

Premier Gordon Campbell
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Check Against Delivery

In my province today I don't know anyone that's involved in public life, provincial or federal or local, that doesn't care about Canada. But we should remember that we all see the country in different ways.

We may have differences in opinion of how we achieve our goals, how we bring out the best in our country and how we bring out the best in our province or communities. But we should all know this: we are lucky to be Canadians. We are trying to strengthen this country and, if we work together and learn from one another, we will do just that.

Let me start by explaining Canada from a B.C. perspective. British Columbia is the west. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are the near-east. Ontario and Quebec are the mid-east, and the Atlantic provinces are the far-east. We ought to be careful when we look at the challenges that we face. We have to be careful that we don't label ourselves out of solutions.

I don't think government is very popular. That may not come as a big surprise to people but we should remember that. As we talk about western alienation we have to be careful we're not talking about people who are just upset with government.

I live in a province that is larger than England and France and Germany combined. In my province there are all kinds of differences, sectoral and regional alienations. The alienation that I feel sometimes in Vancouver for Ottawa is very similar to the alienation someone feels in Kamloops about Vancouver or Fort St. John feels for the Lower Mainland or that Terrace may feel for Prince George.

One of the things that strikes me is people often expect government to solve our problems without any challenges and that just isn't going to happen. What must change is how people perceive what government can and can't do and how elected representatives and public servants perceive what we can and can't do. We must all look at our public institutions and ask how we can change them to reflect the world we live in?

The single biggest challenge that we all share, whether you live in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia or British Columbia or Alberta, is this: the world has changed.

Look at the person across the table from you. As you look at that person, ask yourself this question, are they looking any younger this year? We are all getting older. Our whole society is getting older and so, our whole society has got to change the way we think about how we deliver services – not just so that we have services for ourselves, which is what our selfish generation has done, but also so that we have some of the critical services that we value in this country for the next generation of Canadians.

That requires change. That requires all of us to change. One of the frustrations that I've felt in my job – and I've been at my job for less than two years – is that the most powerful force to contend with is institutional inertia. The most powerful force aligned against improving our services is made up of the caretakers of the status quo.

People are just really more comfortable dealing with the old stuff and the old ways even though it's delivering the old results that none of us like. How many people here say what we really need is more politicians? People say they want less government, and then they go to the province and ask, “Why doesn't the government fix this?”

I mentioned earlier one of the challenges of the Olympic Bid is the road between Vancouver and Whistler. But it actually costs money to build a new road to Whistler – it's not free. And I saw some people on TV saying, “Well I don't have any more money, why doesn't the government pay for this?”

Well the government doesn't have any money – it's your money – and we have a challenge to make sure that we connect what our public institutions are doing with what people desire. But we also should be honest about what our public institutions can't do, because there are things that we can't do.

When we talk about western alienation, we should not confuse alienation from our public institutions with western alienation because there is alienation felt across the country. There's probably even alienation in Ontario, for all I know.

The fact is we have to change our government institutions so that they start responding to the world that we live in. We can't simply say let's keep them like they were. I have no problem saying that Alberta is the energy capital of Canada.

We actually use Alberta and say there's the standard, how do we meet that standard? What do we have to do to be better than that standard? We've got a long way to go before we get there, but we're going to be better.

We need to look at the ways we respond to the issues in front of us. There isn't a province in the country that doesn't want to be the high tech province of the western hemisphere. Saskatchewan and Manitoba wants to be the high tech provinces.

Small communities want to be the high tech centres. There's silicon this and silicon that. In British Columbia we have the Silicon Vineyard. It is an exceptional centre of opportunity, but there are lots of centres of opportunity.

We have lots of similar goals. We know we have to create a knowledge-based economy, and we know we have to build our intellectual capital. The most important resource that we have in the country today is the people that live here. Yes we have great natural resources, but it's the people that give value to those resources. We have to liberate people's creativity and thought if we are to build a better quality of life.

I can recall, when I was Mayor of Vancouver, we had a project, the B.C. KAON project. It was very advanced science. We were very excited about it. When the proponents came home after visiting Ottawa, they thought the attitude from Ottawa was this: “If it's so good, what is it doing in British Columbia?”

It may never have been said, it may never have been thought, but a clear impression was left and that's what people in British Columbia felt at the time. One of the things we have to start doing as Canadians is celebrating things that Canadians are doing exceptionally well in different part of Canada.

