

**Premier Gordon Campbell**  
**Speech to Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce**  
**April 23, 2004**

*Check against delivery.*

It's important for everyone to remember that governments are actually there to provide services, and the people you elect make an enormous difference in our ability to do that.

In 2001 we were very fortunate. We elected, I think, probably one of the most talented caucuses that's ever been elected in the province, and it was elected from all over the province, which was important.

I want to just take a moment to introduce some of them to you and to recognize the contributions they have made. Christy Clark ran with us in 1996, went through an awful lot of hard work with us as we tried to build up not just a strategy but a plan for the future to restore British Columbians' sense of confidence in themselves, to restore our economy, to do the necessary reforms in health and education. When we were elected government, she was appointed Deputy Premier as well as the Minister of Education.

I can tell you there is no tougher job in government than being the Minister of Education. There are two reasons for that. Number one, everybody knows what to do in education. Every student knows, and every parent knows. Number two, the Premier's been a student and a parent, and he knows what to do in education.

Christy took on that challenge with passion, with vigour and with focus. She did an exceptional job there, and she's doing an exceptional job for us as the Minister of Children and Family Development. I want to say thanks to her for her contribution to you and to our province.

I'm also pleased today that Karn Manhas has joined us. Karn Manhas is the youngest MLA in our Legislature.

For our public life to be vital, for our public life to have a sense of the future and a sense of opportunity, as opposed to kind of a burdensome stance, it's important for young people to get involved. It's important to reach out to them. It's important to remind them that this is their future and we need their ideas on how we can create it.

Karn has been very active throughout his riding in Port Coquitlam. He's been a major thrust behind the Youth Matters movement. He's also championing a new resort proposal in Mamquam that will have a huge benefit to B.C. I just want to say thanks to Karn for his energy, for his enthusiasm and for his commitment to Port Coquitlam.

Now, there's another MLA with us who has been a tireless worker on behalf of his riding, his constituency and the young people in it. Harry Bloy is with us here from Burquitlam. Harry spent the last two weeks distributing 700 books to kindergarten children in his

riding. We recognize in our government how important literacy is. It's important to children. It's important to adults.

One of our goals as we strive to 2010 is to be the most literate province in the country, to make Canada the most literate country in the world because that's the skills foundation that's essential to build the kind of future we want. I want to say thanks to Harry for being here today too.

Finally, with us today from the Tri-Cities area is Richard Stewart. Richard I first got to know when I was mayor of Vancouver. He was working to try and make sure that we created neighbourhoods and communities that reflected the needs of our citizens, be they young families or seniors. He has also been the chair of our legislative committee on education. That is an onerous task, because part of what we're trying to do is open up public discussion on education, open it up in a way that doesn't allow institutional barriers to get in the way of our free flow of information and understanding between teachers and administrators, between parents and communities and school boards and trustees. It is an onerous task. In fact, it's such an onerous task that Richard's back has gone out on a regular basis as a result of it.

I want to take a moment to say thanks to Richard for being here, and even more importantly, every elected official will tell you that without the support of their families, without the support of their spouse, if they have one, they can't do the job that they need to do. It's a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day job. Richard Stewart, thank you very much. And thank you, Anna Rosa.

I should also mention Ken Stewart who is with us here from Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows. Ken is the chair of our legislative committee on Crown corporations.

Now, it's not unusual for us to think about this great big thing that's called government. But there's an equally large part of our public institutions: Crown corporations like ICBC, B.C. Hydro, B.C. Lotteries, B.C. Assessment. All of those groups in the past were outside of government purview. We brought them in when we were elected. We said MLAs should be able to ask those Crown corporations what they were doing, how they were performing against their service plans.

Ken Stewart has taken on that brand new task. Again, it is a significant task, and he has done a great job of that on behalf of all of you. I want to say thanks to Ken for being here today.

I want to close by thanking all of the elected officials from the local level of government. I say this with some trepidation, but I want to say it clearly. Local government actually is the front line of government services for us. They are service providers and service deliverers. We count on local government to have a vision and a sense of where they're going and what they need to do.

You know, one of the things I think you understand in chambers but too often we forget is there's really no such thing as government money. There's not federal money and provincial money and regional money and local money. It's all your money. It all comes out of each of your pockets.

One of the challenges that we have to confront, for those of who are elected, is how do we make sure that each of those dollars we take out of your pocket, out of your business, out of your own personal income is actually going to provide services that meet your needs, that are cost-effective, that are delivering the results that you need? A critical component of that is the partnership between the province and local governments.

Once I was the Mayor of Vancouver. I was the chair of the regional district. I was the president of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities.

