



Vancouver Board of Trade Countdown to 2010 Luncheon

Premier Gordon Campbell March 20, 2006

Let me start by just saying thanks to the Board of Trade. This is the third time that they have put on a lunch to support Olympic and Paralympic athletes. It gets bigger and bigger and better and better. And can you hardly wait till 2009, right before the 2010 Olympic Games? We'll have a bunch of gold medallists sitting in this room with us. It is going to be great.

I also want to acknowledge Marion Lay, the CEO of 2010 Legacies Now. 2010 Legacies Now has been one of the vehicles that we've developed over the last number of years to try and provide support to our athletes, to their coaches, to communities across the province, to build a culture of sport and physical activity so that when we host the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games here in British Columbia, we'll be the most physically fit jurisdiction ever to host an Olympic Games. Thank you very much, Marion.

And, finally, a thanks to Bob Nicholson from Hockey Canada. I think it's important to remember that sport is bringing everyone together and we saw that with the World Junior Hockey Championships in Vancouver. The people of British Columbia will get a big thank you for their part in that, but the person that we should really recognize for the work that he did was Ron Toigo. What a fantastic job he and his team did for that event.

And what is important to remember is that when Ron started, he said: "I'm going to do something. I'm going to do it well. I'm going to make sure that if we are lucky enough to host the World Juniors, we are going to make sure it works. It's going to work for Hockey Canada. It's going to work for the people that come and compete. It's going to work for my city. It's going to work for my province. It's going to work for my country." That is what 2010 and the Winter Olympics is about: working for Canada and British Columbia and for all the communities across this province and, most importantly, for every single athlete that comes here to participate in 2010. We want them to get the very best performance that they've ever had, and we have an opportunity to deliver that from Vancouver and Whistler in British Columbia, Canada.

That's important, because these are Canada's Olympic Games. We should remember that. And it's shared with the four host first nations: the Squamish, the Tsleil-Waututh, the Musqueam and the Lil'wat. Today we are welcomed here to the traditional territories of the Coast Salish people, and something that the Olympics is doing again is it's bringing people together. It's building a new world of opportunity for us in this province and, again, in this country.

But today we're honouring the athletes who are going to carry the flag for all of us as they go towards 2010. Think of the amount of work that goes into being a successful elite athlete. Just think what Tom Velisek of Vernon does as a snowboarder. He's working out all the time, he's training all the time, and Tom, what are you going to do in 2010? You're going to take home the gold.

And just think of what Kristi Richards does from Summerland in the moguls. Kristi came through reconstructive knee surgery and she placed seventh in Torino. And guess what's going to happen in 2010? Kristi, what's going to happen in 2010? You're going to take home the gold.

And imagine what it's like for me. I fly over the Atlantic, I land in Italy, I go to British Columbia-Canada Place, and who's the first guy I meet? Denny Morrison, one of our silver medal winners in men's pursuit. In 2010 Denny's going to be here. He's going to be speed-skating at the Richmond oval. And, Denny, what are you going to do? He's going to bring home the gold.

Just think of this. That's three gold medals we've got already — three gold medals. And you know, I thought that 2010 was just way out there. But it's right now. It's happening now.

And we've just finished the Paralympic Games. Vancouver's 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games have already made Olympic history. After the closing ceremonies when Sam Sullivan, the first quadriplegic ever to receive the Olympic flag, received it on behalf of all of us, one of the messages we kept hearing was: "That could never happen in our country." It happened in our country. It happened in Canada. It happened in British Columbia. It happened in Vancouver. And what a proud moment that was for each and every one of us.

So today you're all here offering your support, and I think it's pretty important for us to recognize what incredible commitment and time and effort and dedication it takes for an athlete to achieve what some of the athletes we've honoured here today have done. We have with us today members and recipients of the Premier's Athletic Awards. Those are people that are already getting ready to move to 2010.

I wonder if you could all stand so we could recognize you and give you a show of our appreciation. Could you award winners please stand.

On top of that we have a number of British Columbia Olympians who have helped shape our Olympic past and will help us build towards our Olympic future. I wonder if those Olympians could stand so we could recognize their contribution to sport and to Canada over the last little while.

And what great stories all of those athletes have to tell. What great stories they have to tell about the support that they've received over their entire athletic careers as they have led us all by the examples that they've set. It takes thousands and thousands of hours for an athlete to get to the point where they can win a medal.

And now our goal, I think, as a country should be to reach beyond what we've been able to accomplish in the past. In British Columbia we have tried to create an environment where we can contribute to the development of some elite athletes. We've committed \$25 million to 2010 Legacies Now for athlete and sport development. Now the B.C. Lottery Corporation has set up a brand-new program that will provide, through the new SportsFunder lottery, \$20 million over the next six years to amateur sport in British Columbia.

And what's important for us to remember is as we develop a culture of sport, it starts at the ground. Every one of us is not going to be an elite athlete. Every one of us is not going to be a Denny Morrison. Every one of us is not going to necessarily get to be on that podium. But if we provide a large enough base, we will find people stepping up to the podium. First, they'll step up to a local event, then eventually they'll step up to a world championship, and then, when they get to 2010 here, they'll step up onto the podium, and some will be third, and some will be second, and some will be first.

And as they step to that podium, you'll be able to think to yourself: "I was part of that." Maybe a small part of that. Maybe you supported a corporate sponsor. Maybe you contributed to the SportsFunder lottery. But we should all know that what little we do is nothing compared to what athletes, their coaches and their families do.

I'm sure every successful athlete will tell you they would never have got as far as they did without the support of their family. I can remember I used to say to my mum: "Mum, would you drive me to hockey?" She'd say: "What? Are you nuts? At 5 o'clock in the morning?" That was a fair enough comment for her. I couldn't skate. There was no point in taking me to hockey.

But just imagine 2010. We did pretty well in 2006. Maybe the men's hockey team didn't do as well as we'd hoped, but boy, can those women play hockey, eh? Imagine this: 2010 in Vancouver, a women's gold again, a men's gold and a sledge hockey gold — all three golds coming right here to British Columbia, Canada, because of those teams and the work and the support that you've given those folks. Just think of that.

We are the only country in the world ever to have hosted an Olympics and not been able to give a gold medal to one of our athletes or one of our teams. Now, that's a record that we are going to obliterate in 2010.

It's been said that it takes 10,000 hours to develop an Olympic athlete. The athletes who have told you they're going to win gold in 2010 have already made a big dent in that 10,000 hours. And they need sports nutritionists, sports psychologists, coaches, families, friends, people that are willing to help you on that journey, and every successful athlete remembers that those people are the ones that got them there.

I want every athlete in British Columbia and every athlete in Canada to know that we are all behind them. Their families will be behind them for sure. Their coaches will be behind them, and their coaches will pick them up and say: "It's going to be okay. Keep going. Keep working. Work through it. Yes, it's tough. Keep on going. You know where you want to go. We're going to get there together." And sports organizations will tell them. The Canadian Olympic organization will tell them.

What we want them to know in British Columbia is when our athletes work towards that podium, there are four million British Columbians that are behind them, and there are 30 million Canadians that are behind them. The Vancouver Board of Trade has said continually for the last three years: "We believe you can achieve your goal."

We believe you can achieve. We're going to be there for you, and as we work together, we're all going to be there in 2010 when you stand on that podium and we hear Oh Canada play.



Top