I think it's great that New Brunswick is doing extremely well as they try to change their economy from a have-not province to a have province. They are trying to be innovative and they're trying to think about how they can get new power and new opportunities for the people that live there.

I'm trying to do the same thing in B.C. And if they've got a great idea in New Brunswick I hope they'll share it with us and I hope we'll learn from it. That's how we're really going to strengthen the country. I'm what I call a Zen Federalist: I think the less they do, the stronger Canada will be. What I mean by that is that there are things that we value as Canadians. There are things we can do as Canadians that we sometimes take for granted.

I was fortunate, I went and worked in Nigeria for two years in the 70's. When you go to Nigeria, you realize the things you take for granted in a western European culture. If we want change we can vote on it. In Nigeria, when I was there, they made changes with bullets, not with ballots.

We were riding a motorcycle on dirt roads, and one day we skidded out. I fell off and Nancy, my wife, was behind me. I landed on my head and was all right, Nancy landed on her elbow and got a great big wound on her elbow. We took her to this little hospital and I can remember sitting there thinking, “I wonder if we should go home?”

In Canada, we wouldn't have had any worries about this for a second, but I really thought “I wonder if we should go?” Experiences like that really make you realize all of the things that we have, all of these assets and public goods that we have that we've built in this country over generations. Many are actually things that we can't take for granted if we want to strengthen and improve and revitalize them.

We have to change the way we think about our public institutions and what we're doing. That's the way to start connecting. It's the way to connect in British Columbia and the way to connect in the rest of the country.

We should also recognize how huge the challenge is. Because we call ourselves Canada, we think that we are just a country. Switzerland is a country. But you know, the Kootenays region of British Columbia is two times the size of Switzerland.

We have to think of ways to deliver services and deliver those important public goods in a way that makes sense to people. Canada is 9,976,140 square kilometres, one country. Europe is 9,938,000 square kilometres and many countries.

As we move to improve things, let's not forget that we're better off than 95 per cent of the world. For us to move forward, we have to face the facts.

Here is a fact that is often forgotten: the federal government was actually created by the provinces. These four provinces got together and said why don't we see if a larger institution can help us meet our common goals. Maybe it can improve how we can do things. But let's limit what this new federal institution we are creating can do and thereby protect our individual uniqueness. Let's give them a couple of things to do, not too much.

That was a good idea. When you look at the initial constitution of 1867 what do we have? Do you know where municipalities sit in the constitution? They are under provincial responsibilities between public houses and mental institutions.

The fact is our province came into confederation with 36,000 people. It seems to me that now with a province of 4.1 or 4.2 million people, we may want to think about making changes in how we deliver services.

In B.C., we're trying to do that. We have produced a Community Charter, which for the first time is giving our communities in British Columbia the right to make their own decisions without the province checking on them.

I don't want to check on them. I don't have time to worry about local zoning. That's their job. They need to know about zoning and the local delivery of local services. Citizens elect people to local office to know those things and to make decisions on them.

Local governments make much better local decisions than provincial governments do. And provincial governments make better provincial decisions than federal governments do. There are some things that we should be doing provincially and frankly, when you look at the huge challenges that we face in Canada, particularly around health care, we're lucky we have ten provinces.

We've got ten provinces that are trying to do the same thing. There is no province that doesn't care about taking care of patients. Have you heard any premier from any party say I really don't give a darn about patients?

Everyone is trying to find ways we can actually do better. Everyone is trying to find ways we can focus resources on patients' needs instead of on the wrong stuff. There are lots of vested interests; lots of people who protect the status quo and say you can't make change.

The patient doesn't worry about theories. They worry about getting care as quickly as they can, as close to their homes as possible.

We're making some changes in B.C. that are good. We have taken 52 health authorities and shrunk it down to six. We have five regional boards and for the first time we have one provincial authority that says how are we doing, how can we do some of these important tertiary things that everyone needs in a way that is cost effective for the people that you're serving in your target group.

Over the first two years, we're going to save over 41% in administrative costs. Already we're seeing improvements in care in the province. If that's something that we can take and show other provinces, that's good.

In B.C. we have also created very detailed accountability contracts asking for outcomes – and asking for people to start focusing on things like mental health care which we'd put on the backburner in the province for a long time.

