

Premier Christy Clark introduces Canada Starts Here: The BC Jobs Plan to the Vancouver Board of Trade

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Check against delivery

Thanks, Dave, for the introduction.

I'd like to acknowledge my caucus members in attendance, as they stand up - please give them a warm round of applause.

Iain Black is here today as well.

And most importantly I want to acknowledge all the job creators in the room and that's you.

You know, my grandfather was a member of the trade delegation that went to Japan with this Board of Trade in 1954. I found this wallet of his from the trip when I was cleaning out some boxes in my garage a couple months ago. He worked for a B.C. small business, Nelson Brothers Fisheries. He was the production manager and he went on this trade mission that flew through Anchorage, Alaska and then on to Japan.

The whole point was to reach out to open new markets and create new jobs in British Columbia.

I am really proud he did that, and that the Board of Trade had the foresight to lead that mission in the 1950s. Fifty-seven years later, I am standing here before the same organization to talk about the same thing - new markets, new opportunities and good jobs for families.

Back then, it was no small task, but he went anyway.

Just think about it. Nine years after the end of World War Two, imagine how unknown Japan was to people in our part of the world. You couldn't get live streaming news from Tokyo over the Internet. And you definitely couldn't watch Iron Chef on TV.

But way more importantly, in 1954, it would have been impossible for British Columbians to provide the kind of help we are providing as Japan recovers from the recent natural disasters. Back then, Japan must have felt like another planet. Yet today, they are B.C.'s third-largest trading partner.

This shows how far a determined effort and a clear vision can take our economy and our province.

And it's time to do it again.

Our plan is called Canada Starts Here.

We chose this name because we know British Columbia can pull Canada into the next century - we know we can lead this country like never before.

It means we can take the best of Canada and we can make it better - right here in B.C.

Executing on this plan is my central mission as your Premier.

Our plan is centered on bringing what we call the "first new dollar" to British Columbia.

This means bringing new investment here so each new dollar can grow, and multiply and circulate - circulate from the initial investment, to our value added sectors, to our small businesses and, finally, to dinner tables, rec rooms and ice rinks from one end of B.C. to the other.

Our BC Jobs Plan is built on three pillars and today I'd like to tell you about some of the key initiatives we'll be implementing as part of this plan:

The first pillar is enabling job creation with a commonsense government that opens doors instead of closing them, and makes things simple for business by getting out of the way when we can.

Does that mean stripping back environmental and other social protections?

Absolutely not. But it does mean taking a businesslike approach focused on the end game - defending and creating jobs for BC families.

Our jobs plan recognizes that sometimes government must lead the way. But sometimes the best thing government can do is get out of the way.

I am announcing today that we will establish a "Major Investments Office" that will help businesses who want to invest in B.C. get the answers they need in a quick, clear way.

This office will facilitate answers, make sure timelines don't slip and negotiate solutions to problems. If the answer is "yes," let's get there as quickly as possible and get the jobs created as soon as we can.

I am also announcing today that we will move aggressively to eliminate one of the big problems inhibiting job growth in our province - the endless delays in permitting approvals.

We will invest \$24 million across natural resource ministries over two years, in order to eliminate the backlog in key authorizations that is preventing projects from proceeding.

Let me stress, we are not changing environmental protections.

And we are also adding more resources to make sure we continue to meet our legal obligations to First Nations - and continue to involve them in the benefits of economic development.

We are going to take the time we need to protect our clean air and water, but we are not going to leave investors hanging because the government that makes the laws can't process the permits.

I am also announcing today that the new BC Jobs and Investment Board will be up and running in 60 days. It will include citizens from across B.C. to promote economic development by holding government's feet to the fire to make sure we are doing everything possible to make B.C. competitive - and not standing in the way of good jobs.

B.C. will only win if we win together, so this board will bring together business leaders and labour leaders, community leaders and government to fight for jobs like never before.

I am also announcing the establishment of an Aboriginal Business and Investment Council to help connect First Nations to capital and expertise, so deals can get done, jobs can get created and progress can be made.

