

Premier Gordon Campbell
Address to the Burnaby Board of Trade
May 22, 2003

Check Against Delivery

There is a growing understanding in your community of what a strong and vibrant future Burnaby has.

You are the centre of a technology industry in this province that is starting to thrive and gain recognition, attracting people from other parts of the country and the world.

You have two great institutions of learning, BCIT and Simon Fraser University.

If we do the right thing, nurture them and build on the research that they offer, and we reinforce the successful businesses here, Burnaby will continue to be an exemplary community with a broadly based economy that is second to none.

One of our government's challenges is to try to build the framework you need to pursue your goals and objectives. The leadership you show – through the chamber, non-profit organizations and your great learning and health institutions – is critical.

We want you to use your imagination and build on your innovative capacity, because we know when you come up with a great idea in Burnaby, we can copy it in other communities for the benefit of all British Columbians.

We want to reinforce exceptional ideas that are taking hold and see them move the province forward. But we can't make necessary changes and take advantage of opportunities if we don't face the fact that the world is changing faster than many of us recognize.

Our government must respond with a flexible framework that encourages creativity, investment and risk taking; without that, we can't make the kind of progress we want to make.

Imagine what Burnaby would be like if you didn't have an organization like Electronic Arts – one of the largest entertainment software developers in the world.

When Don Matricks comes and talks to you, you should ask him how much help he got when he started out as a student from Simon Fraser who said, "Here's something that I might be able to do."

One of the challenges they faced was losing some of their most talented and creative people to other jurisdictions that seemed to be more attractive to them.

When we started as a government, the first thing we said is, let's recognize that the most critical natural resource we have in this province is the people who live here. Their imaginations, hard work and creativity can build the kind of future we want to have.

When we cut personal income taxes, we had a number of good reasons for doing so. The most important was to say to people, if you work hard in this province, you can get ahead and you can do better.

After 23 months in office, we leave about \$900 million more in people's pockets. Their paycheques are growing and their take-home pay is growing.

That investment has started to pay off in the broader economy. B.C. had the fastest growth in retail sales among the provinces in the first quarter of this year. We had the fastest growing wholesale sales. We watched as our trade went up 11.3 per cent.

Energy exports were up 78 per cent, mineral exports, 39 per cent and pulp, 12 per cent. When people across the province were asked what their investment intentions were for the next year, British Columbia ranked second in the country.

That's a lot better than tenth – but it's not as good as first. This government is committed to making British Columbia the number 1 investment destination in our country, because that creates jobs, opportunities and the resources we need to provide exceptional public services.

We're committed to doing that. We are going to do that.

We've faced a number of interesting challenges since June 2001. None of us could have anticipated 9/11, the war with Iraq or SARS.

None of us could have anticipated what took place this week with regard to mad cow in Canada. You can't plan for these things – but you can build an economic base that allows you to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves and respond to difficult challenges when they arise.

British Columbia, the only province in the country with disease control, was exemplary in its response to SARS.

We sequenced the genome for SARS. That gives us a chance to do something for the world. We've already committed to try and find the vaccine for SARS in about one-half the time that we normally would.

Instead of making that a competition where we're trying to keep other people out of our ideas, we're making it a collaboration, bringing in the National Research Lab in Manitoba.

We're looking at the excellent work they're doing in Saskatchewan. We're saying to Ontario and Quebec, join us in this, let's find out with the private sector how we can collaborate.

Think of the advantages for us in British Columbia if we actually develop a new software that allows us to find vaccines more rapidly. The savings for the economy would be enormous.

The potential for health protection is massive, and the contribution to the world will be incredible for all of us. That can happen right here if we seize the opportunity and run with it, with commitment and focus. That's what we intend to do in British Columbia.

It's time for this province to lead, and that's what we're going to do – in research, technology and a whole range of activities. Much of that will come from small business, medium-sized businesses and large businesses right here in Burnaby.

