

Address to Union of B.C. Municipalities Annual Convention

Premier Gordon Campbell

October 27, 2006

Check against delivery

Well, it is great to be here in the traditional territories of the Songhees and the Esquimalt First Nations, to have a chance to talk with all of you again.

When I come, I can't help but thank all of you and thank the UBCM.

You know, this is by far the most comprehensive provincial meeting of public elected officials and public servants that we have in the province. Isn't it interesting that it's local governments that bring us all together to examine a full, complete provincial agenda? It's where we come every year when we have a UBCM meeting, we listen to one another, we learn from one another, and we learn how we can act together to improve the quality of life for the people that we all serve.

The fundamental principle that the UBCM brings to the table is: only one taxpayer. We all serve the same citizens. We reinforce our mutual goals, our mutual objectives, our common concerns, and we find a way forward. It's so important to focus on those common purposes that we share.

Every year we seem to be able to come together and have an idea of what we should all do together. Now, I should say I find it's particularly easy to find support when there's provincial funding involved in that.

But it is important to note that your community opportunities task force, which has worked very hard for the last two years, has actually reinforced the single, most important idea that we should have: we accomplish things when we work together.

We've worked together to combat crystal meth, and improve community health, and prevent and prepare for West Nile virus and pandemics. We've worked together on emergency preparedness, wildfire prevention and interface management, community tourism, traffic safety, and 211 planning.

And we're going to continue to work in that spirit of partnership because it's the true way to build progress. It's the way that we can ensure that we provide a better quality of life for all the people that we serve in British Columbia.

When we work together, we achieve positive results for your communities, for our province, and for our country. You know, when we work together, we do get positive results.

Now, if only we can get the City of Victoria to expedite your zoning applications for Municipal House, we'd have one more thing to cheer about. Now, I realize that it's only been a year since we offered to donate the land, and things do take some time at City Hall. But wouldn't it be great if we could open Municipal House and celebrate it for the 2008 150th anniversary of the province of British Columbia, right here in Victoria?

The theme of your convention this week has been: vibrant and integrated communities. Just to be sure I knew what we were talking about, I went to the dictionary to look up what vibrant means. It means pulsating with life and vigor and activity. It means being responsive and sensitive and bright.

It is a great theme: vibrant, integrated communities. It's a great vision worth striving for. It reminds us to think beyond our own small borders and work together on common needs and common purpose and common challenges. And, once again, the community opportunities task force has stressed that point.

We need to think differently. Our world has changed dramatically: economically, socially, and demographically. The status quo simply has no status anymore. And it's a challenge because it's not that the world is going to be changing; we have changed.

Vibrant communities are excited by their future. They're not mired in the past. When Herb Pond and Jack Talstra imagine a three million-TEU container port in Prince Rupert and Terrace, they're painting a new picture of the entire northwest of B.C. for Canada. We're going to work with them on that.

When Okanagan mayors come together on the Okanagan partnership, they're painting an exciting, new landscape economically, environmentally, educationally, and socially for their whole region. They're painting that landscape for British Columbia. And we're going to work with them on that.

When Joe Snopek leads the way to integrated regional policing, he's thinking beyond his borders. When Christ'l Roshard imagines a new future for Lillooet, she's imagining a new future for British Columbia. We're going to work with them on that.

When Colin Kinsley reaches out to the Lheidli-T'enneh and Stewart Allgard reaches out to the Sliammon, they're building a new relationship and a better community. They are leading the way for British Columbia. They're building a better province. We're going to work on that too.

These are examples of leadership. They're examples that are reflected across the province in all of your communities. On behalf of all my colleagues I want to say thank you. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your vision. Thank you for making British Columbia a better place for all of us to live.

Now, leadership is required. It's leadership that builds vibrant, integrated communities, creative and prosperous communities that are environmentally sustainable and socially

responsive. Vibrant communities are safe, healthy places where people can choose to walk or bike to work, where they can breathe clean air and have access to clean water and proper sewage treatment. They are places that encourage the imagination and that are naturally driven by the dreams of their citizens.

This convention theme is not just a title; it's a call to action for all of us. It's a call to all of us to work together to accomplish the goal.

Your communities are a recognized strength today for British Columbia. They're an important cornerstone for our future.

So we have to ask this question: what more can we all do to design healthier cities and towns that provide healthy choices to citizens, and help us sustain services for the next generation of British Columbians? We all know we have to start from the ground up.