And by 2015 the B.C. government will sign at least 10 new non-treaty economic development agreements with First Nations to further improve economic certainty.

But this plan won't just help Aboriginal people - it will help every British Columbian by increasing investment in our province.

Small business is a key driver of job growth and the cornerstone of many communities. The potential of clean technology and the creative economy, of digital media and the arts, to bolster our economy and enrich our lives is

one of the reasons that I announced in Surrey yesterday three tax initiatives to help small businesses in these areas and others.

These include a competitiveness review of business taxation to ensure the film industry and others benefit from streamlined administration.

We will also make the most of B.C.'s natural gas advantage. I will be our top salesperson as we work to grow new natural gas markets in Asia for B.C. - I will market this resource with a single-minded focus and promote the use of natural gas as a transportation fuel.

We will take action to realize the potential of Liquefied Natural Gas. As I announced in Prince Rupert on Monday, we will clear the way and secure the investment required to establish up to three LNG plants by 2020.

We have enough electricity available to launch the first two phases of the project.

And I need to be clear here today - we will not allow a lack of power supply to stand in the way of further important steps in this project.

Earlier this week I met with leaders of the Haisla First Nation to talk about LNG and they have a real problem on their hands - it's going to create more jobs than their community can fill. I think that's a problem a lot of communities would like to have.

The second pillar of our jobs plan is about continuing to build smart infrastructure, and I don't just mean bricks and mortar ... I mean people, too. We need to support the human relationships that help us succeed, the unity we must foster and the education we must strengthen.

That's why earlier this week in Kamloops I announced that the province is setting an aggressive target to grow the international student population in B.C. by 50 per cent in just the next four years.

And our physical infrastructure is the start of a web that also ties our country together in a very real way.

Our ports are not just British Columbia's ... they are Saskatchewan's ports too. The workers building the Port Mann bridge know they aren't just building it for the Lower Mainland - they are building it for families in places like Woodstock, Ontario so they can get auto parts delivered from Asia.

This coast is Canada's coast - and that is why I am announcing today that we will invest \$50 million to improve the B.C.-owned rail corridor that connects Deltaport to Canada's transportation network.

With this contribution, the Port of Metro Vancouver can now move forward on a \$200-million expansion to increase container capacity, enabling the creation of over 600 jobs at port operations and ensuring goods move efficiently. This follows my announcement on Monday that B.C. is committing \$15 million towards the Road Rail Utility Corridor on Ridley Island.

We will also be thinning our border with the United States to help trade and people move more efficiently.

We will be consulting broadly and announcing further infrastructure investments in the coming weeks, many of them with our good partners the federal government - and all of them made with an eye to defending existing jobs and creating new ones.

The third pillar of our jobs plan is about opening up markets for B.C. goods.

It's about doing what my Grandfather did in 1954, but doing it today on a much larger scale and harnessing all of the strengths our B.C. team has to offer.

We will focus especially on China and India, where economies are growing and the middle class is coming to the fore.

Visuals of middle class growth in Asia.

India's middle class population versus all of Canada.

The middle class in India alone is expected to be more than 10 times the size of Canada's entire population in less than 20 years.

We need to be great at expanding and understanding those markets, and producing goods to feed their demands.

Opening up new markets for B.C. is key to our success, and I intend to lead this effort personally. I intend to be the chief salesperson for our province as we take our place leading this great country.

By selling B.C. wood all over the world, we have created a renaissance in the forest sector - 27 mills have opened in the last two years, including one in Kitwanga. A sizeable chunk of that mill's sales will be going to China, Japan and Korea. I was there when they opened the mill in Kitwanga and I've seen what a positive effect it's had on that community. There are 481 people living there and that mill - which started with that first new dollar - employs 45 of them. And about three quarters of those employees are First Nations people.

Those are real jobs, for real families right here in British Columbia - and it shows the impact of focusing on trade with Asia - and the power that trade can have all over our province, in communities large and small.

It also shows the power of Pat Bell, our Jobs Minister, and it's a great example of why I gave him the job in the first place.

