

## Premier Christy Clark addresses UBCM Delegates – 2015

### Vancouver

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I'd like to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people.

I want to congratulate incoming president Al Richmond. Al has done a great job at the Cariboo Regional District, where they had a rough summer wildfire season and led their communities through them.

And I want to thank Sav Dhaliwal, from my hometown of Burnaby, for his work over the past year.

For all of you who are new, I'd like to tell you the story of a Soviet leader.

He was meeting his predecessor, who handed him two envelopes.

Open the first in your first crisis, the second in your second crisis.

A few years pass, and he has to open the first envelope.

It says "blame me for everything." He does, and he survives the crisis.

A few years later, he needs to open the second.

It says "write two letters."

### **THE ABILITY TO RESPOND**

Here's a story about the year. You know I like to tell stories. It's a true story. And I know it could be a story about how bad things are. How things are only going to get worse.

But if I was going to do that, I would have been here yesterday morning.

People don't want you or me to complain and despair, or tell them how bad things are.

Citizens look to leaders – for reasons to hope, optimism in the face of adversity.

They look to us for a plan to make the future better.

- BC film had its best year ever.

- Tourism is up almost 10% since last year.
- Whistler had its best month ever in August. Parksville had 10,500 people, Tumbler Ridge, a town of 2,700, welcomed 8,000 people to the dinosaur museum.

At the same time, BC faced tough challenges.

The recent windstorm when 710,000 accounts lost power.

BC Hydro crews worked around the clock in 16-hour shifts to restore it for 99 per cent of them...in just 72 hours.

Twice as quickly as Toronto, where they had half the number of accounts to re-connect.

And then there was the wildfire season.

Ron Hovanes in Oliver, Mike Richman in Pemberton, Bruce Milne in Sechelt, Mike Ruttan in Port Alberni, and Doug Findlater in West Kelowna...

You did an amazing job when your communities needed you.

And of course, there's Midway and Mayor Randy Kappes. Of the 500 residents in your village, 240 of them volunteered...and they fed 650 people.

That's the definition of why local leadership matters.

In Rock Creek and Pemberton, firefighters said to me: "Christy, the fire is behaving and moving in ways I've never seen before."

It's going to get worse according to the National Research Council in the US ...

Every degree the average temperature goes up will quadruple the amount of land that will burn in western North America.

Hopefully they're wrong. But we can't afford to sit on our hands.

## **NEW MINISTRY**

That's why, in Naomi Yamamoto, we have the only Minister in Canada with that sole responsibility.

She will be reaching out to work with you on wildfire preparation, windstorm response, and earthquakes.

We're better prepared already, from more resources for EMBC and over \$17 billion in seismic infrastructure upgrades...

But there's more to do.

Next June, EMBC will work with internal and external agencies in the largest disaster drill in BC history...

And to make sure we protect all 4.6 million British Columbians – we need to make sure we're working together – not at cross-purposes.

It's not acceptable that the actions of a few can cause so much damage.

The careless smoker that starts a wildfire, campers who ignore campfire bans, or drones getting in the way of firefighting...

That's why I asked Mike Morris to consider tougher penalties for starting fires or breaking campfire bans...and we are looking at ways to regulate drones.

All of this is about planning for the long-term.

That's our job. That's what leadership is.

If the worst happens, none of our citizens will be looking to us to complain about how bad it is.

They will be looking to us for reasons to hope.

They expect us to be ready.

So I have five announcements today I will be sharing with you in a moment.

They're all about looking far down the road.

Planning in good times...

Doing the work now to protect and secure our communities, our prosperity...

## **THE HARD WORK**

British Columbians want governments that live within its means, so that when times are tough...

We can still look after them.

So here's what that means for us.

Control spending, keep government small, shave down our debt.

The first step was getting BC out of deficit. We've done that.

The next is to eliminate BC's operating debt. We'll stick to our plan, and in 4 years, we're going to eliminate BC's operating debt for the first time since 1975.

Debt-free BC starts there.

But we are not losing sight of the need to make investments in our vital infrastructure.

Right now, we have more than \$7 billion dollars' worth of projects in the field. Bridges, hospitals, transit...

And then you think about what BC Hydro is doing.

Investing \$2.4 billion dollars every year for the next ten years. Dams, transmission lines, distribution...

The federal politicians can talk about what they're going to do to create jobs by investing in infrastructure...

We are doing it.

When you combine all these projects, you're creating 150,000 jobs over 10 years. Site C alone will create 10,000 construction jobs.

I know there are some who oppose it just as passionately as I support it.

What I don't understand are those few who lack the courage to take a position.

That's not leadership.

Leadership is growing a diverse economy. Putting people to work.

Over 83,000 people visited the Come Home to BC booth at the Calgary Stampede alone.

Thank goodness you're here. Thank goodness BC is ready for us to come back.

So many of them were grateful. To be reunited with their families, and go back to the communities they love.

We're starting to see the first LNG projects starting to take shape.

Rural communities starting to thrive again.

But we can't forget – we are outliers. In Canada, the US, and Asia...deficits, debt and a fragile economy are clouding the future.

We are surrounded by uncertainty. And BC's singular achievement has not happened by accident. It's because we have a plan.

It's because of every hardworking British Columbian. And leaders like you.

In Kamloops, Peter Milobar and his council are undertaking a core review to find savings and put tax dollars to the best possible use.

In Kitimat, nobody is more proud of the new smelter than Phil Germuth – because when he looks at it, he sees 1,000 good-paying, secure jobs.

