

Premier Gordon Campbell
Speech to B.C. Broadcasters Convention
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Check Against Delivery

It's great to be back. I want to start by saying thanks to your president Gerry Siemens. Your executive has done a great job for all of you, and they've identified some of the competitive disadvantages that you face. We're working on those with you. I just want to say how important it is that your executive does take the time out of their schedules to come down and to talk with us.

I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the political things that we're trying to do, but I think every once in a while you need to step aside from politics and think about what the province has to offer and what you offer the province.

I want to go back to last year. Looking back over the last 12 months and thinking about the province, there is really an incredibly strong lesson that I've picked up: any time we decide as a province we're going to come together and we're going to focus on an objective, we will succeed.

Let me tell you two experiences from 2003 that demonstrated that. The first one, which I think was arguable probably both not just your finest hour but the finest hour for the public service in British Columbia, had to do with the wild fires last year. For me it was an exceptional experience because I'd never really seen wild fires like that. I went to the McLure fires up near Kamloops. We landed, and they put me in a helicopter and they took me up over those fires.

You can even see it on a big television, and you'd never understand how huge, how consuming and how massive those fires are. We were up in the helicopter, and you'd see big equipment there and they just were these tiny little things down there compared to that fire. You could watch as that fire moved across the mountain and what it wiped out, the life it took out and sucked out of that part of the province.

We saw the strength of individuals working there doing everything they could, putting themselves in harm's way to protect communities. It was, remember, people from the Barriere fire department that protected Barriere. I'd heard about Barriere on Friday. We'd all thought that we were going to lose Barriere. We flew into Barriere and you could see exactly where the fire people had stopped the fire and the fire had gone around Barriere.

There were two things I heard. The first was we weren't, as a government, doing a very good job of communicating. The second was what a great job the broadcasters were doing. The role that you played not just in McLure, not just in Barriere but in fires across the province - in Cranbrook, in Kelowna, in the Okanagan, in Penticton, in Vasseaux Lake - was really a truly important public role.

As we learned, I think we got better. As our emergency preparedness people learned I think they got better. But you folks were spectacular, whether it was Jim Harrison at CHML, Rick's team at CIFM and TV 7 in Kamloops, you did a great job of keeping people informed.

Nick Frost, Rick Dyer and SILK FM and all their teams working like crazy to keep things up around the clock, the Yellow Ribbon campaign, the \$250,000 that was raised by broadcasters, that was all you. On behalf of all the people that you served, let me just tell you how appreciative we are and how grateful we are for the great public service that you provided. It was exceptional.

When we arrived in Kamloops one of the things that people said to us was: we don't want misinformation to get out. They told stories about people who had been told their house was saved and then they found out it was gone, or your house was gone and then you found out it was saved and the emotional sort of roller coaster that people go through is pretty phenomenal when you think of that.

The responsibility that was shown by the broadcast industry throughout that experience was actually very encouraging to the public. There's lots of people that are used to broadcasters going out and putting a microphone in front of somebody's face who's just lost a loved one or something and saying: "How does it feel?" But that's not one of your shining moments.

What was your shining moment was when you actually reflected to people what you knew. You shared with them what was going on, and it was an enormous public service. I do think it's important for you to recognize what a huge contribution you made.

There's another thing that we learned, though, and that is we have to work better together. So we've had staff out talking with you and your industry, finding out what we can do to be better, finding out what we can do to make sure that things work more effectively should this happen again. I just want to encourage you to keep up with that and know that when we come and talk to you, we're asking because we want to hear it. We want to do better. We want to improve ourselves.

As I say we want to improve, I do think it's important for us to stand back a little from that and think about what actually was accomplished last year because we have one primary public goal: to protect the public, to protect people.

You know, it's pretty phenomenal when you have the second largest evacuation in the history of the country, when you have wild fires raging all over the province, when you lose dozens and dozens and dozens of homes, and there was not one member of the public our firefighters were trying to protect who lost their life. That's a real tribute to the public service of British Columbia. They did an exceptional job for us last year. Again, it was bringing everyone together.

Unfortunately we lost three pilots who were trying to protect the public in accidents, but you know, again, what we did was say let's bring folks together. There were 61 different property protection departments here. It was the first time ever we created a provincial fire protection service. We had fire protection officers from all over the province who were immediately shared. I think that was a phenomenal event.

