

Hon. Gordon Campbell

*Check against delivery*

Thank you very much. It's great to be back, and it's great to be reminded on a consistent basis that this is the last time I'm going to be speaking to the Truck Loggers Association. I walked in and Kathie said, "Here's your badge – last one you're ever going to get." And I want to say thank you to Finning; the job market's still tough out there, and I need all the help I can get, so thank you very much.

It's great to be here with you, though. Candidly, it's pretty good to be here and hear the theme of your convention: Positioned to Prosper. An interesting thing for me is I actually think that your industry and our province are positioned for prosperity that is beyond what a lot of us have been able to imagine over the last couple of years, as we've gone through the economic challenges in the economic downturn.

What I'd like you all to know here at the Truck Loggers Association is that doesn't happen because of just the work of any one group, but I can tell you this: the way Truck Loggers have worked with us – not just for the time we've been in government but for the time we were in Opposition, where they identified problems; they told us how we could approach them; they told us what solutions were; they worked together with us; they taught us; they showed us the way forward. That makes a huge difference to every single one of your elected representatives. So I want to say thanks to the Truck Loggers Association for all the work you do to make sure that you inform all of your elected representatives of how important the decisions we make are in your lives.

You would all know, as members, that you can't get there without a strong executive force and a strong group of people at Truck Loggers Association on a day-to-day basis. I want to say thanks to Graham for taking on the task of being the president. I want to thank Bill and Glen for being in line. I also want to thank Don, who has sat beside me for a number of years now – and confused me most of the time when I'm sitting with him – but thank you anyways, Don; I appreciate that.

And I want to thank Monty. I can't remember the last Truck Loggers convention, or meeting, I came to where Monty didn't say grace. It's the first time, I think, you've really included me that that way, Monty – so with you and Finning I'm ready for the future. Thank you very much. It's great; thank you.

I just want to say a couple of words about...I've been Premier now for nine and a half years or so, but I actually had the opportunity to come to Truck Loggers a lot of times before I got to be Premier. One of the great things about your membership is how enthusiastic they are about what they do on a day-to-day basis. That's been reflected in a series of presidents that you've had of this organization, and I would like to personally thank all of them. I'd like to thank Ted Arkle for the work that he did, and Rob Wood and Mike Hamilton and Tom Olson, and of course again Don, for the work that they've provided to all of us, the guidance they've provided the association, and the contribution they've made to our whole province and your whole industry. Thanks to all of you guys for the work that you've done and the time you've taken out of your lives to give back to the province of British Columbia.

And finally I want to introduce the team of people that I've had the opportunity to work with – those who are able to attend today. As you know, we're in the middle of a leadership campaign, so we don't have the normal full complement of all MLAs here at the Truck Loggers – but I do want to recognize the exceptional leadership that we have seen from the Minister of Forests, Range and Mines, Pat Bell. Thank you for the work that you've done, Pat, and thank you for coming today. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the MLA for Prince George-Valemount, Shirley Bond, joins us. Thank you, Shirley. The Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, the MLA for Surrey-Panorama, Stephanie Cadieux, joins us. Thank you, Stephanie. The MLA for Coquitlam-Burke Mountain, Doug Horne, is with us; thank you, Doug, for coming. The Minister of Children and Family Development and MLA for Langley, Mary Polak. I actually haven't seen him here yet, but I think Barry Penner joins us today, the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. Is he here? Applaud for him anyway. I want to say Don McRae joins us as well, the MLA for Comox Valley; thank you for coming, Don.

As I reflected on my last speech to the Truck Loggers, I thought, "What could I say? What announcements could I make? I have bad news? None." I have, in fact, over the last 10 years had the opportunity to meet with you on a number of occasions. We've laid out a plan for the 10 years that are ahead of us.

I want to go back to that idea of partnership, because it's the partnership we've had between the government and the Truck Loggers that has positioned us for prosperity in the future. When you think about it and you think of what's happened over the last 10n years and the changes that we've faced, the one thing that really strikes me is that actually in this industry and in this part of our province, there has been relentless change. It has been ongoing. Some of it has been driven by us, as a province, as an industry. A lot of it has been driven by the world.

