

2004 B.C. Hospitality Industry Conference

Premier Gordon Campbell

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Check Against Delivery

It's important to recognize, as we look to the future of our province, the vision for what B.C. will be will come from your imaginations and from your commitment to creating the kind of province and community that you would like to live in.

It's no small task. I can tell you that your leadership has been exceptional throughout, and I want to say how much I appreciate the time and the effort that they have put in.

When we try to create a partnership between government and industry, the really critical component of that partnership is open, honest and direct communication. Now, I understand that there's some decisions that we've made that you didn't like, and let me tell you this: your leadership never hesitated to tell us why they caused concern, how they thought we could improve on them, where we could go together to make sure that we provided opportunities to people, and I think it's because of leadership from people like Mariana Fiddler and Dave Crown, as well as Craig Norris-Jones.

All of you have been willing to say to us: we understand; we're trying to get to the same place together. Let's work together, let's work with one another, and let's try and deliver a tourism industry in British Columbia and a hospitality industry in British Columbia that is second to none. That's our goal, and we're starting to see some results.

None of this is easy. It is never easy to be the best. It is never easy to keep in front of your customers' needs and desires and wants, but it is important to strive for that. It is important to say we are ready to stand out, to be out front.

We've tried to do that in a number of ways in British Columbia in the last three years or so, and we've tried to do that with people. We've tried to listen and to learn as we've built the kind of province we wanted.

When I spoke to this organization in 2001, we had gone through some pretty difficult times. Already we'd gone through the difficult times of 9/11, and we didn't recognize at that time that 9/11 was just the start. The technology meltdown had taken place. The softwood lumber dispute was starting to have impacts across the province. We were coming upon BSE, and the avian flu and SARS. All of those things were challenges you had to overcome.

And you've overcome them. You've overcome them by keeping focused on your future and what you can deliver in terms of a quality product to people. We've overcome them by recognizing what our assets and our strengths are right here in British Columbia.

You know, this is the best place on earth. There is no reason why we shouldn't have the best tourism product on earth, there is no reason why we shouldn't be bringing the world to British Columbia, and because of your hard work, we're seeing progress this year, as we will next year and the year after that. Tourism is coming back in British Columbia because we are not focusing on only one aspect of tourism; we're focusing on a whole range of challenges that we face.

We were talking about the world that we have inherited, and there probably hasn't been a time for 500 years that the turmoil of the world, the new ideas, the new knowledge that is coming forward and being shared around the globe, has been as present as it is today. And we can't really be certain what the world will look like or feel like 25 years from now. But you know, if we think and imagine what we'd like it to be, I can tell you there are few places in the world that have as much opportunity to shape that reality ten years and 20 years out as British Columbia.

We do live in an exceptional place, with exceptional natural assets. We've got spectacular rivers and sensational mountains and vistas through the Chilcotin that are second to none. In the Peace River, it's a different world than it is in the Kootenays or on the north coast.

You go to Prince Rupert and they've been hit by shock after shock after shock. You know what they have? They've got a future that they've imagined. They have envisioned a future with one of the largest ports on the continent serving Asian markets and serving North American markets. They've got a future where cruise ships are bringing people from all around the world.

And when they get to wherever their destination is, they're meeting people who are excited about British Columbia; they're excited about their future. They're excited about the experience, and they're going back home, and they're saying to folks: "Go back to B.C. There's no better place on earth." And that's because of the drive of people like every one of you here in this room.

You know, there has been a shift in this province. When I met with you three years ago, in 2001, there were a lot of people wondering where we were going. Well, what's happened since then? There is no economy in the country that has created jobs faster than British Columbia – 180,000 new jobs have come to our province since 2001. And those jobs are all jobs for people. They're not statistics. They're jobs for people with families in communities that once again feel excited about their future.

One of the truly great benefits for me in the job that I do is getting to travel all over the province. I decided to run for the leader of my party back in 1993, and it was the first time I really travelled the whole province. The first time I went to Prince Rupert, it was as sunny as they could have imagined up there. The second time I went, it was sunny. The third time I went, it was beautiful and sunny. And the fourth time I went, they gave me industrial-strength boots and a raincoat that I had to wear in Prince Rupert. But it is a gorgeous part of the province.

You go to the Kootenays, and you look at the Hoodoos, and you look at that Highway 95 and 93 as you go north and south, and you see an incredible place. Even with our eyes in British Columbia, even with the eyes of people who are used to mountains and rivers and valleys, it is one of the most spectacular regions in the world. And we're starting to see people capture that idea and really start to invest in that idea.

You know, right now in British Columbia we have over a billion and a half dollars of private sector investment coming to create resorts experiences for people from all over the world - over a billion and a half dollars going into every region of the province. And the great thing is that when you look at those resorts, what people are capturing is their understanding of their part of the province, and they're wanting to share it; they're wanting to give it out to our clients and our customers as they come: \$270 million in Sun Peaks; \$50 million in Red Mountain; \$250 in Big White; \$150 million in Silver Star; \$400 million in Kicking Horse; and literally millions and millions of dollars in snowmobile adventures, in heliskiing across the province, in backcountry experiences across this province – all things that truly sets us apart from the rest of the world.

