



BRITISH COLUMBIA

Speech from the Throne

The Honourable Iona Campagnolo
Lieutenant-Governor

at the
Opening of the Fourth Session,
Thirty-Seventh Parliament

Province of British Columbia

February 11, 2003



Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members.

I join you again, when as legislators you look to the future of our great province and the future of all its people through this Speech from the Throne.

Since this Assembly last convened, several honoured British Columbians have passed away, and we pay tribute to them today. They include Vancouver lawyer Peter Butler, forestry consultant and entrepreneur Charles Widman, Provincial Court Judge William Ostler and Haida artist Freda Diesing.

We also note the passing of one of our country's admired former Governors General, Ramon Hnatyshyn and one of the most honoured citizens of this province, Brigadier General, The Honourable Henry Bell-Irving who served British Columbia both as a soldier and a citizen and was a distinguished Lieutenant Governor from 1978 to 1983.

All these citizens and many more that we have lost since we last met have added much to the life of this province and are sorely missed.

On behalf of all Members, I also send the good wishes of this Assembly and the people of B.C. to former Premier Mike Harcourt for a continued positive recovery from his recent and terrible accident.

A lot has happened over the past year, as the world has struggled to recover from the devastating after-effects of September 11, 2001.

We live in trying, uncertain times of great global change.

New solutions are required to cope with the generational challenges that all provinces are facing in health care, education, and other vital social program areas.

New approaches are needed to refocus public resources where they are needed most – on people: patients, students and those most vulnerable in our society.

Significant change is needed to make our economy more competitive and to build a stronger foundation for prosperity for every family, in every region of our province.

Reforms are required to make our government institutions and services more responsive and accountable to the people they serve.

Yet with the need for change and modernization come exciting new worlds of opportunity. These are times of renewal, hope and accomplishment. They are times of discovery, achievement and unlimited possibility.

No place on Earth is blessed with more potential than British Columbia.

In the heartlands of British Columbia, from one community to the next, the optimism of the people burns bright, as it has throughout our history.

It is that indefatigable sense of confidence and community spirit that has always been the hallmark of British Columbia. In these times, as in those long past, it is the strength and imaginations of British Columbians that carries us to a brighter future.

We still have a long way to go, and there are challenges yet ahead. But we are moving forward, farther, *faster* than anyone thought possible.

The world will open up for us as we *open up* our province to all British Columbians and to the world. That is our central strategic imperative. It is the mission to *open up* British Columbia to the wealth of opportunities that lie in wait of our discovery.

We must *open up* our minds to new ways of meeting our common interests. We must *open up* our province to new partnerships with First Nations, other governments and private enterprise.

This is the government's overriding vision: to *open up* every region and every community to new horizons of hope. To *open up* every sector of our economy to new opportunities, wherever they exist. To *open up* the free flow of people, goods and services within our province and with our trading partners. To *open up* every region of B.C. to visitors from around the globe through a successful 2010 Olympic bid.

There is no place on Earth that has more to offer the world than British Columbia.

With all we have to work with as a province – our wealth of talent, our rich natural resources, and our tremendous competitive advantages – there is no dream we can't realize if we really want to make it happen.

Opening Up Our Democratic Institutions

Today across the country Canadians have lost some of their confidence in their public institutions.

They are skeptical about government's ability to meet their needs and meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world.

Your government is acting to change that. It has worked to open up our public institutions to the people of the province through a number of reforms that are in some cases without precedent in Canada or the Commonwealth.

These include free votes, active legislative committees, new Government Caucus Committees, televised open Cabinet meetings, and a set date for provincial general elections.

There are now three-year rolling service plans, with performance targets that Ministers must meet to earn their full pay, and an independent Progress Board to report on how well our province is doing.

All of these measures have made the government more open, accessible and accountable to British Columbians.

The government's initiative to create Canada's first Provincial Congress reflects the growing understanding among all Canadians that all elected officials serve the same citizens.

Provincial Dialogues on Health and Education have reinforced the government's prime commitment to improve health and education, as well as its dedication to new ideas, to learn from one another and to bring British Columbians together in search of new solutions to their common challenges.

We can open up new worlds of possibility if we have access to the information and facts needed to make informed decisions.

New efforts will be made to ensure that British Columbians do have the information they need to understand the challenges their government faces and to assess the decisions it is making on their behalf.

