



B.C. Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association

**Premier Gordon Campbell
December 2, 2004**

Check Against Delivery

It is great to look back and see what we've accomplished, because we have had a plan and that plan is starting to deliver some benefits.

I would be remiss if I didn't say to all of you that I wouldn't be able to stand here and talk about the successes we've had in the province if it wasn't for the caucus I serve with. One of the great rewards of the job is to be able to work and serve on behalf of British Columbians.

It is important to recognize how much time and effort and energy MLAs put into their jobs. It's equally important for you to know what your organization has done in terms of reaching out and explaining the challenges you face.

I appreciate the time and effort Jack Davidson puts in - not just to say here's a problem, but to say without question, here's a solution.

I am proud of what we've been able to accomplish in the last three and a half years in British Columbia - you were a major part of that.

Today I want to talk to you about what we want to do in British Columbia, about what B.C. means to Canada, and what our goals for B.C. will be in the years ahead.

Your association has been around since 1966. Let's think back for a minute and remember what our province was like when the Road Builders was established.

When you think of all the changes that have taken place since then, you start to understand why it is important that we think long term, that we think of what we want the province to be like in 2014, in 2024. If we don't think don't think long term, it's almost certain we won't get where we want to go.

Our political life has a four-year life span and that's not good enough for planning transportation. That's not good enough for planning the future of the province.

As you leave today I hope you'll be thinking about where you want British Columbia to be ten years from now - not two years from now, not one year from now, but ten years from now. It won't happen if we start thinking about it nine years from now, we have to start thinking about it now.

The first real road in this province was built from Fort Victoria to Esquimalt harbour in about 1850. Do you think any of those people imagined what British Columbia would be like today?

Phil Gaglardi and W.A.C. Bennett opened up the province 50 years ago. The roads that we take for granted today, that we somehow think were always here, weren't here 50 years ago. But there was a spirit then that we're capturing again in British Columbia that said: we can use transportation to open up our province, to open up opportunities, to take us where we want to go as a province.

The number of cars in British Columbia has increased more than ten-fold in the last 50 years. Fifty years ago there were a quarter of a million cars driving around the province. Today it's 2.6 million, and that's growing. In fact, the number of cars in the province is growing faster than the number of people in the province. And you wonder why there's congestion.

We have to think further ahead to figure out how we can continue to use our transportation system to move us around the province. Transportation is not just about economic development - it's about our quality of life, social development, and connecting people and regions. It's about connecting communities to opportunity.

Fifty years ago there were no paved roads north of 100 Mile House. Fifty years ago there was a gravel road through the Kicking Horse Canyon. Fifty years ago Highway 16 from Prince George to Prince Rupert was a track. It wasn't even a road let along a highway, and yet all of those roads and infrastructure have been critical in the development of British Columbians. These roads and connections have enabled community after community to reach their full potential.

The decisions we make today will have just as much positive impact as those decisions that were made 50 years ago.

Over the last three years we have worked hard. We have worked hard to earn the opportunity to plan what we want to do to build on the future of this province. I can tell you, British Columbia is back and we are on the move.

In the last couple of years we've seen some dramatic changes in our province. They're dramatic changes that have come as a result of people committing to the future of the province - people in your industry and in other industries, in small businesses all over the province, saying: let's pick up our dreams again and let's pursue them. Let's not look at what the barriers are; let's look at how we get over them. Let's look at how we can take the course we want to, to accomplish the goals that we have for ourselves.

And what's happened? Four years ago British Columbia had the worst economic record in the country. Today we have the number one or number two best economy in the country in terms of economic growth. That is progress. Even number two is progress. But I want you to know this, we're not resting until we're number one in Canada.

We are number one in job creation - almost 180,000 new full-time jobs - new trade union jobs, as well as non-union jobs. New jobs are opening up in the energy industry, and they wouldn't have nearly as many if we hadn't invested in transportation infrastructure.