Let's talk about land. We know this: the more urban land that we use, the more we compound urban challenges and urban costs. The greater the urban imprint on our land, the more distance we create between ourselves.

How many in this room set out with your plans to create urban sprawl? Did any hands go up? No one. No one sets out to create that, because sprawl increases travel costs, transportation costs, and all sorts of attendant side effects: poor air quality; poor health; higher policing costs; higher servicing costs for water, for sewage, for municipal infrastructure. Now, this isn't an earth-shattering revelation. We've known this for a long, long time.

The good news is that we also know what creates healthier, less costly, more sustainable communities: higher densities. New densities also will help us create healthier communities. It will use less land. It will create a sense of place and create the opportunity for more affordable housing.

Let's create communities where residents can choose to walk or bike more and get out of their cars. That means creating compact, pedestrian-friendly communities that are a mix of land uses and that meet the diversity of needs of seniors and young families and all of us in British Columbia. The results of properly planned, mixed-use, higher-density communities are: measurably better physical fitness, a reduced likelihood of obesity and traffic crash risk, and fewer air pollutants per capita than residents of more automobile-oriented communities.

Just think of this example. In the city of Vancouver in the early 1990s they changed their downtown core and took 25 million square feet of commercial space, and they converted it to residential space. At the time, we were told people will never make that choice. You should know this: in the last ten years the fastest growing means of commuting in downtown Vancouver is walking. We've seen a 62 per cent increase in the people there who walk to where they need to go as a commuter means. That provides everyone with a healthier lifestyle because when you walk to work, you get your 30 minutes a day of

physical exercise — which means that's good news for you and good news for our health system.

I know this isn't new to say, but there's another positive thing about densities: we can lower our housing costs. We all know the components of housing costs: there's land, there's building, there's time, and there's fees. Every one of those costs has skyrocketed in the last generation.

Here's the question: what can all of us do, to reduce those costs? I want to see a broad range of housing options for people, for seniors — so there's different housing to meet the needs of seniors — for young people who want to be first-time buyers. What can we do to put housing within the reach of people again? How can we make it more affordable?

In the 1950s the average home size was 950 square feet. There was usually about one bathroom in every house and one automobile. Today the average size of new homes is over two times that amount. There's usually three or four bathrooms, and certainly two cars would be pretty much the standard. All of those drive additional costs for us.

In British Columbia today if you can find a contractor who will build you a home at \$150 a square foot, I'd like you to see me later. But also just think of the math of that. That means that the average home is costing just for the building part of it in excess of \$200,000 more for people than it would have in the 1950s.

We have to start thinking about building better, building better designs and building smaller. Just so you know, my wife, Nancy, and I shrunk the size of the home we're in. We shrunk it by about 30 per cent. So it's 1,500 square feet. But you know, it's a great place to live. In fact, we like it better. I don't think it's because the boys are out of the house, but it could be.

We can do this; we can design places properly to make this thing happen. The components of housing include not just land costs, though, and we have to know that. In Vancouver, they used to have 33-foot subdivided lots. Today the minimum size is 40 feet. The neighbourhood I was brought up in had 33-foot lots. I can tell you this: if we just went back to 33-foot lots, we'd increase the amount of housing that was available and we'd reduce the land costs by 20 per cent. If we're for affordable housing, we have to start thinking of all the things we do to make sure that we have affordable housing.

Now, I've sat in your chair. I know why people don't move to higher densities. I've gone to a few public hearings in my day. It's the same reason that we fail to make difficult decisions with regard to housing the homeless or to better help the mentally ill: small-p politics. It's not popular to increase densities. We just don't do it. It's not easy to create homeless shelters, halfway houses, rehab centres, or mental health facilities. And it's not just money; often it's zoning.

One of the things that defines vibrant communities is what we do for one another. In this room, we all are leaders. We can't just talk about this; we have to embrace it; we have to follow it through. We have to show a singular purpose and commitment to solving these challenges.

And believe me, I know that when we work together, we can solve these challenges; we can put them behind us. In ten years we can look back and say: look at the progress we've made; look at how much healthier, how much more vibrant our communities really are.

We simply can't allow fear, and in some cases ignorance, to stop us from doing what is right. It just compounds our problems, and the price we pay is played out in our streets at the expense of our mutual goal, vibrant communities.

