



BRITISH COLUMBIA

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Honourable Steven L. Point, OBC

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Lieutenant-Governor

— *at the* —

Opening of the Fifth Session,

Thirty-Eighth Parliament

— *of the* —

Province of British Columbia

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As we open this session of the 38th Parliament, we pause to honour the memory and contributions of British Columbians who have recently passed.

Members mourn the loss of former members of this Assembly and Members of Parliament, the Honourable Stan Hagen, Dennis Cocke, Mark Rose, Ray Perrault, and Jim Fulton.

We also recognize the contribution of this legislature's former Sergeant-at-Arms Anthony Humphreys, former Agent General for British Columbia in London, Alex Hart and former Ambassador J. Alan Beesley.

We owe a special debt to Master Corporal Erin Doyle, Captain Jonathan Sutherland Snyder, Sapper Stephan Stock, Private Terry John Street and aid workers Shirley Case and Jiri Zivny, who fell in pursuit of peace and human aid overseas.

We join First Nations communities to honor the memory of Grand Chief Bernard Charles, Chief Dempsey Collinson, Chief Peter Seymour, elder Lena Jacobs and elder Agnes McCoy.

Civic leaders like Ed Wampler, Calvin Kruk, Murray Dykeman, Ernie Crist, Frank Carson, Victor Tessaro, and Bill Whalley have left indelible contributions.

We've bid farewell to talented contributors to B.C. sport and culture Bob Ackles and Chuck Bailey; notable business leaders like Geoffrey Ballard, Dennis Zanatta and Harold Zlotnik.

And today we salute the 62 dedicated members of the B.C. Public Service who passed away last year, among them, Brenda Bulmer, Robert Davidson, Gloria Loewen, Jim May, and Denise Durand Hutchinson. They helped build a better province for us all.

We live in a radically changed world.

A world rocked to its core by a global crisis of confidence.

It is a tumultuous time of uncertainty and shaken assumptions that has left families and businesses wondering what hit them.

This new world requires a new mindset that finds hope in the transformation that now drives us to change.

It's an entrepreneurial mindset that sees opportunity in the dire reality of global warming and its clarion call for innovation, clean energy and the green economy.

The new economy must focus on smarter government, leveraged investment and constructive change founded on new partnerships.

The importance of the Asia Pacific and its strategic relevance to British Columbia in this Olympic era, as Canada's Pacific Gateway, is magnified today.

The knowledge economy and the value it places on specialized skills and creativity is essential.

The seismic shifts we are experiencing call for long-term thinking and fundamental changes in human behaviour that create the impetus for healthier living and innovation in health delivery, new housing and job creation.

These global challenges cannot be resolved by simply more government spending. They require integration not isolation, partnership not partisanship, and focus not fragmentation.

The failed responses of the past are no roadmap to the future. They will only take us backwards.

The way forward is the path of greater collaboration, freer trade, and coordinated strategies that understand how fundamentally things have changed.

It is the path that views progress through a new prism of trust and takes us beyond our differences to new spectrums of possibility.

The answers we seek will not be found in the narrow confines of parochialism, ideology, or tired dogma.

They will only be found with open minds and pragmatic action that embraces change as a necessary and positive condition of progress.

As we meet today, families worry about their jobs, raising their kids, and caring for their aging parents.

The weight of their mortgage or rent or credit card debt hangs heavily on their day-to-day lives.

Seniors have seen dramatic drops in their retirement savings.

Companies that once looked to expand, now work to survive.

The things we took for granted keep changing.

These are challenges that call this legislature to action.

Government must deal with the realities of the moment, while pursuing the opportunities of the future.

The heart of the economic crisis we now face is a global crisis of confidence.

We must restore stability and reverse the psychology of loss that drives current trends.

No place on Earth offers more cause for hope and confidence in the future than British Columbia.

No economy on the continent is better positioned to weather this tornado of change and to come through it stronger than ours.

We are the lucky ones.

We need to look beyond the towering clouds now overhead to the sheer potential of the people and landscape around us.

That potential is vast in British Columbia. Together, we can seize it.

Our economy is more diversified than ever.

We are uniquely advantaged as Canada's Pacific Gateway to the world's fastest-growing markets.

British Columbia has enormous potential in clean, low-carbon energy, mining, forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, technology, tourism, trade and transportation.

Our taxes are low. Our standard of living is high. We are blessed with spectacular natural, physical and human assets.

This is what the world will see in only 361 days, when we host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

It is that fundamental strength and character, which has always defined British Columbia, that we must call on now to guide us forward with confidence.

That does not minimize the challenge at hand.

Only a few weeks ago, most experts predicted net growth for British Columbia in the year ahead.

Today, we must brace for a period of recession.

How deep it might be, or how long it will last, is impossible to know.