In 1993 I travelled around the province. One of the things I noticed was there was a sense of what communities might be able to do as they thought ahead. But as we went through the nineties, what I noticed was that there was less and less: "Where do we want to go? What do we want to do?" The questions that were more like: "Are we going to be here?" That was really a diminution of what local governments could actually provide.

I've been touring the province. I've probably visited 40 or 45 communities over the last six or seven weeks. There's something that's very important that's happening, and it's happening here. I want you to know it's happening elsewhere as well. There is a new sense of optimism. People are planning for their futures. They're excited about what they can do. They're looking at their own community and saying: what are the assets that we have that we'd like to develop?

We have always lived in the best province in the best country in the world, and right now everyone, local governments are making it even better. That's because of the contribution local government leaders are making. I want to say thank you to all of you for being here today.

As I come to the Tri-Cities, I think of two things. The first thing I think about is how important this region of our province is. This region is an economic engine. You've got a port that's significant. You've got a city centre here in Coquitlam that's starting to generate additional opportunities. You've got high tech. You've got tourism development opportunities. You've got manufacturing and retail opportunities.

How do we create a vision for the whole Tri-Cities area of the Greater Vancouver Regional District? How do we bring that vision together so that we're driving forward and taking full advantage of all the things that you have?

It's really important to understand that the province is changing dramatically. You have a special role in it. Sometimes we lose track of that as we go day to day to day with whatever problem we face.

Look at the person across the table from you. Go ahead. Now that you've done that, how many of those people look like they're younger this year than last year? One of the challenges we face as a province is as a province we are aging.

Just think of this, and it'll show you some of the differences we have in different parts of the province. I was just in the town of Creston in the Kootenays. We knew in Creston they were really interested in getting a library built. We were going to make the contribution they needed. The volunteers were really excited. They were coming to meet with me and tell me what was going on.

I was going to this bakery where we were going to have this meeting. There was a bench there. On the bench there were two women; I'd have to call them seniors. I went up to them and they said: "Oh, Premier Campbell." I said: "Yes." They said: "Do we have something to talk to you about." I said: "I know. We're giving you the library." They said: "No. We knew you were doing that. We want an aquatic centre." I said: "Okay, an aquatic centre." They said: "We need it for our seniors."

You live in the region which is actually one of the youngest regions in British Columbia. There are more families moving here than just about any other region of the province. When John says to me, "I want an aquatic centre," I'm thinking he's not thinking for the seniors; he's thinking for the kids.

You have a special role to play, and you have to embrace that role because you have a huge opportunity. The chamber here in the Tri-Cities has been a very strong chamber. You have not been afraid to lay out for us your plans for your part of the province. When you do lay out that plan it allows us to help, to try and create ways that we can help meet your objective and to do that in a way that's upfront, that's straightforward and that recognizes we can't do everything, but we can try and help with some things.

The \$2 million to refurbish the Rocky Point Park in Port Moody is trying to help. That's something that Port Moody wanted. It's something that's important to the quality of life of people that live there.

The \$1.6 million that for the Leigh Square Community Arts Village is something allows Port Coquitlam to think about what they want to show off, what's good about your community that you want to take forward when the world comes to British Columbia.

That's important, because I can tell you that there are two types of communities left in the province. There are the ones that think ahead. There are the ones that think of things that can be, and there are the ones that say to us: why can't it be like it was in 1975? Well, it's not going to be like 1975. But I want to tell you this. If we stay the course, if we stay committed, it's going to be better. It's going to be way better for British Columbians. That's what our objective is.

When I came here a few years ago prior to the election we talked about trying to reignite the economy, reignite and unleash the power of entrepreneurship, to give small

businesses a chance to move forward and become big businesses, and to allow for the creativity of people to drive the economy forward again. That's starting to happen. There is no economy in the country that generated more jobs in 2002-2003 than British Columbia.

I don't how many of you remember this. In 2000 we were tenth. In 2001 we were tenth. In 2002 we're number one. In 2003 we're number one. Guess where we want to be in British Columbia? We want to be number one, we want to keep setting an example and driving forward, and with your help we're going to do just that.

You said to us that you wanted us to cut personal income tax. We did that. Why did we do it? How many of you folks in this room today think to yourselves when you get to your paycheque at the end of the month: "Darn it. I just wish I could pay more taxes?" How many of you are saying: "If I could just send the government just a little more money I'd feel a whole lot better about myself?" How many of you are thinking that?

When we cut taxes it's because of this one thing. We know it's your money, and we know that you will use your money more effectively when it's in your pocket than when government takes it. Our job in government is to try and deliver those services that you ask us to deliver as cost-effectively, as thoughtfully, as we can.

