

Premier Gordon Campbell
New Westminster Chamber of Commerce Luncheon
June 29, 2004

Check Against Delivery

Thank you very much. It's great to be here in New Westminster. I spent some of my youth in New Westminster courting my wife Nancy who lived up the hill.

One of the things that is so great in New Westminster today is it's starting to get a true sense of itself. I'm very please to be in your city, and thank you to His Worship Wayne Wright for giving me the passport to get in.

Joyce Murray and I were talking earlier about what we could do to re-open the province and give people that sense of excitement that was British Columbia. I said the way for that to happen is for people to decide they're going to stand for what they believe, run for office and get elected. They will be able to serve their community by capturing its spirit, and in doing that, serve the province.

In New Westminster you elected a great MLA in Joyce Murray, and I want to say thank you for doing that. She has never forgotten that she is from New Westminster.

She set an example for her colleagues in caucus by developing the festival of volunteers, an exceptional event with a community focus. Whether it's leading our bid for 2010, or capturing the spirit of vision and excellence that is represented by 2010, Joyce has done a great job.

Joyce is a courageous cabinet minister. She always expresses herself clearly and unequivocally. She is exactly the kind of MLA we want to make sure we not only elected in 2001, but that we keep on electing, in 2005, 2009, 2013. Joyce thank you very much for all that you do for us.

I do know the Chamber understands this completely - that there is nothing that can be accomplished by any group without a team commitment. So I am pleased that we have a number of MLAs here today.

John Nuraney is here from Burnaby-Willingdon. Richard Lee is here from Burnaby North. Harry Bloy is here from Burquitlam. Richard Stewart is here from Maillardville. Christy Clark is here from Port Moody-Westwood and as you know Christy is the Minister of Children and Families and previously was Minister of Education.

These people have provided exceptional service. We've gone through challenging times over the last three years. Without the work of these MLAs we wouldn't have had nearly the successes that we've enjoyed here British Columbia. So I want to say thank you to all of you for the work that you've done and the time that you've put in.

Anyone who serves in elected office needs to have the support of their family. I know Dirk has been a great support for Joyce and I want to say thank you for that because I know what a sacrifice it is for you too. Thank you to all of the families of the MLAs here today.

This is a city of firsts. New Westminster was B.C.'s first capital, and the first city incorporated west of Ontario. Only in the last fifteen or twenty years have people started to recapture the vision of New Westminster as a city of firsts.

I've travelled all over the province in the last three or four months and it has been very encouraging to see the new spirit of optimism that is moving throughout British Columbia.

Whether you're living in Prince Rupert with its port and all its possibilities; or Kamloops, the city of tournaments, and all the activity taking place there with the new university; or Kelowna, with their exceptional, world recognized wine and technology centre, we're starting to see some real activity take place in this province, which is going to bode well for everyone who lives here.

For the first time in seven years the majority of British Columbians, 58 per cent, say they feel good about B.C.'s economy. That's a step in the right direction - we are creating an environment where people are excited about their future again. It's because of that enthusiasm and drive that we're feeling the momentum of the province shifting.

B.C. is number one in job creation in Canada. We're first in housing starts, and first in business confidence in this province. Here in New Westminster, building permits doubled last year. That's the highest level you've had since 1993. The building boom has already created about 500 new jobs in New Westminster.

Business incorporations are up 20 per cent. That's the highest in a decade and double the provincial average. That is an opportunity for growth the Chamber of Commerce has driven, and I hope you're going to take advantage of it.

When we went to work a little over three years ago we knew there were certain things that had to be done. We had a situation that many of you may have faced in your businesses in the 1990s, where you had to ask what were the essentials. There may have been things you would have liked to do, but simply weren't able to afford.

We had a lot to lose if we didn't get our economic house in order. Through the 1990s, we went from the best economy in the country to the worst. As I travelled through the province in the '90s you could feel the sense of opportunity that was British Columbia slowing ebbing away.

We undertook a major program. We had a plan that we put in place just like you have to put in place a plan in your business or in your home. Why did we decide to get our

economic house in order? For the same reason that any family decides to get their economic house in order.

Imagine this, Nancy and Gordon Campbell go to buy their first house in 1974. We went to the bank and we asked for a mortgage for our house. They approved us and wished us good luck. Imagine if over twenty of the next twenty-five years we went back to the bank and we said: excuse me we need more money for our mortgage.

The first year Nancy goes in they would say: well we can give you a little more for your mortgage but you had better start getting your costs under control. Next year they say: well Gord maybe a little bit more for your mortgage, but you better start getting your costs under control.

How many of you think we would still own our house, if twenty out of twenty-five years we went back to the bank and asked for more mortgage money? We should all know that's exactly what we did as a society in British Columbia. Twenty of the twenty-five years before we were elected the province actually went back and said they wanted to build-up BC's mortgage.

My son Nicholas just graduated from university so he's the next generation of Campbells. When I graduated from university the total public debt was \$2.84 billion. When Nicholas Campbell graduated from university the total public debt was \$40 billion.

Have you noticed that throughout our generation we didn't invest as much as we should have in infrastructure for health care. We didn't invest as much as we should have in education or transportation. Our generation took a lot and we felt it was time for us to give it back. It was time for us to try to give the next generation a better life and more opportunity, and in fact a province in better shape than the one we inherited.