Ten years ago, when I was first elected, our province was not a first pick in terms of economic growth. In fact, it was lagging the rest of the country. After a decade of incredible prosperity in the rest of the country, British Columbia had fallen behind. Ten years ago when I met with you, you talked about an onerous taxation burden. You talked about onerous regulatory concerns. You talked about the way the government was getting in your way so you couldn't pursue your goals and your objectives to make sure you created not just healthy and successful companies, employment, and stronger communities up and down the coast.

Over that 10 years we've made a lot of changes. Some have worked the way we hoped, and some haven't been as good as we might have wanted. But we have been willing to work together and to change things so that the industry could be more competitive and it could position itself for prosperity. Our taxation regime is dramatically different today than it was in 2001. In 2001 you had a corporate capital tax; there is none today. Today you have the lowest corporate income taxes of any jurisdiction in the G7. Today your workers pay on average 37 per cent less in income taxes than they did before.

And today communities all over the province are recognizing that there is a true partnership between our forest industry and the well-being and the quality of life of the people that live in those communities. That partnership has been reflected in a change in the way we do business. It's been reflected in the change in the way we think of one another and the way we think of the industry.

This industry is not just critically important to our past. It is critically important to our future in British Columbia. As we take the opportunities that are laid before us on that table of opportunity, it is important for us to recognize that in spite of the changes that we've had to face and the changes that we've had to make, that change is going to continue and it's going to be relentless. If we are going to have the opportunities that young people working in the forest industry deserve, that young businesses in the forest industry deserve so that they can prosper, we're going to have to be able to face those changes directly and try and make sure that we maximize the benefits for all of the people that live here.

Ten years ago, it's hard to believe we didn't have a softwood lumber agreement. We were just wrapping up the previous one. We looked to a future one. It took us five years to get another softwood lumber agreement. You'll know there's been a challenge from some of the American industry to what we've been doing in British Columbia. I can tell you what we've been doing. We've been living in accordance with the softwood lumber agreement – and as is always the case when we have a level playing field, British Columbian companies, British Columbian workers win. We win competitions with the level playing field, and that's why our future is so bright in this province.

For the first time ever, as we face a challenge to our trade between the United States and Canada, our review will be done by an international panel. They're going to actually, for the first time ever, look at what we actually are doing – not what those who are failing in the competition say we're doing. As we look at that challenge that the softwood lumber has created for us, we see a whole new world opening up for us in the future.

That new world is across the Pacific. That new world is something that we started dealing with in 2002. I can remember going there for the first time with Mike de Jong, when he was the Forests Minister in 2003. Some members of the industry said, "What are we doing here?" What we were doing there was trying to pry open a market door that would create huge opportunities for British Columbians.

I can tell you this. The difference that Pat Bell has made since he took on the task of being Minister of Forests, in opening up that marketplace, in creating new trade opportunities – new trade opportunities that are making sure that mills stay open in the province, that are making sure that product is shipped to China and making sure that we have people at work in China – has made an enormous difference. Today I can tell you with confidence that there are 5,500 people at work in British Columbia in the forest industry today because we took the time, in partnership with the industry, to go and open that door to China.

And ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you this: the door to China is getting wider and wider, and I am sure that Pat Bell and the future Premier of the province of British Columbia are going to walk through that door with you and with your workers, and we are going to see a huge improvement in the forest industry in our province and the economic opportunities that exist there.

We already, in British Columbia, have the world's largest softwood lumber manufacturer, West Fraser. We have its third-largest softwood lumber manufacturer, Canfor. We have its fifth-largest softwood lumber manufacturer, Tolko.

One of the things in British Columbia we have to know is we are the best in the world at this business. When I say that, and I say "you," you should think this: it's about you. You are the ones that have made us the best in the world. You are the ones that generate the kind of thing that we've seen from some of the industry in the United States, because you are so good at what you do. Never lose track of that as you go through the challenges ahead.

