

March 1, 2010

Premier Gordon Campbell's Statement to the House on the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

Premier Gordon Campbell

Check Against Delivery

I rise to make a ministerial statement. The last time that we gathered in this House we were about to embark on a great Canadian undertaking, the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Today we can say together and we can say with pride that the 2010 Winter Olympic Games were a Canadian triumph.

It was a triumph of partnerships. It was a triumph that erased borders and brought us together as a country as never before in my memory. Millions of Canadians held this Olympic dream in their hearts. We were together as one nation. As Alex Bilodeau crossed the finish line, won gold and embraced his brother Frederick. We rose as one as Maëlle Ricker won B.C.'s first gold medal at home in an Olympic Games and helped set the pace for a record-breaking performance.

Hon. Speaker, this was a team effort. It was a country's effort. It was the effort of every province. It was the effort of the cities of Vancouver and Whistler and Richmond. It was the effort of all Canadians. Our Olympians, our games organizers, volunteers and host communities set the bar high for themselves, and they have now set the Olympic standard for all to follow in the future.

Families from all walks of life, of all places of origin came together in Vancouver and Whistler and Richmond. They celebrated the success of our athletes. They celebrated the community of one another, and most importantly, they celebrated being Canadian with spontaneous outbreaks of the national anthem at one in the afternoon, one in the evening, and some say at four in the morning.

As the President Rogge of the IOC said today, he has never seen the kind of exuberance, excitement and embracing of the Olympic spirit that he saw in British Columbia, Canada. Whether you were there were in person or one of the 3.5 billion people that was introduced to B.C., Canada and the communities that we all live in, you all actually got to share in the joy and the exuberance of the Olympic Games.

We all embraced the power of sport to unify us all, not just as Canadians but as a human family. Through the power of sport and seemingly impossible feats of human strength, agility, endurance, artistry, perseverance and dedication, our athletes have inspired generations with the power of the human heart and the performances for the ages.

When we see what our athletes have done and, more importantly, overcome to achieve their true potential, we know there is no goal too great if we believe in ourselves as British Columbians and as Canadians. As we watched, we learned the power of hope, the importance of family, the strength of team, the coaches and all who supported them in their quest for

excellence. Their journeys are Canadian journeys, their Canadian stories. They speak to the essence of who we are as Canadians and the force of national purpose.

The greatest triumph of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games is the intangible bond that strengthens us as the Canadian family and the indelible pride and confidence that we will all share forever and can spark our national purpose as we reach into the future. For us, these games will always be a defining moment for British Columbia and for Canada.

British Columbia has always imagined these were Canada's games that we could contribute to our country and we have through the efforts of literally thousands and thousands of volunteers who said to the world: "Bienvenue au Colombie-Britannique. Welcome to British Columbia. Welcome to Canada." [

These were the most-watched games in Olympic history. They celebrated the Winter Olympics as never before. This was Canada's team. As we walked through the streets of Whistler and Richmond and Vancouver, as we walked through Vancouver Airport as athletes from around the world were welcomed, we saw blue-jacketed volunteers who were putting the best face they could on Canada's games. What a superb job every single one of those people did.

This was the culmination of years of effort by thousands of people — people from every territory, from every province and indeed from around the world. They were inspired by the vision and the mission that Jack Poole set for them as the chair of VANOC.

They have been encouraged and prompted and energized by the leadership and the example of John Furlong. Our VANOC team is one that the IOC looks to as the standard bearers for future international Olympic Games, and to all of them we owe our heartfelt thanks.

Hon. Speaker, it was the people behind the scenes that really lifted this Olympics up and made it something exceptional. Our security forces. I met with the executive producer of NBC's Olympic coverage. He said to me that he had never felt safer in an Olympic venue, and he remarked upon the fact that he felt safe in spite of the fact he saw no weaponry and he saw no automatic weapons. He saw police officers and security officers who were taking care of the public good, the public interest, and to all of those security officers, I say thank you for putting such a proud face on Canada.

The medical team that we had. In the Turin Olympics of 2006 over 1,100 patients had to be admitted to Turin's hospitals. In British Columbia in 2010, because of the excellence of our medical team, because of the dedication of them, we only had to put 22 people in hospital. That speaks to their professionalism, to their expertise and, again, to their commitment to the Olympic spirit. I say thank you to all of them also, hon. Speaker.

This was an Olympics of many firsts. It was the longest torch relay in the history of the Olympic movement, in-country torch relay. Twelve thousand Canadians carried the Olympic torch, but equally importantly, 15 million Canadians had their hearts touched as that flame crossed their community and over a thousand communities in this country.

