



# BRITISH COLUMBIA

## **SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

The Honourable Steven L. Point, OBC

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Lieutenant-Governor

— *at the* —

Opening of the Third Session,

Thirty-Ninth Parliament

— *of the* —

Province of British Columbia

February 14, 2011

As we open this session of the 39th Parliament, we pause to honour the memory and contributions of British Columbians who have passed since this Assembly last convened.

Members mourn the loss of former members of this Assembly: Sindi Hawkins, Carl Liden, Eileen Dailly, Dean Smith, Karen Sanford, Dr. Howard McDiarmid and former Lieutenant Governors Colonel Robert G. Rogers and Dr. David C. Lam.

We recognize the sacrifices made by Corporal Darren Fitzpatrick; first responders Jo-Ann Fuller and Ivan Polivka; and air tanker pilot Tim Whiting.

We recognize the contributions of business and community leaders: Chester Johnson, Jack Ebbels, Audrey Paterson, Justice John C. Bouck, Lorne Greenaway, Jim Bohlen, Dorothy Stowe and Virginia Greene as well as civic leaders George Hawksworth, Alan Herbert Emmott, Kathleen Grouhel, Ruth Layne, Gerry Trerise, Garry Watkins, Lela Irvine, Larry McNabb and Jack Volrich.

We acknowledge the passing of John Babcock, Nodar Kumaritashvili, and Leonard James Gibbs.

We recognize former judge and B.C. Conflict of Interest Commissioner H.A.D. (Bert) Oliver and the 62 members of the B.C. Public Service who have passed since we last met.

We join First Nations communities in honouring the memory of Grand Chief Archie Charles and William Abner Thorne.

Exactly one year ago to this day, Canadian history was made when Alexandre Bilodeau won Canada's first Olympic gold medal on Canadian soil.

It was a moment that captured our nation, raising us up with a renewed pride in our country and igniting the Canadian spirit as never before.

In the weeks that followed, the world was introduced to British Columbia and Canada. Canadians got to know each other as well. Each time the Maple Leaf was flown, each time O Canada was sung, we grew closer together.

That renewed pride was a gift from our athletes. They inspired us and taught us what it meant to dream big and to reach higher as individuals, as a province and as a country.

To each of them we say thank you.

Thirty-four British Columbians were part of the Canadian Olympic Team and 22 B.C. athletes were part of Canada's Paralympic Team.

British Columbians beamed with pride as those athletes achieved their dream of competing at the highest level at home.

We all sang a little louder when Maelle Ricker was the first B.C. athlete to win gold and the chorus built

for all our British Columbia Olympic medallists: Ashleigh McIvor, Chris Le Bihan, Denny Morrison, Duncan Keith, Scott Niedermayer, Brent Seabrook, Shea Weber and Roberto Luongo.

Our Paralympian medallists Lauren Woolstencroft, Jim Armstrong, Darryl Neighbour, Ina Forrest, Sonja Gaudet, Josh Dueck, Lindsay Debou and Karolina Wisniewska amazed us with their tenacity, strength and skill.

Canada's Olympic performance inspired a generation. In the coming days the Province will honour each of British Columbia's medal winners in a special way. We not only thank them, but we owe our thanks to their families, friends, coaches, trainers and sponsors who helped them along the way.

We owe our thanks to thousands of individuals and organizations who came together to organize what is now regarded as the most successful Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in history.

We thank Jack Poole for his focus on what the Olympics could do for all of us. We recognize the commitment of the entire VANOC board of directors and of John Furlong and his exceptional team of professionals. They deserve our gratitude, as do the sponsors and all who had a hand in making our Olympic dream come true. No one will forget the thousands of blue-jacketed volunteers who were the face and shining personality of the Olympics and of our country.

For the first time in Olympic history, Four Host First Nations welcomed the world as full partners and were an integral part of our Olympic success. They too deserve our thanks.

We owe thanks to the workers who ensured that for the first time in Olympic history, every venue was completed nearly a year ahead of schedule. We thank the doctors and nurses and health professionals who exceeded all expectations in caring for the athletes and our visitors. We thank the public safety officials who ensured that we could celebrate excellence and enjoy our cities and our triumphs safely and with joy.

We thank the more than 12,000 torchbearers and over 1,000 communities from coast-to-coast-to-coast who gifted all Canadians with the opportunity to be part of both the Olympic and Paralympic flames.

All British Columbians and indeed all Canadians should be proud of the contributions they made towards not only the Olympics, but our outstanding global reputation.

Perhaps the defining character of our Olympics was a comment by a veteran Olympic broadcaster who said he never felt safer at any Olympic Games — and he never saw a single weapon.

That says a lot about the society each of us has helped to build over the past 150 years. It says a lot about British Columbians.

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British Columbia reached new heights with the success of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. A new decade of international opportunity and economic and social development lies before us all.

Its success was possible because of a foundation built on economic competitiveness, sound fiscal management, a commitment to quality health and education programs and services to support those most in need. It was built by individual British Columbians in every part of this province. It was built with vision and commitment to one another and to the future.

We now gather together on the eve of transition to new leadership. Both the government and the opposition will select new leaders in the days ahead. With change there is always excitement and opportunity to discover new paths ahead and new means of achieving our shared goal of a better future for all.

This is a time when British Columbians are encouraged to discuss new ideas about making our province an even better place.

Through this period, government will ensure a smooth and orderly transition while continuing to deliver the quality services that are important to all British Columbians.

Tomorrow's budget will meet statutory requirements while providing maximum flexibility for future decisions by the new executive council and this legislature. As laid out in government's three-year plan,

spending priorities will continue to be focused on health and education.

