

**Premier Gordon Campbell**  
**Speech to B.C. Homebuilders Association**  
**February 2, 2005**

First, let me say thank you for letting me meet the other obligations I've had and still have a chance to come a chat with you.

Gary Friend has been a strong and supportive voice for a stronger BC economy and I want to say thanks to Gary for the leadership he's showing.

Gary and I chatted prior to the last election about another person in this room who is a true leader in British Columbia. He is someone who said I'm not going to stand at the sidelines and watch what happens to my province. I'm going to stand up and tell people what I think they should do and the direction they should go in.

That person is your CEO Peter Simpson. Peter has done a great job for your industry advising us how to improve things, how to move them forward. We should never underestimate the value of somebody who is going to stand up for what he believes in, speak out for what he believes in and drive the agenda for what he believes in. That's what Peter has done for all of us.

You all know this from your own enterprises, from your own businesses, that it's not what you do by yourself and that nothing can be accomplished if you don't have a great team. One of the things that happened in 2001 was you elected one of the most exceptional Legislatures in the history of the province. We're fortunate to have a number of our MLAs with us tonight.

Richard Stewart I first met when I was sitting in the mayor's chair in Vancouver. He was talking about what we needed to do to create a better environment and move beyond the rhetoric about affordable housing to actually doing things that would provide that housing. I can tell you in our caucus he's been a great MLA and a great spokesperson for Coquitlam-Maillardville. On May 17 I need all of you to work hard to re-elect Richard Stewart as the MLA for Coquitlam-Maillardville.

I also want to talk to you about Harry Bloy. Harry's the MLA for Burquitlam. Ever since he was elected in 2001 he's worked very hard for his community. Harry was the guy who grew his hair long last year so that he could cut it and

raise money for cancer. He did that and raised \$5,000 for cancer research. I can't tell you how important it is that you re-elect people like this.

I was first elected in 1984 to city council in Vancouver. For 20 years I've been running for office. You've no idea how often people come up to me and say: I can't quite understand why this is. Why can't you ever get good people to run for office?

I said we actually did get good people to run for office, including Dave Hayer, a member of the Finance committee. He's been all over the province talking about what we should do now that we've got our financial house in order and what direction we should go in. He's really been a great guy, and we're hoping that they're going to work hard to get Dave re-elected May 17, 2005.

Karn Manhas, MLA for Port Coquitlam, has done a great job, but he decided that you don't have to run for office and stay there forever. You can run for office, make a contribution, as he has, and implement better programs for the people in this part of the province. Karn decided he was going to step aside, so I can tell you in Port Coquitlam we're going to have Greg Moore running, and I know we'll elect Greg Moore on May 17, 2005.

One of the things that we've benefited from in the last three and a half years is an economy that is starting to open doors to people again. Your industry has actually been the leader during that time. You know that when you're building a home you're building jobs and you're building futures and you're building opportunities for people. You have really stepped up to the mark as a leader in British Columbia's economy.

We need you to continue to do that, continue to work building homes for families all over the province, and particularly in the Lower Mainland. Because for the first time in seven years we've had people returning to British Columbia. They're coming back for opportunities and that's going to keep on happening. But one of the things we have to figure out is how to maintain the quality of our communities and how we build the economy as we move ahead as Canada's only Pacific province.

I can remember the first time I went to what they call a big city mayor meeting. I was sitting in the room with Ralph Klein who at that time was the mayor of Calgary and Lawrence Decore who at that time was the mayor of Edmonton, and

they were claiming to be Pacific Rim cities. I reminded them that there was a mountain range between them and the Pacific.

The fastest growing economy in the world is China right now. The fastest growing middle class in the world is India right now. They're not part of the old G8, but they are going to have a huge impact on what takes place in our future. They create opportunities for us. They create opportunities, for example, in our forest industry. In China, they have ten million housing starts a year. So we have an enormous opportunity there. We want to open that opportunity up, because we think that's great for our forest industry, and that it will be great for British Columbia.

Three years ago we went to the oil and gas industry and we said: what do we need to do to be competitive? They came back to us with a long list. We said, well, can you sort of prioritize the things that are most important? Can you give us your top five? Let us work with the top five. When we've got the top five done we'll go to the next top five. But let's get some progress made.

So they talked to us about how we could encourage what we call summer drilling and expanding what was then a very short winter season in oil and gas. We changed the royalty structure to do that. As a result of that change in royalty structures suddenly there was the largest monthly sale of petroleum and natural gas rights in the history of the province.

I called the head of EnCana, and I said I want to say thanks for doing this. I said make sure you tell us what we have to do next, because we want you as an investor to go out and say to other people in your industry this is a great place to do business. He said to us, well, you know, there's A, B and C you should be doing. And it just happened we were actually already working on A, B and C.

It's more than just the Peace River that we're looking at now. You've got the Nechako Basin, which is just to the southwest of Prince George. There's the Bowser Basin, which is to the northwest of Terrace, and, of course, you've got offshore oil and gas opportunities for us as well, which will benefit the entire province if we can do it in a scientifically sound manner and an environmentally secure way.

We have a plan for the next ten years to build an economy that continues to capture the momentum of the last three and a half years and move us forward. Our plan is not to be the number one job creator of the last three years. It's to be

the number one job creator of the next ten years. It's to open up the long-term future where companies continue to grow because that's how you really strengthen the economy. You need confidence and you need optimism if people are going to take risks.