Few, if any, saw the sheer force and speed of the decline's progression.

Now, it is hitting our families, companies, communities and provincial finances.

Last fall your government acted. It eliminated tolls on the Coquihalla Highway, accelerated tax relief for individuals and businesses and insured credit union deposits.

It increased 20-fold the funding for resource road maintenance and rehabilitation.

It established new stability in property assessments, a new property tax deferral option and new RRSP protection.

In the year ahead, a new voluntary, defined contribution pension plan will be established to help those who currently have no pension plan.

We will seek to do that in partnership with Alberta, Saskatchewan and private employers, to create a common plan that is available to our citizens and capable of extension to all Canadians.

Enabling legislation will be developed this year, so that B.C.'s new pension plan is up and running by Canada Day in 2010.

Tomorrow's budget will build on these and other measures, with a sound financial plan that is prudent, responsive and responsible.

It will be marked by significant fiscal restraint, discipline and new economic stimulus that is affordable, timely and cost effective.

At the core of that plan is this government's broader vision that aspires to our Five Great Goals.

It is a strategy that views global leadership on climate action as impetus for innovation, investment, sustainable growth and new jobs.

It is predicated on partnerships with all who want to help our province build for the future.

Our government will do all it can to protect the economic gains families have made in the last eight years and to secure enhanced economic prospects for them in the years ahead.

The government will avoid layering on new costs that take more money out of the economy.

Last year, almost one billion dollars of economic stimulus was put into the economy with tax reductions and the climate action dividend.

Now is not the time to impose hundreds of millions in new costs on small businesses through an increased minimum wage that will mean more job losses, will depress job creation and will hurt those it purports to help.

Now is not the time to take more money out of our economy through higher taxes.

That is why this government accelerated and expanded tax cuts last fall.

That is why every penny of carbon emissions revenue, and more, has been returned to taxpayers through new tax relief.

Over 100 tax cuts made by our government were critical in our economy's remarkable recovery over the last eight years.

They generated hundreds of thousands of new jobs since 2001 and drove down B.C.'s unemployment rates to the lowest levels in over 30 years.

Now more than ever, we need to maintain low taxes.

New tax relief gives light and heavy industry a 50 per cent rebate on school property taxes.

That will help save jobs, particularly in rural communities.

Yet more needs to be done to ensure that provincial tax relief is not negated by local property tax hikes.

Our government will work with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities to develop new legislation over the summer, for introduction early next year, that will protect provincial tax reductions.

All levels of government must be equally disciplined to ensure that tax reductions at one level of government are not negated by tax increases at another.

Not all economic strategies involve more government spending. Some require smarter thinking.

Many can be undertaken at lower cost.

Discretionary spending will be reduced to maximize available budget increases to support critical services for patients, students, children and those most vulnerable in our society.

Everyone will be asked to make each tax dollar go a little further and to help eliminate the deficits that will be unavoidable in the next two years.

The government will protect public sector labour agreements but where spending can be reasonably avoided, it will be.

Every effort will be made to balance the budget as required by law by 2011/12.

This government will not become inured to the injurious effects of deficits.

It will not slide down the easy slope into structural deficits that only push our debts onto the backs of our children and grandchildren.

We must not use our ability to overspend as new license to live beyond our means or to avoid tough decisions.

Institutionalized deficits only satisfy our needs this year by making it ever more difficult to provide services that are essential next year.

Government wants our children to have access tomorrow to the basic services we take for granted today.

That is why our government worked so hard to balance its budget and pay down debt accrued by years of overspending.

That is why future surpluses will be used to eliminate that dead weight operating debt.

Our fiscal discipline has enhanced our government's ability to finance needed capital projects.

Those projects produce hard assets with lasting value and provide ongoing benefit to those who must pay for their amortized costs.

Although overall taxpayer-supported debt will rise, it will still be far below the level this government inherited in ratio to the size of our economy.

Governments set conditions for strong economies. But families and small businesses, investors and entrepreneurs, resource companies, universities and colleges are the ones who create jobs that improve our quality of life.

Education is the best economic development and health promotion program ever invented.

In tight economic times, it is only smart to maintain and expand educational investments.

Our government will increase K–12 education funding in spite of falling school age populations.

We had hoped to be in a position to introduce a voluntary all-day kindergarten program for five-year-olds this September.

Regrettably, three factors will delay its introduction. Current economic circumstances, the need to develop appropriate space and the time to recruit qualified educators means it is not feasible in 2009.

However, government is committed to that vision and will commence creating space and teacher capacity to meet that need as soon as possible.

Funding for advanced education will increase.

As more students choose to complete their studies and more workers look to pursue new training and skills development, more resources will be available.

Fortunately, we have prepared, with the largest post-secondary expansion in 40 years.