There was another date in 2003 that was significant. And it also shows the spirit of winning that we have in this province and what we can do when we get together. That date was July 3. That was a real triumph. I can recall three years ago talking with you here about the potential for the Olympics. I can recall Jack Poole coming and talking about it. I can recall all of you, again, coming together and saying to people: let's get behind this. Let's try and make sure that British Columbia does do the best it can possibly do.

Boy, that was an experience and a half, I'll tell you. I think we had eight people that were presenting up on the stage. We went early on to practice. Everyone put aside their egos and everyone said: how do we get there? How do we get to this big objective that we've set for ourselves?

There are two stories that I love about that. We were practicing and the Prime Minister stayed here for July 1 and was going to fly overnight to be there for us. We listened to the speech that he was supposed to give in the presentation. We said: we don't like that speech. We don't think that's a very good speech. Let's rewrite the Prime Minister's speech. We rewrote the Prime Minister's speech and sent it to him and - this is the important part - he actually read exactly what we told him to.

Now, I don't know if you knew the former Prime Minister that well, but I'm told he wasn't one for being told exactly what to say. But he was right there and saying: what's my role? How do I do it? What do I have to contribute to make this work?

Later Wayne Gretzky and I were standing outside in the hotel hallway before we went downstairs. Now, I had a speech that might have been maybe three minutes. It seemed like an hour and a half, but it was about three minutes. I practiced it and I practiced it. I lay there and I closed my eyes and I thought about it. We were all ready now; we were going in. We were the first presenters that were going on there. Wayne and I were standing in the hall. Wayne looked at me and said: "You know, I've never practiced a speech like I've practiced this one before."

If you watched that presentation, you saw the athletes did exactly what we knew they'd do. They absolutely shone. They shone through that whole thing. We showed the team of people that were ready to deliver on the Olympic spirit, and I think at the end of the day we won by three votes. There's an old expression in politics: it doesn't matter how much you win by, as long as you win. But I think those three votes were won because we had a team that was willing to come together to focus on what was best for Canada, for British Columbia, for the next generation of British Columbians, and we won. That's something

that should give us a sense of confidence again as we move to the future. Without that confidence we don't accomplish the goals that we set for ourselves.

When I think of the spirit of winning, when I think of the spirit of us moving ahead, I think of all the people that are in this province and what their vision is and where they want to go. I know that we can accomplish it if we focus our agendas and focus our resources and efforts on them.

As I travelled around the province over the last two months, I visited 50 towns. There are two kinds of towns in British Columbia right now. I'm glad that there's one kind that is in the vast majority, and that's the kind that are feeling optimistic about their future. They've got plans. They know where they want to go. I say to them, you know, you can come to me and tell me five or ten things that you'd really like to see happen. We can help you get there.

My great example for me is Prince Rupert. There are not many towns that have had as much kicking around over the last ten to 15 years as Prince Rupert. But when I arrived in Prince Rupert, nobody complained. You know what the civic leadership said? They said: this is what we want to do. We want a port with a container facility. We want to build cruise ship opportunities. We want to open up our port to the Pacific Ocean. We want to take our customers from Canada and get them to their customers as fast as we can.

They're excited about what they're doing. You know what's going to happen in Prince Rupert? It is going to take off. They've seen a 40-per cent increase in their cruise ship activity in Prince Rupert this year over last year. They're going to get over \$30 million to create a container facility that works for Peace River farmers and Alberta farmers and prairie farmers, that makes competition for Vancouver, that gets people two days closer to the Asian market and two days closer to the markets in the centre of the continent.

That's what Prince Rupert's done because they have a vision of what they want to do. They're not sitting there saying, oh gee, this is tough. They're saying this is what we're going to do, and this is exciting.

There are some other towns that are sitting there saying to themselves: boy, I wish it were 1955. You know what? There's nothing we can do to make it 1955 again. Just look at the folks across the table from you. Take a quick look at the guy who's across the table. Go ahead and have a look at him. How many of them look younger than they did last year? No, we're all changing. We're all aging, and our society's changing. We've got to work and change to keep up.

