

Vancouver International Airport's Forum 44 Conference**Premier Gordon Campbell
November 8, 2004***Check Against Delivery*

Thank you all so much for coming to be part of this. I think the leadership that Graham Clarke has shown as the chair of the YVR board and that Larry Berg's certainly carried on as the CEO has been exceptional.

I think we should all, every once in a while, take a moment to celebrate the fact that the YVR that we live with today is the culmination of the people who direct this great airport. I can tell you that as I travel around the world there's no airport that I think matches YVR.

We're going to build an even stronger image for YVR as we over the next 10, 20, 30 and 40 years. Forty years is a pretty distant horizon for most of us. A lot of people are wondering what they're going to do next week. In government, we have been trying in British Columbia to build a planning process that takes us out three years, and, amazingly, that is something that was not in place when we were elected just three years ago.

In Canada and in British Columbia we're thinking about five years out and 2010 and how do we make sure we take advantage of that. We're thinking beyond that in terms of building the capacity that we have for advanced education, for young people in the school system.

But to think 40 years out is a major task of the imagination.

One of the challenges that you all face as you sit here over the next couple of days is to take off the fetters and the boundaries and the barriers that we're used to dealing with.

I think that as we look at YVR and recognize what it's become, it is critical that we think back to what it was. I remember my first time that I came to the Vancouver airport which was a little more than 40 years ago. It was what we now call the south terminal, and it wasn't as fancy as it is now as the south terminal. There was a big square window in the northeast corner. You could watch as these great big huge planes came in. They probably carried 50 or 60 people. As you think of the airport, you think of its expansion. This YVR that we know today is certainly an enormous improvement over what we had just ten years ago, just 20 years ago.

I notice that Frank O'Neill is here. I was first elected mayor in Vancouver in 1986, and Frank came and talked to me in 1987 about the potential for expanding a third runway here. For those of you who've been here for a while, you might remember that in the mid-seventies there was talk about a third runway, and it had failed. It had failed because the public hadn't grasped the vision; the public hadn't seen the benefits.

One of the things that Frank and I talked about was it was important to think of YVR in terms of a much larger context than greater Vancouver. YVR is actually a critically important transportation hub for the entire province of British Columbia and for the entire western part of our country.

Today YVR is actually responsible for the Fort St. John airport, the Kamloops airport, for managing the Cranbrook airport. All of those are major economic and social infrastructure projects for those communities. They are critical as they think of their future and how they can deliver on the promise of their regions of the province.

So I think as we look ahead I can tell you you've got some great, great speakers that are coming today. One of my favourite speakers to listen to is David Baxter. He's pointed out to us in government that there are some social issues that are hardwired into our lives. We know they're going to happen. We know that our province and our country is going to be aging. What does that mean to travel? What does that mean to tourism? What does that mean to transportation? What does that mean in terms of providing services to people? We know as they age they are going to be different. We will be different in 20 years than probably our parents were at the same age. What does that mean? What are those questions that we should ask? As Graham said, we have to be willing to ask questions, but we also shouldn't shy away from new answers because the world is going to be a different place in 40 years.

We stand today on the edge, I believe, of the ocean of the twenty-first century. The Pacific Ocean is going to be driving our economies; it's going to be driving us in the way we reach out and deal with the vast economy of China, the economic growth that's taking place in India, and the rapidly growing middle classes in both of those countries. The opportunities for trade, the opportunities for tourism, the opportunities for learning, the opportunities for cultural enhancement are all part of what that future 40 years from now holds.

Maybe as we think 40 years out we should think about how much our world has changed, even in the last ten to 20 years, let alone 40 years. Forty years ago the entire population of British Columbia was 1.8 million people. Today that's smaller than the population of the greater Vancouver region. Forty years ago, we watched as the first people moved into space. Today they're starting to talk about the commercial use of space travel and the commercial opportunities that space

travel presents.

How many of you here have one of these little machines? Any of you? Blackberries. How many of you have kids? How many of you have kids that use little computer games? Well, this particular instrument has more power in it than computers that would have taken up this room, the next-door room and the room further down the hall 40 years ago - this little instrument.

