

Premier Christy Clark's address to the Canada West Foundation
(Check against delivery)



Before I begin, let me thank Jim Dinning, your Chair, for inviting me here today.

Let me also pay tribute to all the people who make up this great organization:

- Dr. Roger Gibbins and your management and operations team
- And the many people whose time, energy and ideas have made the Canada West Foundation so successful.

The founders of the Canada West Foundation had a bold vision, to give Canada's western provinces a true voice in Confederation.

From that vision, for four decades, you have made a very thoughtful and very powerful contribution.

Thank you.

Tonight, let's cast our eyes on the future that lies ahead.

As our needs and aspirations within Confederation have become better understood and indeed acted upon, our focus has shifted.

No longer are B.C. and the western provinces on the outside looking in. Remember the battle cry "The West Wants In". With more confidence and determination than ever, we are looking outward to realize a new dream which is the economic reality for BC and the West and indeed, Canada.

I speak of course of our relentless pursuit of the Asia Pacific.

There will be nothing greater that will shape the future prosperity of this generation of British Columbians and generations of Canadians to come.

There is no greater link to that prosperity than our Prince Rupert and Vancouver ports, and our international airport - YVR. BC is Canada's only Pacific coast province.

And what a huge competitive advantage we have to be more than two days closer than the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

We need to seize that opportunity. But this takes more than just being blessed with great geography.

It takes hard work. It takes a plan. For me, that means that we have to do three big jobs very well.

First, we need to focus and coordinate our economic development to make sure we leverage all of our advantages - these include ports, resource sectors and people.

Second, we need to make sure we are properly 'selling' ourselves to Asia. It has to be abundantly clear we are stable and reliable trading partners - truly 'open for business'.

Third, we need to 'sell' the Asia Pacific future to all of Canada because, believe or not, folks aren't getting it!

Starting with number one ... FOCUS.

British Columbia is going to put special focus on sectors where we can leverage and grow our competitive strengths.

With this in mind, I've asked Pat Bell, my Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, to review our economic development plans.

We want to turn promise and potential, into paydirt.

We have many opportunities to exploit in BC, ranging from natural resources, to tourism, to education and research-based opportunities. When it comes to an economic development plan, we don't want to be all over the map, we want to be focused and seize the best opportunities that will bring that first dollar into our economy.

Pat's working on those plans now and I look forward to reviewing them, but I know, we know, that the Asia Pacific will feature largely in them.

My second point - making sure we are properly selling and marketing ourselves to Asia. From all of the work done to turn China into our province's biggest consumer of forest products, we know that building relationships is key - it takes focus and sustained efforts.

And in the past few years, relationships have helped spur on impressive growth.

Just look at the numbers. Ten years ago, B.C. exported just over \$1 billion worth of goods to China and Hong Kong.

Last year, our provincial exports to China topped \$4.3 billion - a record amount, more than three times the amount since 2001.

That's 11 and a half million dollars worth of exports to China every day.

This growth has been critical, and timely, in light of the economic slowdown in Japan and the US.

In three years, our exports to China have doubled and it has now become our second-largest export market.

So our commodities and goods are being exported faster than ever. And coming this way is increased direct investment.

In 2008, Chinese direct investment in Canada totalled \$5.7 billion. Last year it jumped to \$14.1 billion. That's an increase of nearly 150 per cent.

In February, PetroChina and Canada's Encana Corp. agreed to a \$5.4 billion shale gas venture in northeastern British Columbia and Alberta, the largest Chinese investment in Canada to date.

In April, China Southern launched regular air service between YVR and Guangzhou. And details about expanded cargo services are coming in the weeks ahead.

There are a lot more examples. And as impressive they are - as impressive as the traffic and activity flowing through our ports and Pacific Gateway - very little of it means anything if it doesn't mean something to our families.

China has been a lifeline for the forest sector. Today, 127 people in Crofton were hired back at the Catalyst mill because they needed a second line of pulp production.

About 155 family supporting jobs at the Canfor mill in Quesnel have been secured because China is buying BC's wood.

In fact, Jim Shepard tells me that just four years ago China was a negligible market for Canfor. Now it accounts for about a third of the company's total lumber production.

So the trade and market development work we do far across the Pacific matters to a lot to people - a lot of families - here at home.

And long before any container ship shows up in our ports or any foreign currency is deposited into our economy, there is the hard work of growing relationships that lead to exchange.

But we've only just begun. By 2020 it's expected that trade with the Asia-Pacific will reach \$230B - with one-third coming from B.C.

If we do our job, strengthen our Pacific Gateway and the road, rail and air connections that bring goods to people, that growth could mean over 250,000 new jobs in British Columbia alone.

And when market to Asia, we need to leverage BC's multicultural advantage in Asia. Our diversity is more than a mere asset to us. It is who we are, and who we are matters. It turns relationships into networks; it turns leads into partnerships.

