



BRITISH COLUMBIA

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC
Lieutenant-Governor

— *at the* —

Opening of the Fourth Session,
Fortieth Parliament

— *of the* —

Province of British Columbia

February 10, 2015

Members of the Legislative Assembly:

It is my privilege to represent Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, who this year will become our longest-reigning monarch, surpassing the reign of her great-great-grandmother after whom this city is named. Her Majesty provides an example of service to us all. I ask you to join me in extending to Her Majesty our congratulations and best wishes.

Since the chamber was last addressed from the throne, we lost some beloved British Columbians.

They made their contributions in different venues, but their accomplishments inspired us and made us proud.

Pat Quinn and Ted Harrison represented the very best of British Columbia on the world stage.

We will also miss two men who took different approaches to fighting cancer—Dr. Jasbinder Sanghera through research, and Sergeant Mike Lawless through fundraising.

You all know the demands of public office only too well. With that mind, I ask you to remember Simma Holt, Jack Adelaar, Jack Talstra, Gordon Harris, Maurice Chazottes, and Allan Hustwick.

Events around the world from Ottawa to Sydney to Paris have brought the importance of democracy into sharp focus.

Each of you has earned a sacred trust—not only to represent your constituents, but also to represent democratic values.

Respect for each other, acceptance of diversity, and tolerance for differences of religion or political beliefs.

In this house, and around this great province, we must never forget...

While we may disagree with the person speaking, we must always recognize, respect and defend their right to speak.

THE PLAN

Members, we live in uncertain times. The global economic recovery remains fragile, and market conditions remain unstable.

Consider the price of oil. Who could have credibly predicted that oil would lose half of its value in a matter of months?

Today, provinces with oil-based economies and indeed our federal government are forced to respond to the sudden fiscal impacts.

We are fortunate in B.C. that we have a diverse economy and the people, working in diverse sectors, to build our future.

We are fortunate that we do not rely on one commodity.

That's why it is important for your government to have a plan, the BC Jobs Plan, to strengthen our diverse economy, and to stick to it with purposeful determination.

Members, before I look forward, let me review what we have accomplished in our recent past.

In September 2011, your government introduced the BC Jobs Plan. Since then, more than 70,000 jobs have been created. A near-record 2.3 million British Columbians are working. Unemployment has dropped 1.7 percentage points since the launch of the BC Jobs plan—more than any other province in Canada during the same period.

Last September, the Jobs Plan was accelerated across eight key sectors of our diverse economy to attract investment and to create jobs across the province.

They are: International Education, Transportation, Forestry, Mining and Energy, Technology and the Green Economy, Tourism, Agrifoods, and Natural Gas.

In **international education**, the number of international students has increased by 20 per cent in just five years, spending \$2.3 billion in B.C., and supporting almost 25,500 jobs. At the same time, opportunities for B.C. students to study abroad have increased steadily, through partnerships with overseas institutions.

Transportation is crucial, because our trade depends on it. In just the past year, the Malahat Safety Improvement Project was completed, the Province made changes to provide better wages for container truckers serving Port Metro Vancouver, and thousands of British Columbians shared their input on a new transportation plan.

In **forestry**, your government has focused on forging relationships with new markets, and expanding our client base.

This strategy has paid off. In just five years, forest product exports have increased by 63 per cent, and now account for over a third of all B.C. exports.

B.C.'s **mining and energy** sectors provide good-paying jobs across the province, from rural communities to corporate offices in Vancouver, a global mining hub.

Since 2011, five new mines have opened, creating over 1,300 new jobs, and seven major expansions of existing mines have been approved. Later this year, we expect the Red Chris mine to open, employing another 300 British Columbians, including many First Nations workers.

B.C.'s **technology and green economy** sectors are putting B.C. on the world map, with hotspots in Victoria, the new Okanagan Centre for Innovation, and the thriving startup culture in Vancouver.

Technology contributes \$23 billion in annual revenue—up \$10 billion in just 10 years.

B.C.'s clean-tech industry is also making strides, leading the way in fields as diverse as biofuels, clean tech entrepreneurship, and carbon capture.

The **tourism** sector continues to grow, with more than 19,000 tourism businesses throughout the province, many of them small businesses.

In 2014, British Columbia destinations received significant international recognition, and revenue has increased steadily over the past decade.

