

Premier Gordon Campbell
Address at Interior Logging Association Convention
April 11, 2003

Check Against Delivery

It's great to see you're having such a great turnout at this year's convention because it is reflective of a new sense of the importance of forestry and the future of forestry. You're topic today is forestry and education and I want to talk a little bit about that.

Sometimes as we get involved in the day-to-day activities of our lives, whether we're in public life or working in our own enterprises in our communities, we lose track of some of the challenges that we face.

More importantly we lose track of some of our successes. I want you to keep having these conventions. I was talking to some of your executive before we came for lunch and I pointed out how important it is that we keep having these major meetings of forest industry concerns.

Not just because it gives you a chance to meet with one another and talk and have a good time, but also because it gives the communities you meet in a chance to think about how important forestry is to that community, and we should always remember how important forestry is to our province.

The dollars that we get from forestry actually provide the funds to educate 390,000 students. Without forestry we wouldn't have the resources that we need to provide for the health care and education services that are so critical to all of our lives regardless of where we live in British Columbia.

About 70% of the timber harvested in British Columbia comes right out of the Interior, and 84% of our wood products come from the Interior.

Right now in British Columbia, 90% of the forest products that we have are exported. We export \$450 in forest products every second. Geographically we are larger than France and Germany combined, but we require an open trading market for our products.

Forestry is an incredibly complicated industry. There are all kinds of players and parts to it. As we look to build a stronger and more prosperous future in forestry and for British Columbia it's important that we remember that.

When we talk about education and the ILA having had their 45th Annual Convention, that's almost two generations of British Columbians. The generational changes that we face create all kinds of difficulties for us. The world has changed, and it's changed in ways that all of us live through and sometimes we don't notice.

I want you to do me a favour. Look at the person that's sitting next to you. How many people are looking younger this year? It's amazing but we're all getting older, our society's getting older.

As our society gets older it requires us to change what we're doing and how we're doing things. We all know that adds huge additional pressures to our health care system. We should all think about what that means in terms of our industries as well.

When we think about forestry we know that we need to have young foresters. We know that the next generation of British Columbians have got to be excited about this industry. It's critical to build that sense of enthusiasm so that we remind the next generation of British Columbians what forestry is, what our forests represent.

Our forests are the most environmentally sensitive building materials that we have. They are more environmentally sensible than concrete, certainly than steel, certainly than plastic. Our wood product is a great product for the future.

It's built a strong province, but it's going to build an even stronger province as we think of the future. Right now we are talking about building trade with China. It's an enormous new market that we are going to be able to access.

The Chinese economy is growing at between 7 and 8% a year. We know that our wood products, our wood technology can help them meet an awful lot of their objectives. There are 700,000 families in Shanghai alone that can afford a new wood framed housing unit. We want to make sure British Columbia is leading that market. It represents literally hundreds of millions of dollars of potential trade.

Today, 65% of our wood exports go to the United States. It's a huge market for us, and we are working to open that market up. To do that, it's necessary for us to advocate on behalf of our forest industry in the United States – in the boardrooms and in the lunchrooms of the United States.

When we had the United States industry come forward and put up their protectionist measures they didn't just hurt British Columbia's industry, they put literally thousands of construction workers in the United States out of work.

They put literally thousands of families out of reach of a new housing product that they could use to buy for themselves. We have to remind those customers of that. We have to build our own political base in the United States as we move forward to make those changes – so they understand how our market works, so they understand what the benefits are for people who live and work in the United States.

Over the next few weeks, we will actively be pursuing a continuation of the softwood lumber talks. We believe that the reforms that we've brought forward in British Columbia have been received well by both the administration and the industries.

I am not pretending that these are going to be easy discussions or that it's a slam-dunk to complete them, but British Columbia is going to continue push for this. We are going to get a resolution to softwood so that we have open access to American markets so our workers and our contractors and our industry can flourish with a sense of stability and optimism about the future.

We are doing our best to create a framework for forestry in this province that encourages innovation, competition, and productivity. We're doing our best in trying to come up with a framework that will make sense for communities all over this province and workers all over this province. That will make sure that we do have the sustainable and stable industry that is essential to our economic future.

We don't claim to have a corner on all the knowledge of what's taking place, so this is a request and it's a sincere request: we need you to tell us what we're doing and how it works, and how we can fix it if it doesn't work.

We need those of you who work on the front lines to come forward with your recommendations for how to improve things. We are going to listen, we are going to learn and as we go through this we are going to get it right on behalf of all British Columbians, but we need your help to do that.

We've found that every time we take a step and we have positive interaction and positive contributions from those of you who are actively involved in the industry, we actually learn something that allows us to do better.

When we introduced the new forest practices code, it required us to work hard with members of the industry. With that new forest practices code we've eliminated 18 separate approval steps that made no difference to anyone. They just cost a lot of money and didn't do anything about improving the quality of our forest management. We have been able to do that because you were able to contribute some of your time and suggestions to the solutions that we need.

When we are looking at the working forest, it's time for us to recognize in British Columbia that we need to have a land designation that recognizes economic activity is critical for us to build a future. It's critical for you to have a sense of stability to have a forestry industry that's thriving.

Stan Hagen, Minister of Sustainable Resource Management, has put out a working forest discussion paper. You need to tell us what you think would be improvements to it. We are going to designate that working forest, it is going to be there for future generations of British Columbians, and it's necessary for us to have that done properly with your input.