I know this is tough. But I want to give you a sense of hope. I sat through more than a dozen public hearings for what we called in Vancouver special needs residential facilities. It was facilities for people who may have had a mental illness. They may have had a drug addiction. They were trying to come through that, and they may have been halfway houses. They were special facilities that were there for those people particularly. And I can tell you this. In every single one of those public hearings, we never heard from the public saying: "Please put this facility in our neighbourhood." Not once. And one of the proudest things for me as a serving elected civic official was this: every single project was approved by that council, and not one of them has caused a problem in the neighbourhoods where they reside, and many of them are in the neighbourhoods that you would say are great neighbourhoods in Vancouver.

So today, as we look to the future together, I ask you to join us in facing the reality of our urban centres and our cities and our towns. We can simply no longer afford not to make better use of local land bases, not to shrink the processing time that we have for homes, not to reduce the burden of fees and not to build smaller units.

As Rich Coleman said to you the other day, the province is going to work with you to see our land used more effectively, to create more affordable housing solutions for our seniors. There is unity of purpose here, and we're all in this together.

I want to thank those of you who've been working on the Premier's task force on homelessness, mental health and addiction services. You've been imaginative; you've been creative; you've tried to integrate services to the needs of people in your communities. In fact, we've been working to create more affordable housing for the last five years in this province. We've left more in people's pockets, and we've invested record amounts in housing. We've doubled the budget for shelters and affordable housing. There will be another \$32 million for housing in the next two years. We're ready to build hundreds of more units. We've already built or are building 10,788 new units of subsidized housing since 2001.

But we need your help, and I want to say that quite clearly. We need your help. We need your commitment. We will only succeed in changing the world we experience if we do something differently. Nelson Mandela's quote is right: "If something is man-made it can be fixed with the actions of human beings."

The new outreach plan that we've announced deals directly with people on the street, one to one. It recognizes that they're individuals with individual needs and, many times, multiple barriers that they have to overcome. It's been very successful, and every mayor has said to me: "We want to see the opportunities of that outreach program expanded to our communities," and we'll be doing that over the next three years. We want to make sure that we're dealing with people because we know that will work when we work together.

I don't want to accept people living on our streets. None of us, least of all the homeless, want to accept it. But we're going to have to work together if we're going to put this behind us. You know, announcements are a beginning, but it's execution that matters. Time adds costs and carrying costs and escalating construction costs.

I want to share just three examples with you, and I know that you'll all take this in the right way. There are many, many examples like it. I believe we have to find our way through these things and for us to do that, we have to talk openly and directly and honestly with one another.

In November of 2004 the federal and provincial governments came together with \$84 million for additional support for housing across the province. In December of that year, we announced there'd be \$27 million to help create 200 new units in what's called the Woodward's project in Vancouver. That project will have construction started in 2007. The units will be ready in 2009. That's five years. Think of that. That is longer than it took us to fight two world wars and win them, and that's not good enough. It's not good enough for us; it's not good enough for the people that we're trying to serve.

In Prince George we approved \$4 million for supportive housing. We thought we had a piece of land available. Unfortunately the land wasn't rezoned. Now there's \$4 million sitting there, wondering where its home will be, wondering what we can do with it.

In Kelowna in March of 2005 we announced \$4.5 million for supportive housing. March 2005. We're hopeful that construction will start in 2007. We are hopeful that occupancy will be available in 2008.

This is tough stuff, and for us to truly solve the problem we all have to be part of lifting our way towards a solution. We will pay; we will invest; we will ensure that there are resources there. But really it is your part of the deal to make sure that we get the job done. All of these things, land costs, building costs, processing costs and time are working against what we all say we're for: affordable housing.

So what are we going to do about it? We can make this work if we all decide that we're going to come together and make it work. We will invest. We will work with you. But we're going to have to look at ways of reducing land costs, of smaller building sizes, of reducing permit costs and reducing the costs of time that are holding our progress back. We're going to work to make that happen, and we're going to work with you because we know in partnership we can solve this problem for the people that we all serve in every one of our communities in British Columbia.

As well as building housing, there is another component to this. So often it seems to me our critics overlook the fact that leaving more money in people's pockets actually makes a big difference in what housing is affordable to people. Here's what we've done in that regard. Last year we doubled the funding for shelter allowance for elderly renters, the first time since 1990 that there's been any increase. We eliminated provincial income taxes for everyone earning under \$15,500. That's helping seniors and renters on fixed incomes. People used to start paying income taxes at \$10,000. Well, that's a pretty significant first step. We reduced provincial income taxes for people earning \$30,000 or less by 37 percent and a 63-percent reduction was put in place for people under \$20,000. So today a typical senior couple earning \$30,000 a year pays over \$1,000 less for income tax alone, and everyone in B.C. earning up to \$80,000 a year now has the lowest income taxes paid in Canada.