We have incredibly strong, bedrock Asian communities in BC with immense personal, cultural and business connections throughout the Asia Pacific region - and these connections build more than a trade bond, but a far more powerful and enduring human bond.

And this is important, because I believe that the North American jurisdiction that learns how to do business the same way our Asia-Pacific partners do business will be the most successful.

My third point - we need to 'sell' the Asia Pacific future to the folks back East.

I'm not saying that they don't always pay attention to the West, but in an April poll commissioned by the Asia Pacific Foundation, it showed a 15 per cent drop (from 59 per cent to 44 per cent) in the number of Canadians who view China as important to this country's prosperity. In fact, this downward trend held true for all Asian economies.

Which is shocking given that our commodities are helping Asia fuel the biggest urbanization experience in the history of the world.

So I'm very happy that the Asia Pacific Foundation is launching a national conversation to highlight the importance of adapting to the shift in power toward Asia.

Later this year, I will be fulfilling a commitment I made during my leadership campaign to lead a trade mission to China and India. Just as we saw the potential in the China market over the past few years, we must also set our sights on India now.

But B.C. can't do it alone. We can't think of ourselves as a single port city, or a single region, or even a single province. We understand that B.C. and western Canada, together, form vital links in intercontinental and international trade.

We understand that together we have to keep expanding our capacity to move cargo, and expanding our links with trading partners whether they're in eastern Canada, or Beijing or, yes, the United States.

And we can't forget that the US is our best friend and our most important trading partner. Our natural gas market - which is enormous and so critical to our provinces revenue base - is primarily in the US, for example. Indeed, our relationships and interdependence are, really, without parallel on Earth.

Today, I met with Washington State Governor Chris Gregoire. We talked about the Pacific Coast Collaborative which brings her state, B.C., Oregon, California and Alaska together in a common front and voice on issues facing Pacific North America.

Yes, our jurisdictions are sometimes competitors, but we are stronger when we are pulling together, with a collective 52 million people and a GDP of \$2.5 trillion.

In fact, Governor Gregoire gave me some very good advice about China, and the importance of China to the Washington State economy.

The Pacific Coast Collaborative is one way BC is working with its neighbours. Within Canada, BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan's New West Partnership really is something that opens Canada's west to the new opportunities of the 21st century.

The agreement creates the nation's largest interprovincial trade and investment market. It combines the power and resources of Canada's three most western provinces, of nine million people and GDP of over \$550 billion, rivalling Ontario.

I recently hosted Premiers Stelmach and Wall in Vancouver, and I was incredibly impressed by how deeply they understand the importance of our west coast ports to their provinces, and to Canada. How the transportation infrastructure we are building (and have yet to build) doesn't just connect them to the coast, but to markets that comprise half the world's population.

The New West Partnership is pushing us to share our expertise, build on shared strengths, encourage the creativity of innovators, and expand our presence around the world.

For example, we've opened a trade and investment office in Shanghai - the new New York. The office helps us create a consistent, customer-first presence - something that the Chinese value so highly in a business relationship.

We're also finding ways to get better value for taxpayers' money by working together on procurement, particularly in health care.

Together, we're committed to removing barriers and promoting commercial ties with Asia and, at the same time, connecting Canada's west to the rest of North America.

We need more co-operation and collaboration - in our trade offices, economic policy, and post-secondary institutions - those centres of new thought that will push our economy forward.

There is still a lot more to do and learn. Right now, despite all the big numbers and progress I've just talked about, I would have say that our performance is good when it comes to responding to the opportunities of the Asia Pacific - we need to be great.

Because being great translates into family-supporting jobs - like those millworkers in Quesnel, and it translates into revenues to fund a ravenous health care system.

Greatness will come from focusing on strengths - targeting our efforts where the best opportunities exist. It will come from creating a strategy and sticking to it.

And it will come from strong, personal, cultural and commercial relationships that allow opportunities to grow, expand and diversify.

This isn't the old B.C. We are looking over the mountaintops and across the Pacific horizon. We are dreaming big and being bold.

And we are fixated on doing the three big jobs I laid out at the beginning:

1. Focussing economic development on our advantages
2. Selling Canada better than we ever have in Asia itself
3. Selling, realizing and leading the promise of the Asia Pacific for all of Canada

When we do these, I am confident we can deliver on what really matters and that's building a better future for our children and grandchildren, here in BC, across the West and all across Canada.

And my team and I look forward to working with the Canada West Foundation, taking your advice and counsel, as we explore the future.

Decades ago we said the "West Wants In". Today, I believe the "New West" is central to Canada's future. We're no longer pleading, we're leading. And I believe all of Canada will want in when it comes to our exciting future.

Thank you.