My sons used to play on their Nintendo. The Nintendo game they had had more capacity in it, than the first rockets that we sent up into space - just with that little Nintendo.

We are facing enormous change as we look ahead, and I think the challenge for us is to try and, number one, understand it, number two, project it out, and number three, see if we can get on that change and ride that wave of change into the future as opposed to stand and hope that it's not going to knock us over.

We can do that in this province and this country. If any place in the world can do that, we can do that with vision and, I think, most importantly with imagination. Imagine 40 years out. Imagine what we would like our province to be.

Equally importantly, imagine what we want our country to be, because when we can imagine a grander vision than our local vision, a grander vision than our provincial vision and we start to think about what our national vision can be, we can start to pool all of the resources we have locally, provincially and nationally to achieve those goals.

If we can imagine that vision in a way that includes the people from Fort Nelson and the people from Prince Rupert and the people from Cranbrook and the people from Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba and the people from the east, imagine what we can do. And it's important that we lead that exercise here, in Canada's only Pacific province.

As we look at our province and we think of the future, we have to think well beyond the Lower Mainland. We have to think of the reach of our ideas and the reach of our products to communities in China, to communities all up and down the Asia-Pacific. We have to think of that reach and we have to think of how we can deliver to those people as effectively as possible between now and 40 years out from here.

We've taken a major initiative in British Columbia. The B.C. Rail investment partnership is going to open up the entire north of our province. Just think of what this does. As we open up that north we open up Prince Rupert to the Asia-Pacific, which is 30 hours closer to Asia than the port of the Vancouver. It's an opportunity for us to maximize the potential of our connections across the Pacific and to those economies by recognizing what Prince Rupert can offer.

You know, when you ask Canadians generally whether or not they're part of the Asia Pacific, about 32 per cent of Canadians say yes, that's an important part of our economic package. When you ask British Columbians, 70 per cent answer yes, it's an important part of our future; it's an important part of where we want to go.

Now, 40 years ago our second-largest export destination was Western Europe. Today we ship four times as much to Asia as we do to Europe - four times as much. Although the U.S. is still our number one export destination, I can tell you that 40 years from now we better be making sure that we have some more balance in our trade.

With balance in our trade we don't run into the challenges that we faced over the last few years, for example, with BSE. We certainly won't run into the challenges we face with softwood.

For example, the housing growth in China is four or five times what it is in the United States. We have barely touched that market today. That's why we launched the Dream Home China project in Shanghai. For us in British Columbia this is hard to believe: in China they hardly build any houses with wood. But wood is the most environmentally sound building material there is. There's an opportunity for us to expand the place of wood products and to provide the vast-growing middle class of China with opportunities to move into a kind of accommodation they haven't even dreamed of yet. Let's make those dreams for them.

I was in India last year. They have the fastest-growing middle class in the world in India. And that fast-growing middle class is starting to think about travel. So imagine what it's like when you're Premier of British Columbia and you go and you discover that the first non-stop route from India to Canada goes from Delhi to Toronto. Well, I can't believe they'd pick Ontario instead of British Columbia, can you?

The fact is we have to make sure that our airport, here at YVR, is the gateway to those economies. So right now, we'll keep working on trying to make sure that our airport is open to flights from Delhi. And the stronger we make YVR, the stronger a contribution it will make not just to B.C. but to all of Canada. So what I say to our federal elected officials is: open up these opportunities to us in British Columbia. Stop restricting our opportunities. Let us show you what we can do. We should be opening our opportunities here; we should be opening this great Pacific gateway to the entire world.

We should be pursuing, we should be advocating, we should be demanding, we should be succeeding in achieving open skies in Canada and in British Columbia. It's a critically important point for us as we look to the future here because trade and social interaction and tourism are critically important as we build a more peaceful, more secure world. I think that's the critical part of what the next 40 years is going to hold, in anyone's mind.

