

Premier Gordon Campbell
UBC Mental Health Research Announcement
February 21, 2005

Check Against Delivery

Let me start by saying to Dr. Piper what a successful job she's done as an educational leader for all of us in British Columbia - indeed, for the country. When our universities thrive and excel everyone in Canada benefits, and, indeed, if you look at the impact of research and the tools that have been developed here at the University of British Columbia, the entire world benefits in different ways at different times.

I'm very pleased to be here with Dr. Piper. I'm also very pleased that the Chancellor of UBC, Justice Allan MacEachern, is with us today and that my Minister of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services, Hon. Brenda Locke, is here with me today, too.

We set a goal for ourselves three years ago. We said it was time for British Columbians to recognize that mental illness was something that touched us all. It doesn't touch us with statistics; it touches us in our families; it touches us in our communities. Every single one of us knows someone who is suffering or dealing with mental illness.

We're not going to be able to deal with that in a constructive and positive way if we don't shine a light on mental illness and talk about some of the challenges that mentally ill people face.

Think of the young person who's suffering from an eating disorder. How can we help that person through that? Think of our colleagues in the workplace who are suffering from depression and watching as that disease slowly eats away at them because we don't deal with it in a constructive and a positive way.

The first thing we have to do is say to people with mental illnesses "We're there to give you support." There is nothing wrong with someone who has a mental illness except the mental illness, just like breaking your leg or breaking your arm or some of the physical illnesses that we all deal with.

Mental illness has tended to be invisible, has tended to be something that we put away and try not to look at in the face. What we're doing today, I think, is dealing with mental illness as a critically important issue for us as a society - not just as a province, but as a society.

Across the country and the continent, around the world, in fact, mental illness is something that we're going to have to come to grips with and deal with in a constructive, positive and thoughtful manner, where we'll provide people with the supports they need so they're not afraid to confront their mental illness and can become healthy again.

When you have an anonymous donor who comes forward and says they are willing to provide \$10 million to create an institute for mental health in British Columbia, I think the people of British Columbia would want us to match that. So I am pleased to say today that we will be seeking Legislative approval in the next few weeks to match this very generous private donation with a \$10-million contribution from the people of British Columbia to establish this new mental health institute here at the University of British Columbia.

I see my friend Dr. Pat McGeer is here with us today. In establishing this new UBC mental health institute and creating three new permanently endowed chairs - one in child and adolescent psychiatry, one in geriatric psychiatry and depression, you have to recognize how both Dr. McGeers have pushed back the frontiers of knowledge so that we can deal with dementia and Alzheimer's and other things that are confronting us all as an aging society. I'm sure that the chair of geriatric psychiatry and depression will help build on the exceptional work that they have done.

With the chair in psychotherapy, once again we're bringing the pieces of our knowledge of mental illness together, to create the foundation to find the cures and the supports that are required by people suffering from mental illness. That is what we intend to do and what UBC intends to do at their Institute of Mental Health.

I think it's great that UBC's a leader, and I think it's great that you've allowed the Province of British Columbia to join you in that leadership. It's a gift we can give to future generations, and I want to say thank you to the donor for their generosity of spirit and the contribution that they've made to the well being of Canadians across this country.

Thank you very much.