New jobs are opening in forestry. New jobs are opening up in mining. Listen to that - new jobs are opening up in mining in British Columbia, trade-union jobs. People are supporting their families and their communities, because I can tell you this: without a job, people aren't very confident about the future; with a job, they're willing to work with us to build a future.

We have made progress, but we have not reached our destination. We've seen a 10 percent increase in export growth, a 12 percent increase in manufacturing shipments, and a 30 percent increase in housing growth.

Those are numbers we should take some confidence in, and we should know we're going in the right direction. But they should encourage us to do more. They shouldn't encourage us to sit back. They should encourage us to dream bigger, not to reduce the agenda for excitement we have in this province.

Think of this - trade from British Columbia to China through the Port of Vancouver was up 56 percent over the last year. Lumber exports have been up 46 percent. Sulphur exports are up 63 percent.

It is expected that border crossings between Canada and the United States are going to double by 2020. That transportation demand is going to continue to increase.

The fastest growing middle class in the world is in India. The second fastest growing middle class in the world is in China. They want our resources, and we want to deliver them. To deliver our resources we need a transportation system that is capable of getting our products to their markets, and their products to our markets. I can tell you this: British Columbia is up to the challenge, and I know the Road Builders are up to the challenge as well.

Here's what I think one of our biggest hurdles will be as we look out over the next ten years. We have to think bigger. We have to think of all the investment it will take to reach the full advantage of our opportunities - opportunities not just for us, not for our government, not necessarily for you and your companies, but for the province and for the country.

British Columbia has a very important role to play in Canada. We are the only Pacific province in Canada.

I'll tell you a quick story. The first time I was elected mayor, I went to a meeting. There were two mayors, big city mayors. One was the mayor of Edmonton; his name was Laurence Decore. The other was a mayor of Calgary; his name was Ralph Klein. They sat at the meeting, and they said: "You know, we're really proud to be Pacific Rim cities." I looked, and I said: "You know, you guys are not on the Pacific Rim. There's a mountain range called the Rockies between you and the Pacific Rim." The country depends on us getting their goods to world.

I remember when Ralph Klein, who at that point was the Premier of Alberta, came to British Columbia, and he met with me and he said: you know, one of the problems you have in B.C. is people don't see what the potential is here. You should be opening up the port of Prince Rupert.

I'll predict in 20 years the Port of Prince Rupert will be a major transportation interchange for the entire continent.

I was talking to an investor the other day. He was looking at investing enormous amounts of money in British Columbia. He's looking at investing it in Prince Rupert in the port. We're already investing \$30 million in expanding its container facilities. But he said to me, and he said this pretty directly: you've got to think bigger. We're talking about 20 million TEUs, not 2 million TEUs.

That's a big change for us. And it is important for us to take a moment to think what we would like to see happen in ten years, in 20 years.

We're going to have major centres in this province, major centres that are recognized for their cultural diversity, for their economic opportunity. If we don't connect those centres, if we don't have goods moving smoothly back and forth between those centres, if we can't connect people to one another in the places they want to go, we will actually hold our economy back. So what we want to do is expand those opportunities and look to the future.

The Pitt River Bridge has 52,000 vehicles crossing it every day. Those vehicles wait around and wait around, and they pour pollution into the air and wait around some more. They're holding up the movement of goods. They're holding up the movement of people. We can't simply say that's good enough. We have to find ways that we can make sure that traffic is moving.

Those who argue you can't invest in transportation because you'll never build your way out of the problem have got to understand this: it's not just building, it's

designing communities that work.

We're going to have a major city in Surrey. Within the next ten years it'll be the largest city in the Lower Mainland. It's going to have a university there; it's going to have economic activity there. It's got J.P. Morgan there, with 800 employees. It is a place that people outside of British Columbia are recognizing.

So what do we have to do with the Port Mann Bridge? We have to double it. It's not a question of choice; it's something we have to do if we're going to move people and move the economy of British Columbia.

It's not just the Port Mann Bridge. We said to you a couple of years ago that we were going to invest in the Okanagan. One of the fastest growing economic regions in the province is the Okanagan.

