

**Funding for the new Northern Sport Centre
University of Northern B.C., Prince George**

**Premier Gordon Campbell
April 14, 2005**

Check Against Delivery

I want to say how pleased I am to be here not just with all of you, but with all the folks on the stage, because I have visited the north for a long time now and one of the things that's great about the north is the leadership that you have here. I want to start by talking about Colin Kinsley, a mayor who never forgets how important his city is, not just to this immediate region, but to the entire region of the north. It's really great to work with your mayor.

I can tell you the first time I met with Bill Lynch he said to me you've got to let us do some of the things we want to do in the north. You've got to let the north come up with northern solutions that work for northern people. He's always been a strong advocate, and I want to say thanks to Bill.

Charles Jago spends all of his time trying to make the city of Prince George even stronger and the University of Northern British Columbia even stronger by making sure all of the benefits of learning and research stretch out across the entire province and are shared with the rest of the country. This is a man who has not just been a leader, but an emissary and an advocate. His enthusiasm and his dedication are an example for all of us. So, Charles, thank you very much for all you do as well.

And I want to talk about my deputy premier, Shirley Bond. I've given her two of the biggest jobs in government: leading the largest expansion of Advanced Education in the history of the province in the last 40 years so that the benefits of education are reaching out across the province. Access to education is expanding for young people and old alike.

For people who want a life of learning, we want that learning to take place in the Peace River country, in the northwest, right here in Prince George at the great University of Northern British Columbia and at the College of New Caledonia. We want it taking place at the new university in Kamloops and at the new university in Kelowna.

Shirley has been a strong provincial leader and is recognized on the national stage for the commitment she's made. She's also making her mark in health care as we move ahead to improve the quality of health care. So I want to say thanks to Shirley for the work that she's done.

Pat Bell is man who is passionate about our resource industries, about what they can do and where they can go. His work in mining speaks for itself. We have quadrupled the amount of exploration that's taken place. Mines are opening in British Columbia. From Tumbler Ridge to Williams Lake, people and mining families are benefiting from pay

cheques they can depend on. They can look to the future again. That's because Pat is a man who focuses on the goals ahead and delivers on his commitments. I want to say thanks to Pat for the work he's done.

We're a team, here; all of us are a team. And we hope that British Columbia will act as a team.

I want to introduce some of the athletes who are here with us today: from Prince George Senior Secondary School, the senior volleyball team; UNBC Northern Timberwolves Women's team; UNBC Northern Timberwolves Men's team; UNBC Nordic ski team; the Whitney-Warren wheelchair curling team; Robert Hedges wheelchair basketball; speed skaters Ryan Hickman and Alexis Gaudet and Tim Hemsall and Sarah Pousette are all with us today. They are the generation that we are working with to try and make sure they have a better future in Prince George.

Northern people coming up with northern solutions to meet northern challenges and take advantage of northern opportunities: that's what has really been a critical part of what's taking place. And really, the focus for a lot of that, the leadership for a lot of that comes from the City of Prince George.

Today I want to make two announcements.

We set a goal for ourselves in British Columbia: we want to be the healthiest, fittest jurisdiction ever to host an Olympic Games, and we want to be the healthiest and fittest jurisdiction in the world by the end of the next ten years. To do that, we're going to have to invest and we're going to have to invest in ourselves. We are each going to have to make decisions that will allow us to accomplish those worthwhile goals.

We've launched a program called Act Now B.C. that asks us as individuals to act responsibly to help us meet our health challenges in the future. So I want to start this morning with two numbers. I know you've all been waiting, but I think it's important to get these two numbers out. Five: say that. And 30.

Five.

That's not a very loud five. Let's try this again. Five.

And 30. All right.

So what's five? Five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. How many of you had your fruit or vegetable this morning?

What's 30? It's 30 minutes of physical activity every day. You don't have to be an elite athlete like these people who are on the stage with us, just physical active.

All of you front-row people, stand up. Put your arms above your head. Wave your arms. Okay, you can even wave your sign, that's right. Wave your arms. Okay, that's a little bit of physical activity. Let's do a little more in the rest of the day.

Physical activity makes a difference in terms of the many preventable challenges we face. We know that cancer is one of the ones that we face here in the north. We face it across the province. We have the best cancer treatment of any place in the country, in British Columbia. But we know we're not doing as well as we can in the north. We want to do something that starts to directly meet that and talk with northern people to make sure we do it properly.

So today I can tell you that your UNBC president, Charles Jago, and the Northern Health Authority chair, Jeff Burkhardt, will lead a comprehensive consultation process about access to cancer care in the north. That will be funded with a \$300,000 commitment that will include treatment options such as radiotherapy, early diagnosis and screening preferences. A million dollars will go to research and development for a research program right here at the University of Northern British Columbia.

Led by Dr. Jago and by Jeff Burkhardt, we know that we will get the answers we need as to how we can provide for all of the therapies that are required in rural and remote communities. And that won't just be for northern British Columbia. We're going to look beyond our borders. We're going to talk with the folks in other jurisdictions and we're going to share the knowledge so we can make sure that we improve the quality of care for families and people in the north.

Hopefully, we'll raise the standards of success in making sure that people survive their cancers. I want to thank Dr. Jago for taking that task on for all of us.

Now I want to talk about a meeting that I had with Dr. Jago and Bill Lynch and your mayor and Shirley Bond and Pat Bell. It was a couple of years ago when we were talking about the potential for the 2010 Olympics and Paralympic Games. I remember one of my friends in Prince George said: We never get anything out of those activities when they're taking place in Vancouver.

The Olympic spirit has been captured by Prince George. From the start, Prince George said: We will use the Olympics to strive to be our best, to reach higher and to make sure that we take full advantage of those Games.

They came forward with an idea. The idea was that the University of Northern British Columbia should be a place not just for research, not just for learning, not just for the development of the mind, but for the development of our bodies. It should be a place where athletes from across the north could be the best that they could possibly be.

So today I am pleased to announce that the province will be contributing \$20 million to the new Northern Sport Centre, right here at the University of Northern British Columbia.

That is just the start. It's the start of building the kind of culture of sport and physical fitness that we want to have in the province.

It's going to be a high performance-training centre with a multi-court gymnasium and with seating for 2,000 spectators. There's going to be a field house and an indoor track, an outdoor sports field, and a vast network of cross-country trails.

That's so that athletes like Bo Hedges of Fort St. John no longer have to practice wheelchair basketball in a converted squash court, or Dennis Proctor, a two-time gold medal winner in speed-walking, can practice his sport year round, right here. So Barb Sharp, who carried Canada's flag at the World University Games in 2003, can continue to excel in the biathlon. By 2008 the facility will give athletes like these the opportunities to be the best that they can possibly be.

But it's more than that. It's more than saying to elite athletes that we have the coaches and we want to provide you with the support that you need. It's also saying to all of the students at UNBC: this is a place where you can build not just your mind, but a healthier body, where you can expand and fulfill all of your dreams.

Our goal is to make sure that 20 per cent more British Columbians are physically fit within the next ten years. We can do that. You can lead that here. You can lead that in the north.

No longer will elite athletes have to leave the north and go elsewhere to excel. They can stay in the north, they can live in the north, they can build the north, and they will be an example for the north. And that's what's critical for everybody here.

It has been said that great cities need great universities. This is a great city, and you've got a great university.

Thank you very much.