And all over B.C. we see examples of small businesses working in Asia too, leveraging the strength of established local community connections with those Asian markets.

Like Surrey-based Jhajj lumber, who have just recently started shipping their first ever containers of wood to India.

As many of you know, to increase our share I am going to lead a trade mission to China and India, so that I can make sure we're working with the right people, with the best ideas, to open up and expand markets for B.C.

We are launching an investor-focused international marketing campaign and I will have more to say about this tomorrow at the Business Council's Asia Pacific Forum.

These three pillars - enabling job creation, building smart infrastructure and opening new markets - will stand on two key foundations.

The first foundation is creating a strong, skilled B.C. workforce, trained for the jobs our economy needs today and in the future. And that means promoting education that will give our citizens the best chance to get the good jobs that will allow them to stay close to home, keeping families together, while building a stronger economy.

It also means having an immigration system in place to support job creation. That's why we support an increase to the number of applicants we can accept through our provincial nominee program, and we're working with the federal government on any other strategies we can identify.

And the second foundation is preserving our government's hard-earned reputation for fiscal discipline.

This foundation is so important - because we can't continue to be a safe harbour for investment if we aren't prudent about our finances.

We all feel a special pride in being Canadians. We are well thought of around the world and respected for our diversity and our tolerance - but Canada also has a well-deserved reputation for fiscal responsibility. Here in B.C. we take Canada's fiscal prudence one-step further through our commitment to low taxes and balanced budgets.

Canada's debt to GDP ratio is 36 per cent - down south in the US it's a whopping 72 per cent. And I'm proud to say that here in B.C. it's only 17.5 per cent. That's one of the reasons we have a triple AAA credit rating.

This is what I mean about taking the best of Canada and making it better.

We have to stick to our fiscally prudent course - we can't honestly say we are putting families first if we are saddling future generations with more and more debt.

High debt policies won't work for tomorrow and they won't work for today either. Just ask Greece; go ask the European Union; go ask anyone who lived through the 1990s right here in British Columbia.

You will notice our BC Jobs Plan is not about figuring out how many tax dollars we can spend - in fact the spending commitments are really quite modest. I'm quite proud of that.

We are being smart and strategic, because I think taxpayers deserve to be treated with respect. Our plan is premised on the focused pursuit of the first new dollar. To do this we have identified eight sectors with the greatest opportunity to bring that first new dollar into British Columbia.

These key sectors are:

- Forestry
- Mining
- Natural gas
- Agri-foods
- Tourism
- Transportation
- Technology, clean tech and the green economy, and
- International education.

These are sectors where our unique advantages - our creativity, our diversity, our resources, our geography - will put us on the path to success. They are sectors that will lift our entire economy by helping the businesses small and large that are the engine of job growth and create the greatest number of spin-off jobs.

They were chosen because they drive export growth. And that means everyone wins.

If you want to see how it works, take the example of the little town of Princeton. Two hundred and seventy people in Princeton now have a good job because of the mine at Copper Mountain - a job they can rely on when they need to buy a new truck - a job that will allow them to renovate their home. And maybe for the first time, they'll be able to put lunch in their children's lunch boxes each and every day.

The mine was shut down in the 1990s, and they were able to re-open Copper Mountain, based on one contract, with one company, in one Asian country.

That's how that first new dollar helps everyone. Because whether you work in manufacturing or the service industry, those dollars move around quickly.

Increased commodity prices make expanded mining a great opportunity for B.C. And the fact that our companies set the global standard for responsible mining means we can take advantage of it.

That means more revenue for health care and education.

We need to create more Princetons.

I've told you what we plan to do - now I'd like to talk about why we are doing it.

Everything I do is about putting families first - families of all shapes and sizes.

Good citizens come from families that instill character - and they become the foundation for strong, stable and safe communities. That's what builds a good province and ultimately that's what builds a great country.

And what makes families strong and stable?

You need a good job.

That's why a thriving private sector is so important. You create wealth, and in doing so, you create jobs. And you also create the revenues needed for education, for health care and for the services we all depend on.

You will notice our plan is about defending the jobs we have as well as working to create new ones. And that's important.

