

Premier Gordon Campbell
Address at the Leading Edge Endowment Fund Luncheon
May 20, 2003

Check Against Delivery

It's important for you all to know that the idea for the Leading Edge Endowment Fund came from you. It came from our researchers at Simon Fraser, UBC, UNBC, and at the colleges throughout British Columbia.

It came from people who have a clear vision of the possibilities that this province presents – a vision of what we can do if we build on our knowledge and develop our intellectual capital to move forward together.

That idea, that enthusiasm, that passion for research and the development of new knowledge to push the frontier of intellectual development has been passed on to my cabinet and my caucus colleagues.

This whole idea comes from an approach that says the best and most important natural resource we have in the province is the people that live here. If we can think of how we can let people unleash the strength of their imagination and help reinforce that imagination, there really is very little that we can't accomplish in this province.

The members of our Leading Edge Endowment Fund Board have always understood that, and have brought their knowledge and expertise to the table as we've tried to create something that's new.

They've helped create a framework that actually celebrates the research that is done in B.C.

For example, when you look at fuel cell development in this province, the world wishes they were as good as B.C. and we should celebrate that. We should recognize how fortunate we are to have that and reinforce it and recommit ourselves to that if we are going to take full advantage of it.

We've just seen what the benefits of research can do for all of us, not just here in B.C. but across the country and around the globe. Here in B.C. at the Michael Smith Genome Science Centre, we believe they've sequenced the gene that is the cause of SARS.

Think of what we can do with that as we try and create a new collaborative model under B.C.'s leadership that develops a vaccine for SARS. It's something we can give to the world by opening our research doors, by bringing in the best that the world has to offer and bringing focus to that collaborative model so we can cut in half the normal time it would take to develop that vaccine.

That is the kind of leadership that British Columbians are showing. That is the kind of leadership that B.C. institutions are giving. It's a national asset that we want to build on and I want to congratulate everyone in this room for what they do to build that. As a government, we have invested a about \$900 million in the past two years dollars to build our research capacity and increase technology access.

It takes some time to build knowledge. It takes small particles of information that we gather together, and as we do that suddenly there is a crystallization of those facts in a way that gives us new answers, new pathways to solutions that we can share it with the world.

As we think of sharing that knowledge, we should recognize that it creates huge economic opportunities. Our universities do a very good job of transferring that pure research into the marketplace.

That is something that we can learn and share as well. One of the challenges we face is to both celebrate the real research that is taking place, the real development of knowledge that is taking place in our province.

Each of the B.C. Leadership Chairs will tell you that they need the support of their students because they're not just students anymore – they are new explorers who are out there working to build that knowledge base under their guidance.

Today I'm pleased to say that the commitment that the people of British Columbia have made to research through the Leading Edge Endowment Fund is going to be complemented by two very generous gifts.

Let me say first that the Leading Edge Endowment Fund under the leadership of Shirley Bond is fully funded for the full \$45 million one year ahead of schedule so that is a very important step.

Part of the idea behind the fund was to try and create true service partnerships between public resources and private-sector resources. I'm pleased to tell you today that we have two examples of how we have been able to lever some additional opportunities.

The first thing I would like to announce is the Rix Family Leading Edge Student Awards program to help attract and retain the best and brightest graduate students who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

The Rix Family Leading Edge Student Awards are possible because of the very generous contribution of the Rix family – \$500,000 has been made available by the Rix family and Dr. Don Rix.

Dr. Rix has been a long-term philanthropist and B.C. business leader. He's helped to build a network of clinical laboratories across B.C. where he served as Chair of the Board

for MDS Metro Laboratory Services, as well as being a hands-on executive for a number of other enterprises.

This new program provides a one-time grant of \$25,000 to each of the B.C. Leadership Chairs to support students working closely with the research chairs themselves.

From this grant, annual \$5,000 scholarships will be awarded to select and outstanding students and I am pleased that we have the first three recipients of the award with us today.

All three of these students work on research related to the B.C. Leadership Chair in Spinal Cord Research Chair at UBC, announced in April 2002. The first student that I'm going to announce is Anthony Choo from Mississauga, he's a PhD student in UBC's department of Mechanical Engineering.

His research looks at the mechanisms of primary injuries to spinal cords and the development of a new spinal cord injury model that contrasts the different types of injuries observed in humans.

It's a collaborative effort between engineers, scientists and clinicians that will hopefully allow for more tailored treatment based on the physics of cord damage.