Additional resources will be committed to foster informed public debate of the facts and choices at hand, and understanding of the opportunities and solutions the government is pursuing in the public interest.

The government will do more this year to bring citizens together in search of new ideas for constructive change.

A Dialogue on Crime will bring together community leaders, MLAs, law enforcement experts and others in pursuit of better ways to prevent and combat crime in our schools and on our streets.

In the interim, legislation will be introduced this Session to help our police better manage and track information on criminals, suspects and sentencing conditions imposed by the courts.

This new high-tech computer-based system will enhance public safety, and will be provided to police across British Columbia.

A Seniors and Youth Congress will also be organized to examine the challenges facing our province from the perspective of both the younger generation and seniors.

The government wants to build a bridge between the generations where the enthusiasm and new ideas of youth are tempered by the wisdom of experience.

Moreover, this year your government will put the drafting pen in the hands of the people to shape the future of our parliamentary democracy in the 21st century.

A Citizens' Assembly will examine and make recommendations on the crucial issue of electoral reform.

British Columbians will have an unprecedented opportunity to review and debate all models available throughout the world for electing their MLAs, consistent with our system of responsible government.

And if the Assembly ultimately determines that there is a better model than the current system, that model will be put directly to the people in a referendum to amend our provincial constitution on May 17, 2005.

A motion will be introduced in this Assembly within the next few weeks to initiate this process, following the release of the report on this issue that was so ably completed by the respected Gordon Gibson.

To open up the future, we must have the confidence to challenge the status quo and build upon the values of British Columbians. We must embark upon a bold, exciting, new course: one that ventures to dare and dream and *do* whatever might be done to make B.C. the best it can be.

Opening Up New Worlds of Possibility

Education is the key to opening up new worlds of possibility, and along with health care, it is your government's highest social priority.

This year, the government will build on the major reforms introduced in education last year. New measures will be taken to improve graduation requirements and ensure graduates have the skills they need in life after school.

Amendments will be introduced to the *Teaching Profession Act* that will enhance accountability and administrative efficiency, while clarifying the role of the British Columbia College of Teachers.

New steps will be taken to encourage student involvement in education planning in schools. New Web-based informational tools will help parents foster student achievement and improve literacy and numeracy skills.

Similarly, improvements will be made to advanced education.

Our universities remain a source of provincial pride and educational excellence. The government will continue to help liberate the expertise and potential that exists within our universities, to ensure they remain engines of knowledge generation and discovery.

It will continue to pursue new partnerships through initiatives like the Leading Edge Endowment Fund, Genome BC and the B.C. Life Sciences Initiative that will build on the nearly \$700 million the government has committed to advance research and foster innovation in British Columbia.

Your government is excited by the contributions that are made by B.C.'s exceptional colleges and institutes throughout the province.

This year the government will initiate a new research partnership aimed at providing new resources for applied economic and social research that takes place in our colleges. The new B.C. Regional Innovation Chairs will be seed-funded by a \$7.5 million one-time grant from the government. The chairs will be administered by the Leading Edge Endowment Fund.

The legislative committee on education will focus its attention on B.C.'s institutes and colleges to determine what can be done to build on their accomplishments.

The new BC Campus on-line learning model will be advanced to significantly increase access to post-

secondary education. A new *Private Career Training Institutions Act* will be introduced to guide career-related private training, and to ensure tuition protection for students.

A new model for industry training in trades and technical sectors will be implemented to address skills shortages and increase training and apprenticeships.

All of these initiatives will help open up new worlds of learning for British Columbians.

Opening Up

New Hope for Sustainable, Accessible Health Care

No area of government is in more dire need of reform than health care. We must find new ways of controlling rising health costs, while also increasing access to services, drugs, technology and highly skilled health professionals.

Despite the \$1.1 billion increase that the government has directed to health care, it is still not enough to keep pace with British Columbians' growing demands, an aging population and rising expectations for ever bigger, better, and more expensive health care services.

Over the past decade Pharmacare costs have jumped by 147 per cent and are now projected to grow by almost 500 per cent over the next two decades. Over the past ten years, we've seen the cost of health care grow from 34 per cent of all expenditures to 41 per cent today.

This growth in health spending is increasingly squeezing out the money available in the budget for other vital social services. Clearly this trend cannot continue.

New solutions are needed. New approaches are required. New cooperative relationships and cost containment strategies are essential.