We think by establishing a working forest land base we create the opportunity for people to actually look at their future and plan long term, not just for next quarter or next year but for the long term.

As we look at the opportunities in forestry, it's necessary for us to think beyond four or five years and to think out ten years and fifteen years. When young people are going to school and thinking about what their future is they're thinking about a long-term future.

We want them to know there is a long-term future for them in forestry. To do that, it's critical for us to have a land base that says we accept, we respect and we indeed need forest activity to take place.

Our economy has been doing a little bit better lately. We have an economy that we want to be firing on all cylinders. We have enormous opportunities in energy development. We're going to try and take advantage of them. We have huge opportunities in technology development. We are going to try and move forward and take advantage of them. We have opportunities in agriculture and ranching. We have opportunities in mining. We are trying to create a system that encourages investment in all these regions.

But we should all remember forestry is our number one industry in British Columbia. It is today, it will be tomorrow, and it will be a decade and two decades from now if we do it right and if we work together.

That's our government's goal, and I think it's your goal. And if we can express that to young people, we will have a whole new generation getting involved in forestry, in the industry and in building the future of British Columbia. I need your help to do that too.

One of the things that we want to do is remind young people about what takes place in forestry. We were talking today about foresters. When I go out and talk with young people in universities, the young foresters actually know what's taking place on the land base.

But we need to get down into schools. The work that you do with your forestry truck that goes around and gives young people a sense of what's taking place is a very important tool.

In the next few days we are going to be announcing a major provincial initiative to try and explain to British Columbians how important the forest industry is, to try and show young people what the opportunities are in forestry. We are going to be sure that young people actually understand that a forester is exactly what we want to train in this province.

We were given the best tree growing lands in the world. We have a responsibility to manage that properly. We have a responsibility to use sound science as we develop that. But we shouldn't forget that we've actually exercised that responsibility particularly well over the last few years.

Today in British Columbia we are planting six trees every second. The largest carbon sink in the country is right here in British Columbia, it's represented by five billion trees that have been planted over the last twenty years.

One of the great things about trees is they grow and keep growing. We harvest a tiny percentage of the trees in British Columbia. As the trees that we plant grow they actually clean up the environment that people tell us they're worried about.

They actually create better environment for wildlife, for the biodiversity that people are concerned about. That's what you do in your business and you shouldn't let people forget that's what you do in your business.

I told you a year ago when I came that we were going to be dedicating 1% of all stumpage to marketing, to product development, and to research and development to make sure that our message gets out to British Columbians, to Canadians, to our customers.

We have started to do that and one of the ways that we are going to have a chance to do that is if we are successful on July 2nd. On May 2nd of this year the International Olympic Committee will do an evaluation report on our proposal for a Winter Olympic Games in 2010.

On July 2nd they'll make their decision. Think of having the world come, think of having those thousands of media representatives coming and going into an expanded media centre and going into our skating rinks and Olympic Villages.

Think of what happens when we start marketing our wood to the world and they start seeing wood as an environmentally strong material. We are right now going to China. We are working with the Chinese Olympic Committee for 2008.

We're going to make a proposal to them where we use B.C. wood and B.C. engineered wood products to develop some of their sites for the Olympics. On July 2nd, if we're successful with the Olympics, it won't just be about giving our young people who are athlete's opportunities, it will be about building economic opportunities throughout this province.

It will be about building tourism opportunities, and if we're imaginative, innovative, focused, and committed it will be about building new opportunities for forest products around the world and in British Columbia.

These are all ways that we can build the kind of strength in forestry that we need – so that we recognize forestry not just for what it's done for us, but for what it will do for our province as we move forward.

I said to you last year when I came and spoke with you that I hoped that in a decade I'd be able to come to the ILA and talk about a new generation of forestry, a new generation of foresters, a new generation of opportunity.

I believe we are on track to do that. I don't pretend the road will be short or all smooth going. But if we work together, we can make a significant difference and achieve that goal. You have been very good at telling us some of the challenges that you face.

In talking with the industry, we've talked about the challenges of labour law. We've talked about the challenges of WCB. We've talked about the challenges that we face in transportation.

Today, here in Vernon I announced a \$22.5 million transportation project at the Swan Lake interchange. That's something that will certainly help people here in the Shuswap and the north Okanagan.

It's something that Tom Christensen has worked very hard on to make sure we committed to it. But it's just the beginning. It's the beginning of building a rural and resource road infrastructure that recognizes that people on the road and people in the industry need to be on a safe and secure transportation system.

We will invest over \$200 million over the next three years to improve our rural and resource road infrastructure. That should help people in your industry, and people who work with you and you with your company.

As we move our goods more efficiently, we add to our competitive advantage. There is literally layer upon layer of initiatives and objectives that we have to meet if we are going to fully realize the potential and the promise of forestry in British Columbia.

I wasn't here for the inaugural ILA meeting in 1958 and I'm pretty sure I won't be here for the last meeting of the ILA, but I know this: if you continue to come together, to offer positive solutions and to recommend what's best for your industry, we will successfully move forward to create opportunity for young people, opportunity for our province and a bright new future for forestry in British Columbia.

I need your help to do that and I'm going to work with you to do that. Our government will work with you to do that and I want to say thank you once again for the contributions that you have made to this great province and building this great industry. Thank you very much, I appreciate it.