Second, I'd like to introduce Carmen Chan. Carmen is from Hong Kong. She is a third year graduate student in neuroscience at UBC specializing in molecular biology of spinal cord injury and neuronal regeneration.

Her studies involve molecular manipulation of molecules within the central nervous system and how that affects spinal cord injury recovery.

Finally, Erica Botner is here from Ottawa. She began her MSD studies in rehabilitation sciences in January. Her research will help in recreational reintegration of patients. She has already co-authored a paper for a leading rehabilitation journal while working part time at the GF Strong Centre for Rehabilitation Research Lab.

None of this would be possible without the generosity and the vision of Dr. Don Rix. In addition to his work at MDS Dr. Rix is a member of the Science Council of BC and the Premier's Technology Council. He has given generously to students in financial need in the past. On behalf of all of you would like to say thank you.

The first B.C. Leadership Chair that we appointed was for spinal cord research. It's an area where we had seen significant advancement in British Columbia under the leadership of ICORD.

We have watched as Dr. John Steeves has performed the critical objective of bringing people together, understanding the challenges that we face and having a passionate vision of what we can accomplish in the area of spinal cord injuries.

Approximately 36,000 Canadians have spinal cord injuries, including 3,000 people in British Columbia. Almost 200 people are added to that list annually. We are even more aware of that recently with the challenges that our former Premier, Mike Harcourt, has faced.

We should all be amazed at the progress that Mike has made not just because of his personal commitment and his strength but because of the excellence of the care and the effectiveness of the care that he got right here in B.C.

But we shouldn't think that happened by accident. It happened because of leadership; it happened because of effective treatment; it happened because of physicians and physiotherapists and health care professionals.

It happened because of the research that has been taking place in B.C. Ninety per cent of what we know about spinal cord injuries has been discovered in the last 10 years.

One of the things I can recall from when I was Mayor of Vancouver, one of the really celebratory, incredible, you'll never experience again kind of days was when Rick Hansen wheeled into the stadium at B.C. Place.

To date, \$148 million has been raised by the Man in Motion Foundation as a result of the leadership that Rick Hansen showed all of us.

Because of the research we have been doing here in B.C. there is a real possibility that within the next 10 years we will in fact find a cure for paralysis resulting from spinal cord injuries.

It's something that we will be able to look back at and say we can remember when they started to do that. We can remember not just Rick wheeling into Vancouver having gone around the world, but we can also remember the development that took place that allowed us to dramatically improve the quality of life of those who actually suffered from spinal cord injuries.

The Man in Motion Tour has certainly provided an enormous amount of support for that. I'm pleased to say today that the funding for first B.C. Leadership Chair is being increased by \$1.5 million for a total of \$6 million thanks to the donation of two private partners.

First I want to say a special thank you to John and Penny Ryan of Whistler for their \$400,000 contribution. In 1999, John Ryan wheeled 5,400 kilometres over 32 days across Canada in a hand cycle bike raising over \$1 million for spinal cord research.

Today is the Ryan's single biggest donation from that fund. John works in Whistler where he is among the top 1% of all realtors in Canada, and to try and repay John for this exceptional contribution we've decided to win the Olympic Bid on July 2nd.

In recognition of this exceptional gift we will be renaming the chair the John and Penny Ryan BC Leadership Chair in Spinal Cord Injury Research.

Today I want to also acknowledge the presence of Patrick Reid, the Chair of the Rick Hansen Man in Motion Foundation. I am pleased to tell you that the Man in Motion Foundation will be contributing an additional \$1.1 million to the John & Penny Ryan Chair to raise the total funding to \$6 million.

I want to say thank you Patrick for that contribution from the Foundation. I would be remiss if I didn't point out that that means Patrick is going to have to go out and raise those additional dollars over the next little while and I'm sure he'll be calling all of you on a regular basis.

I want to close today by reinforcing the fact that our learning institutions and our research institutions are truly magnificent assets. It's something that we inherited from those who came before us. It's something that our grandfathers and grandmothers and mothers and fathers committed to and in their own way tried to provide us with the foundation that we needed to build a better future.

The Leading Edge Endowment Fund is one more step to recognize that if we can reach unleash the imaginations of British Columbians there is nothing that we can't accomplish together.

Whether you are from a university, a college, an institute, business or academia, we should all know that our commitment to research is a commitment to the future. Our commitment to the development of knowledge is a commitment to the next generation.

On behalf of all of us today, I want to say thank you to all of you for the leadership that you have shown. Thank you for the imagination you bring to work every single day and thank you for all you give to the Province of British Columbia today and to the future of people tomorrow. Thank you very much.