Some is the spin off of Simon Fraser University or the University of Alberta; some is simply the spin off of the imaginations and research talents of the people that live here.

As we use our imagination and determination to make British Columbia succeed, we must also face the fact that not everything will necessarily fall into place the way we'd like.

In some cases, the facts are pretty difficult for us.

I'm at the leading edge of the baby boom. We're now the aging boom.

We forget about the impact that we've had on the society that we've lived in. We've taken a lot for granted.

A lot of investment – in educational institutions, transportation infrastructure and community infrastructure – occurred before my generation got into the economy. To be candid, my generation has basically consumed most of that investment.

As we look to the future, we're going to have to find ways for our generation to give back to the next generation.

Take a moment and look at the person across the table from you. Are they looking any younger than they did last year?

That's a critical question, because our society is aging. Society's aging is greatly impacting the two most critical public services we provide, health care and education.

Marshall McLuhan used to say that we all look at life through a rear-view mirror. Our rear-view mirror tends to be about a generation old, and the challenge for us is to flip it

forward so we can start thinking about the next generation and what we're going to leave it.

Let me give you a couple of examples. In health care, we all want to have a system that works. For years, we've known what we had to do, but avoided it because it's tough.

The Seaton Royal Commission came forward with a report in 1991. It told us we need to provide for a continuum of care for seniors. It told us we need to start thinking about people with mental illness because mental illness is everywhere and has a major impact on our acute-care system if we don't respond to it progressively and positively up front.

We can't hide it in the closet and hope it will go away; it's not going away. Each of us will have had someone in their workplace who's suffering with a mental illness.

When I first ran for provincial office, about 33 cents of every provincial tax dollar went to health care. Today, it's 41 cents of every dollar. In less than 10 years.

We know it's growing at six to seven per cent a year. We know our pharmaceutical costs are growing at 14 to 15 per cent a year, and you don't need an economics degree to see that's not sustainable.

The costs we're imposing on the system – because of aging, new technology, and not responding and preparing ourselves for the future – are significant. They also impact our opportunities to deal with the other things.

For kids from five to nine years old, the average cost of health care is \$800 a year. Go to the other end of the spectrum, 90 years and older, and the average cost of health care is \$20,800.

The fastest-growing age cohort in the province is 90 years and older.

I want folks to get older – it beats the alternative. I want people to live longer, I want them to live healthier lives, I want to be able to provide them with more options for care.

I don't want to say, “We have a reduced number of care options, and if they don't work for you, too bad.” We want to try and respond positively and constructively, so the quality of their life and care is better.

If we're going to do that, we have to recognize that the demands that are put on the system are changing, and respond with new solutions.

That's what we're trying to do. We've reduced 41 per cent of administrative costs in our health-care system.

Every single cent of those administrative savings has gone to patient care. We've increased the health-care budget by \$1.7 billion in 24 months.

Part of what we're doing is focusing your resources on the things that you think are best for the province.

We're trying to get the federal government to focus resources on what we think they can best do, which will allow us to get out of other things and leave resources so we can use them properly.

If we are going to protect the future, another imperative is to invest in our young people. Over the last two years, we've invested \$900 million more in education.

We know that the best economic development program to be found is a good public education system, and the best preventative health-care program is a good public education system.

One part of our educational system is K-12. Between 2001 and 2006, we will have increased funding for school boards for students in the order of \$240 million – in spite of the fact the number of students in school is dropping.

Provincially, it's dropped 7,100; we're expecting a further drop of about 9,100. That doesn't mean that the decisions we have to make are easy at the local level.

Frankly, it means they're tough, because we have to think of how we can focus those resources on teachers and students and classrooms.

How do we make sure we provide an array of choices and opportunities for young people to learn in? How do we make sure that teachers have the array of opportunities that they need to teach in?

How do we make sure parents are part of the system and included as a critical component of any public education system. Every study that's been done proves beyond a doubt that parental involvement in children's education improves achievement.