You didn't, certainly, in the last 10 years, and I know you won't in the next 10 years – because one of the things we should know is: this is a place that you want to be. There is no place, as I've gone around the country or around the continent, as I've talked with other people in other parts of North America, certainly – there is no place I'd rather be than British Columbia right now. There is no place that has a firmer foundation. You know why we have a firm foundation? Because we have great, smart people that are living here. We have a great resource base that we can build on. And we have a firm foundation that is going to allow us to build this economy as we go into the future.

And you know what we're going to build it with? Does anyone have any idea what we will build it with in the future?

*Voices: Wood.*

*Gordon Campbell:* Pardon me? That guy over on that table – table number four – what do you think we'll build it with? [*Laughter.*] That's the kind of enthusiasm – "Maybe just a little bit of wood; I don't know." It's going to be a lot of wood. There's going to be new wood products. There's going to be new wood markets. There's new opportunity in China, which we really can't even start to imagine yet. That's the manufactured wood opportunity that exists in China. It is huge. We've got the product. We can teach them how to develop it, and over the next 10 years we can flourish in forestry, and we will meet the needs of their customers in China. It is an enormous opportunity that I am sure that everyone in the future is going to reach out and try and take advantage of.

Remember, when people tell you that it can't be done, that it has been done. We've seen a dramatic increase in our trade to China. In fact, in September, October, and November of last year, we shipped more wood to China and Japan than we shipped to the United States. That's going to continue to happen as we go forward, because their economies – certainly the Chinese economy and the Korean economy – are growing at double digits, and the American economy is floundering.

The American economy continues to have a significant challenge in front of it in terms of its housing market. We're trying to provide them with understanding of how they can build that market for wood in the United States, just as we're trying to do it in Canada. One of the things that we talked about here at the Truck Loggers – I don't remember how many years ago now; probably four or five years ago – was establishing what we call a "wood first" strategy. It says, "We're going to think of using wood first in building our public buildings. We're going to think of using wood in doing the things that we can do with wood, and build new products with wood."

As we've done that, we've seen, actually, an increase in the number of people that are actually embracing that wood-first initiative. There's 27 communities across the province that have embraced the wood-first initiative. One of the things that we should all do in partnership – and whether I'm Premier or not Premier, I'll be helping you do it as much as I can – is we have to encourage the federal government to embrace a wood-first policy. We've been working with Saskatchewan and Alberta to embrace a wood-first policy.

And if we can't get them to do it in Saskatchewan or Alberta, or if we can't quite convince Ottawa to do it, I can tell you this: in Japan, right today, they are thinking of embracing a wood-first policy and passing a wood-first policy, which also will make an enormous difference to us in British Columbia. But it won't happen if we don't continue to build on the strength of the partnership we've had between the Truck Loggers Association and the government of British Columbia, and the government of British Columbia and the government of Canada.

I think that over the next two years, almost for certain, there's going to be a federal election at some point. We should continue to advocate together for a wood-first policy to be adopted by the Canadian government. It works for the environment; it works for the economy. It works for British Columbia; it works for the future.

All of those things work, and when you have a policy that makes sense, there's nothing better than advocating it together. You can know that we are going to [inaudible]. I will continue. I believe the government is going to be continuing with that, with an aggressive program. I've talked to Pat about it, and he's going to advocate that. Right, Pat? Thank you very much.

It's also important to think back over the last 10 years and realize that 10 years ago, there was one community forest licence in this province. Today there are 41 community forest licences in British Columbia, with an annual cut totalling more than a million cubic metres. There's another 14 communities right now that are in the process of getting a community forest.

In 2001, first nations held about two million cubic metres per year of AAC – less than three per cent. Today first nations hold 12 million cubic metres of annual allowable cut – almost 14 per cent of the provincial AAC. And there's \$250 million in revenue-sharing and stumpage that's been provided to first nations.

