

Premier Gordon Campbell
Victoria Fire Fighters Union Flag Raising Ceremony
September 10, 2003

Check Against Delivery

Thank you very much. I want to thank Dave Stephenson and the Ottawa Professional Firefighters Association, as well as Rick Farrell from the Victoria Firefighters Union for helping bring us together today.

Tomorrow marks the second anniversary day of when 343 New York firefighters gave their lives in the line of duty at the World Trade Center.

There are 240 firefighters and their families in the Capital Region, and there are thousands more throughout British Columbia. They're men and women who are willing to protect us all in the most extraordinary circumstances.

Joseph Campbell once said: "A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself."

Two years ago in New York we were all reminded too vividly of the risks that our firefighters face - and that they accept without question.

It is important that we honour the loss, their memory and the actions of each of those firefighters and all of their brothers and sisters who worked side by side with them, and all of those who carry the honour of firefighting forward today.

But as important as it is that we honour those that we lost, it's equally important to celebrate the fact that their lives and the lives of firefighters are dedicated to saving the lives of the public, day in and day out.

That courage has been displayed in the province of British Columbia this year as we face the worst firefighting season on record. More than 7,600 men and women from across Canada have joined together to battle more than 2,200 wildfires in the province this summer. It includes forest service personnel, property protection personnel, members of the military and armed forces, and First Nations firefighters who have all come together and put themselves in harm's way to protect the public, to protect the people they serve.

They do that without asking for honour, without asking for recognition. They do it because of their personal commitment, and that commitment is an inspiration to all of us.

It's unfortunate, as we think back two years, about the loss of hundreds of firefighters in one single event.

In British Columbia over the last summer, unfortunately, we've lost Ian MacKay, Eric Ebert and Ben von Hardenberg as they, too, tried to protect the public.

In Kelowna, city firefighters there have saved ten times more homes than have been lost. Amidst the smoke and flame and heat you'll never hear them ask for praise. You will never hear them seek the honours they deserve. You will see them at work. You will see them protecting the public. You will see them doing what they are committed to do.

From New York City to B.C., the heroism of our firefighters is unfailing. While the rest of us are fleeing danger, firefighters are charging into it.

It's been said that courage is not the absence of fear but, rather, the judgment that something else is more important than fear.

On behalf of all of the people of British Columbia, we send out our heartfelt appreciation to all the firefighters' families in New York who have lost a loved one, to all of the firefighters across British Columbia and our country, that stand in harm's way to protect us.

By always being there, you are true heroes – our firefighters are there when we need them the most.

Again let me say thank you for your dedication and thank you for the inspiration you give us all.