We're trying to do that and encourage that in a way that's positive, constructive and provides choices for people.

As we try to respond to the generational challenges we face, we're trying to create an environment for business that encourages investment, recognizing that you build an economy from small to large.

You start with small business. Everyone should understand that British Columbia has more small businesses per capita than any other province. It is a major part of our economy.

We want to continue to build that, and the small businesses British Columbians are building are actually reinforcing our traditional industries. I was in a big sawmill in Smithers that has increased its productivity by 21 per cent.

Workers there have long-term, high-paying, stable jobs because a small business in Salmon Arm developed a software program that measured the moisture content of the fibre that was going through the mill. By measuring that properly, they've increased their productivity.

Another small business in Fort St. James had a program that was applied in its mill. They increased productivity substantially.

With the Olympics in 2002, small businesses in British Columbia took advantage of that opportunity to create a niche for themselves in the marketplace – and they've grown.

Kootenay Knitting Company makes great sweaters. They've almost quintupled the number of employees they have. Their small enterprise is no longer small.

Of every government that has a small-business strategy, I think the last government's strategy was, let's take big businesses and make them smaller.

Ours is the other way around. We recognize we have to create opportunities for people by getting government out of the way and creating a tax environment that allows them to succeed.

We increased the small-business tax threshold by 50 per cent, to \$300,000 from \$200,000. And as I mentioned, we've reduced taxes for individuals by over \$900 million and for businesses by \$400 million.

We've started to deal with B.C.'s huge regulatory burden. We've committed to eliminate one-third of all regulations on business over our first three years.

We're on track; we've eliminated 62,000 separate regulations so far. That's without losing sight of critical health-care and safety concerns.

Businesses understand that our most valuable asset is the people that work for them. They understand the power of individual commitment.

We live in a country that encourages that. In fact, it was the commitment of two individuals that started Burnaby's pursuit of the 2009 Games.

It's going to have a benefit for everybody. Seventy countries and 12,000 athletes are going to be here. And many communities besides Burnaby are going to benefit from that.

Our kids are going to benefit. Our police and our firefighters are going to benefit. It's a great opportunity and I want thank those who made it happen.

With regard to the 2010 Olympic bid, I was part of the team that was part of the Olympic Evaluation Committee Group that came and chatted with us.

The team decided they're committing this Olympics to the athletes, to sustainability, to First Nations. This 2010 Olympic and Paralympic bid is not just British Columbia's bid or Canada's bid. It's First Nations, it's Vancouver's, it's Whistler's, it's Burnaby's.

Burnaby is going to gain a \$70-million speed-skating oval if we're successful on July 2.

Beyond infrastructure benefits, though, the Olympics is our opportunity to remind the generation that follows us – and younger – what we can do in this province when we tap into people's individual commitment and strength.

Everyone who has stood on the Olympic podium worked hard – facing some self-doubt along the way, yet persevering.

As Catriona LeMay-Doan told us the other day, it's always worth it. It's worth it when you have support from your family, friends and communities, when people are working with one another and you get to actually stand on that podium.

On July 2, we have an exceptional opportunity for British Columbia. It's our opportunity to show Canada what we can do. It's our opportunity to put Canada's best foot forward, to celebrate our incredible diversity and strength.

It's our opportunity to say to young athletes, musicians and artists, come and show the world what you have to offer. It's our opportunity to remind ourselves what we can accomplish when we dig deep inside ourselves and strive to be the best we can.

On July 2, a decision will be made. I'm hopeful they will make the decision to host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in British Columbia. Equally important, I want us to take that spirit – of reaching higher, going faster and responding to individual initiative and strength.

In Burnaby, you've shown that by working together, you can realize your dreams for your community.

Let's pass that along to the next generation. Let's think about what we can give back.

If we do, we will have the province that's leading the country – and, more importantly, we will have made a contribution to the future that we can take pride in.