I think it was the great Lester Thurow from MIT who said: "A competitive world gives you two possibilities: you can lose or you can change." You and I both know that change is not a lot of fun. We were elected in 2001. You know what we were elected to do? To change things. You know what people wanted? People used to say to me: "Do you guys think you're up to this? It's going to be pretty tough." They wanted it to be easy.

I can tell you, standing here before you today, I wish it had been easy. But I can also tell you this. If you focus on where you're going you'll finally get there, even if you have to make difficult decisions to get there.

When I look at the province today I can tell you one of the great things that gives me energy is the spirit of optimism that I feel in British Columbia when I go from town to town to town.

I was in Campbell River. The mayor of Campbell River said to me: I can't tell you how much better it feels here. We actually have people coming and building homes here again. We actually get people that want to move in Campbell River who don't have to wait for two years for their home to sell at any price they can get. They put their home on the market now in Campbell River and it's sold in a week to ten days - and by the way it's sold for their asking price and then some.

I was in Creston the other day. This is a good example of how change works. We'd been working with Creston. They were very anxious in getting a library out in Creston. They said to us: how can you guys help us get our library program working? I said: well, we'll work away at it. It wasn't me. We have ministers working at it. We have MLAs working on it. I just went to Creston and I said: great news. We can do the library. They said: that's great; thanks a lot.

They said: by the way, all the library volunteers want to meet with you at a bakery. Any time I go to a bakery that'd be great. I said fine, I'd like to do that.

We went to the bakery and there's two older ladies sitting on a bench in front of the bakery. I said: Hi, nice to see you. I said I've got some good news about the library. They said: we know about the library. We want an aquatic centre for our seniors. Think 20 years ago. Back then in Creston they would have said: we need an aquatic centre for our kids.

Our world is changing. We're changing. And if we want government to be there for people, we want the services that people need, we're going to have to figure out how to change the services so we can deliver them to people in a long-term and sustainable way. And boy, I'll tell you, the one thing I know about this job from two years ago is the most powerful adversary we have is not the NDP. It's not special interests, as we normally define them. It's the status quo.

Each of you knows that you don't get to live with the status quo. You've got two choices. You can lose or you can change. British Columbia was losing, and losing. We said we were going to change it. How is it working so far? Well, I can tell you this. We've gone from the worst economic growth record in the country to number three or four next year. That's encouraging. We've gone from a small-business community that was shrinking to, for the first time in six years, a small-business community that's growing. We had 9.8 per cent growth rate in small businesses last year. We're expecting it even to be higher next year. That's the first time in over a decade.

We've watched as British Columbia has the fastest growing job growth of any jurisdiction in the country. We've watched as there's been an 18 per cent increase in forestry investment.

Finally our forest industry is attracting people back. On northern Vancouver Island an executive in the forest industry comes up to me and says: "You know, Premier Campbell, I've got a whole new set of problems. You can imagine how I feel when someone says: boy, do I ever have some problems for you. Do you know what his problem was? He couldn't find people to fill the jobs that were available out on the land after the changes we made in forest policy.

I was down in Texas with Premier Klein last November. I can tell you every oil and gas exploration company said: you guys are getting it in British Columbia. You're making a difference in British Columbia. We're coming to British Columbia. We've got a 56-per cent increase in the number of wells that have been drilled this year over last year. We're having year-round activity taking place now because there's summer drilling and there's deep well drilling.

That means there's going to be activity not just in the northeast where we are used to. We're going to find activity in the north central, in the Nechako Basin just to the southwest of Prince George. There's the Bowser Basin just to the northwest of Terrace.

We've got enormous opportunities in the offshore and, in spite of the political opponents who say it's never going to happen, I can tell you this: The science is there and there are literally hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs and opportunities on the offshore of British Columbia - for coastal British Columbia and for northern British Columbia.

Our energy industry is being recognized around the world. The last place that's going to notice it probably is British Columbia, but we've got to get the word out. We've got to encourage people to go up and down the coast and talk about servicing that opportunity.

You talk about the new geological opportunities that are taking place. You talk about the opportunities for first nations and for non-first nations. You talk about the training opportunities for people. They are huge in oil and gas, and we see that.

And for the first time ever we have already got \$800 million of investments from independent power producers in alternative energy forms – wind energy, biomass energy, run-of-the-river energy, all of which is clean energy.