Here's what's important about that. First nations are critical to our economic future in British Columbia. They want to be our partners; they want to work with us. If you hear the stories of what can happen when we work in that partnership, it means it spells success and it spells prosperity. First Nations leadership are ready to go to work with the forest industry to make sure that they benefit for their communities and their workers and their kids.

There are no better stewards than you working in partnership with the First Nations – and I want to say thanks to the TLA for the work they've done. Tom, who has done a great job up in Haida Gwaii, working with them up in Haida Gwaii. It will make a huge difference in our competitiveness and our ability to perform in the international marketplace as we include first nations as true partners.

I want to say thanks specifically to the executive of the TLA for the work they've done with that, and I want to say thanks to the First Nations leadership – because partnership works when you're both working together and you are working for mutual benefit. You have done that, and you've done us all proud by the work that you've done, so thank you very much for that.

We've also made significant strides in how we deal with our forest industry on the land base. Again, I take my hat off to everybody here who has worked so hard with us to do that. We've improved environmental standards that we advanced together, in concert. The Great Bear rainforest has a new operating regime called "eco-based management systems." That is something that's new. Whenever something's new, it takes time to get it in place – but it is going to make a difference.

In 2001, just 2.8 million hectares were recognized as certified by third-party organizations in British Columbia – 2.8 million. Those organizations – like the Forest Stewardship Council, the Canadian Standards Association's Sustainable Forest Initiative – gave us their seal of approval for only 2.8 million hectares. Now listen to this. Because of the work of your industry, because of the way that we've worked in partnership and cooperation, today that number is 53 million hectares – and that number is higher than any jurisdiction in the world. That's you.

The task now that we face is to look forward. None of us can pretend that we know exactly what's going to take in the global marketplace. None of us can pretend that we know exactly what's going to take in the national economy, or even the provincial economy. But we know the things that we can actually do. It will be sure that as the economy improves that we do better, or if the economy deteriorates that we mitigate any challenges that we may face.

Really, the fundamentals that we faced in 2001 are the same fundamentals we face in 2011. We have to make sure that our regulatory regime is thoughtful, is scientifically based, and frankly is timely. We have to find ways to remove uncertainty from the system, as opposed to putting it into the system. We have to find ways that we can continue to be competitive in terms of our tax regime, so we encourage investment, so we encourage increases in productivity. You can't call for increases of productivity if you put hurdles in front of increased productivity. We have to find ways that we can do that, because that will make us even more competitive in the world.

No one is going stand aside while British Columbia comes forward. We're not going to be order-takers; we're going to be market-makers. We're going to be people that go out there and say to people, "We want to work with British Columbia, because they have the best products, because they have the best service, because they know what our concerns are" – and we're going to meet them.

In 10 years, the people who predict the collapse of the mid-term lumber supply as a result of mountain pine beetle will be proven wrong – if we're smart, if we invest now, if we work now, and if we work together now. We have to have a concerted effort to grow more trees. We want to become – and I'm sure you all want to become; 10 years from now you want to become – as well-known across the globe for planting forests as you are for harvesting forests. We can do that, and you can do that, in partnership.

We want to make sure that as we move ahead that there is no question that silviculture is a critical component of all that we do in British Columbia. I believe that in 10 years you'll be able to watch as exports to China far exceed exports to the United States. And as we expand those marketplaces in Asia, whether it's China or Korea or Japan or India, we will expand the opportunities here in British Columbia. Forestry will once again be a place that people say they want to go to work, they want to get the skills development, they want to have the training, they want to become a forester – because a forester thinks about the environment, he thinks about the economy, she thinks about how the biology works across the province. She thinks about ecosystems, but most importantly she thinks about the health of the forest, because the health of the forest reflects on the health of our economy.

For anyone who doesn't understand that the health of our forests is critical to our economic well-being in the future, we have to go out and we have to explain why. Let me give you just one quick example. When we were faced with the pine beetle infestation in the early 1990s, we hoped that the environment would take care of it. We hoped – we all prayed – for that cold winter to come along. It never came.