Guess what happens when we leave money in people's pockets? What do you do with the money in your pockets? People start to spend it. Brian Jessel is the largest single dealer of BMWs, the best and most successful BMW sales dealership in Canada - number one in Canada. I can tell you this. When we cut people's taxes, his sales went up. His sales went up because people thought they could do something.

When Ikea came here and decided to open up their store I can tell you their sales are doing a lot better because people have bigger paycheques. Retailers across the province are doing better because people have bigger paycheques.

Investors are thinking of coming to British Columbia. You know the number one province for foreign investment in the country today? Does anyone know? British Columbia. And when those dollars come into British Columbia they invest, create jobs and opportunities and create an economy that grows. And as our economy grows we can deliver better public services. That's what we're trying to do.

You told us, your chamber told us: get rid of some of the stupid regulations. Well, we haven't got rid of them all and we probably never will. But I can tell you this. We've set a goal for ourselves. Each member of our caucus sets a goal. Each member of the cabinet sets a goal to eliminate one-third of all useless, costly, ineffective, non-servicing regulation from the province. We've eliminated 85,000 regulations in the province. We're going to meet that goal and that objective by June of this year, just like we said we would, because we know regulations are a hidden tax.

There's not one of us that will tell you we've been perfect. I bet there's not one of you out there that would tell us we've been perfect. When we reduced that regulatory load we were doing it for a reason. We wanted to stop doing things that made no sense, that cost a lot of money, that held the economy back and stopped the creation of jobs that we wanted.

I know that I'm always coming and asking you for help. But what we do need you to do is to say, "It's not quite working yet," if it isn't. When it's working well, tell us where it's working well. When it's not working well, feel comfortable telling us when it's not working well, because you know what? We're just like you. We are working long hours, doing our best. If you can take the time just to tell us how to do better we'll try and do it. But we need you to do that. The chamber here has always been very, very good at that.

As we move forward, we need your help even more, because the challenges don't disappear because we're starting to build a foundation. The challenges are just starting to rear their heads. They're challenges of aging in our population. They're challenges of delivering services.

How many people here have kids? How many have kids in school? How many hope that they're going to graduate? How many think you'd like them to go on to get an education beyond high school?

What we found, over the last 15 years actually, was there was no expansion of our high schools or our university and college opportunities in this province. So we were saying to our kids: it's really important you be able to get into university or to go to college or to learn a trade. Then we were shrinking the opportunities - not purposely. We just weren't expanding the opportunities.

Last year in British Columbia there were some programs that required a 92-per cent average to get into university. What are we doing to our kids? We're saying to them: you need 85 per cent to get in. You need 87. Science: 92 per cent. We were saying to people who wanted to be involved in the aerospace industry: I'm sorry; there are only 72 spaces. We know there are 426 of you, but the rest of you are out of luck.

So what did we do? We started with what you told us to do, the public told us to do, get our financial house in order. We got it in order. Then we said: where are we going to invest? We decided we were investing in health care, two billion additional dollars into health care in the last three years, and education.

If you're a parent and you've got a child in school or high school, they should know this. If they get a B or better, within the next three to four years they're getting a university education if they want one, or a trade school education or a college education, because we owe that to our kids.

We've added thousands of spaces to Simon Fraser. There'll be a new campus in Surrey. There's going to be new spaces for Douglas College that are going to meet the needs of

people in this community. When we can provide education to people where they live, close to where they live, we save them an awful lot of money getting that additional degree.

We are now in a position where actually if people want to work in this province they can find work. If you are in the construction industry in British Columbia they're looking for workers. They're looking for tradespeople.

You'll all remember people saying: "I am leaving. There is no work; I am leaving. If I go to Washington State I have a bigger paycheque. I can take care of my family, and there's work. I am leaving. I'm going to Alberta. I can take care of my family, and there's work."

We are now working our tails off trying to get them to come back home, because there are billions of dollars of opportunity in the construction business, in the home building business, in the transportation business, in the \$600 million that we're going to be investing in the Olympics, in the \$500 million we're going to be investing in the convention centre - all of those things. We think of Olympic Live Sites. All of those sites get built. We need workers. We need tradespeople. We're asking them back and we're going to deliver to them jobs they can count on for the long term in British Columbia.

I know that one of the things that you've said to us is if you have to change the way we develop those trades. Often we're given directions - which is good - and then people say something along these lines: "We want a completely different result, but don't change anything you do." Or: "We want a completely different result. Let's just do a whole bunch more of what we did in the past, and maybe then it'll work."

That's what we were finding with the apprenticeship training. We had this huge clump of institutional inertia that said: "No. Don't get the result you want. Don't provide trades training and skills development and apprenticeship training to people on the basis of what they need. Think of what the institution needs."

