and rekindle our spirit. We have big issues to tackle that must be resolved with fairness, cooperation, and determination. Throughout the last weeks I have asked British Columbians to join us as we strive to create a new era of hope and prosperity.

To quote another leader from another time, history and our own conscience will judge us harsher if we do not now make every effort to test our hopes by action. We have tough decisions to make together. At no time in our province's history have so many critical concerns converged. To meet those demands within the taxpayers' means won't be easy, but it nevertheless is what my government was elected to do.

I have confidence in British Columbians. I know we can trust British Columbians. My government's goal is to leave British Columbians confident that they can trust us. Your Honour, that is my hope, that is our common challenge. It's now up to all of us to get the job done. Thank you.