The additional federal funding negotiated at last week's First Ministers' Conference will help. But it will not in itself solve our sustainability problem, or adequately offset the cost pressures of current health services and health reform.

The Province's vision for health care, the Picture of Health, clearly outlines many reforms that will also help meet the challenges at hand.

More steps will be taken this year to act on that vision.

The Action Schools project represents only one of several initiatives that will be taken to promote health prevention and wellness.

The new 24/7 BC NurseLine, the BC HealthGuide, the Aboriginal Companion handbook, and new programs aimed at early childhood development will all help promote health and wellness for all B.C. families.

Later this year, the government will initiate a new strategy for Chronic Disease Management. New measures will be taken to strengthen British Columbia's Ambulance Service.

Your government will continue to pursue new independent living options for seniors, to improve their

quality of life and to reduce pressure on long-term care facilities.

A new Fair PharmaCare Plan will be introduced later this month that will significantly benefit most British Columbians living on fixed and lower incomes.

Some 280,000 low-income families will pay less than they do now. For the first time young families with lower incomes will be supported in their drug costs through the Fair PharmaCare Plan.

The new Fair PharmaCare Plan will end the existing inequities whereby higher income earners sometimes pay less for their drug costs than those with much lower incomes. Yet it will ensure that the vast majority of B.C. families will pay the same or less for their prescription drug costs than they do today.

All of these measures will help put health care on a solid and sustainable footing for the future.

Opening Up

New Ways of Meeting Our Common Interests

Your government will continue to open up new ways of meeting our citizens' common interests.

New steps will be taken this year to improve choice and access to childcare services, as all services are consolidated under the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

The new funding model announced last December will increase the number of government-funded childcare spaces by over 50 per cent, from 45,000 to 70,000. More than 1,400 licensed family and group childcare providers will be eligible for government assistance for the first time.

The government will also introduce legislation to open up a new provincial authority called Community Living BC to oversee the design and delivery of services to people with developmental disabilities.

As the government continues with employment assistance reforms aimed at fostering greater independence and self-sufficiency, funding will continue to be focused on those who need it most.

Funding for employment programs for people with disabilities was increased by 40 per cent this past fiscal year, and in the new year those with disabilities will see their earnings exemptions rise again.

The changes the government has made have not been easy or without controversy. But they are working. Today there are 55,000 fewer British Columbians dependent on income assistance than there were when this government came to office.

Exit surveys show that 92 per cent of those leaving income assistance have done so for employment, educational opportunities or because they have other sources of income. The majority – 66 per cent – found paid employment and are generally earning two or three times more than they were on welfare.

Opening Up Recognition and Reconciliation with First Nations

If history has taught us anything, surely it is this: we are always stronger as a country and as a province when we work together.

We are enhanced as a people when we celebrate our diversity and build on all we have in common. We are enriched when we listen to one another and learn from our mistakes.

Nowhere is that truer than with governments' relations with First Nations. For too long we have been stuck in a rut of our own making, talking past each other and heading in opposite directions.

There is no mileage in the status quo. To make progress, we must all find a new path forward together. We must move beyond the old approaches and flawed policies of the past.

It is up to us to accord First Nations the respect, support and social and economic opportunities to which they are entitled.

Errors have been made in the past. Our institutions have failed Aboriginal people across our province.

Your government deeply regrets the mistakes that were made by governments of every political stripe over the course of our province's history.

It regrets the tragic experiences visited upon First Nations through years of paternalistic policies that fostered inequity, intolerance, isolation and indifference.

Inadequate education, health care and housing; rampant unemployment; alcoholism and drug abuse; unconscionably high rates of physical and sexual abuse, incarceration, infant mortality and suicide: these are the hallmarks of despair that have disproportionately afflicted First Nations' families, on and off-reserve.

These are the legacies of history that we must act to erase. They are sad reminders that it is always our children who pay the biggest price for society's shortcomings.

No words of regret can ever undo the damage that has been done to First Nations in all the years we have shared this land together. Nor are governments solely responsible for all of the misfortunes endured by First Nations at the cruel hand of history.

The point of reflecting on the errors made is not to assign blame or bear guilt for the actions of our forefathers. Rather, it is to assume today's responsibility to heal the wounds that time has wrought.

It is to offer our hand in a new partnership of optimism and hope, as one people of many peoples, in pursuit of common goals.

The place to meet is at the negotiating tables, not in the courts or on opposite sides of new barriers to understanding.