We've got to stop caring about what the institution needs and start thinking about what people need. We've done that with apprenticeships; we've training more people; we're providing more opportunities that fit into their lives. That's how we're going to build a skilled trade force in British Columbia, by committing to people, not to institutions.

Here in the Tri-Cities you have a particular opportunity to lead the way with that, because you do have a place where people want to see active, vital economic activity taking place. You do have a place that's not just a home for small businesses but it's a home where big businesses want to locate because their employees want to live here. Never lose sight of how valuable your quality of life is here. Never lose sight of how valuable your parks are here, your recreational services, how valuable your neighbourhoods are in terms of economic development for the long-term future of this province. Because people do want to live here. You should have some visitors come and see you and tell you how lucky you are.

You know, when we think about this Spirit of 2010, we should just take a moment to stand back and think about 2003 because it helps us build the confidence we need to create the future that we want.

Let me just tell you two stories: 2003, the worst forest fire season in the history of the province of British Columbia; 50,000 people had to be evacuated from their homes. I visited those people and you know one thing that they knew? They knew that there were 4.1 million British Columbians wondering how they could help. They knew there were 4.1 million British Columbians ready to contribute. It might be a phone card; it might be toys from one of the stores here; it might be a sleeping bag; it might be just an Internet connections. But they knew that you wanted to help.

What happened when British Columbians came together like that? The second largest evacuation in the history of the country, and not one life was lost of the public that we were trying to protect. That is a huge testament to the quality of our public service. It is also a testament to the quality of British Columbia when we work together.

You know, we did lose three pilots who were putting themselves in harm's way to protect people. Our hearts have gone out to those families. But I can tell you: everyone should be proud of what British Columbia did then.

There was another day in 2003 which was much more celebratory of British Columbians working together. That really was an incredible day for me: July 3 when we won the 2010 Bid. We had people up on the stage and our presentation team from all our areas. The athletes did a superb job - every single one of them.

But this was what was really neat about it. There wasn't a person that made a presentation that wasn't trying to reach for something that was way bigger than themselves.

We were practising beforehand. Believe it or not, we were practising. We were doing our presentations and seeing how they'd work. There was a stand-in for the Prime Minister. He read out the words of the Prime Minister was going to say.

We looked at one another, and someone said: "I don't like the words the Prime Minister is going to say." So we rewrote what the Prime Minister was going to say. This is what's important. We sent him what we thought he should say, and he didn't change a word. He flew in, he showed up, and he said exactly what we wanted him to say.

I don't know how many of you knew the Prime Minister, but he wasn't the type of guy that would do exactly what you told him to say. The Olympics got him to do that.

I was standing in the hallway of the hotel there waiting to go down into the presentation centre. Wayne Gretzky says to me: "You know, I've never practised harder for a three-minute speech in my life."



That's how everyone felt. This is one of the really substantial competitions in the world. We won for ourselves because we all came together, because people thought of something that was bigger than themselves and what we could give to the future of the country and of the province and of the communities we live in.

The thing I love about that video is the light in the kids' eyes. Look at the kids as they're wondering whether we're going to win or not. Think of the kids that are hoping that they get to stand on a podium and win a medal. Think of what we give them when they learn that when they focus on what's best in themselves and they focus on what they care about and they work hard for it, it delivers something that is really special. That is a huge gift.

Sure, there are major economic benefits. Sure, there are thousands of new jobs. There's a framework there for people who can sell everything from kitty litter to ski jackets if you want to - about \$10 billion of economic spinoff in the province.

We arrived home. We celebrated in Vancouver. I had to fly back to Prince Edward Island for a Premiers' meeting. I got off the plane, got into a cab. Someone from Prince Edward Island said: "Isn't it great. We won the Olympics."

There's not one person in Canada that doesn't know this. British Columbia is going to put on the show of our lives because we're going to be showing off British Columbia. We're going to be showing off to the people who live here. We're going to be showing off our spirit. When I say to people that we're the best province in the best country in the world, we should know this. That's true.

There's not one athlete that will arrive here at our sites and not be welcomed by someone who knows their language, who knows their culture, who knows their background. The strength of our diversity here is phenomenal. We have something here in B.C. that other communities strive for. It's valuable. It's worth building on.

I can tell you this. Just like a gold medal athlete, we started out a few years ago to reshape this province, to build a future we could be proud of, to build a future that was better for our kids than the one that we inherited in 2001. You know what? We're on track. We're going to get there.

We are a gold medal province. We are going to have a gold medal performance, and with your help we'll all stand on that podium, we'll all sing *O Canada* with pride, and we'll all know that we haven't let this country down.

Thank you very much.