We set our sights on gold medal performances, and we had so many firsts. For the first time ever, a Canadian athlete won an Olympic gold medal at home when we hosted the games, when Alex Bilodeau received his mogul medal early in the sports.

For the first time ever, a British Columbian won at home in the women's snowboard cross when Maëlle Ricker crossed the finish line. For the first time ever in the Winter Olympics at any time, a British Columbian won a gold medal when Ashleigh McIvor won her ladies ski cross championship.

For the first time ever, Canadians, Americans and people around the world were awestruck at the exceptional precision of both the incredible Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue as they won the skate dancing gold for the Olympics.

For the first time ever, we won a gold medal in men's skeleton when Jon Montgomery won at Whistler. Let us not forget the gold medal performance of Christine Nesbitt in the 1,000 speed skating. It was electric to watch the gold medal performance of Heather Moyse and Kaillie Humphries as, for the first time ever, women crossed the bobsled finish line coming in first in an Olympic games. Right behind them were silver medallists Shelley Ann Brown and Helen Upperton. For the third straight time, the women led the way, and they won a gold medal in Olympic hockey.

There was not a British Columbian this weekend who didn't rise to their feet and cheer as Fort St. John's own Denny Morrison and his team gave us a gold in the men's team pursuit. Charles Hamelin gave us a gold in men's short track 500 metre, and not content with that, he and his team got us a gold in the men's 5,000 metre relay.

Then imagine the performance of Jasey Jay Anderson, who came from 20th place to a gold medal in the parallel giant slalom in snowboarding. For the first time ever, a Canadian rink, Kevin Martin and his team, went undefeated through 11 games in an Olympic Games to win gold for Canada's men's curling.

As if that wasn't enough, yesterday we were all sitting around, minding our own business on a Sunday afternoon. There we were, thinking to ourselves, "They're going to do it; they're going to do it," until there were 24 seconds left, when it was a tie. I have never heard the country so quiet, hon. Speaker, until that lad from Nova Scotia put the puck in the net, and Canada's men won gold. This was Canada's team. People from every province and territory joined in making sure that they would lift our entire country up with their performance.

You know, it wasn't just our gold medalists who made us proud. I can recall — I think it was the second day of the games — as Jennifer Heil won silver after an incredible race, she looked in the camera and said: "I won this. It's Canada's silver medal." She had performed exquisitely.

I can recall Clara Hughes at the end of her exceptional Olympic career, knowing that she had skated the skate of her life and set an Olympic record not just for Canada, but for the world, as the first multi-medal winner in both Summer and Olympic Games. What an example she has set for all of us.

We won more silver medals at the 21st Winter Olympic Games than has ever been won before in a Canadian-held Olympics. We saw the incomparable Kristina Groves win both a silver and a bronze. We saw the entire women's speed skating team win silver in the 3,000 metre relay. We saw Mike Robertson, who won the silver in snowboard cross, and Marianne St. Gelais, who won silver in short track. We saw Francois-Louis Tremblay win a bronze in the 500 metre men's short track and our four-man bobsled team come third.

We were all moved, we were all inspired, by the incredible performance of Joannie Rochette. How can you top that? Her courage and performance epitomized the strength of her resolve and the resolve of the entire Canadian Olympic team. It also epitomized the strength of family, as her father watched her perform in the performance of her life

It has been an incredible 17 days, and on behalf of all British Columbians, I want to say thank you to everyone who brought the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games to us here in our province, in our country, and who made us so proud.

Within days we are going to see another round of exceptional athletic performances. On March 12 the Paralympics will open in Vancouver, B.C. Just as we set the standard for others to follow, we will do the same in the Paralympics. Our Paralympians are ready, they are prepared, they are determined, and we are all looking forward to their gold-medal performances as we host them here in 2010.

The spirit of 2010 is one that I hope will last for a lifetime. I hope it will touch the hearts of our children across this country. I hope it will remind us of what we can do as Canadians when we act as one nation with common purpose and a common commitment to one another.

I am very proud of the work that VANOC did, that the volunteers did. I am proud of the partnerships we've had. But mostly I am proud of British Columbians, the people that cleaned the streets, that kept our hotels clean, that provided the service to our international visitors. There's not one person that visited Vancouver for 2010 — or Whistler, or Richmond — who did not go away knowing the warmth of the Canadian heart, the warmth of Canadian hospitality and our commitment to one another as well as to our guests.

Four host First Nations, for the first time in history, welcomed the world's international athletes to an Olympic games. We have learned from them. We welcomed the world as well. We were inspired by the performances of our athletes, but mostly I have been inspired by the performances of Canadians from coast to coast.

It was an honour for British Columbia to host these games. It will be an honour to host the Paralympics.

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