Your government will prove this year that it is serious about negotiating workable, affordable treaties that will provide certainty, finality and equality. It will take bold new steps to advance issues that are common to most treaty tables, such as governance, certainty, and access to fish.

Agreements-in-principle are within reach. With goodwill and mutual commitment we can break new ground and lead by example.

Progress is not just being made in treaty talks. First Nations leaders have worked closely with the government to create social and economic opportunities for their communities throughout B.C.

Your government is determined to provide a new level of economic opportunity for First Nations communities and people.

A three-year, \$30 million Economic Measures Fund has been established to help First Nations pursue new economic opportunities now. That Fund will be indefinitely extended with an additional \$10 million per year.

Funding has been approved to support Aboriginal involvement in oil and gas, tourism, forestry, fish aquaculture and the Olympic bid.

Your government is working to expand First Nations' involvement in the co-management of parks and recreational services.

A formal new partnership with Aboriginal leaders is leading the country in Aboriginal child protection and family development.

Funding has been enhanced for Aboriginal post-secondary programs, early childhood development, childcare services and programs to protect and promote Aboriginal languages. The First Citizens' Fund is being doubled, from \$36 million to \$72 million.

All of these initiatives will help, but more must be done. The treaty process will not be completed overnight – it will take time. Interim measures will help, but it must be remembered that a third of First Nations have opted not to participate in the treaty process.

Regardless, the courts have been very clear that the Crown always has a legal duty to consult and accommodate First Nations where their rights may be affected. Your government will do more over the next years to meet that obligation.

It will work with First Nations and others to explore ways of building upon the Provincial Policy for Consultation with First Nations, in furtherance of the New Era goal of developing a legislative framework for respecting Aboriginal rights in the absence of treaties.

Efforts to renew forestry, to develop energy, to build tourism, to restore mining, to revitalize the fishery, to expand agriculture, to improve health care delivery and educational prospects, all create new opportunities for British Columbians that must include First Nations.

Clearly, new partnerships are required to promote greater equity and certainty for all concerned – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

Achieving those partnerships will require new commitments to cooperative approaches on everyone's part, especially in our forest and fishing industries.

Significant reforms will be introduced this year to ensure that more access to logging and forest opportunities is available to First Nations.

Your government will take another bold step to forge a new era of reconciliation with First Nations. Starting this year, funding will be earmarked in the budget for revenue sharing arrangements with First Nations that wish to help revitalize the forest industry in their traditional territories.

The distribution of that revenue will be negotiated with First Nations in exchange for legal certainty that allows all regions and all British Columbians to more fairly prosper from their resource industries.

The future will be forged in partnership with First Nations – not in denial of their history, heritage and culture. It will be won in recognition of First Nations' constitutional rights and title – not lost for another generation because we failed to act.

It will be earned through reconciliation and mutual respect. It will be built with bold new approaches that will materially improve First Nations' quality of life – before and after treaties are concluded.

Opening Up

The Canada - British Columbia Partnership

As your government acts to create a new generation of understanding and collaboration with First Nations, it recognizes the federal government must also play a crucial role.

The Province is striving to create a new Canada-British Columbia Partnership that meets the needs of all our citizens and includes everyone in the promise of Canada.

British Columbians want their provincial and federal governments to work together on their behalf, not in isolation or opposition to one another. B.C. taxpayers also want to see a fairer share of their federal tax contributions being reinvested in their province.

Your government is pleased with the federal government's growing appreciation of this fact. Over the past year, significant commitments have been made in partnership with British Columbia.

The Province is working in partnership with the federal government on the 2010 Olympic bid; the new Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre; the new Gulf Islands National Park; the softwood lumber dispute; the pine beetle infestation; and cross-border initiatives.

The governments have joined together to build important new infrastructure, and a strong new partnership.

British Columbia's new Life Sciences Initiative is one such example. It has the potential to provide support for cutting

edge research in life sciences critical to our traditional resource industries and to our future.

New knowledge, new technologies and applied applications will create a new wave of economic opportunity for entrepreneurial scientists and small businesses across B.C.

Working with the federal government we are confident we can close the digital divide that separates many Aboriginal and rural British Columbians from the world of information, opportunity and benefits that flow from broad band access.

Another area where the Province is working in partnership with the federal government is in transportation.

Improvements to highways and border crossings have already begun. But more is needed, starting with critical improvements to the Trans-Canada Highway.

