



World Urban Forum

Premier Gordon Campbell June 19, 2006

Thank you very much Prime Minister, Your Worship Mayor Sullivan. And to all of the delegates here today, let me say what a privilege it is to be here with you at the third World Urban Forum.

I was in Vancouver in 1976 when we had the first forum on urban issues. This forum is about turning ideas into action, taking the ideas that are spawned in conversation and putting them to work for citizens all over the world. For the world is relentlessly urbanizing. More and more and more people are coming into our cities and our towns to look for a better future, and all of us in this room know that sometimes the future they find is not as full of hope as it might be. But this session this week gives us a chance to rekindle the light of hope in the eyes of communities around the world by learning from one another, by teaching one another and by sharing with one another.

From Tokyo to Stockholm, from Manila to New Delhi, we face many challenges. But this week we should also recognize the progress that has been made, the new technologies that are available and the new understanding that can strengthen our cities and towns around this great world. We all want our cities to be human and healthy and vital places for people to live, and we can make a difference. This forum can make a difference in people's lives, in citizens' lives in Africa, in Asia, in North America and South America, in Europe, in all parts and all corners of this globe.

Think back to 1976 and as you enjoy this city and these urban surroundings today reflect on the fact that this place has been shaped by the environment that we live in — the mountains, the ocean, the rivers. Back in 1976 we saw the city that we lived in and the region that we lived in with different eyes and we opened our minds and open our hearts to different solutions to the problems that plagued us.

Today we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people. When the first Europeans came to this place, the Coast Salish people said to them: "You are welcome." And today as we look to the future it is still a welcoming city. This is important. For every city is a place that creates new opportunities for new people and new life as we create living urban structures.

Today, you can walk along the water to Burrard Inlet, around Stanley Park, along the north shore of False Creek and to the south shore of False Creek, along False Creek and all the way up to Spanish Banks and the Fraser River — miles and miles of waterfront walks that are there because the citizens of this city demanded that.

In 1976 there was no light rapid transit, no SkyTrain in the Lower Mainland. But because we came together and said we have to move people, not just cars, we have had great success connecting our regions, while reducing the impact on the environment. As Mayor Sullivan reminded you, it is planning and thinking of what we want our city to be like that allows us to create the communities we want to live in.

Coming out of 1976 there was a vision for Vancouver. That vision called for a downtown where people would work, but also where people would live, where people would enjoy themselves, where people would learn and participate in cultural activities. We took 25 million square feet of potential office space and turned it into a residential neighbourhood which we now call Yaletown. As you visit Yaletown you will find urban shops, you will find a neighbourhood, you will find community centres, you will find parks, you will find an urban place where at the end of the day people want to live.

30 years ago there were 5,000 hectares of property called Burns Bog in the Lower Mainland that was ripe for dense, commercial development. People in this community said to government, No, we want you to protect that land. We want it to be there for future generation after future generation. So today Burns Bog is protected in part because of the work of federal, provincial, regional and local jurisdictions' efforts to save the area, to save our air quality and our water quality in the Lower Mainland.

This week at this forum we are planting seeds, seeds that can grow in every part of the world, seeds that can nourish our environment, that can help clean our air and help clean our water. As we organize and as we learn we must recognize that we need to take ideas and put them into action. Putting ideas to work is what we do when we leave these forums. It is what we put to work in our towns and our cities and our countries all over the world.

In Vancouver and in British Columbia and Canada we pride ourselves on being an open, tolerant community that celebrates our great cultural diversity, celebrates individual citizens coming together, each carrying a thread that is part of the bright tapestry of the future that we are weaving together.

We face major challenges from crime, pollution, sustainability. Thirty years ago in this part of the country we said that we faced an affordability challenge in housing. Unfortunately, today in 2006 there are many people who will say to you we still face an affordability problem in housing. It's not because we haven't tried to solve this; it's because we haven't found the answer yet. But we have to be willing to embrace new ideas. We have to be willing to work with one another and to learn how to work with different communities and different parts of the globe and different parts of our country to find that answer.

As we create living, human, healthy communities, I encourage all of you to think of the words of the great philosopher who once said: "Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it." Cities await your touch and your actions to create better urban communities for the people we all serve.



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