

Announcement of the Irving K. Barber B.C. Scholarship Program

Premier Gordon Campbell

October 22, 2004

Check Against Delivery

I want to start with a series of thank-you's to people who have been a big part of realizing this vision.

First, I want to thank the people of the Okanagan. People in the Okanagan understood how important it was for them to have a top-class university, a research university, a university that was world-renowned right here, and I can tell you this: the University of British Columbia Okanagan fits all of those demands because of the drive, the commitment and the persistence of everyone in the Okanagan region of this province.

I also want to thank four of my colleagues, who were introduced earlier. You know, they have been working with people in their communities to enhance the new Okanagan College as well as to provide additional resources for students here in Kelowna at UBC Okanagan, and I can tell you that there haven't been better advocates than those four people. I want so say how pleased I am that all of them, including Sindi Hawkins, are here with us today.

I know Martha Piper would say this and I have to say this as well: we have exceptional people working at the University of British Columbia and working in the Ministry of Advanced Education as well, and I want to thank the deputy minister Philip Steenkamp for his leadership in moving forward with this expansion of university spaces in B.C. Thank you, Philip.

There's one person who is not with us today who I know would love to be. Her mother passed away earlier this week. That's Deputy Premier Shirley Bond, the Minister of Advanced Education. There is no one who has picked up the opportunities that advanced education represents to all of us better than Shirley Bond. All of us in our caucus would tell you that when we go to her with an idea from our constituency, she is the first to say: "How can I do it?" She is not one of those people who tells you the problems she faces. She is one of those people that goes out and finds solutions. This was one of Shirley's solutions. This is a reflection of Shirley's leadership. And I know that you'd all want her to know that you send her best for today, but also that we send our thanks for the contribution she has made to UBCO as well.

In March, when we announced UBCO, we did say that it was going to take its place amongst the world's great universities. One of the things that we said is that UBC would bring its assets to the table. I didn't realize how quickly they'd bring their assets to the table, but they did do that.

Within weeks, Martha was in my office with Ike Barber, talking to me about Ike's continuing vision for expanding the opportunities of education to every community of this province. The Irving K. Barber Learning Centre is about reaching out to all those people in British Columbia who often feel they're very distant from advanced education opportunities. It's something that touches into the smallest town, if the smallest town wants to take advantage of it, and into your home if you want to take advantage of it.

Ike started in British Columbia. He built his business in British Columbia, and he built his business in the vast, vast heartland of our province. Slokan was here creating jobs, creating opportunities, and Ike Barber said this quite clearly: I want to continue doing that into the future.

The Irving K. Barber Learning Centre was an exceptional contribution to all of us in British Columbia, and so we have to start today by saying thank you to Ike and to Jean and to their family for their exceptional generosity. Just think of what they've done in just the last couple of years – an enormous contribution to people that they have never met. And there is no greater gift you can give than to invest in the well-being, the health and the learning of others.

The Barbers ask for no thanks. They simply say: "We will open the doors of opportunity to you. We will open those doors in every part of our province." Let me say this: that is the kind of citizenship that made this province great, and we're going to continue to build on that.

Thank you, Ike, and thank you, Jean.

Is there anybody here that cannot be excited about the Irving K. Barber school of arts and science right here at UBCO? Imagine this: some of the brightest minds in the world coming right here to Kelowna and talking not just to your students here but talking to your community here, and not just talking in Kelowna but talking to other parts of the province as well, exposing us to new ideas, exposing us to the thrill of debate, exposing us to the development of new knowledge as we move ahead. What a gift that is.

One of the things we wanted to do as we develop that gift right here at UBCO is we wanted to make sure that other people in the province had a sense of the opportunity and excitement created by this. So, on behalf of all the people of British Columbia, let me tell you today that the government of British Columbia will be establishing the \$15-million Irving K. Barber B.C. Scholarship Program.

That program will provide up to 150 scholarships worth up to \$5,000 each. Those scholarships will be available for students who transfer from B.C.'s colleges to a university to finish their degree. We all know that British Columbia has great universities. We're trying to build on that asset today as we look to the future. But we all should remember this: we also have one of the best college infrastructures in the world. We're enhancing that with Okanagan College. We're enhancing that with Northwest Community College. We're enhancing that with Northern Lights Community College.

We're enhancing that across the province, because education knows no boundaries, and neither should educational opportunity. Thanks to Ike Barber, we're going to make sure that's a potential that we realize in British Columbia.

We're undertaking the largest post-secondary expansion that we've had in the last 40 years in our province. This is about our province's future. This is about young British Columbians being able to realize their dreams and their objectives as close to home as they can. This is about having British Columbia being recognized as one of the world's truly great centres of learning.

And I want to be clear about this. It's not because of the government that that happens. It's because of educational leaders like Martha Piper, it's because of citizens like Irving Barber, and it's because of you. It's because of our faculties and our staff throughout the province, and it's because we have young people whose thirst for knowledge will not be quenched.

Thank you very much for being here today. I appreciate it.