Every single one of you in this room has taken risks to have a successful business. Last year, because of you, we had a record number of houses built and sold, over 96,000. That's good news. But we all know that we have to be prepared to be competitive in the future. And you have to feel comfortable telling us as government what we need to do to create a framework for you so that you have confidence in moving forward.

You're not going to find a politician who doesn't tell you that small business is important and that every business needs to have the opportunity to grow. We can do that if we work together. It doesn't mean that it's easy. It means if you work hard and you're focused and you make the commitment, you have a chance to do this. You have a chance to thrive and to succeed.

Last year we saw lots of new jobs in construction, as opposed to what was taking place in 1998-1999. I can remember one of my friends then saying all of their qualified trades were leaving. They were relocating their families to Alberta. They were relocating their families to Washington State. The problem, she said to me at the time, was when that happens it's very difficult to bring them home.

But people are coming back to BC. They are coming back to jobs in BC's forests, in the oil field, in BC mines, in BC tourism, in BC's technology industries and in your industry. There was a net gain of over 7,300 people from the rest of Canada in 2004, the first annual increase since 1997.

One of the things that clearly we have to do over the next little while is build our trade infrastructure, build the skills infrastructure we have in this province so that when we do have jobs and we do have opportunities that people can meet them, and you can plan out to make sure that we meet them. So we've made some changes. We've unveiled a new apprenticeship program, for example, that's creating more apprentices, more opportunities for more individuals.

We know construction is going to be big in the next little while, but it's not just homebuilding construction. We've got non-residential construction that's taking place from the \$600-million project to improve the Sea-to-Sky Highway up to Whistler to a \$300-million hospital that's being built out in Abbotsford. It's all

going to require trades. To support that infrastructure we need homes for people and they have to be able to buy homes that meet their needs.

My first decision on whether I was going to buy a home or not was made in 1974. I don't know how many of you know Vancouver, but I remember driving along Point Grey Road in Vancouver, right on the water. I saw this house on a 50-foot lot right next to a park. It was for sale. I said I'd like to buy that. How much is it? \$51,000 for the land. I decided it was too expensive and I didn't buy it.

What we have to do is move beyond the rhetoric of affordable housing and start having governments reflect the needs of affordable housing. We need your help with that, and we need you to know that you have to feel comfortable telling us when we're not doing things right. If you can start building a program and tell us what we need to do and how we're going to do it, we want to work with you on that.

We have to be competitive. It's not a question of whether we'd like to be or not; we have to be competitive. And we have to be competitive in each sector of the economy. So I am going to be counting on you to talk to us about not just how we may be less competitive but, in some cases, how you may be less competitive. Are there things that you could do differently so that you could be competitive?

You know, we live in a truly exceptional province with a truly exceptional quality of life. And in spite of the challenges that we may face with an aging population, in spite of the challenges that we face in the health care system, we actually have a pretty good health system. We can make it better, but it's pretty good.

We have a pretty good public education system, too. We could probably make it better, but it's a pretty darned good system.

There's an awful lot of people in the world who would like to live right here. It's one of the best places on earth to live.

As we look to future, we all have to get our heads around this: British Columbia is going to lead our country. But we have to be willing to look out and to think beyond next year and think ten years out. Think about where we're going to be and what you want your company to be in ten years, because we should know this now. When British Columbians work together, when they pull together,

when they focus their energies and their efforts around a common vision, we will succeed.

On July 2, 2003 I stood in Prague, and I heard the International Olympic Committee say the winner is Vancouver. Now, let me tell you this: we were not the only ones competing for the games and it wasn't a landslide. But I know this: if we hadn't had the federal government working with the provincial government, working with all of the Canadians in B.C., if we hadn't had the diversity of population that we have, if we hadn't all been pulling in that direction, we wouldn't have succeeded.

We succeeded because we had a goal and we thought that we should strive for it. And we did it. We did it because we worked together.

I was just talking to a fellow last night. He worked for the Vancouver Organizing Committee. Do you know what he did? He bought a new home. He came here, and he bought himself a new home in Deep Cove. You know, that's going to happen time and time and time again.

We're watching as our forestry industry stabilizes. We're watching as our mining industry is growing and as our energy industry is growing. Our tourism industry is going to take off. We've just been given a cruise-destination status by China. We're expecting a hundred million tourists coming out of China by 2020. We want all of those guys coming here and driving our economy forward and building it up.

We have this event coming up that I think is important; I think it's important for all of you. It's May 17, 2005. It's when you decide what kind of province you want to live in. It's when you decide if you want to have a decade that's full of opportunity or a decade that's full of opposition. It's when you decide if you want to keep moving forward or if you want to go back.

I want to move this province forward.

I was born here, and I remember what it felt like when I was growing up. I can remember what it felt like when I was graduating from high school; This is what it felt like: you had choices, you had opportunities, and the world was opening up before you.

We're just starting to feel that again in British Columbia. We're just starting to feel that not just here in Greater Vancouver, but in region after region after region. We're just starting to recognize what we can be if we work together and we strive to be the best that we can possibly be.

It's organizations like yours that are going to make a difference. You'll decide if you want to continue to move forward with investment, with opportunities, with growth, with improving the quality of life for British Columbians.

I believe in small business and entrepreneurial activity. I believe in the private sector. I believe in free enterprise. I believe if we work together, there is nothing we can't accomplish in the province. I believe that we are headed for a golden decade in the province of British Columbia, of economic and social opportunities that we're just beginning to imagine.

But I need your help to get us there. I need your creativity, and I need your imagination - to take British Columbia forward to a positive future that's second to none.

Thank you very much.