As well as income tax reductions we've reduced prescription costs. We've eliminated or reduced MSP costs premiums, for a quarter-million low-income British Columbians and seniors. This year, for the first time since 1993, we increased the Home Owner Grants by 22 percent, and we increased the threshold for Home Owner Grants as well. This is a result of the largest jump in real disposable income in British Columbia in 20 years and the highest weekly average earning increases in Canada. That all makes housing more affordable.

Weeks ago the minister responsible for housing, Rich Coleman, announced a new rental assistance program. That's going to help 15,000 lower-income British Columbians by putting more money in their hands and letting them decide where they want to live. Can we do more? Sure, we can do more. And today I can tell you that we will increase the shelter allowance for income-assistance recipients in the next budget for British Columbia and that will be the first increase since 1994.

We're going to work with you. There'll be new incentives to create new facilities and support those with mental illnesses and addictions. You know, we're going to listen to you. We're going to listen to what we've heard from you. You know what you've told me? De-institutionalization is a failed experiment. So we're going to work with you to make sure that we provide for the care and the support for people with mental illnesses as we look ahead, and it will be a major item on our agenda.

We're going to need to build smarter, faster and smaller. We're going to need cities to increase densities, reduce building costs and create new positive benefits for our environment. And ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you this. I know this. When we work

together we're going to succeed in making this happen for the people that we work for in British Columbia.

The other day I was at a meeting, and a fellow came up and he gave me this book. He said: "You're going to want this book. I need you to take it and give it to the people in Kaslo." Is there anyone here from Kaslo? Great. It's good to see you guys. I've got something for you here. I want you to look at this. It's from 1893. Here it says — and this just shows you how the world's changed — a \$500 reward will be paid for the arrest or information leading to the arrest of William P. Birch, commonly known as Slim Birch. This thin little book is all of the records for the town of Kaslo from 1893 to '98. Look at that. Can everyone see that? This is how much government they had in Kaslo in that whole time.

The reason I raise that is that we are coming in 2008 to our 150th anniversary of British Columbia being formed as a province. It is a time for us to celebrate. It is a time for us to think about what we've been able to accomplish, to reflect on our past, and more importantly there are often times when we can think about our future. We want our cities, our towns, our first nations to join in the celebration.

I'm pleased to announce that part of that celebration will be the establishment of a new B.C. spirit square program. The spirit square program will provide \$20 million to assist communities in creating and enhancing public outdoor meeting space where you can celebrate your community pride and your community spirit.

Your spirit squares can take the form of a traditional town square or community commons. It will be yours to decide. Spirit squares I hope will reflect your community, the diversity of your citizens, your culture, the first nations heritage and your history. They can be built on the great work that's currently taking place by over five dozen B.C. spirit committees across British Columbia. And you should know this. The province will share up to one-half of the capital cost of projects to a maximum of \$500,000. The total project can be \$1 million. We'll share up to \$500,000. You decide what you want to celebrate the spirit of British Columbia and your community. It's my hope that the spirit squares will be a lasting legacy of British Columbia's 150th anniversary.

The vibrant communities of tomorrow will also be energy-conscious communities that aim to improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The government's new green city project will encourage cities to expand their networks of pedestrian paths, cycle ways, green ways and wheelchair-accessible green spaces. It will aim at promoting, recognizing and rewarding B.C.'s best designs and programs for encouraging physical activity, energy conservation and environmental benefits in communities of all sizes.

The province will establish annual green city awards that will be presented at each annual UBCM so we can learn the best practices that are being used across the province. And let me tell you this: it's not going to be a piece of paper. It's going to be hundreds of thousands of dollars in awards when you decide what you're going to do to make your cities greener, healthier places for all of us to live and for all of us to learn from.

We are also going to establish a new “local motion fund” to provide matching grants aimed at getting people moving on their own steam and getting them out of their cars. We’re going to provide \$40 million over the next four years to help you build bike paths, walkways, green ways and improve the accessibility for people with disabilities.