One of the things we have to know now is that it's not going to come. What you have to know now is we have to change the way we look at the world and change the way we manage our resources to make sure we can maximize the benefits in the changed environment that we live in – not just economic environment, but natural environment. I know that working with you, we can do that.

I know that as we work together, we can see a bioenergy industry growing across the province of British Columbia that provides carbon-neutral energy. For those who say that time has passed, I can tell you: they are looking at the past. It has not passed. It is here, and it's going to increase in scope as we move ahead. Bioenergy is going to be a critical component of making sure that we have a forest industry that is resilient, that goes through the good times and the bad times in terms of the traditional building products but allows us to meet our needs and our objectives as we go forward and into the future.

It's important, I think, for us to know that as we do that we are going to continue to work on the challenges that confront us in terms of our entire natural environment. We are facing significant flooding. We're facing inundations. We're facing droughts. We have to work on that – and you know one of the reasons that that has been exacerbated? Because 80 per cent of our pine forests have died. Little things, like the fact that a tree drinks about 70 litres of water a day if it's living, and zero litres of water a day if it's not, make a difference. It makes a difference in our water tables; it makes a difference in how we deal with the challenges that we face in the winters and the summers and the springs. We have to be alive to that, and we have to be willing to shift what we do to meet those challenges.

I want to just say one last thing about the marketplace. I think, as we look to the future, we have to look to the future with confidence, but we have to understand that the future will not be only of our making. We can do the best we can in British Columbia to set our industry on the right footing, but we have to do it with others. Partnership is the critical component of that. We actually have to do it with the government of Canada, we have to do it with Alberta and Saskatchewan, and we have to do it with our competitors in the United States.

We have to teach them about product development. We have to teach them about wood first. We have to show them how they can grow their market as we grow our market. We can do all those things. We can do it if we open our minds to the opportunities that are in front of us.

You know, as I get ready to close down my last speech to the Truck Loggers Association, I can tell you this: you are well positioned for prosperity. It only requires a couple of things. It requires you to build on the foundation that you have created. That foundation is one that was built on open partnership; open communication; direct, honest appraisal of what the government has done or not done, what the government could or could not do. Open appraisal and honest partnership says, "We all understand that the forest industry is critical to our public well-being, to our quality of life, to the quality of our economy, to the opportunities that exist in communities all over this province."

It also requires us to make sure that we define and share our goals. As was so eloquently pointed out earlier, I'm about to be out of work. But there are at least six people I know in my party that are looking for the same job – so let me tell you this: it's a great job. It is a really good job, because they get to work with you. It is a really good job, because they get to work with a great group in caucus that have the best interests of the whole province of British Columbia in mind. It is a really good job, because they will learn far more than they could ever imagine.

I used to say that the world would change a lot less in two years than you expect, and a lot more in 10 years than you expect. Over the last 10 years, the world has changed – but it's changed, in my mind, for the better. British Columbia is one of the leading economies on the continent. The people of British Columbia have a sense of confidence. If they set a goal and they set an objective, they know that they can reach it.

If you doubt that for a minute, I just ask you to think back to one year ago. One year ago, the world was getting ready to come to British Columbia for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. One year ago, there were still people that said we'd never do it. And just 11 months ago, they all found out we could. The best Olympic Games in the history of the Winter Olympic Games. Athletes that made us all proud, and thousands and thousands of British Columbians that were proud not just of their province, but proud of their country.

You are Canada's leaders. You're Canada's leaders in forestry. You're Canada's leaders in building a new relationship with first nations. You're Canada's leaders in dealing with the real challenges that climate change presents to all of us. You've led because you've had an executive with vision, with strength, with commitment, and with energy. And you've succeeded in positioning yourself in prosperity, because you've lived according to the principles that you set when I first talked to you, probably 15 or 16 years ago.

Thank you for doing that. Thank you for the contribution you all make to your communities, to your workers, and to this great province. Thank you for what you've done to make British Columbia the best place on earth.

Thank you.