

# Truck Loggers Association speech

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Thanks, everybody. Thank you very much, everybody. I'm so glad to see you all here in Vancouver again. Not that I'm counting, but it is 110 days until the election. So, we're all getting a little bit busy.

This is a really important day always every year on the calendars for all of us in government because the forest industry is so important in British Columbia for so many thousands and thousands of people in every corner all across the province.

So, as I often do, I just want to say to all of you, thank you for the work that you do, for the jobs that you create, for the confidence that you have in British Columbia. I hope today and tomorrow when Steve Thomson gets a chance to talk to you as well we will be able to demonstrate to you our confidence in the work that you do for British Columbians every single day in keeping this economy number one in Canada.

And Bill, thank you very much for praying for me. My son and I attend an Anglican church and part of the regular recitation of the church is the priest always starts off with offering a prayer for our leaders. So he walks through the leaders and he always names me and every time he says he is praying for me and that God will forgive me. My son Hamish every time, my 15-year-old son, leans up and goes, 'My God, I bet you are glad to hear that, mom.' No matter how stupid a parent you are, according to a 15-year-old, I guess you can always be forgiven. So, thank you.

Let me just start with this. I think we all, at least I started 2016 thinking some of the risk around the world had

receded and maybe things were getting a little bit more predictable. Well, my friends, 2016 has changed a little and if you want to really think about where the risk is around the world we can look just south across the border. We can look to Europe where there are all kinds of political cataclysms. We can see the economies in Asia, all kinds of unusual, unpredictable things happening. We really do need as a province to be more prepared for that unpredictability and that risk that we now see emerging around the world more than we ever have been before.

I would like to welcome, in addition to all of you, is the master of making sure we have as much certainty as we possibly can in an unpredictable world, our tremendous and hardworking, incredibly smart and solutions-oriented Minister of Forests and Lands, Steve Thomson.

We're also joined by Jordan Sturdy, who represents the Sea to Sky. A passionate former mayor of Pemberton and passionate about every one of those communities, including Squamish and Whistler and West Vancouver, all up and down the corridor, working incredibly hard for jobs across British Columbia.

And we are also joined today by Shirley Bond, our Minister of Jobs. One of the things I'm going to talk about in the speech is the fact that since we introduced the Jobs Plan, British Columbia has led the country in job creation -- 191,000 new jobs created. No one else in Canada, almost in North America, can say that they've done a similar job. That would not have happened without the steady hand and the sharp mind and determination of Minister Shirley Bond at the tiller.

And I do want to talk to you today in your comments about the role that forestry plays in British Columbia, the role that you play in particular as contractors in the forest industry. But first I do want to reflect on some of the

challenges, one of the particular challenges that you are facing.

I sat down with Jacqui and her executive last week. She reminded me that the average age of a faller is 57; 57. You've got a 50% retirement that you are looking down the barrel at in the next five years. And it is \$30,000 on average to get every one of those guys out in the woods before you can get them working.

One of the problems we have is that that is a major looming liability for you when you face down all of those retirements and try to figure out how you are going to train all those folks. One of the things that we are committed to doing, thanks to the work of your executive in making your voices heard, Shirley, with the Ministry of Finance, is going to lead the work with the TLA to make sure that we put in place a new system of training tax credits for onsite training for truck loggers in British Columbia so that we can reduce some of that training cost for you and make your businesses more sustainable.

I know that it is hard. Ronald Reagan used to tell this joke about an old Soviet guy, came from the socialist nirvana and he came out here and got hired by a contractor. He gets out into the woods and the contractor says to him, 'So, how many trees did you cut down today?' and he says, 'I got four.' And the contractor says, 'Well, that is not good enough. You've got to get 20.' The next day he comes back and he says, 'I got seven.' The contractor says, 'Look, that is not good enough. I'll take you out and I'll show you how to do this.' So he gets out there with this guy from the socialist nirvana standing there watching him and he fires up the chainsaw and the old Russian guy starts panicking all of a sudden. He says, 'What is the matter?' He goes, 'I don't know, what is that terrible sound?'