There's diversity here. You don't have to come just for a week. You can stay for a lifetime experiencing British Columbia, and that experience will be something that builds your understanding of your connection to the world and the community that you live in. It's truly an exceptional tourism product that we have.

And we know as we build that product, we have to build the most critical ingredient, and that's the people that are part of delivering the product. When you arrive at Blue River and you talk to them there, they can tell you all about their plans, they can tell you about Blue River, they can tell you about the North Thompson River, they can tell you about first nations, they can tell you about their history – and people come and they're fascinated by that.

As you drive up the east coast of Vancouver Island and you go to a little place called Alert Bay, you'll find one of the really, truly magnificent museums of first nations artifacts that you can find anywhere in North America. Again you go to Prince Rupert. There's a gateway museum there for people from all over the world. They're going to come there, and they'll say: "This is magnificent." And it's sometimes because we sit in the middle of this magnificence that we don't recognize how great it is, and we don't magnify it for the world to see.

So because of the leadership that you've shown we decided it was time for us to help you showcase all that to the world. We doubled the support that we provide to tourism industry marketing from \$25 million to \$50 million a year so that we can hold BC up to people in Europe, in China, in India, in the United States - all over the world - so people will start to see British Columbia. Because when they see British Columbia, they're attracted to British Columbia. And what's really critical for us now is let's take that \$50 million and let's generate millions and millions of visitors to our province.

When we look at British Columbia, we tend to look at it as a big place, as one place, and it is one place. But I also know from dealing with people over the last number of years that often there are people that feel that their place was left out when we project an image of B.C. to the world.

I can remember as a kid watching Hockey Night in Canada. Remember Hockey Night in Canada? I can remember watching Hockey Night in Canada, and there were Canada ads that used to come on – little television snippets. I was this little kid that was lying on the floor in front of my television set in Vancouver, and you know what I was doing when I watched those Canada ads? I was waiting to see British Columbia.

I wanted to make sure that when Canada had a picture of our place, there was a picture of British Columbia, and I was always pleased when we finally got to something that was a symbol of my province. And as we think of the province and creating an international vision or an international perception of British Columbia, it's important to know that we want British Columbians always to see their part of the province in that picture.

So as well as the doubling of the tourism budget, we provided \$25 million to the Union of B.C. Municipalities so communities across the province could complement that \$50 million promotion. So talk with your mayors; talk with your councillors. Encourage them to take advantage of this.

Let's start by doing a really good job with what we have. It's true with this as it is with so many other things: what you do will make a difference. Don't leave it up to someone else. The phone call that you make will make a difference. When you call down the road to someone in your community and you say: "We want to do this; do you want to join us?" that makes a difference.

And let's be clear about this: the dollars that the province invested in tourism are your dollars. There's no such thing as provincial money and federal money and regional money and local money. It's your money and you are the ones that will drive the success of those programs, and we know that you'll be successful.

It is important for us to recognize the value of the things that we see every day. I get on the Harbour Air or the Helijet or West Coast Air flight and I commute from Vancouver to Victoria harbour. And if I ever put down my papers and just listen, well you should hear the tourists on the plane marvelling at our province.

I did a whitewater rafting trip in the Chilcotin, and there were some people from outside of British Columbia. Now, I don't go whitewater rafting all the time, but it was spectacular. You should hear people that come from outside of British Columbia. They can't believe we're so lucky. They can't believe we have this kind of product and this kind of experience available.

What we're doing right now is we are trying to make it easy for them to arrive, and what we have to do is recognize that as they arrive, when they touch down, when they land,

when they get here, that is the first time that they're going to experience British Columbia. So we have communities like Golden saying: the first time you get into British Columbia, we want you to see our gateway – our gateway to British Columbia, our gateway to the entire province. We'll talk to you about B.C.; we'll talk to you about B.C. experiences; we'll talk to you about the fastest way to get where you want to go. We'll talk to you about how to stay a little longer in Golden or Kicking Horse. They're saying: how do we welcome people and tell them all of the things that they can enjoy while they're here?

We've invested \$2 million in the Comox airport. We know that's bringing thousands and thousands more people to the North Island. We're investing \$4 million in Prince George airport. We have the Terrace airport, the Fort St. John airport. All of these airports are looking at how they can expand the opportunity to attract people directly to their part of their country.

Cranbrook airport - a \$13 million project. They want more people to touch down in Cranbrook. And when they land in Cranbrook, they can go to the Kimberly Alpine Resort; they can go to the Fernie Alpine Resort; they can go to Invermere, Panorama. They can go to Kicking Horse. They can play at really top-quality golf courses. They can go fly fishing in some of the best fly fishing areas in the world. That's in our province.

Sure we've had some times in the past where maybe things weren't working exactly the way we wanted them to, but I can tell you this: we are on the threshold of a golden decade in the province of British Columbia. We are ready to take off in the province of British Columbia.

