

Premier Gordon Campbell
Opening Comments at Grand Opening of Mental Health Centre in Kamloops
April 4th, 2003

Check Against Delivery

One of the advantages of serving in government is the opportunity to work with people and see what they can do when they come together and commit themselves to a community, to a project, to making lives better for people all over British Columbia.

Your mayor has been introduced and his councillors are here with him today. Your council has been a strong advocate for improving the quality of health care across the province and I want to say thank you to them for the work that they've done in helping us move this project forward.

I also have to thank my colleagues, especially your elected representatives Kevin Krueger and Claude Richmond. Neither of them ever took his eye off this ball as we've moved it forward since 2001.

We understand in government how important it is that we have a comprehensive, provincewide strategy to try and provide the support and the care that people with mental illness need.

It's important for all of us to recognize that mental illness touches us across the province in every walk of life, in every community. It's important for us to provide facilities, professional care and professional help and support for people with mental illness just as we're expected to do with physical illnesses.

I'm very proud of the work that Dr. Gulzar Cheema has done as our Minister of State for Mental Health in not just laying out a program to advance and improve the quality of facilities and care that's available, but in also teaching those of us in government and across British Columbia about the ways we can work together to improve the quality of life for everyone in this province. So I want to say thank you to Dr. Cheema for his commitment.

I often meet with young people and students and they ask, "How do you get things done?" Your community is a good example of how you get things done.

You decide to do something because it's important for the people who live in the community. You give your time, your effort and your energy to think about how you can put together a positive project, and then you don't give up until it's done. To all of you, I say congratulations for that.

For eight years we have talked about improving the quality of psychiatric care and providing psyche facilities here in the community of Kamloops. I know there was great disappointment when it seemed to take longer and longer and longer, but I am proud to

say today we've made an important start as we open two brand new state-of-the-art community-based care facilities.

There is a 44-bed acute care facility that will be started in September of this year at Royal Inland Hospital. It will be integrated into the hospital there as well, which will help provide the kind of facilities that we need to provide the care needed by people with mental illness.

These buildings and all that they represent really represent the work of people. We will know that they have worked when not just the community but also the clients who use these facilities are leading healthier, more secure lives in the places that they call home.

We know from all of the studies that the closer people are to their families and to their communities the healthier their situation is and the more quickly they can be integrated back into the broader community.

These buildings represent the work of dozens of workers, architects, designers, and trades people. When you have the opportunity to go through these buildings, you will see the work has been done with care – for the project and for the people that will live in it.

I know the health care professionals that work here will provide their clients with love and support so they have the secure environment they need to help them return to their communities.

These are the goals that we have set for ourselves as a province and you should take pride in the work that you have done as community leaders, as professionals and as clients who have shared your ideas and your thoughts on how to make these facilities work more appropriately. I am pleased to be here on behalf of the Province of British Columbia to say thank you to all of you for the commitment you have made. You are showing leadership that will affect hundreds of people's lives over the years ahead.

We are going to do a special brick laying ceremony today, and there are some beautiful, colourful bricks that represent people's feelings. My brick is not as colourful, and all it says is the Province of British Columbia – but it's important. Because we should remember that the Province of British Columbia is made up of people – 4.2 million people who are willing to work with one another to improve the lives of themselves, their neighbours, the people that live down the street and their children.

This is a project that symbolizes that spirit. It symbolizes the best that our province has to offer and, on behalf of your province and the government, I want to say thank you very much for making this dream a reality.