

Premier Christy Clark addresses UBCM Delegates - 2014

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Good morning.

I'd like to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Squamish Nation and Lil'wat First Nation. This is a special year for most of you.

It's when you stand up. Stand up for your values, and ask for your communities' support to lead.

I want to talk to you today about the responsibilities that come with that privilege.

What it means to lead.

What's at stake in our province. The role of rural communities -- how rural and urban communities are connected.

I want to talk to you about resource development.

Done responsibly. Done right. That's at the heart of our history.

It powers what all of us do in this room. And it's the key to our future.

First, I want to acknowledge some of the titans of BC municipal politics who have chosen not to run again next month.

It's going to be a lot different here next year without people like John Kettle and Walter Grey - and a lot less colourful.

It was John who told a packed room recently that nudity is the best form of birth control as we age.

It's a good thing we have so many natural resources - because we'd all be naked without them.

To everyone wrapping up your career in elected public service: thank you. I also want to thank Rhona Martin for everything she's accomplished at UBCM.

We didn't always see eye to eye, but that's okay. I don't need or want to be surrounded by people who agree with me.

In fact, I relish it. There really is no other explanation for me running in Vancouver-Point Grey.

Rhona, you've been a tireless advocate for municipalities across the province, and I thank you for calling it like you see it.

And I want to congratulate incoming president Sav Dhaliwal. I'm looking forward to working through the issues with you together.

One of the things we have done best in British Columbia is ensure we meet regularly, face to face.

This isn't always the case in other provinces. But there is tremendous value in bringing together local and provincial leaders...

To discuss the issues that matter to the people who have entrusted us with the privilege of representing them.

Two weeks ago, I convened a very different meeting of leaders, when I invited 400 First Nations chiefs from across the province to meet with my cabinet and my deputies. It wasn't modeled on UBCM, and obviously the issues are very different - but the concept is basically the same.

The first step towards solutions is dialogue.

Meeting face to face...

Talking our way through problems...

It's what made this province the place it is today.

My grandfather used to take me out fishing on the Fraser River. A river whose rich resources sustained my family for generations.

It's part of who I am.

In that rugged, beautiful river, there's a story at the heart of our identity.

The gold rush of 1858 was a dangerous time.

When gold was discovered here just a mere nine years after the California rush...

It attracted thousands of American prospectors north across the border - which was disputed at the time.

The mark they left lasts to this day along the Fraser, with names like Boston Bar, Texas Bar, and Yankee Flat.

As they moved farther and farther upstream, they came into increasing contact with First Nations.

And with increasing contact came increasing tensions, until one day bodies started to appear in the river.

The colonial government in Victoria was too far away to intervene. Motivated by revenge, two different American militias formed to attack nearby First Nations, led by Chief Spintlum.

One of those American militias was led by Captain Snyder. Perhaps he was motivated by purer instincts...

Or perhaps he knew they were hugely outnumbered.

What he didn't know was Chief Spintlum was also counselling peace. Spintlum knew this was just the first wave. His people might defeat this rabble, but thousands upon thousands more were coming.

Think about that moment when they eventually met.

It must have been unimaginably tense. They both arrived thinking thought the other side was spoiling for a fight.

And in a way, they were both right: plenty of people on both sides wanted one.

Instead, there was peace. Because there was leadership - Snyder and Spintlum.

Both with the courage to shape history, even when surrounded by people who disagree.

They found the best way forward.

They found a way to work together.

And they changed the future of our province and our country - forever.

Two men who probably never grasped the impact of their decision that day.

Two men who stood up to be counted despite opposition.

Two men who did what they sincerely believed was right for the people they led.

Why haven't we heard more about this story?

For starters, Governor Douglas hated it, because it showed how little control he had, and how vulnerable B.C. was.

Can you imagine what would have happened if a bunch of American prospectors had been killed by First Nations?

The US army would have been up here. And they might not have left. I might not have gotten to enjoy those afternoons on the Fraser with my grandfather.

And in Hope, where a lot of those prospectors started their journey north - next month, you might have been voting to send a congressman to a deadlocked government in Washington, DC.

Snyder and Spintlum understood the special role they had as leaders.

The same special role that has been given to each of you...

To shape the future.

To make history happen, instead of letting it happen to you.

But Snyder and Spintlum didn't just lead by looking forward...they also led by reaching back.

Back to the men who followed them. And persuaded enough of them to take another path.

A path of peace, rather than conflict.

It's how the BCTF and provincial government solved the teacher's strike: leadership on both sides.

The BCTF could have decided to force the government's hand - and government could have decided to legislate them back to work.