That is your government's top priority for funding under the new Canada-British Columbia Partnership. We need to open up Canada's gateway to British Columbia through the Kicking Horse Canyon of the Trans-Canada Highway.

Your government will pursue that goal and other priorities to meet British Columbians' transportation needs under the new Canada-B.C. Partnership.

As well, the government is working with the federal government to harmonize environmental assessment policies and to improve fisheries management.

This year the government is hoping to enter into a new, multi-year national agriculture policy to improve food safety, quality, and environmental sustainability.

It will also explore the potential for a new national park in the Okanagan, as well as new marine parks to protect some of our most valuable marine ecosystems.

There is so much that can be achieved for our province and our country when we build them both together. This is the promise of Confederation.

Opening Up New Partnerships with Local Governments

Your government will also open up new partnerships with local governments. A new Community Charter will shortly be introduced to give local governments greater autonomy, new planning tools, and new sources of revenue.

New partnerships will be opened up with the private sector. Partnerships BC will aggressively pursue public-private partnerships that will improve customer services, maximize private sector investment and minimize costs to taxpayers.

While public-private partnerships are already underway with a new ambulatory care centre in Vancouver and the new Fraser Valley Health Centre, new public-private partnerships will be actively sought this year in transportation, health care, information technology, housing, and land and resource development.

Opening Up British Columbia to the World

There can be no better way to open up our province to the world than by hosting the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver and Whistler.

No money could ever buy the exposure that event would give our province over the next decade and beyond.

What better way to invite the world to visit our province and build our tourism industry? What better way to turbo-charge our economy and create lasting legacies of achievement? What better way to celebrate our multicultural heritage as Canadians?

All of Canada is counting on us to win that bid. Cities across the nation forfeited their own chance to host the Olympics so that we might win the bid for all Canadians.

And now we are approaching the finish line with only two other cities vying for the honour of standing in the spotlight.

The Olympics are about much more than tourism or sport. They are about reaching for the best in all of us.

It is the light of competition, dedication, commitment, discipline and excellence that shines from the Olympic flame. It is the light of humanity and international unity. It is the light in a young person's eye as she dreams of standing on the podium, singing our National Anthem.

The Olympics are all about showing ourselves and all the world just how much we can do and how great we can be in every respect – as individuals, communities, British Columbians and Canadians.

They are about giving our country and our province a chance to shine... a chance to achieve more than we ever thought possible.

The economic benefits of hosting the Olympics are undeniable. They will attract billions of dollars in new investment and economic activity into our province and create thousands of new jobs.

Independent studies have confirmed what former Olympic hosts from Calgary, to Sydney, to Salt Lake City have all told us – the Olympics will generate far more in jobs and economic activity than their cost. Ask Lake Placid, Albertville, Lillehammer or Seoul. They all agree it was the best thing they ever did.

Should we be successful this July, we will gain a once-in-a-lifetime chance to showcase our province to some two billion viewers worldwide. We will gain the right to build upon the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games for years before and after that magnificent event.

What a legacy it would leave to our children. What an opportunity it would afford our tourism industry and communities throughout our province. What a way it would be to put our province, our athletes and our nation front and centre on the world stage.

The decision will be made on July 2nd.

Opening Up Our Transportation Infrastructure

The key to building our province has always been to open it up – to open up B.C. to new opportunities for growth and prosperity wherever they exist.

To open up our gateways to all of Canada and the world... To open up our provincial lands and resources to wealth creation... To open up every region to better transportation infrastructure and freer movement of goods, services and people.

Your government has a vision for transportation to do just that.

In rural B.C. there are roads that you cannot drive on because they are in such bad shape. Resource industries face increasing costs and complications because our transportation system does not meet their needs.

Cities and suburbs are choked by traffic and are in desperate need of public transit. Coastal communities need improved ferry service to meet not just their economic needs but their social needs as well.

Goods must flow freely to our customers on the continent and around the world if our economy is to prosper. Ports need to be opened to new levels of access and our airports need to be recognized as critical social and economic infrastructure.

When our transportation system is failing, we cannot work together as we should or reach our full potential as a province.

Your government has completed the first stage of a comprehensive transportation plan.

It is a vision that opens up the North with major improvements to rural roads, new access to gas and oil fields, and the completion of the new Nisga'a Highway.

The heartlands of our province will be opened up through an integrated rail network that improves service and protects public ownership of the BC Rail lines, beds and rights-of-way.