B.C.'s **agrifoods** sector is famous throughout Canada and the world for its fresh, healthy food products.

To help farmers and food processors promote their products, your government expanded the Buy Local program, and committed more than \$8 million for a seven-year tree fruit replant program that builds on the recent success of growers replanting low-value orchards with high-demand and high-quality varieties.

The results speak for themselves, with \$2.7 billion in exports to more than 140 countries, with record-setting growth in China.

In all these sectors, your government is delivering.

Perhaps no sector has attracted more excitement and investment than **natural gas**.

Liquefied natural gas could create a hundred thousand jobs and the revenues to eliminate our debt by supplying the world's cleanest fossil fuel to the growing economies of Asia.

LNG is a generational opportunity to grow, but it is also a plan to protect a vital resource industry, which already employs 13,000 British Columbians.

Your government has worked to ensure that B.C. is globally competitive, and a secure place to do business.

Global companies have already invested more than 7 billion dollars to pursue their proposed projects, and they continue to undertake the work necessary to bring these projects to life.

THE ENVIRONMENT

B.C. will continue to lead on responsible economic development by continuing to protect our clean air, our clean water and our land.

We will continue to provide a positive example to the world that there is no need to choose between economic growth and fighting climate change.

Our carbon tax proves we can do both.

When it was launched nearly seven years ago, it was controversial.

Today, as discussions move from Lima to Paris, the B.C. carbon tax is a model not just for our fellow provinces, but international governments, environmental leaders, and the IMF.

Our economy has grown. Our population has grown. Yet our dependence on oil has declined.

Protecting the environment means setting world-leading standards—but it also means making change when needed. British Columbia will continue to lead.

When the dam failed at Mount Polley, our first responsibility was tending to the needs of the community. But the second was to order a full and independent review.

The third will be to take those findings, and apply the lessons learned to ensure this never happens again.

Your government takes the same approach to worker safety. Holding employers to the highest standards, and learning from past tragedies. The lessons from the Macatee Report and the Coroner's Report into the Babine and Lakeland tragedies will help to ensure workers return home to their families at the end of their shift.

We will continue to stand up for B.C. with our Five Conditions on heavy oil pipelines.

Not to build walls against development, but to articulate the way we do business in B.C.

Responsibly. Safely. With social license.

CHARTING THE COURSE

In addition to delivering on the Jobs Plan to support economic growth responsibly across all our sectors, your government has consistently taken the right first step—fiscal responsibility.

Because sound fiscal management builds the foundation for growth.

It allows us to attract investment, and grow the economy.

And that allows government to provide skills training to ensure British Columbians benefit from economic growth.

That allows government to provide the services that have become part of how we define ourselves as Canadian.

In 2013 your government proposed a balanced budget. And delivered.

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Your government will start 2015 by proposing a balanced budget.

It will deliver a balanced budget.

And B.C. will continue to stand strong in an exclusive club.

In terms of debt management, your government has met or exceeded every one of its targets over the last three years.

Your government is committed to eliminating the provincial debt—but will continue to make affordable investments in our future, especially those that help us grow our economy and the jobs that come with them.

MANAGING COSTS

Your government will continue to work with B.C.'s dedicated public servants and their unions to reach agreements that deliver services affordably.

Today, more than two-thirds of B.C.'s public sector workers have already agreed to five-year contracts. Under the new mandate they will benefit as the economy grows

Most notably, the provincial government and teachers' federation set aside more than 30 years of discord to reach a negotiated agreement.

The longest in British Columbia history.

Many said this was impossible.

Now there is an opportunity to work together on our shared priorities: students and student outcomes.

ONE TAXPAYER

Members, fiscal responsibility must extend beyond core provincial government.

We can never forget: there is only one taxpayer.

Following a comprehensive Core Review of provincial government, the Taxpayer Accountability Principles set out clear expectations for the broader public sector, including Crown corporations:

To deliver services well, and affordably.

Our government will also continue to work with our municipal partners to share best practices. To control spending. To respect the one taxpayer that pays for all levels of government.

That is the central principle behind the plebiscite in Metro Vancouver.

The mayors of Metro Vancouver have developed a vision to ease traffic congestion, reduce emissions, and invest in new public transit infrastructure. They have come up with a realistic way to pay for it.

