

Premier Gordon Campbell
Address at the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs
October 21, 2002

Check Against Delivery

It takes commitment to take a small business and make it thrive. We have a different attitude in this government than the last government had in British Columbia.

Every government has a small business strategy. The last government's strategy was to take big businesses and make them small; our government's is to take small businesses and make them big.

It is tough to start a small business – it is tough to start any business, although women are quite a bit better at starting businesses than men are.

In B.C., 98 per cent of all businesses are small businesses. Our goal is to change that and to have a variety of businesses, but you have to create an environment where small businesses can start, where risk-taking can be honoured, and where we reward people and say thank you for trying to create new wealth and opportunities.

We want this to be a place where people come because they know their investment, their ideas and their creativity are honoured and rewarded. It's not going to be a province that makes sure you succeed, but it's going to be a province that tries to remove the hurdles so that you have the opportunity to succeed in a very competitive world.

The fact that this Forum for Women Entrepreneurs is going to work very closely with our friends and colleagues in Washington state is a very important statement about where we can go as a province. The more we can tap into other people's talents, experience and mentorship, the better off we're going to be.

I took on a new job 16 months ago. I didn't really have a mentor I could turn to in terms of the job I was doing.

To have someone who has gone through what you're going through, someone who's willing to reach out and give you the support you need when you need it, someone who's willing to listen to your problems as well as help guide you to your solutions while leading you to your best judgment is critical as you build a successful enterprise. That's what mentorship is about.

In British Columbia we are fortunate to have a number of very successful women entrepreneurs. Julia Levy, founder of QLT, has built the tenth fastest growing technology company in this country. It is a cornerstone of our biotechnology thrust here in British Columbia.

Gerri Sinclair founded NCompass Labs, which was bought by Microsoft, and after a year's stint with us as the president of the Premier's Technology Council, she is now an executive with MSN Canada.

We know Shannon Byrne, the CEO of Paradata Systems in Whistler as one of the members of our Technology Council. She is also one of the top 40 under-40 entrepreneurs in our country.

These are people who can share their experience – and they're willing to do it. There are literally hundreds of women making an enormous contribution.

No one should go without a mentor if people are willing to contribute and take the time to show leadership. I can identify a number of you in this room tonight who have made major contributions to make sure we have the kind of environment where women can prosper – and we will celebrate their success. The Forum for Women Entrepreneurs gives us a chance to do that.

I also want to tip my hat to the men who are here. All of us benefit from a strong business environment that encourages women to be successful.

I want to close with this: One of the challenges all of us face in a world that's changing incredibly rapidly is to stand back from the changes that we have to tackle and recognize the opportunities in front of us.

I believe that by creating the first chapter of the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs in Canada, women in British Columbia are setting an example. Our province can consistently set the example when we tap into the energy and the commitment of people like yourselves.

I want to ask you one thing tonight. Please join the Forum, please offer some time, and please let's all work together so that in British Columbia women know that we celebrate their success, and we support their hard work and creativity.

We want to be sure all of the women in this province – and indeed from across the country – recognize British Columbia as a place where you can create something that's worthwhile.

We are going to be there right behind you all the way. Thank you very much.