

Premier Gordon Campbell
ICORD Announcement at University of British Columbia
November 4, 2002

Check Against Delivery

Research is a critical component of building a new economy for British Columbia and enhancing the quality of life for British Columbians and for citizens of the world. Often it's research that will provide us with competitive advantages in our traditional industries.

I want to start today by offering my congratulations and my thanks to four leaders.

Rick Hansen did his Man in Motion Tour many years ago now, but he never lost sight of the dream of making sure that those who have spinal cord injuries could fully recover.

We know how difficult that is; we know that's a long road. But we also know that when Rick started to go around the world, people said he would never finish. I have confidence that we are going to finish in finding a cure for spinal cord injuries.

Dr. Martha Piper, president of the University of British Columbia, has probably been British Columbia's leading advocate for research in all fields.

Martha doesn't have a discussion - or a meal, or even a pop - with you without mentioning the word research at least six or seven times. The leadership she has shown in British Columbia has paid off enormous dividends to our scientists and to the people who live here.

Dr. John Steeves is British Columbia's first B.C. Leadership Chair in Spinal Cord Research. He has shown the leadership and the commitment to gather together a critical mass of scientists. The announcement we are making today will help Dr. Steeves and his colleagues reach their objectives.

Minister Shirley Bond understood the importance of research when she was given the task of taking on the Ministry of Advanced Education. She's had wrestling matches within government to ensure we secured the resources necessary for us to take the first steps to establish British Columbia as a research and scientific leader.

Investing in research is investing in our future. Today I'm pleased to announce the Province of British Columbia will commit \$65 million to new research projects throughout the province.

Forty-six million of those dollars will go to 38 separate research projects at the University of British Columbia. We want to establish our advanced education institutions as leading research entities - not just in Canada, but around the world.

That's why we made the commitment to the Leading Edge Endowment Fund - \$45 million to give our researchers, our scientists and our students the support they need to carry out research that is global in quality and recognized for the leading role it plays.

Today the largest single part of that \$65 million is the ICORD Centre. ICORD stands for International Collaboration On Repair Discoveries.

We are contributing \$12.9 million today for its activities. That \$12.9 million will bring together 300 researchers, academics and clinicians to integrate their work and provide the international scope and critical mass that's necessary to be successful.

In the last 10 years, we have learned more about spinal cord injuries and how to deal with them than we had in the previous history of humanity. In spite of that, there are 3,000 people in British Columbia today who suffer from spinal cord injuries, and 200 people are added to that list every single year.

Because of the leadership Rick has shown to us through his Man in Motion - first the tour, and then his foundation - British Columbia is now recognized as a leader in spinal cord research.

Because of the excellence of Dr. John Steeves and his team at ICORD, we are recognized around the world. Already, we are finding there is new hope for a cure for long-term paralysis because of the work that has been done by ICORD researchers at UBC.

In fact, a study released last May showed us that brain cells that communicate with the spinal cord and were previously thought to be dead after a spinal cord injury could regenerate for as long as a year after the injury occurred.

These are the kinds of discoveries that will light our path to a successful resolution of the task that Rick Hansen and so many others have set for us - to have the tools, the science, the knowledge, and the clinical and rehabilitative practices to give someone with a spinal cord injury full mobility again.

This is the first of its kind in Canada. The ICORD Centre is going to be something every British Columbian can be proud of. British Columbians today - not the government: British Columbians, you - are contributing to a solution.

These are your dollars we are bringing together with dollars from Rick Hansen's Man in Motion Foundation, the University of British Columbia and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to make sure we succeed.

On behalf of all of the people of British Columbia, I want to say thank you to those who have envisioned this project and are going to carry it to a successful conclusion. Thank you very much.