It's the challenge, first of all, of hiring somebody who comes from a place where they probably didn't learn a whole lot about hard work. But it is also the challenge of making sure that we can put people in a modern economy out into the forest safely in a way that we know they are going to be able to do their job. And that is the challenge that Shirley is going to try and help you solve over the next few months as we develop the training tax credit for you.

Now in addition to that, I should also say, Shirley has gone out and made sure that we have created something like over 4,000 new trades training jobs in British Columbia. She and Steve have just delivered another half million dollars to the ILA for 28 more heavy equipment operators and log truck drivers. We are determined to work with you and with the industry to make sure that we have the trained people that you need ready to be able to fill the jobs that are opening up. Because despite what the Opposition will say, I do not believe and I don't believe British Columbians accept for one second, that forestry is a dying industry in British Columbia. This industry is thriving and it is going to continue to grow. It will evolve. It will change. It will be different. But this industry is a sun rise industry and it is the future for a lot of our kids who want to be able to live and work in the same place that they grew up.

But I know logging is hard work. Forestry is hard work. I think of that every time we get to work on a budget, which is what we are doing now. This will be our fifth consecutive balanced budget in British Columbia. We are leading the country in growth. We are growing three times faster than the Canadian average. Our unemployment rate is the lowest in the country. It is the lowest though that it has been compared to the rest of the country since 1961. We are going to eliminate our

operating debt for the first time since 1975, within four years. That is the first step towards a debt-free BC, by the way.

We have the lowest middle class taxes in Canada and we have record investments in health care and infrastructure -- roads, airports, ports, schools, hospitals, programs that lift people up like the Single Parent Employment Initiative, and the best job creation record, as I said. One hundred and ninety-one thousand jobs created in BC since the Jobs Plan was introduced. If those jobs were their own city they would fill the whole population, just about, of the city of Richmond. That is a lot of jobs being created in British Columbia while all around us we have provinces that are shrinking.

And of course the NDP response to that record is always, 'Well, anybody could have done that. Five balanced budgets, best job creation record, low unemployment, what's so hard about that? How come you didn't do it faster?' And I always think and I look across at John Horgan and those guys who criticize us and I always feel like he reminds me of that guy, you know when you invite all your friends over to help you move? He is that guy who comes over and sits on your couch, drinks all your beer, eats all the pizza, and then when it is all done, he goes, 'Well, gee, I was really happy to help you out.'

But to me, those numbers are not meaningless. It has been hard work but it has been really important work. Because those numbers, when we talk about jobs, tell us how many people in British Columbia, how many more people are going home with the dignity of a pay cheque.

They tell us how many more people are able to look after the people that they love and build a future for them that they are worthy of. They tell us how many people are able to set an example for their kids when they get up in the

wee hours of the morning and go to work every day. That is what those statistics mean to me and that is why they are so important to Steve and to Jordan and to Shirley and to everybody in our government. Because we have the best economy in Canada but with all the risk that is around us, we are going to have to work even harder to make sure that we stay there. One of those areas where we are going to have to work hard is settling a fair deal for British Columbians for softwood lumber. Time after time, without regard for the facts, the American government has accepted all of the allegations that have been filed by the US industry. You would get more fair and impartial hearings from a judge at a pro-wrestling event.

But they have picked a fight and they will find out that in British Columbia we are no pushovers. In the long term we are going to get a fair deal for British Columbia workers and British Columbia businesses and we are going to do it for three reasons.

The first one is because we are not going to go away. We are going to pursue every strategy to get a fair deal that the law allows us.

The second one is this: Americans aren't that different from us. They want low cost, affordable housing and they want jobs. Choking off the supply of Canadian softwood to the American market will make housing more expensive and it will kill American jobs. We are going to take that argument to the heartland of the United States and we are going to ask middle class Americans if they want their housing prices to go up, if they want their jobs to disappear? We need to take this battle to the people that voted in this new president and I believe that we will win.