The local motion fund will also support programs that aim at getting our kids playing again in our communities and in our parks. It’s going to match on a 50-50 basis capital projects up to \$2 million a year. That means the province’s share will be a million, and your share will be a million. That will be the maximum for any community in any given year.

And that’s not the only way that we’re going to make sure that our green cities project works to reduce greenhouse gases, improve air quality and improve energy conservation. Expanded rapid transit, greater use of hybrid vehicles, supportive fuel technologies and hydrogen highways are all innovations where British Columbia is leading, and we intend to continue to pursue those opportunities. New investments will be made in all of these priorities in the next fiscal year, and the province intends to continue to lead. New financial incentives will be offered to help you shift the hybrid vehicle fleets and to retrofit dirty diesel vehicles to cleaner technologies. We’ve already in place a \$2,000 tax break to help people purchase hybrid vehicles rather than traditional cars and trucks. The lifetime of that program will be expanded and, as of 2007, all new cars leased or purchased by the provincial government will be hybrid vehicles in British Columbia.

That’s not all. The new Canada-B.C. municipal rural infrastructure program will be over \$150 million, and we should recognize our federal partners in providing a contribution to that. Eighty percent of that program will go to communities of less than 250,000. Sixty percent will go to projects like improvements in water quality, wastewater and sewage treatment and public transit. The other 40 percent will be used to support local roads, culture, tourism, recreation and connectivity projects all aimed at creating more vibrant communities.

You know, we’re going to do something different. We’re going to do something for small towns in British Columbia to help you meet your infrastructure needs. Small towns are 5,000 people or less. I’ve heard from so many mayors and councils over the years that all these big programs just don’t quite work for you. It doesn’t quite fit the way you can budget. It doesn’t quite fit your resources. So with the best of intentions, somehow or other they seem to pass those small towns by. Well, we’re going to change that. We want you to have the means for you to act on your capital infrastructure plans, so we’re going to establish a new Towns For Tomorrow program which will fund \$21 million over the next three years to help you meet your needs in small-town British Columbia. And — here’s the part I really like — this is going to be a different kind of infrastructure program. The province is going to pay for 80 percent of the program, and you’re going to pay 20 percent.

I can see lots of you here from the capital regional district getting a little edgy. I remember a UBCM meeting in 1991 where we were talking about the capital regional district's sewer outfall. For decades, experts and scientists told us that that great ocean out there was the most marvellous flushing machine that has ever been established. We were told: don't worry, do nothing, because Mother Nature does everything we need to safely dispose of our sewage.

Well, that's not the case. Raw sewage is contaminating the ocean's floor, and we said that we can't let that continue to go on. We've got countries from around the world that point to our capital city and cry: "Foul." I can tell you without fear of contradiction today: Victoria, you've got a problem. But in the spirit of working together, let me say that differently. Victoria, British Columbia's got a problem. And so I should tell you here today we are going to clean up that sewer outfall once and for all. We're going to work with the CRD, we're going to work with the federal government, to identify the best, lowest-cost solution to provide proper sewage treatment for greater Victoria, and the province will contribute one-third of the funding required to make that happen.

There is one caveat, and you're going to be hearing this a lot from me in regard to capital projects in the years ahead. We're going to insist on one condition: that Partnerships B.C. take a hard look at how that project might be built as a public-private partnership. In fact, I can tell you today that we're going to be making that a condition of provincially funded capital projects over \$20 million in the future. We know P3s save money, transfer risk and add great value through design innovations and private sector ingenuity.

You know, for the first time since 1983 we've been granted a AAA credit rating again in British Columbia. That will save our taxpayers about \$50 million in interest costs over the next ten years. We plan on keeping that AAA credit rating, and that means we've got to always look to get the best value for every single tax dollar that we invest in capital plant in this province.

Since we launched the public-private partnership initiative in 2002, we've actually either started or completed \$4.7 billion in new P3 projects. We're getting at least \$131 million in additional benefits on the Sea to Sky Highway, at least \$92 million in additional benefits on the new Canada Line, \$39 million in additional benefits in the Abbotsford hospital and cancer care centre, \$17 million in additional benefits in the \$95 million outpatient hospital in Vancouver, \$10 million in additional benefits in the Britannia Mine water treatment plant, \$25 million in additional benefits in the new William R. Bennett Bridge in Kelowna, and we have a project in the Kicking Horse Canyon that is months ahead of schedule and is on budget. That's \$310 million of value, and we're determined to capture that over the life of those projects.