Improvements to the Kicking Horse Canyon will help open up the Kootenays and the Columbia Valley to the rest of Canada and all of B.C.

New investments in border infrastructure will improve the movement of our goods to our customers. The Island and Coast will be opened up to greater choice, competition and better service through the new BC Ferries Services.

And your government will continue to work to ensure our airports become the regional social and economic engines they should be.

Improvements to transportation are long overdue and starting this year they will be secured for the future through dedicated funding from fuel tax revenue that ensures those investments are made.

Opening Up A Revitalized Forestry Industry

No issue will dominate this Session's legislative agenda like the reforms aimed at revitalizing B.C.'s forest industry.

A number of measures will be taken to open up our forest industry and put it on a sound, sustainable, competitive footing.

This Session, your government will introduce legislation to create a working forestland base. The working forest is meant to secure a working land base for forest companies, forest workers and communities throughout the heartlands of British Columbia.

The government will pass forest reforms to diversify tenure and move towards market-based stumpage that is regionally sensitive and socially responsible. These measures will ensure that British Columbians get top value for every log harvested from their public forests.

More timber will be available for innovative, smaller, local operators through the B.C. Timber Sales Program and also for First Nations.

Fair compensation will be assured for existing tenure holders that recognizes both the benefits and costs of reform.

There will be benefits from the elimination of water bedding, cut controls and appurtenancy requirements that have hurt forest companies' ability to successfully compete.

We will maintain current restrictions on the export of logs from Crown lands. As noted, significant steps will be taken to involve and accommodate First Nations' interests in the development of forest resources.

These measures will not be easy, painless or welcomed by all. Restructuring of this magnitude simply cannot be made without some short-term dislocation. But restructuring is needed now. It cannot wait.

The Coastal industry is in deep trouble and has implored the government to act, despite the attendant hardships and growing pains that will inevitably result in the short-term. To delay further would be to invite devastating consequences and unthinkable permanent job losses.

The changes that must be made are difficult, yet absolutely critical to the Coastal industry's long-term viability and survival.

The Interior forest industry faces other structural pressures, beyond the softwood lumber dispute. The pine beetle infestation threatens communities throughout most of the Interior and the North.

Your government will continue to work with the industry in each region to act in a measured, determined way to bring about the right reforms at the right time for the greatest public good.

The government's primary concern as we move through this generational change in forest policy is the people who count on the forests directly for their livelihoods.

It will work with labour, the federal government and industry representatives to try to mitigate the trauma of change on people's lives and in our heartlands communities.

Over the long term, the government's forest reforms will modernize our forest industry and make it more competitive. Forestry will remain British Columbia's number one industry for many, many years to come.

This year the sun will begin to rise on a new forest industry where forest workers look to the future with confidence and optimism.

Opening Up B.C.'s Heartlands to Economic Growth

Your government's new B.C. Heartlands Economic Strategy will open up new opportunities for economic growth throughout our entire province.

The Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise will complete and implement economic development plans across the province, incorporating plans for infrastructure, human capital, and marketing.

The B.C. Heartlands Economic Strategy will open up new partnerships with First Nations, new investments in transportation infrastructure, new opportunities for tourism, sport and recreation from a successful Olympics bid, and a revitalized forestry industry.

Yet more will be done.

No sector of our economy offers more promise for job and wealth creation throughout British Columbia than our energy industry. The new Energy Policy will open up new investments in independent power production and clean, renewable alternative energy throughout B.C.

Coalbed methane has huge potential for the Kootenays, the Central Interior and Vancouver Island. Opportunities for job creation in that new enterprise will be pursued this year with new vigor, supported by new legislation.

Offshore oil and gas exploration holds tremendous promise for communities in the Northwest and on northern Vancouver Island.

By 2010, your government wants to have an offshore oil and gas industry that is up and running, environmentally sound, and booming with job creation.

Tourism is another sector that is critical to the government's B.C. Heartlands Economic Strategy. By 2010, your government wants to see our tourism industry more than double in size.

The government wants to see B.C.'s parks be major magnets for tourism. The new Recreational Stewardship Plan will help make that happen.

But more can be done to leverage the opportunities that will flow from those parks, new investments in transportation, and hosting the 2010 Olympics.

B.C.'s summer and winter resorts are unparalleled in the world. From Kelowna's Big White to Vernon's Silver

Star... From Courtenay's Mount Washington to Penticton's Apex... From Sun Peaks in Kamloops, to Eight Peaks and Saddle Mountain near Blue River...