And third, we need to make sure that every time their

allegations go forward, we fight them. We need to make sure that they know this isn't the Olympics and there are no East German judges that are going to fix the outcome, we are going to make sure that our Canadian argument is heard because the facts are on our side. They fought it four times and they've lost every time. They want to fight it a fifth time, they are going to lose it again.

We may not get a deal in the short term, but we will get a deal, and we are going to get the right deal that works for British Columbia workers. Steve Thomson and I have been working on this for years now and neither of us is going to give up. We have got your back.

And I can't resist just because, I think it was yesterday, John Horgan got up and said, 'Gee, where have you guys been on the softwood stuff?' They have mentioned it in the House once, once. They thought it was worthy of concern enough that they raised it a single time in Question Period. And now the NDP say that they are going to have a task force to help BC workers settle the softwood deal.

You do not need another task force. What the lumber industry needs, what contractors need and what workers need, is a fighter. You need people who are going to go down to Washington DC and fight for your best interests. People who are determined, who won't give up, who understand the issues that you face and who are going to get to it. No more study. No more work across the border. We are going to fight this for you and we are going to get the best deal that we possibly can.

John Horgan is not just that guy who sits on the couch while he watches you do all that work, you know while he watches you do all the work in your moving, he is also rifling down under the cushions trying to get any spare change so he can put it in his pocket. Not surprising

coming from a guy who drives around in a car with a sticker that says, 'Let's have a total ban on log exports in British Columbia.'

Now, we know that we can't replace the American market and nor do we want to. But we do know that we need to grow the alternatives, continue to do that. We've seen over 1,000% growth in the work that we've done in the last 15 years in growing our exports to China. Now Steve Thomson has begun the work to making sure that we are squaring up some opportunities in the world's fastest growing economy, which is India.

We've quadrupled what I agree is a small denominator in terms of the amount of exports, but we've quadrupled it in just the last three years. Today the largest mass shipment of lumber ever from British Columbia is on its way to the subcontinent. That is going to be put to good use. It is going to be the first commercial wood demonstration project in India and we know, because we have a trade office there now selling our lumber, that Indian builders are anxious to use BC wood products. They are just as anxious and just as excited to see the opportunity of our techniques in the way in which we do this as China was 15 years ago. This is the next big thing for British Columbia. And Steve Thomson, I promise you, is all over it.

I promised you that we would protect logging contractors. Today, the Forestry Service Providers Protection fund has \$6.5m in it. That was a promise that we made and it is a promise that we kept.

We promised to help restore forests devastated by pine beetle and wildfire. Today, the Forest Enhancement Society of BC has \$85m for wildfire protection and stewardship. They've invested in 23 projects around the province. A promise that we made and a promise that we



kept.

We promised to help world communities cushion the blow from economic challenges, build capacity, diversify. And the second intake of the rural dividend grant is now underway. That is \$25m in investment to help small rural communities confront change. A promise that we made to rural communities and a promise that we've kept.

And finally, when resource industries have been depicted as bad guys by highly paid lobbyists all around the world, we promised that we would make sure that people knew that our forest industry is nothing less than the best, the most sustainable and the safest anywhere in the world.

I was so proud to welcome the Duke and Duchess when they came. Another opportunity, actually we saw them at the legislature inspecting the troops and I said to Hamish my son, 'I just can't believe how perfect they are. I don't know what it would be like to be that perfect.' And he goes, 'Yeah, I'm sure you don't have any idea what it would be like to be that perfect, mom.'

We were honoured to have them come and introduce them to the Great Bear Rainforest, part of our international brand, our sustainable British Columbia forest industry, and they inducted it into the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy. Our message for the world has been, 'This is part of the way that we do business in British Columbia. Striking a balance between environmental protection and making a living off the land.' It gives our customers the confidence that they need to know that they are buying the most sustainable products that they can anywhere in the world.