But we didn't.

Because we were determined to come to a negotiated settlement.

Determined to call a truce, and start a new kind of relationship.

One that focuses first and foremost on kids.

And while determination and a square focus on the long game is part of leadership...

It's not the whole story.

We were able to reach this historic agreement because leadership on both sides of the table had the support of those who entrusted us with leadership.

Teachers who, in the end, voted 86 per cent in favour of the agreement, and the thousands and thousands of British Columbians who were prepared to endure the long strike...

Because they wanted this ended the right way.

Today, none of us is leading our communities to war - thank Goodness.

But all of us, we hope, are leading our communities to greater health and wealth.

Everyone wants prosperity.

None of us should think we can benefit from economic development... and then excuse ourselves from rolling up our sleeves and making it happen.

I met with Mayor Frank Armitage yesterday.

There are less than 3,000 people in Princeton, yet Frank tells me they contribute \$750 million per year to the provincial economy, via forestry, and the Copper Mountain Mine.

They came to see me yesterday about getting some help to install an elevator in their town hall, so their courtroom is accessible to everyone. Despite all the wealth they produce for all of us, they still struggle to meet the needs of their small but mighty community.

This isn't a new story. Wealth has always flowed from rural BC down to the urban centres, then over our borders or across the sea.

It is how we create wealth together - urban and rural.

The dispute between Snyder and Spintlum. It all started because of mineral wealth - gold.

But here's something we in urban centres sometimes forget...

Spintlum didn't want to stop the gold mines. He just wanted the miners to leave some of that wealth behind.

It's the same today in Rural BC. It's the same with First Nations.

They're for economic development. They just want to see more of the benefits extracted from the land they live on to come back.

That's why I asked Donna Barnett to lead a Rural Advisory Committee. Because we have to do a better job making sure places like Princeton, and Terrace, and Fort Nelson, and 100 Mile...

Get their fair share.

That starts with getting development right. Getting to "yes" doesn't mean skipping the necessary steps.

There's anxiety in places like Squamish and Burnaby, where they're debating development projects. And that's understandable.

To earn social license, you can't hide from people's real concerns

That's what the 5 Conditions are about.

An articulation of our core principles for development.

There needs to be a formal environmental review...

World-leading practices on land and in the water in place for prevention and response in case of accidents...

Aboriginal rights must be addressed...

And we need a fair share of the benefits that reflect the risk.

These conditions are an articulation of the ways we do business in BC.

It works. Others can learn from it.

It's the same approach I take with liquefied natural gas. I see a tremendous opportunity for British Columbians from LNG.

It's because it's the cleanest-burning fossil fuel.

Because it's safe to transport.

Because we have the highest standards for worker safety.

Because we have a 50-year record of environmental safety.

It's because we are doing it right that I see opportunities for businesses across the province, through the LNG Buy BC program.

Opportunities for thousands of people, trained for new careers through the Skills for Jobs Blueprint

In July we allocated almost \$7 million for additional foundation and apprenticeship seats.

We're already hearing stories about students who are making the most of this chance.

Students like Andrew Broadbent of Summerland, who got one of the new seats at Okanagan College.

My priority is people like Andrew across this province who are thinking about their future.

But Andrew doesn't have that future without the visionary leadership from all of you.

Because of people like Andrew and all those workers in BC, that we have to be tough regulators.

Vigilant about protection and safety.

After the tailings pond breach at Mount Polley, I went up there to meet with the people affected. They were devastated.

That can't happen again.

The inquiry and investigation underway will let us get to the bottom of what happened, so it won't.

In British Columbia we do have a record of developing resources that is better than almost anywhere else in the world.

We must strive every day to improve and keep our status as tough regulators with responsible, sustainable resource industries.

Equivocation, evasion, and caving in don't count as doing better.

Standing up for what we do...

Striving to improve - that's what leadership is.

And just as wealth from our forests, mines, and gas reserves flow from Rural BC, part of our job as leaders is putting each other in a position for success.

Linda McGuire and her council are here. They are finally - finally - going to be able to bring broadband access to Granisle.

Basic infrastructure that will allow Mayor McGuire's small community to reach its full potential.

They need it - as all small communities do - for economic development, for health care, and for education.

You can imagine how disappointed they were to learn that fibreoptic was coming down the highway, but stopped 2 kilometres short of the community.

We're finding a way to fix that. And we want to fix it for other small communities.

This will be a significant initiative across government, coming out over this coming year.

And it will build on so many good stories...so much possibility around the province.

Dancin' Dave MacDonald says there's a house on the market in Port Ed for \$445,000. Probably the highest listing ever in the town.