To allow for the completion of successful leadership selections by both the government and opposition, the government will seek approval from this House of an interim supply that will allow for the ongoing operation of government business.

On February 26, a new Premier-designate will be chosen. The Premier-designate will be sworn-in shortly thereafter and another chapter in British Columbia's history will begin.

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At a time when Canada is seen as a beacon around the globe for its economic stability, its social character and its unwavering strength, British Columbia is recognized as a leader within Canada.

Across the continent and in many parts of the world, British Columbia is looked upon with envy.

The past decade has renewed our confidence about what we can do when we work together.

We have begun building a New Relationship with First Nations that recognizes First Nations' inestimable contributions to our province's cultural and economic history and works to close the health, educational and economic gaps that exist between First Nations and non-First Nations.

Since 2001, B.C.'s businesses large and small have helped create hundreds of thousands of new jobs, so today in B.C. well over two million people have jobs that support their families and add to the quality of life in their communities.

Working with non-profits, federal and local governments, today we continue to house more homeless, offer more direct health and social services and provide more direct support to vulnerable children and families than at any other point in history. More needs to be done.

British Columbia is a globally recognized leader in climate action that protects future generations without sacrificing the needs of today.

British Columbians take great pride in our rich parks system. We now have more protected area than any other province in Canada, an area equal to the size of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI combined. Everyone has a favourite B.C. park. They are an important part of British Columbia's identity and history that is recognized around the world.

This year we will celebrate BC Parks system's 100th Anniversary. One hundred years ago Strathcona Provincial Park became the first in a long list of parks that have shaped our culture and reflected our respect and appreciation of our natural environment.

Our celebrations will serve to remind British Columbians of how fortunate we are and how important it is that we follow stewardship practices that protect those

parks for the future. Renewed interpretive programs will highlight the incredible opportunities that lie within BC Parks in every part of the province.

We will also complete the commitment made with the State of Montana to sustain the environmental values in the Flathead River Basin in a manner consistent with current forestry, recreation, guide outfitting and trapping uses.

The Memorandum of Understanding and co-operation signed by British Columbia and witnessed by interested First Nations and American Tribes has been described by Prime Minister Harper and President Obama as an “historic” agreement to sustain the environmental values in this area. We look forward to implementing this agreement with our partners and paralleling steps taken recently in the United States Congress and by the State of Montana.

Our province is now recognized as a clean, renewable energy powerhouse and we have established an enormous competitive advantage with some of the lowest electricity rates in North America.

British Columbia is recognized as North America’s leader in public private partnerships, working with the private sector to build affordable and innovative public infrastructure — housing, hospitals, transit, highways and bridges.

We have led the country with the creation of seven new universities and the largest expansion of post-secondary education in the history of B.C.

Today our workers pay the lowest provincial personal income taxes in Canada and our businesses will soon pay the lowest corporate taxes in the G7.

Our transportation network is connecting North America to established and emerging economies in Asia while opening new markets for all our enterprises abroad.

Our citizens have among the longest life expectancies in the world, and our scientists are global leaders in areas such as cancer, spinal cord injuries, HIV/AIDS and genome research.

For all the natural resources that our province has been blessed with, it is the people who live here that have defined our quality of life. People who work and invest in our resource industries — mining, forestry, fisheries, agriculture and energy.

It's British Columbians who have created our high-tech industries — in film, digital media and new technologies — and who are our great explorers in life sciences and research in our universities and colleges.

It is our health professionals and social service professionals who have pushed back the frontiers of illness and injury as they move to their destination of creating a healthier society. It is our public servants, our excellent teachers and educators and thousands of parents and support staff who give our children the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

First Nations leaders have ushered in the New Relationship and made decisions in the name of progress to provide new social, educational and economic opportunities to their people.

It is our workers who persevere through scorching heat and freezing cold to build and maintain a transportation infrastructure that is the backbone of our economic and social lives.

Our small business owners work day and night, year-round to provide jobs for their employees and a future for their families.

It is our children who say ‘inspire me and I shall dream the next dream.’

It is our families who are raising those children and who are determined to make sure that they inherit a province filled with even more opportunities than what this generation has been blessed with.

For the last decade British Columbians have lifted this province to new heights for the benefit of future generations.

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But even as we look back we know that British Columbia’s best days lie ahead.

New leadership, new vision and new ideas will urge us forward as we enter the second decade of the 21st Century. Our advantage as being Canada’s Pacific Gateway continues to grow. Our young people will

energize us all and map a course which captures their imaginations and calls us all forward.

B.C. is a modern, inclusive, multicultural society that welcomes newcomers to contribute, that encourages free enterprise and is ready to compete globally.

Our abundant natural resources and the strengthening New West Partnership provide unsurpassed promise for all who live here and in other parts of Canada.

This is a place where others dream of living and where still more can't wait to visit.

We in this House are among the fortunate few who call B.C. home and who are called to serve. We have the privilege of public office and the responsibility to forge a new dialogue about public ideas and public solutions for the problems that vex us all and that hold us in thrall. Together we stand on a foundation of principle that has always supported our dreams and provided all of us who live here with an unsurpassed quality of life.

Our values are reflected in our actions. Let us all in this House commit to reflect the best of British Columbia.

Let us give to future generations rather than taking from them.

Let us demand more of ourselves than we demand of others and set a better example to all those who have bestowed upon us the honour of public service.

Civil dialogue, open discussion and respectful debate should characterize all our deliberations in this House and beyond these walls.

Let us all bring honour to this House, and to all who went before, by the quality of our debate and discourse.

And remember, in this great province, in this great country: *“Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”*

The best lies on the horizon for British Columbia.