We just broke ground on a \$565-million convention centre expansion here in Vancouver. Now, you can imagine there's a lot of people in Vancouver that are excited about that - a lot - but I want people from the rest of province to understand this: 60 percent visitors that come to Vancouver go somewhere else in this province. Last year we lost \$150 million in convention business - \$150 million. We know when this project is complete we will be generating an additional \$230 million a year in convention business – and thousands of new jobs.

We're also building on a whole new area of tourism that in the past we haven't really focused on, and we should. Having just come back from Ottawa and the Grey Cup, I can tell you it makes a lot of sense.

Now, we went to the Grey Cup on a charter a flight with 173 people and talk about B.C. spirit. Those people were ready to go. Obviously, we would have preferred a different result in the game. But every single one of those people said: next year, in Vancouver, we're going to win. They were excited. They'd had a good time. And the Grey Cup injected \$40 million in the Ontario economy.

Well, next year B.C. is hosting the Grey Cup. We're going to bring it back to Vancouver next year and we're going to win next year, and we're going to generate way more than \$40 million into our economy in 2005.

It's not unusual for us to talk about 2010, and I'm a huge fan of 2010. But you know, the golden decade's just halfway done by the time we get to 2010. Leading up to 2010 we're going to have the 2005 national cross-country ski championships in Prince George. We're going to have the 2005 World Men's Curling Championship in Victoria. The estimated economic impact of that is about \$10 million. We have the 2006 World Junior Hockey Championship here. It's going to generate \$30 million in Vancouver and Kelowna and Kamloops. We've got the 2008 North American Indigenous Games bringing \$30 million into the Cowichan Valley. We've got the 2009 Police and Fire Games bringing \$50 million into Burnaby and the region.

Those are big numbers; those are big promotional opportunities. I think when we bring those folks we don't want them to come once, do we? We want them to come twice, three times, four and five times. We want them to tell their friends. We want them to tell their colleagues at work. We want to show them, when they come to British Columbia, there isn't a better place to visit. There isn't a better place to enjoy yourself, to experience something that you don't normally experience.

As we do that we have to think beyond mountains and Mounties. We have to think about cultural activities and festival activities. We have to think about product development that is really second to none.

I'll tell you what really won the Olympic bid for us in 2010. It was the great diversity that we have in our province. It was the fact that any athlete that wants to come and be part of the 2010 Olympics here will know that there will be someone here that will speak their language, will understand their culture, will know what their food is, know the food that they want to be the best they can be. That's a great, great opportunity that we have. There's not many places in the world that are like this.

Right now we sit on the threshold of the ocean of the twenty-first century, the Pacific Ocean. Twenty-two percent of our population is from Asia. That is a huge asset for us because when I travel to China they know we understand the culture, and we have people who know the language and they know the product that they want. They connect and strengthen the opportunities that we provide to that middle class in China. Folks, you should know this. The fastest-growing middle classes in the world are in India and in China. When I go to India we have people that are directly connected.

Right now Canada has agreed that there can be one flight from New Delhi to Toronto. Now, we're still working on this geography lesson for Canada, but actually Vancouver is closer to India than Toronto is. Vancouver and Cranbrook and Prince George are closer to Beijing than Ontario is. We have a huge asset here in the people that live here. We want to take advantage of that asset.

There is a Tsunami of change that is approaching us, and folks there is nothing that you will do or I will do that could stop it. So won't it be fun to ride that Tsunami in, ride that change into the future, ride that change so you benefit, so your clients benefit, so your kids benefit, so your province benefits, so your country benefits? Won't it be kind of fun to lead Canada in that? Don't you really like leading better than running to catch up? Don't you really like having nobody in front of you so you can see where you want to go and look at that finish line and just keep on driving towards that finish line? Isn't that really a lot more fun?

Over the next ten years we're going to bring the whole world to British Columbia. Over the next ten years British Columbia is going to help Canada take its first major steps into the twenty-first century. We're going to take major steps in terms of building new technologies that will connect people. We're going to take steps in terms of connecting the citizens of the world to our tourism products right here at home. We're going to take major steps in terms of making sure that our whole province thinks of itself as one but also recognizes the strength of the diversity of our product and our people that live here. We're going to take major steps because it's our responsibility to do that.

Lots of us were born here. Lots of us came here. We have first nations that are ready to grab the future with us. Every region of the province is ready to dream about their future. So today, as I close, let me ask you to do this: imagine the future you want. Imagine what it looks like. Imagine how it can be. Imagine giving the young people of British Columbia the skills they need through educational programs, through experience in becoming known as the best tourism and hospitality industry in the world. Imagine lifting people up so they can see their dreams and their opportunities and know that they can strive with confidence to achieve them.

Look ahead. Look ahead ten years and see what you want this next golden decade to look like, to feel like, to be like for you, for your family, for your province, for your country. I know you can do it. I've worked with you before. You've gone through difficult times, and you're coming out ahead. You've gone through difficult times, and we're ready to take off. If we can stay committed, if we can stay focused, there is nothing we can't accomplish in British Columbia when we work together.

Thank you very much.