It's the same in Salmon Arm. Where's Mayor Nancy Cooper? Housing, retail, and tourism - all up.

And Janice Perrino told me there's 100 new building permits been issued in Summerland.

Terrace saw an average of 1 residence built per year. They've had 190 in the last 24 months.

Joe Stanhope is thinking about how to take the 30 % cut in gas rates recently announced by the province, and turn it into economic opportunity for Vancouver Island.

The foundation for all of this success is getting our own house in order. We can't ever forget: there's only one taxpayer funding multiple levels of government and important public services.

It's up to the provincial and local governments to ensure we're working together to ensure those services aren't costing citizens more than necessary.

That's why we commissioned the Ernst & Young report. It shows we've had some successes. And it shows there's a lot more work to do.

Some local governments are paying more than the province for people to do similar jobs.

And in those cases, compensation levels are simply too high.

It's not just local governments. The report also shows we need to keep working to manage compensation and spending at Crown corporations...

That's why we've taken steps towards addressing that with the Taxpayer Accountability Principles.

I'm not here to point a finger - this is a healthy process that all governments at all levels need to go through.

And I understand only too well just how difficult and heated negotiation can be with public sector unions.

But we all have to stick to our guns.

We will not raise taxes.

We will not commit to something we cannot afford.

We will not kick the ball down for the next generation to figure out.

There are success stories here, too. I met with Mayor Carman Graf of Telkwa yesterday.

They have some of the lowest per capita expenditures in B.C.

Their plan is fairly simple:

Grow, then spend more. Not vice versa.

But it's not just about wages.

We are in the midst of our first major core review in 12 years, but some of you got to it before I did.

Dan Ashton led a successful review in Penticton that led to property taxes being frozen - with no cuts.

But the road to prosperity - the road to economic growth - can be bumpy. Things can happen along the way that are unexpected.

Back to Captain Snyder for a moment.

Remember he was the leader of just one of two American militias bent on revenge against the First Nations.

But after deciding to seek peace himself, he went to his fellow American leader, Captain Graham, and persuaded him to do the same.

But in a moment of weakness, Graham changed his mind and went off anyway in search of a fight.

Instead of igniting a full-scale war, he got himself killed - possibly by his own men.

Captain Graham could have reached Spintlum first. And if he had, the US army, already sent from California to northern Washington State, could have been sent in. Thousands more people might have died on all sides. And the national motto, from sea to sea, would be something quite different.

The lessons of Snyder and Spintlum have never been more relevant.

They remind us our province wasn't shaped by destiny alone.

It was shaped by men and women who made choices.

156 years after two brave men decided to find a better way forward, we've encountered another fork in the road.

The Supreme Court of Canada has told us Aboriginal title exists.

As leaders, we have a decision to make. We can ignore it, encourage more litigation, and put economic development and all of our futures on hold.

Or we can follow that fork in the road. We can begin a journey down a new road together. Embrace it as an opportunity to start down a new path.

A path with First Nations as partners. Sharing in all the benefits of a growing economy. Sharing in access to education, job opportunities, new revenues. Wanting more of the resources of this province to go back to their communities, just as you do to yours.

You have decisions to make in your communities, too.

Because as one politician to another: I know this is a big year.

Public service is more than a full-time job, and if that wasn't enough to fill your evenings and weekends... You're getting into the home stretch in your re-election campaigns.

And when you're competing for people's attention - talking about the things that bring us together, rather than fighting about the things that divide us...

But as Captain Graham learned...

The path to glory can be very short-term indeed.

Like them, we need to understand the reality of our times.

We need to summon the courage to shape history, even when surrounded by people who disagree.

We need to keep searching for the best way forward, and new ways to work together.

We've come a long way.

Think about what our resource economy makes possible.

If you get cancer - anywhere in BC - you have best treatment centres, with the best outcomes in anywhere in the world.

That's largely due to research and work done in Vancouver. And we've been able to make significant investments, because of the wealth generated in our resource sector.

Think about what our post-secondary institutions are achieving on the world stage.

Next month, I'm leading my sixth trade mission, this time to India.

We'll be visiting the University of the Fraser Valley's campus there. They wanted to form partnerships with B.C. institutions because of what we're achieving here.

That's only possible because of the wealth generated in our resource sector.

Universities with campuses and partnerships across the Globe...

Think about the opportunities that opens up for young British Columbians from every corner of this province.

We've talked about our history - but that's our future.

And if we learn those lessons, and stay true to our shared vision...

If we're not afraid to work hard, and make the tough decisions...

We'll find we are so much stronger. As a province. Together.

Thank you.