From Canoe near Valemount, to Hudson Bay Mountain near Smithers and Powder King near Chetwynd... From Golden's Kicking Horse to Invermere's Panorama...

From Kimberley Alpine Resort and Fernie Alpine Resort to Nelson's White Water and Rossland's Red Mountain, British Columbia's resort potential is unmatched.

There are brand new resort communities on the horizon.

B.C.'s four-season resorts are an enormous economic asset and represent a major opportunity for British Columbians throughout our heartlands.

This year your government is establishing the B.C. Resort Task Force to bring together all the resources and assets of government with First Nations and Resort Communities across B.C.

It will develop new programs to ensure our resort potential is fully met and fully recognized around the world.

The Heartlands Economic Strategy will bring together transportation, energy, forestry, tourism, agriculture, and new technologies to create a powerful economic force for the regions and province as a whole.

This can all happen if we lift our sights higher... if we set new goals for ourselves that oblige us all to reach higher than we ever thought possible.

Opening Up Economic Opportunities for All

Still more opportunities for growth exist in our technology sector.

To help focus government's efforts on expanding our knowledge economy, the government intends to follow the advice of the Premier's Technology Council.

All information technology and e-government related services will be consolidated this year under the Ministry of Management Services.

Your government wants high-speed Internet access in communities throughout the province.

It wants B.C. to be the most computer literate province in Canada.

Other steps will be taken this year to help stimulate investment and job creation in small businesses throughout our province.

The government will launch a new international marketing strategy to aggressively develop new markets and increase market share for B.C. products worldwide.

A national information campaign will market British Columbia's competitive advantages to all Canadians.

Your government will continue to streamline and modernize regulation and encourage business investment and job creation.

It will simplify consumer protection legislation by consolidating seven existing statutes into one.

Changes to the *Small Business Venture Capital Act* will increase access to seed capital, eliminate red tape, and provide funding opportunities for all regions of the province.

Changes will be introduced to save B.C. businesses time and money.

Companies will soon be able to use a single business number to complete several business processes at one time, from incorporation to registration and data maintenance.

Amendments will also be tabled to the *Coal Act*, the *Mineral Tenure Act*, the *Mines Act*, and the *Petroleum and Natural Gas Act* to streamline administration and stimulate investment in those sectors.

New legislative measures will open up ICBC, BC Ferries and BC Hydro to independent regulatory oversight that better protects ratepayers, free of political interference.

Legislation will be introduced to open up fair and transparent government procurement practices; modernize the *Waste Management Act*; improve contaminated sites regulation; streamline and strengthen the *Pesticide Control Act*; and enhance planning for agriculture and the right to farming.

Opening Up Prosperity and Opportunity

There is much to be done to build a New Era of hope, prosperity and public service for British Columbia.

The challenges at hand will not solve themselves. The opportunities that lie in wait will not be found unless we search for them.

The future we all want for our families, communities, province and country will not materialize by clinging to the status quo.

Real progress always necessitates change... movement... growth. Never has that been truer than it is today.

No region should be left behind as our province moves forward. No segment of our society should be marginalized by a lack of will to make things better.

No sector of our economy should be hamstrung by policies that close off opportunities, turn away investment, or deny job creation.

Your government understands that it too must strive to balance the need for positive change with British Columbians' desire for certainty, stability and manageable reform.

Finding that right balance is always open to debate and constructive criticism. Your government will do its best to listen, learn and act accordingly.

Undeniably, the challenges are great and cannot be surmounted without error. Yet British Columbians know what needs to be done.

This is the year to do it.

This is the year to open up our economy to new investment and job creation by opening up our lands and resources. This is the year to open up our minds to new ways of meeting our common interests, and to open up new partnerships with First Nations, other governments and private enterprise.

This is the year to win the right to host the 2010 Olympics and showcase our entire province to the world. This is the year to revitalize our forest industry and optimize growth in every sector of our economy and in every region.

Your government will open up our province to the free flow of people, goods, services and knowledge. It will modernize and improve crucial public services by putting the interests of patients, students and people in need *first*.

In short, it will put ideas into action.

Let this be the year that we earn our way forward with bold steps, hard work and a relentless commitment to the next generation. Let this be the year we win the world for British Columbia and Canada.

This truly is our time to shine.

Thank you.