Our province is a place of relative economic calm and stability, but we are surrounded by a world of economic turmoil. Today alone we have seen a global market sell off, a significant decline in our own currency and an escalating crisis in the Eurozone.

Our best friend and closest neighbour, the United States, grapples with high unemployment and high debt. Even their own treasury secretary admits many are questioning whether their political system can deal with the economic turmoil.

I don't have to sugar-coat anything for you, the world is facing stormy seas ahead. But we will not keep our heads above water by hunkering down.

Our plan says the best defense is a good offence.

In the 1990s, North America underwent one of the biggest economic expansions in its history and, I'm sorry to say, British Columbia sat it out. The government of the day raised taxes, drove up debt, and chased away investment. And they killed jobs in every community doing it. They pitted one British Columbian against another, they divided our society and the results were tragic.

Businesses were lost ... families saw their dreams go up in smoke ... and then families were pulled apart as 50,000 people left the province looking for a better life.

They were looking for jobs.

We spent the last 10 years catching up.

B.C. turned the page in 2001 and worked to repair the damage done and end the divisive battles.

We got our fiscal house in order by giving taxpayers the respect they deserve, by using proven economic fundamentals, by cutting taxes and by balancing budgets.

A little common sense went a long way.

We saw our credit rating go up and we improved our quality of life because we could afford investments in health and education.

Now we are going to turn the page again and build on the platform of the last 10 years.

We are going to pull together as one B.C. team, with one focus - good stable jobs for BC families.

B.C. has incredible advantages that make us truly unique in the world:

- Our proximity to the biggest markets on the globe.
- Our diverse population.
- Our world class infrastructure.
- Our sound fiscal fundamentals.
- And a wealth of natural and intellectual resources.

We need to build on our position of strength... and never has this been more important than now.

I am a proud Canadian and I'm even prouder because B.C. will be leading Canada into the next decade. We will invite our fellow Canadians to join us and we will tell the world "Canada Starts Here."

This is a unique moment in history for us to do more than our fair share for the rest of Canada, to grasp B.C.'s opportunity to help build an even greater country.

Canada starts here because we are at the Pacific edge of the nation, and we are literally facing the future of the world in Asia.

Our location and geography is an asset, but it is just one part of the B.C. story.

Diversity is at the core of who we are: it is a key strength for our society and it enriches every one of our lives.

From New Canadians to the strength of our young First Nations people, to the people of Asian and Indian descent who have been settled here for a century or more now, our diverse population is a key asset to expanding our economy and making sure that B.C. families prosper.

40 per cent of the population of Greater Vancouver identify themselves as Asian. If you want to argue there is an Asian city outside of Asia, Vancouver is it.

There has never been a place like this in the history of the world. And we have a plan to capitalize on our unique advantages.

Today I have outlined our BC Jobs Plan and that's what it has to be - a plan for the entire province, by the entire province. Not a plan for the government, not a plan for one party - but a plan that brings all of us together and moves us all forward. And that means we need to listen.

As you know, I am a big proponent of open government.

This jobs plan will be "exhibit A" of that commitment. If you visit the website <http://www.bcjobsplan.ca> you will see that a public engagement effort is now getting underway.

We're also going to initiate regional and sectoral engagement across the province, with communities, with chambers and with everyday British Columbians.

We will also be issuing semi-annual reports to British Columbians to tell them about our progress, but also to ensure we improve the plan using what we've learned from talking to British Columbians.

I am doing this because government doesn't have all the answers and we need your help - because government doesn't create jobs, you do that.

I am optimistic as we look forward to tomorrow. I know our province can lead this country if we are at our best - if we are united, if we are optimistic and if we are confident.

As I worked with our team to prepare this plan, I took my inspiration from what this Board of Trade - and my Grandfather - did so many years ago with the mission to Japan. They were writing the story of B.C. and we are going to keep writing it - today and tomorrow.

We are facing a generational opportunity, and we are going to lead Canada into next century.

This is our time.

This is our chance to lead.

This is our moment.

When it comes to building the future, *Canada Starts Here*.