But the people must have their say.

This spring, as promised consistently by this government, people will have their say.

GROWING THE ECONOMY

With our fiscal house in order, we have the foundation we need to grow our diverse economy with our BC Jobs Plan.

It starts with a special focus on small business across the eight sectors.

Small business employs more than one million people across our province.

B.C. has led the country in supporting small businesses by cutting red tape—and in 2015, your government will continue to lead, by further reducing the cost and burden of needless regulations, making it easier to do business with the provincial government.

This year in international education, your government will open three new B.C. offshore schools, implement a new offshore school application process, and continue to work with several countries on promoting bilingual education programs in B.C. schools.

This year in transportation, your government is working in partnership with Alberta and Saskatchewan through the New West Partnership to add capacity and resolve bottlenecks...to strengthen our Asia-Pacific gateway.

In October, the Softwood Lumber Agreement will expire.

We are working with the federal government and our B.C. forest Industry to ensure B.C. lumber products are treated fairly—especially at a time when the US economy is starting to rebound and housing starts are on the rise.

Together we will negotiate a new agreement that recognizes the mutual benefits of trade that is free and unhindered by the harmful effects of protectionism.

This year, your government will also introduce amendments to the *Forest Act* that allow us to implement recommendations from the BC Timber Sales Effectiveness Review, and lead the development and implementation of a renewed Forest Sector Competitiveness Strategy.

This year will be transformative for the mining and energy sector. Over the next few years, there is an opportunity to create thousands of new jobs and billions more in new investment.

This year, your government will increase funding to the mining division to improve the permitting process for major mines and increase staff and inspections.

This year, the minister of technology and citizens' services will bring forward an update to the 10-year skills training plan focusing on feedback from the tech sector.

With ongoing initiatives like the BC Venture Acceleration Program and Broadband Satellite Initiative, your government is delivering innovative change.

To encourage another year of strong growth in tourism, your government is reducing red tape and processing times for land-based tenure applications, and developing and marketing B.C.'s world-class tourism products through Destination BC.

With one billion dollars in growth in the last three years, the agrifoods sector is positioned for continued success. In 2015, your government will continue to work with the Agrifood Advisory Committee on a new action plan through 2020, including a new Fish and Seafood Strategy.

In February 2014, your government pledged to launch the LNG-Buy BC program to connect B.C. businesses with the national and international companies looking to invest billions of dollars in our province.

Last fall, your government said it would introduce a comprehensive LNG tax framework, which gives certainty to investors while ensuring British Columbians benefit from the abundant natural gas resource they own.

Your government said it would introduce world-leading environmental standards to ensure B.C. has the cleanest LNG.

On all these commitments, your government is delivering.

In 2015, your government will continue to work with stakeholders, First Nations, communities, and proponents, and lead the way on natural gas development and export.

TRADE

Beyond what we can do at home, we must embrace the world and increase our trade to create jobs here at home. One of our greatest strengths is our cultural, linguistic, and historic ties across the Pacific.

The descendants of immigrants from Asia helped make B.C. a culturally rich and tolerant society.

Since 2002, British Columbia's trade with China has grown rapidly. China is now our second-largest trading partner, accounting for \$6.5 billion in 2014.

Our trading relationship with Japan, the world's third-largest economy has strong prospects for industries as diverse as mining, forestry, clean tech and digital media, and natural gas.

The recently ratified free trade agreement between Canada and South Korea gives B.C. businesses new opportunities with our fourth-largest trading partner.

On the horizon is India—an emerging economic giant. Since 2011, trade with India has increased by 157 per cent—and it will continue to grow.

This year, the Premier will embark on her seventh international trade mission, returning to British Columbia's sister province of Guangdong.

And B.C. will continue to be a champion for lowering outdated trade barriers that hinder growth within our own country.

SKILLS TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Members, neither fiscal responsibility nor growing the economy is done for its own sake.

Whether they were born and raised here, new arrivals, or considering coming back home from away, we must ensure British Columbians have the opportunities to benefit from economic growth.

That begins with skills training and education.

By 2022 over a million job openings are expected across British Columbia. 44 per cent will be in trades and technical professions.

Launched last year, the Skills for Jobs Blueprint includes \$7.5 billion every year on education and training, and more than 1,400 critical LNG training seats throughout the province.