With Rick Thorpe and Kevin Falcon we just opened up the \$14.6 million Highway 97 four laning near Peachland.

Here's what's important - we announced we were going to do it, we went out and did the tendering on it, we got the tendering, and the project was delivered on time. The project was delivered under budget - on time and under budget, a million dollars under budget. Two weeks ago the Swan Lake Interchange, a \$22-million project, came in \$500,000 under budget.

On behalf of my colleagues let me say to those contractors, and let me say to you, we like under budget. Under budget works for all of us, and it works for taxpayers too, because what it does is it encourage us to go out and do that some more.

We've changed the way we do business in British Columbia. We actually know what we're tendering. We ask people to give us their best bid, we have competitive tendering, and we expect you to deliver.

Yesterday TransLink announced that they support the \$1.7 billion RAV project. That project could not have happened if the federal government hadn't come to British Columbia and said: we will do something completely different. That federal contribution of \$450 million makes that project work, particularly when you combine it with the private sector contribution of \$300 million from the airport.

\$450 million, \$300 million. Do you want me to take a breath now? Everyone take a breath. That's three quarters of a billion dollars. That's a lot of money that we brought into a partnership to make the transportation and environmental infrastructure in the Lower Mainland work better. This is the first time we've had that kind of a public-private partnership. It's one of the largest public-private partnerships we've had in Canada, and British Columbia has been leading the way.

Is it easy to get here? No. Is it worth the effort? Yes, because RAV is going to take literally hundreds of thousands of pounds of pollutant out of the air.

The North Fraser perimeter road is a major project. We can't do it by ourselves. We'll need the federal government to help us. And we have to take the message to the federal government about why it's so important we have good infrastructure in British Columbia.

When I talk about expanding the port of Prince Rupert we can't do it by ourselves. We need to take the message to the federal government and say, "Join us," as we improve the quality of the economy for Canada.

When I talk about the North Fraser interchange, the Pitt River Bridge, the Port Mann Bridge, we can't do it by all by ourselves. But remember this. There is only one taxpayer. So all we're saying to the federal government is let us help Canada reach its objectives. Let us help Canada's economy grow. Let us help generate more jobs in transportation and all those jobs that are connected to transportation infrastructure in B.C. and Canada. Let us take some of that \$800 million we send to you in gas tax and use that to generate more economic growth. I need your help.

We know transportation demands in our province are going to increase. We know we have to plan for them, and we know we have to have the resources and expertise to make sure we reach those objectives. I know we can accomplish our goals when we work together. We can accomplish things when we are willing to think about where we want to be, not where we've been, but where we're going. Not what we've had, but what we can give to the next generation of British Columbians.

In the next 20 years we know there's going to be 250 percent increase in container traffic, and we know this: if we don't meet the needs of those customers, if we can't tell them we're working to meet their needs, they're moving. They won't wait. They need to see our vision. They need to hear our vision for British Columbia.

So I need your help. I need you to take that message out. I need you to talk to every federal MP about British Columbia, and what British Columbia and Canada can do to pull our country into the twenty-first century. Talk about our assets. Talk about how we can invest in Canada's future as we build a stronger province. Look ahead and imagine a great city of Surrey and a great city in Chilliwack. Imagine the great transportation, industrial and educational interchange in Prince George. Imagine an enormous port in Prince Rupert providing people with jobs and opportunities and economic growth. Imagine how we're taking our airports and connecting people and passengers and cargo to our airports - whether it's in Vancouver or Cranbrook or Terrace or Prince George, Kamloops. Imagine those things.

Don't dream small; think big. We can lay out the road ahead of us. We can move forward as a province. We can lead the country. But we can only do it when we work together.

British Columbia is on the verge of true opportunity. We are Canada's gateway to the Pacific. We are our citizens' window to opportunity. This is Canada's future, and the B.C. Road Builders are going to help us build it.

Thank you.



Top