And I do want to say a very special thank you to hereditary chief Dallas Smith because without him the ten years of negotiations that we undertook, grinding away to get there, would never have come to a

conclusion. He is a gifted negotiator, a visionary in his community and I think many of you already know him from his work in the North, in the mid-Island. I'm sure all of you are going to get to know him a lot better after May 9th in Victoria.

And last, I just want you to know we are not done. This is a \$13b industry that employs thousands and thousands of British Columbians. It is vital for communities and families in every corner of the province. The fact is that this whole industry could not succeed without contractors. It could not succeed without the work that you do. So we support you with training. We support you by fighting for open markets, by building our BC brand, by enhancing our forests, by making sure that there is some insurance for you there if you really do find yourself in a worst case scenario. But I have also heard you loud and clear on the biggest issue that you face and that is your business sustainability in an environment that has changed a lot over the last decade.

Jacqui and her TLA executive, boy Don, ever since you left they've done such a great job. That is not true, you know that. But Don did give me his card with a note on it that said, 'Don Banasky is awesome.'

They have made your voices heard, this executive, and so I am pleased to announce that Steve Thomson is beginning and has begun the first review of contractor sustainability that has been done in British Columbia in probably the last 20 years.

Our first job is going to be to get a firm understanding of all the economics in the contracting sector and the forest value chain. That will be done by March 31st. By the way, it is great for contractors but for smaller licensees as well, in particular First Nations licensees, to really to get much more information about how the market is working, how

the value chain adds up. I hope that it will also provide some business advantage for those smaller licensees who are operating often with a lot less information about the market than the really big operators are operating with.

And then we will ask an independent facilitator, who will also be appointed before March 31st and agreed upon by all the parties, to explore and recommend common areas for action. It is important to note that his or her work will be looking at more than just your financial statements. His or her work is going to include individual interviews with members of the TLA so that he or she can really understand what is really behind those statements, really understand the relationships that are being built.

Understand how we can make sure our goals are aligned between government, between licensees and between contractors. It is time that we made sure the relationships that are so profoundly important to making sure that this industry continues to work for British Columbia, that those relationships are strengthened and durable as we move into the next many decades of change the forest industry is going to face.

So, as I said, we can't do this, the forest industry can't do this, without you. The work that you do is vital for all of us in the province.

And in 2017 British Columbia is going to be facing a pretty stark choice. The party that supports resource development projects that get British Columbians working -- and one that says no to jobs across the board. You cannot be first in job creation and economic growth if you are going to say no to every single proposal for economic growth and development.

I was up in north coast yesterday. I was up in Lax Kw'alaams and Prince Rupert. They've got a new nickname for their MLA. Her name is Jennifer Rice. They

all have cottoned onto the fact that she has never met a job she didn't think shouldn't go ahead. So they no longer call her Jennifer anymore. These days they are just calling her J-No.

But to be fair, the NDP have been first in a few things. When they were in government, we were number one in getting thank you cards from the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. We were number one in job losses and we were number one in becoming a have-not province. And that really hasn't changed. Nobody in British Columbia remembers what the 1990s were like better than folks in the contracting sector and the forest industry. Every single one of you who lived through that knows what is at stake in this next election.

And it is a good thing that you know that because it is going to be a hard-fought election and every vote is really going to count. I hope British Columbians will get the facts and try and understand what it means, to make sure what it means to grow an economy. What it means to make sure we are creating jobs all across the province.

So I am going to fight hard for our plan. I am going to fight hard for responsible resource development to continue. I am going to fight for our ideas, for the values that built British Columbia. I am going to fight hard for forestry and I am going to fight hard for your part in the forestry industry because British Columbia doesn't need more task forces. What British Columbia needs now more than ever is a fighter. Let me fight for you. Thank you.