In education, our student outcomes are among the best in the world, and we now have an opportunity to improve.

Compared to other provinces, B.C. students are top-ranked in reading and science, and second in math.

Since 2001, the number of aboriginal students graduating from our schools has increased by 103 per cent. The number of students with special needs graduating is up by 166 per cent.

But the world does not stand still.

This year, the Ministry of Education is bringing some of the best thinking on learning from around the world to B.C. students, teachers and parents, to make sure our students are ready for the world they will inherit.

FIRST NATIONS

Members, the benefits of a growing economy extend beyond skills training and education.

They extend to health care, social services, infrastructure, and public safety.

A growing economy enables us to continue to make investments to ensure we continue to deliver the services that have defined us as Canadians.

Now more than ever, First Nations must be our partners.

Last year's Supreme Court decision on 'Tsilhqot'in title is an opportunity to build a better partnership.

Our government has started this work with a historic meeting between the cabinet and leaders of First Nations.

We will continue to build on the progress we made last year with a similar meeting later this year.

Building partnerships, ensuring First Nations are full partners with a real stake in economic growth and development, is crucial.

Since 2006, your government has signed over 250 significant agreements with First Nations, from treaties and reconciliation agreements to economic development agreements.

To ensure First Nations see the benefits of growth, your government will continue to find ways to ensure they have the training and skills required for the jobs of the future.

In 2015 your government will continue to build strong progressive partnerships with First Nations.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Your government will continue to work with rural communities across the province, increasing opportunities to build careers and raise families closer to home, meaning more growth in smaller centres.

As opportunities increase in smaller towns, your government is committed to help them meet the challenges that growth can sometimes bring.

In the coming weeks, your government will introduce the Rural Advisory Committee, which will provide independent and impartial advice on helping rural B.C. increase opportunities, manage growth, and meet its full potential in communities big and small.

VIOLENCE FREE BC

Last year, your government promised to present a comprehensive strategy to end violence against women.

Last week, your government launched The Violence Free BC Strategy. It aims to prevent violence, respond when it takes place, and give women the supports they need to rebuild their lives.

Government has a role to play. But we need collective action—from everyone in British Columbia.

That's the only way we can put an end to violence against women.

If we work together—2015 will be a turning point.

MEDAL OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Communities are defined not by bricks and mortar, but the people within them.

Every day, British Columbians go the extra mile, volunteering their time, money and talents to build stronger communities.

To recognize the men and women who have made extraordinary contributions the provincial government will establish a Medal of Good Citizenship.

To thank them for making a difference—and inspire others to follow their example.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Last year, your government took on outdated regulations on beer, wine and spirits—sometimes contradictory, often burdensome, and in some cases, a hundred years old.

Step by step, B.C.'s laws were brought in line with how people actually live, while protecting and enhancing health and safety. Greater convenience for one-stop shopping at the grocery store, a chance for parents to dine with their kids in their neighbourhood pub, or buying local wine at a farmers' market.

These changes were also made to help a thriving sector, as our craft beer and wine producers attract more and more worldwide recognition.

This coming year, your government will look at how citizens interact with government services...to reduce red-tape for real people. Step by step, we will propose changes to ease unnecessary burdens, save time and make things more efficient.

CONCLUSION

My fellow British Columbians...we have a proud history.

150 years ago this month, your predecessors voted to create Government House, the Ceremonial Home of all British Columbians. At that time, the Assembly's task was to assert more local control over colonial affairs on Vancouver Island.

Today, our task is more ambitious: to build a more prosperous province.

To grow a diverse economy and adapt to a changing world.

To contribute to Confederation like never before, and help build this great nation.

As one nation builder said:

“Let them look to the past, but let them also look to the future...

Let them look to the land of their ancestors, but let them look also to the land of their children.”

As Sir Wilfrid Laurier knew, leadership means striving to leave a better legacy, while never losing sight of what got us here.

It means staying true to our principles.

It means sticking to the plan.

It will not always be easy.

It will take a lot of hard work.

I know you are up to the task.

We are ready to walk the long road ahead of us.

To build a better, more fair and sustainable province.

A more prosperous province.

One with no insiders and outsiders, with no winners and losers.

Just British Columbians.