Our society as a whole does not do a very good job with mental health. We are afraid of it. We don't understand it. Worse, in the past we have tried to hide it even though it's everywhere and it touches all of us. We all know someone that has had a mental illness. We all know someone who has been depressed and who hasn't been able to get over it. We all know that it puts a huge cost on the health care system. Again in B.C., we're trying to get mental illness out in the open, put it on the table and say “Here is our problem, let's deal with it. Let's work on solving it.”

We know that as we age as a society we need to provide more opportunities to allow more seniors to stay at home longer. We need to provide stages of care for seniors and continuing care for older adults who need extensive long term care for a long time. Government can do that, and that's what we're trying to do.

In Canada we are lucky because we have a strong public life. Our citizens are an important part of building a public life and a public policy framework to help us. We are all involved with public policy.

Those of you who are in business, you're involved in public policy because you're always telling me how to change it. The way to figure out how to change it is for you to say this going to work better for all of us. It's not unusual for me to say to people, “This is what we are trying to do, can you tell me how to do it?” I don't believe that when we got elected, we suddenly get smarter. In fact, there is ample evidence that the opposite may be the case.

However, it is important for us to keep trying. That is what we are doing. We have the Community Charter, which is an attempt to push the decision-making down to the local level and not interfere – let them make their choices.

We've tried to do that with our universities. We've said we're going to stop interfering with them. They are autonomous learning institutions. They should figure it out for themselves. We have said: “You decide. You build your reputation. You decide what kind of program you're going have.”

We said the same thing to our colleges. We're trying to give them the tools they need so they can make their own choices.

We have to do that in Canada. We have to trust people in different parts of the country to do different things and not be threatened by the fact they are doing different things. Let them do them and let's see what the results are. When we have the results that we like maybe we can copy it and if we're not getting results that we like, it's a good idea to stop doing the things that produce them. That's what we have to learn to do.

We have to learn how to do that in terms of the public as well as in terms of our public institutions. We have a long way to go to give the public the information they need to make their own choices.

That is a challenge for all of us. It's a challenge for government. It's a challenge in the media. It's a challenge to non-profit agencies. It's a challenge for business. It's a challenge for citizens.

Citizens are just starting to wake up to the fact that they are actually in charge. For a long time we said the government will take care of this or that. But then governments or politicians started to make the wrong choices as far as a lot of people were concerned. The public has started to re-engage, because they have no choice if they are to protect the things they value. I mean everyone. Not just those we always hear from. Not just from those who make their livings as critics and advocates for one cause or another. I mean each of us as citizens participating in a living democracy.

Our job is to try to engage people as much as we can. We've done another thing in our government which some people think was a good idea and some people don't: open cabinet meetings.

I've only been in one government cabinet so I can't speak for all the other cabinet ministers across the country but, if you listen to the media, every cabinet meeting is full of blood and guts and people are screaming at one another.

Our cabinet meetings aren't like that. In our cabinet meetings we're trying to figure out how to solve some problems. In our cabinet meetings we're trying to identify where we're trying to go and we say to the minister "What have you thought about that, what does your staff say?"

Then we talk about it and we try to learn about it. It's a challenge to convince people that most of us are at work. We're at work trying to solve problems. We may make wrong choices, we may make wrong decisions, but we are trying to solve problems.

I'll give you a quick example from British Columbia. We think that if we're going to do a good job with health care, we better start giving citizens information. We've got to start telling them the pressures we face.

For example, in Pharmacare, our drug program in British Columbia, the costs are growing at 15 per cent a year. Our economy has grown over the last ten years at about 2 per cent a year. You do not need to be an economics major to understand that's not sustainable. If you look at our health care costs, they are growing at 7 per cent a year. Then I ask people to look at our aging population and to think about the increasing demands that puts on health care.

You have to give that information to the public so they start to understand what it is we are wrestling with. Then they can judge whether the decisions we're making are good decisions or not.

At one of our open Cabinet meetings, we provided tons of information to people and the media's take on it was we were going to spend \$100,000 to tell people where they could get information that they require. That's tough to get through. I'm not criticizing it, they're in a totally different business than we are, but we should all figure out how to do that better. We need to figure out how to communicate better, how to provide information for those who want the information.

I'm not saying everyone needs it, but in British Columbia a lot of people are saying they'd like more information. The question is how do we give them that information? How do we tell whether we're successful and whether we're connecting or not? Open cabinets were one way of doing that.