In Victoria, Lisa Helps' task force on economic development and prosperity is looking to find new ways to attract investment.

Lee Brain in Prince Rupert, where in the last year, their chamber of commerce has grown by 46 per cent – new businesses starting or moving there.

Because when those LNG workers arrive...

They're going to buy trucks in Terrace.

They're going to eat at the Cow Bay Café.

They're going to pay good money to learn how to catch salmon with Silverback Fishing Adventures.

The beginning of his vision to complete the work that Charles Hayes began but never finished...because he died on the Titanic in 1912.

## **TRANSLINK**

It's a lot of hard work. And sometimes...

The light at the end of the tunnel is still a ways away.

And while the voters said no to more sales taxes, they said they had real concerns about Translink...but they did not say no to better transit.

They didn't say no to less congestion. They didn't say no to cleaner air.

You have come together around a vision.

We support that vision, and Peter Fassbender and the Province's new appointees to Translink, Jim Chu and Murray Dinwoody are going to help us find a different way to achieve that vision.

## **CRIME**

The other challenge we have to tackle in our urban and growing rural centres is crime. We need to do three things.

First, we need to be tough on criminals.

Our Guns and Gangs Strategy has made headway. The number of gang-related murders has fallen, hundreds of gangsters have been put behind bars, and more and more illegal weapons and drugs are off the streets.

But crime is like weeds growing in your backyard.

We cannot stop tending to the problem just when it looks like we have it beat.

Yes, we need people to come forward – witnesses, concerned family members, and people living in fear.

I want to echo Abbotsford's Henry Braun on this: we need to end the culture of silence.

Third, we also need to be tough on the roots of crime. That means dissuading kids from joining gangs...and helping kids in gangs find their way out.

We want to do more with you.

So today, I'm announcing \$5 million over two years to build on the success of the Guns and Gangs Strategy and the WRAP program in Surrey.

To work with you to take away a gang's most vital resource: our children.

## **RURAL DIVIDEND**

We also have work beyond urban BC.

As the global resource economy is in transition...

Some of the communities that do the heavy lifting for all the rest of us are struggling.

Tumbler Ridge, Williams Lake, Quesnel, Canal Flats.

That's why I asked Donna Barnett to set up a Rural Advisory Council...

To think hard about how we share the wealth that comes from rural BC more fairly with the communities that create it.

Donna and her Council have come up with the principles to guide the Rural Dividend.

So today I'm happy to announce we are committing up to \$75 million over the next three years to create a new Dividend for communities under 25,000...

To help find new ways to develop your economy and generate opportunities for you.

## **RURAL CONNECTIVITY**

Look at the success we've had in tech. Companies like Amazon and Sony Digital has brought its

global headquarters here – the result of the hard work of our trade offices and our tax policy.

Victoria's tech scene is thriving. In the Okanagan, it's now a billion-dollar industry.

Now is the moment to start helping tech firms look at smaller centres.

But they'll only locate in communities that have high speed access.

In this year's budget, we committed \$10 million over the next two years to expand high-speed Internet access to all British Columbians.

And I'm happy to give you this update today:

We are delivering. More than 70 communities will benefit from the first eight projects to be approved...starting with projects from the Kootenays to Gold Bridge to Port Alice.

That's a promise made, promise kept.

### **SMALL COMMUNITY FUND**

Modern, effective infrastructure is the foundation for attracting new jobs and investment.

Peter Fassbender has met with many of you about how we can help. I'm sure he mentioned the success of the first round of the Small Communities Fund.

It covers up to two-thirds of the cost of projects like water systems, road improvements, and green infrastructure.

Over the last two years, it got 55 projects off the ground, with a total project cost of an estimated \$223 million.

So this December, it's a pleasure to announce \$90 million, provided in equal shares by the B.C. and federal governments, will be available for application.

### **WILDFIRE PREVENTION**

And before I close, one more announcement.

Doug Findlater, I saw your resolution and I hear you.

We can and must protect interface communities like yours, and work to prevent wildfires across our province.

This year, we committed \$5 million to removing fuel from areas close to our communities.

Today, I'm announcing another \$10 million for the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative that we co-manage with UBCM.

Applications are open right now, so get yours in to qualify for the 2016 program year.

Additionally, I've asked Steve Thomson to work with Mike de Jong to deliver a comprehensive forest enhancement program with additional funding in next year's budget.

It will focus on removing dead trees killed by the mountain pine beetle, planting new seedlings, rehabilitating impacted wildlife habitat, and reducing the fire risk everywhere.

We need a strong federal partner for wildfire prevention and that's why I've reached out for Ottawa's support.

We need a strong federal partner and federal leadership on another matter.

The Softwood Lumber Agreement expires next month, and we have one year to reach a new agreement with the US.

When a newly-elected Prime Minister takes office, that's my first call.

It matters for all of us, whether you live in Vancouver, Burns Lake, Nanaimo, or Surrey.

## **CONCLUSION**

As leaders, it is our job to plan for the future.

It is our job to create reasons for hope.

To make sure we are as strong tomorrow as we are today...

Living within our means so that we are able to look after each other in times of need.

Growing a strong and diverse economy.

And most important of all...between you and me...

To remember, in this room...

We are stronger together.

Stronger when we work side by side...just as we do in emergencies.

Just like our tireless firefighters and Hydro workers.

Let's keep working side by side.

Let's continue to build healthier, safer, more prosperous communities.

Thank you.