The other day in Ottawa there was some talk about their new energy policy. Know what they said? British Columbia gets it. British Columbia has figured out what they're doing. We should be confident. That's good news for British Columbia because it means more investment and more jobs.

We have to give ourselves a little bit higher than the mountaintop sometimes to look around us and see what we've been able to do in this province in just three years. We now have recognized centres for disease control. Our centre for disease control is recognized in Washington DC. It's recognized in Atlanta. It's recognized in Europe. It's recognized in Shanghai and in Guangdong and in Asia. It's recognized in Singapore. We're globally recognized for what our people here in British Columbia have done. There's only one place left that hasn't recognized this: Ottawa. We're even going to get Ottawa to recognize us eventually.

But we're leading the world. The SARS accelerated vaccine initiative. Do you know how long it used to take to create a vaccine? Ten years. Because of British Columbia and the collaborative process that we put together, we're getting a vaccine in two years. Think of what that means to people. Think of what that means in terms of health savings, if you want. But in think of what it means in terms of savings in terms of human suffering. That's enormous. That's British Columbia working together collaboratively, thinking about where we can get to.

In February we were able to announce we're going to increase the number of spaces at university and degree-granting institutions by 25,000. That's the largest expansion of post-secondary programs in 40 years.

What does that mean? Well, right here in the Okanagan there's going to be a new UBC campus – UBC Okanagan in Kelowna. They're going to have \$75 million a year in major research initiatives. It's going to generate about \$500 million a year in economic activity throughout the Okanagan region.

We're also able to create Okanagan College, which will, in fact, reduce tuitions by \$1,000 a year and they'll be able to ladder up to a university degree if they want to. We're also going to be able to say to people: you're going to be able to get your university education closer to where you live.

Let me tell you what that means in numbers. Somebody can live close to home and go to university and save about \$6,000 a year. That's a saving of about \$25,000 over a four-year degree.

A new university in Kamloops to build on the success of the University College of the Cariboo and expand their reach through distance learning all through the province. We were able to expand BCIT by over 1,100 spaces so that people can get the training they want. We've got a new technology training campus at in Cloverdale and 900 new spaces for Kwantlen College. We've got a new apprenticeship program to create the kind of workforce that we need to take full advantage of the future opportunities we have in this province.

So there's only one thing that can hold us back in this province. That's if people don't recognize how exceptional they are, if they don't recognize the opportunities that are there and grab them.

As I said to people as we've talked about the Olympics, the Olympics doesn't give you anything, but the Olympics provide you with a smorgasbord of opportunities that you can collect from if you want to.

Everyone that we've talked to with regard to the Olympics, whether it's the Sydney Olympics in Australia, whether it's the Salt Lake City Olympics, whether it's the Lillehammer Olympics, they told us this: the earlier you start to think about the opportunities the Olympics present, the better off you're going to be, the more opportunities that you'll get. In small businesses there's a procurement book that's about this thick and full of small business opportunities – supplying everything from pencils and weatherproof covers to chairs and plates and dishes.

Do you know the one word that we want people to have when they read about our Olympics, the one word we want them to have in their heads? Wood. We're going to show them what you can do with wood. We're going to build our markets around the world, whether it's in China or India or Europe. We're going to build our marketplace, show them what wood can do, the most environmentally sensitive building product you've got. We're going to come out winners in the forest industry. We're going to come out winners in the tourism industry. We're going to come out winners in British Columbia because we're going to give our young people a sense of themselves and the value of focusing and dedicating themselves to what they care about for their passion.

An Olympic torch is a light for sure, but the really important part of that light is the light that shines in young people's eyes – that says to them, if you're willing to work hard and focus, you can win.

I believe that you in the B.C. Broadcasters have always understood the importance of dedication and focus. You've always understood the importance of making sure that you build on the best that you've got. You've always understood the importance of committing yourselves to something that's bigger than just the small area that you live in and to your community as a whole.

I believe that we can do that in British Columbia. And in doing so, we'll be giving the next generation of British Columbians that sense of hope and opportunity, that sense of support that they deserve. I think we'll actually be delivering a service to our country, because I still believe that British Columbia is the best province in the best country in the world.

It's time we played that role. It's time we led this country. I can tell you if we keep focused on the spirit of winning, if we focus on the spirit of 2010, we are going to lead Canada with our strength, with passion and with commitment.

Thank you very much.