Another initiative we have taken in British Columbia is the Citizens' Assembly. For the first time in the history of our province, we are going let the people of the province decide how they want to elect MLAs. We're going to have an assembly that will report out in December 2004.

They can look at all the systems they want – first past the post, preferential ballot, proportional representation – but it's their choice. It is not up to politicians how we should be elected, it's up to those who elect us.

How many people actually trust *me* to say this is the best way to elect people? Not many. Because no matter what, they would think I had a vested interest, or that I was only trying to get re-elected. What I'm saying to people in my province is this: "You set the rules for your politicians. You decide how you're going to elect people to the Legislature."

People have a choice. They may participate, they may not. We should remember, it's often the politician that tries to find the panacea. People know this is important and they understand it takes thought.

I'm hoping people get involved and wrestle with some of the challenges we face. How do you have a Legislature that reflects rural British Columbia and urban British Columbia, the heartlands of our province and the gateways to the province? How do you elect a Legislature that recognizes that half of our province is virtually empty?

Most of you have heard of Prince George. Maybe some of you have heard of Atlin, but you have no idea where it is on the map? There are only about 300 people that live there, but it's part of our province. We have to respond to those people's needs.

Here's an example of where we are starting to build the right kind of response in terms of infrastructure. The federal government has a broadband program. We have a broadband program. We want to reach every aboriginal community in the province. We want to reach into small towns and big cities.

We're working together and saying, "Here's something we both want to do. Why don't we figure out how we take these resources and put them together and get a better result?" I think we're going to get that better result.

The same is true for transportation. We want the Trans-Canada Highway to be much better, so the federal government has come and joined us in a partnership to improve Kicking Horse Canyon. It's a \$670 million project and already we have partnership commitments of over \$200 million. As we do that, the great thing is we're going to open up this spectacular road in the middle of the Rocky Mountains and people from Canada will have access to B.C. so they can all come and invest and move to our province.

If we are to transform our economies, we have to start by celebrating what we do that's great. Again, I am really proud of the BC Centre for Disease Control. I'm really proud of Genome BC, and the Michael Smith Foundation who, with Genome Canada, sequenced the virus related to SARS. We know in British Columbia that the best expert on these kinds of virus happens to be in veterinary medicine in Saskatchewan. We know if we're going to be successful as Canadians, we're going to have to have a national lab in Manitoba. We know we're going to solve this problem by working together.

We know that when we think of those things and build on that talent there's something special that we can do not just for Canada but of the world. We're willing to commit to it, we're willing to invest in it, and we're willing to work on it.

If we do that, we will start to reinforce Canadians' own sense of what they're doing that is exceptional. That is what's really critical, to remember what we're doing in Canada *is* exceptional, and how our provinces are responding to the challenges we face is exceptional.

A great idea will be for a national centre for disease control, and since there's only one centre for disease control in the country right now and it happens to be in British Columbia and it happens to do a great job, we should have a national centre for disease control in British Columbia, Canada.

We're capable of doing that. We're capable of sharing that information across the country. New technologies, new communications tools are all available to include the entire country. Why can't that happen from British Columbia?

It can and it should. In many, many ways we've shown how that can happen if you start thinking that way. My best example that I want to close on is the Olympics.

I'm very excited about the Olympics for Vancouver. I'm very excited about what it can do for our economy, I'm excited for the jobs it can create but I'm equally excited for the partnerships that are going to happen and the traditions it can build.

This is a public-private partnership in the best sense of the word. The Olympics works because the private sector gives us literally billions of dollars in sponsorships and broadcast rights that we'd never get otherwise. \$1.2 billion will probably come from the broadcast networks. They won't come if we don't win the Olympics, and if they do come it will be all private sector money that is coming in with the exception of the CBC.

The federal government is a full partner of ours in the bid – a full partner of ours in providing for the venues, a full partner of ours for thinking about how we can have our Olympics in British Columbia reach out to communities across the province.

A full partner in trying to build the athletic network that we need across the country from the Maritimes to Quebec and Ontario and throughout the west. A full partner in celebrating what Canada can do and celebrating Canada's diversity and celebrating Canada's strength and our ability to do these international events.

Together, we're going to continue working as partners in celebrating what is best in our country.

Thank you.