Last year we saw a perfect example when we realized how something like SARS, which started somewhere else, can visit our shores immediately. We also saw in British Columbia we have not just the wherewithal but the expertise to deal with that quickly, effectively, and efficiently as we bring people together.

The B.C. Centre for Disease Control says we're all in this together. It says we want to make sure we're using our researchers and our clinicians and the experience we've got to make sure we can respond quickly. The first case of SARS in Canada landed here. We were not just fortunate, but we were good at dealing with it.

Because of what we brought into focus, it looks like we will have a vaccine for SARS, through the SARS accelerated vaccine initiative, in two years instead of the time it regularly takes to build a new vaccine, which is ten years.

So I think as we look to the future, we have to recognize the future includes not just moving people but thinking about the impact of people interacting, as well, thinking about the enormous advantage that we have here with our strong Asian communities. Let's make sure that we are ensuring that our next generation of young people have the tools so that when we do bring people from around the world, we can communicate directly with them, we understand their culture, we work to build that sense of not just that strength of diversity we have but that social cohesion so that we can move even further ahead.

You know, it's been said that Canada is where the world would like to get to, and I think there's an awful lot of truth in that. There's a lot of truth that we try to empower our citizens. We try to create institutions that say to them: you pursue your goals and your objectives and your dreams. I want to congratulate YVR for saying let's build on that, let's build on that individual sense of commitment to one another.

I think we shouldn't underestimate the task. I think to put our visionary glasses on and think 40 years out is difficult, but I think it is important to try. I hope there are people in this room who will jolt us out of our present and shift our thoughts and our sights to where we can go in the future.

Think not just of what we can be, but of what we hope to be – because I do think one of the great gifts that we have in Canada, and especially in British Columbia, is that once we have set an objective, once we have found the areas of agreement, the framework for the future that we want to pursue, we can accomplish those goals.

We can break down whatever barriers are there that get in our way of doing that. We can do it by working with great cities and great city councils, like we have in Richmond and Vancouver; in great regions, like we have in the GVRD; great provinces like British Columbia; and a great country, like Canada. But we should recognize, as we pursue those goals and objectives, that it takes relentless commitment.

If Frank O'Neil decided to quit because the first person he talked to said I don't think we should have a third runway, we wouldn't have a third runway. If YVR had decided this was just too tough, to think about the rest of the province, we wouldn't have the kind of commitment from the province that we have, to an improvement, enhancement and encouragement of YVR as it tries to look to its future. If British Columbia had decided to quit on SARS because it just seemed too tough, we wouldn't have a SARS accelerated vaccine initiative; we wouldn't have success staring us in the face.

And equally importantly, if our Chinese community decided to stop when they got here to Gold Mountain and found out that they were just being asked to build a railway in some pretty disgraceful conditions, or if our Japanese decided to quit on us because of the way they were treated during the Second World War, or if our South-Asian community decided to quit on us because of the way they were treated during the Komagata Maru incident and many, many decades on either side of that, we wouldn't be nearly as rich a place; we wouldn't be nearly as admirable a place as we are today.

So you are here today thinking about our future. You're not thinking about a year out or two years out or three years out; you're thinking about two generations out - two generations of what we would like this place to be, what we would like people to say about our home, what we would like people to say about our country.

What I'd like them to be able to say is that we are a country that encourages individual imagination; that encourages individual initiative and encourages individuals to dream; that gives people the support that allows them to know that if they're willing to work hard and commit, they can reach those dreams. I'd like us to be recognized as the most environmentally sustainable part of the world. I'd like our environmental policies to look out into the future and for people to say: we want to follow the lead of British Columbia.

I think British Columbia has to get used to leading. We shouldn't be afraid of leadership; we should grab it. We should recognize that when we do that, there'll be some false steps. We should recognize when we do that, there may be some mistakes. But we should recognize that if we keep our eyes high on the horizon, if we keep our efforts focused on our dreams and our objectives, there is nothing that we can't accomplish in British Columbia, Canada.

Thanks for being part of that.



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