I'm proud of the progress we have made in the last three years. There is work to be done, but we've been committed to a plan and it's starting to pay off. It's paying off in jobs and opportunities.

It's paying off in us generating a surplus. It's the first time in a long while that B.C. has had a surplus. Surpluses are good because they enable us to choose where we want invest.

I'll tell you where we're going to invest first: education. We've creating 25,000 new post secondary spaces in British Columbia so we can give our kids the opportunities they deserve. As we invest we want to make sure we're investing throughout B.C., and we are. We're investing in postsecondary institutions in Kamloops, the Northeast, the Northwest and the Kootenays. We're investing in the Okanagan, and we're investing in New Westminster, Coquitlam and across the Lower Mainland as well.

I am proud to tell you today that the province will be adding 1,500 new student spaces at Douglas College by 2010.

I am pleased to have Susan Whitter, President of Douglas College, with us here today. You should understand that without the leadership, vision and dedication of people like Susan, the full benefit of the 1,500 spaces wouldn't be possible. I want to thank Susan for all she does.

Douglas College is a great institution that generates tremendous benefit in its community. It generates about \$140 million a year into the regional economy and its self-employment program helped create 1,700 new businesses alone.

Everyone talks about entrepreneurship - they talk about encouraging people to take risks. Douglas College has a program in place that gives people the confidence to step out and take that risk and gives them the resilience when things don't go exactly as planned.

That's an enormous contribution to our communities. With a 21 per cent increase in student spaces for programs at Douglas campuses in New West and Coquitlam, these spaces are going to help throughout the region.

They're going to help in business development, they're going to help in hotel and restaurant management. They'll help with the associate degree programs like Environmental Science and International Studies.

Thirty spaces are going to be dedicated to the Community Mental Health worker program, a critical issue that we have to deal with as a province as we move into the future.

There are other plans, like a new Bachelor of Nursing degree out of Douglas College. All of those programs are going to be critical and, together with the \$5.3-million Learning and Technology Centre being completed at Douglas, it means new opportunities for New West, Coquitlam and Maple Ridge.

That's an exciting thing for an awful lot of young people who are looking to us to create those opportunities for them.

Today we provided the final report of last year's budget. If we hadn't had the worst fires in the history of the province and lost \$800 million in transfer payments, we would have actually balanced the budget last year.

The reason that balance is important is in government you have to remember that you're never spending your money. I would like the Chamber of Commerce to remember that and take that message out.

There is no such thing as government money. There is no such a thing as federal money and provincial money and regional money and local money. It is all your money. It all comes out of your pocket.

There are people who say that tax cuts don't work. First of all, they're wrong. And second of all we should think about what that means. When they say that, what they mean is they should take more out of your pocket.

My dad died when I was 13, we had four kids in our family. My mom was a school secretary. I don't ever remember her getting to her paycheque at the end of the month and saying to herself: gosh, I just have too much money to spend on my kids.

I don't know how many people in this room feel that way, but I know there are not many British Columbians that feel that way. There aren't many people who look at their paycheque and say to themselves: if I could just send more money to the government I would feel a lot better about things.

Does anyone in this room feel that way? Our first responsibility when we talk about balancing the budget is to make sure that we're spending them where you want those resources spent.

So we have invested literally hundreds of millions in health care and we are going to invest hundreds of millions more in education. We've invested an additional \$250 million in education in the last three years and we're going to invest even more in the years ahead.

We believe that education is the most effective preventative health care program discovered, and that education is the most effective economic development program.

If we invest in our kids and we invest in education and we invest in learning we are actually investing in a future that you can all imagine, pursue and succeed in.

That's what we intend to try and accomplish on your behalf. We have a vision, and the vision requires a solid foundation. The solid foundation first needs to be financial. It's then built on an infrastructure foundation.

As you can see we're improving the Queensborough Bridge, that's a \$59-million federal/provincial infrastructure project. There's the new Howe Street interchange that's going ahead. We've also provided \$6 million for federal/provincial funding for the wastewater storage and pumping station at Keyside Drive. Two million dollars were announced in April for the Fraser Discovery Centre.

The Fraser Discovery Centre can be a huge competitive advantage for you here. The Fraser Discovery Centre is critical because the Fraser River is a defining piece of geography for British Columbia.

The more we can explain to people what's taking place with that river - the more we can show how it has built our economic future, as well as our social paths, and how it shapes our future - the better off we're all going to be.

We sit here beside one of the great rivers in the world. We should share as much information and knowledge about that river as possible. We should bring people together to build that understanding.

The Centre is an example of the private sector working together with government and institutions of learning. With Douglas College, and the private sector, what you're building in New Westminster is a new sense of entrepreneurship and excitement that you can sense in the Chamber.

I have no doubt that New Westminster has an incredibly bright future. It's a future of a city where families want to live. It's a future of a city where families want to work, where you know you can improve, increase and enhance the quality of life of your individual citizens.

It's a future of a city that's diverse. A city that has a sense of excitement about itself, and it's a future that British Columbians will look to with a sense of confidence and pride.

New Westminster is a city that shares a special history in British Columbia, a special place in British Columbia's heart. We want to work with you. To your Mayor and Council I say this, dream the biggest dream you want. Imagine the kind of community you'd like to be. Share that dream and vision with us and we will be able to work with you to help deliver that. You live in a great place, we live in a great province and together we have a great future.

Thank you very much.