That is the future of capital development in province of British Columbia: better value, on time, on budget. So in the future we're going to work with you, but we will insist that Partnerships B.C. look at major capital projects, and the base case in British Columbia will be P3s unless Partnerships B.C. says there's a compelling reason to do otherwise.

P3s will be the capital standard in British Columbia for three reasons: they work for you, they work for us, and most importantly, they work for the taxpayer that we work for.

Another very smart initiative that's been brought forward by the Community Opportunities Task Force is the idea that we have to increase our integration. We should be trying to work more closely together to harmonize rules and regulations.

We just recently completed a trade, investment and labour mobility agreement with the province of Alberta. It's being looked at across the country as a leading agreement. It creates Canada's second-largest economy. It will create \$4.8 billion of additional economic activity. It's expected to create about 80,000 new jobs in the province. In every single region of the province, new jobs will be created. And here's what's really great. It didn't cost a cent. Let me underline that. It didn't cost a cent.

So let's challenge ourselves. Let's try to continue leading Canada. Let's challenge ourselves to develop a harmonized business licence framework by 2008 to become the first province in Canada where businesses can operate freely within their province. Why not do across B.C. what 12 of 13 governments did here in the CRD and create a harmonized municipal licence for trades throughout the region? Why not expand that same principle to do more classes of business, to break down the barriers to economic development and to better integrate communities? And it won't cost a cent. We can do that together. We just have to decide we're going to do it.

Over the next few months you're going to hear me talk a lot about the Pacific leadership agenda. I need you to know this. Each one of you has a role to play in that. That broad provincial agenda includes building a new relationship for first nations and closing the gaps in health, housing, education and economic opportunities. It includes renewing our health care system through the conversation on health, ActNow B.C. and the improvements to health facilities throughout the province.

Our Pacific leadership agenda includes vibrant communities, and it includes a new focus on improving our competitiveness and productivity through skills training and immigration. The world as we knew it has passed us by. A new world is upon us, and it's our irrefutable advantage that we are Canada's Pacific province. The new world will be dominated by trade with China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, India, and South Korea. China's economy has doubled in the last ten years, and it has driven 30 percent of the world's growth in GDP in the last decade. It's now Canada's second-largest trading partner.

The world won't wait for us. We can't wait for Canada. It's time for us to lead. We will work with the communities in the northwest who have established a truly integrated port for millions of TEUs that will be developed through public-private partnership in the years ahead. We will work with Prince George to establish a magnificent state-of-the-art inland port that moves air, sea and land cargo through to Asia and the North American markets in record time. We will work with Kamloops and Ashcroft to develop the best possible southern interior inland port that captures hundreds of millions of dollars in

economic opportunity and opens new jobs throughout the Thompson-Nicola region for everyone to take advantage of.

We're going to do for B.C. and the west what the St. Lawrence Seaway did for Ontario and the east 50 years ago, and we're going to have a strong and powerful federal partner as we pursue that agenda on behalf of everybody that lives in Canada, not just in British Columbia. As we open our northern and interior ports, we're going to be using P3s to build the new South Fraser perimeter truck bypass highway. We're going to build the Pitt River Bridge. We're going to twin the Port Mann Bridge to get your resources to your markets.

We simply have no time to lose. In the years ahead you're going to see us push for a unified Pacific port authority to ensure coordinated trades through all our ports. We're not competing with one another, we're competing with the world, and I know this: when British Columbians come together and we compete with the world, British Columbians win time and time again.

We are going to complete the last and the longest leg of the Kicking Horse Canyon project to open up our gateway to Canada so Canada has a gateway to the Pacific. We will invest more in airports and roads and bridges and critical improvements along Highway 97 and the Trans Canada.

This is Canada's future. This is Canada's Pacific province. We are Canada's Pacific gateway, and we are going to open it together. That is how we build vibrant, integrated communities. That is how we capitalize on British Columbia's core competitive advantage.

We're going to build upon our Pacific heritage and reach out to our Pacific neighbours like never before. We're going to use the Pacific advantage to build upon our wealth of human and cultural and natural resources.

Strong, vital communities are a core value of our Pacific vision. It's powered by the imagination of British Columbians who want to reach higher to create healthier, vibrant, integrated communities that will be defined by our mutual strengths, our mutual purpose and our mutual belief that it is B.C.'s time to lead. It's B.C.'s time to shape Canada's future, and what an incredible future that will be.

Thank you very much.