That has created nearly 32,000 new student spaces since 2001.

Seven new universities have been established and new medical schools have been launched in Prince George, Victoria and Kelowna.

A new law school will be opened at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops in collaboration with the University of Calgary.

Nurse training has almost doubled and nurse practitioners are graduating for the first time.

Billions have been invested in new research, skills development, and expanded trades and apprenticeship training.

In partnership with the federal government, new capital investments will create jobs and provide essential upgrades and new space for our colleges and universities.

Our government will accelerate research investments this year in cancer, life sciences, technologies for cleaner energy and biotechnology.

Governments have an important and vital role in shaping economic change and guiding social development.

High quality health services and expansions in health infrastructure are vital priorities, as evidenced by the nearly 60 per cent increase in provincial health funding over the last eight years.

That funding has grown at three times the rate of inflation over the last decade and will continue to climb in the next three years.

In the past 30 years, health spending has climbed from 26 per cent of the provincial budget to more than 44 per cent of this year's budget.

That trend will grow in the foreseeable future, as 90 per cent of all budgeted new operating spending in the next three years will go to health care.

Those new investments will support innovation in health delivery and improvements in emergency care, health promotion, access to surgeries, mental health and addiction services.

They will also support thousands of jobs in health care for nurses, doctors and other health workers.

We must recognize that new increases in health spending crowd out other funding priorities.

Most ministries delivering programs other than health, education and vital social services will see significant budget reductions that will challenge them to embrace restraint itself as an economic growth strategy.

Our challenge is to find new ways to generate new wealth — wealth that generates tax revenue to fund social programs that are so important to B.C. families.

This government will continue to open up our economy in every region, in every sector and for all people.

The New Relationship with First Nations is critical in that regard, as is the Transformative Change Accord and the B.C. Treaty Process.

We need to close the gaps in education, health, housing and economic opportunity that have for too long disadvantaged B.C.'s first citizens.

That journey has begun.

The progress we have made is demonstrable.

This government is working with First Nations to develop a *Recognition and Reconciliation Act* that will establish a new statutory framework to further the implementation of the New Relationship.

It will acknowledge, and place in a provincial statutory context, that Indigenous people have long lived throughout British Columbia and that this fact does not require proof.

It will recognize constitutionally established Aboriginal rights and title, and will facilitate partnerships and prosperity through shared decision making and revenue sharing.

The *Act* will guide the conduct of the Crown and the relationship of Indigenous Nations and the Crown. It will create process certainty for third parties and Indigenous Nations as they pursue economic development.

The *Act* will support the rebuilding of the historic Indigenous Nations of British Columbia and enable the establishment of political structures for meaningful government-to-government relations.

The journey we have embarked upon is not easy.

It will involve compromise, forbearance and accountability from all of us.

It is a journey that is itself a search for new thinking, new approaches and mutual benefit.

If we get it right, it will be a significant provincial accomplishment for our times.

This we must do for every child and for the generations that follow us. We must do it for the enduring health, strength and enrichment of our province.

That same commitment to new partnerships in every avenue of intergovernmental relations is essential to unlocking our full potential.

New partnerships with other governments in Canada, in the United States and across the Pacific Rim are essential to our success.

We must view our trading partners as critical allies, not just as competitors.

If we look at the new world in “zero sum” terms, we will accomplish nothing.

The answer to shrinking global markets is not to close out the world and close off markets; it is to expand markets and to invite the world in, with new vigour and reciprocity.

That is what the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement with Alberta is about.

New legislation will be introduced this spring to advance that initiative and to achieve true labour mobility for all Canadians wanting to work in British Columbia.

We will relentlessly pursue free trade within Canada for the benefit of every Canadian.

In March, your government will host a first ever joint cabinet meeting with Alberta and Saskatchewan.

It will strengthen our strategic partnerships and open new opportunities across the West.

British Columbia is also creating new partnerships with our American neighbours.

Through the Western Climate Initiative and the Climate Registry, we are helping to lead a continental response to global warming that will shape our economic and environmental future.

The WCI cap and trade system will reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions and drive new sustainable growth.

We are leading the establishment of a new Pacific Coast Collaborative with California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

In March, a first Annual Leaders' Forum in California will launch a new vision for sustainable regional growth focused on clean energy; transportation; collaborative research, development and innovation; protecting our oceans; harmonization of technical standards; and public-private partnerships.

In an uncertain age marked by growing demands for greater protectionism, these forums define mutual interest and common cause. The Enhanced Driver's Licence is a good example of their benefit.

It is far better to be sitting across the table, working together, than to be talking at each other, across our borders, reinforcing differences.

The opportunities for understanding offer so much more potential.

To that end, our government will organize the Cross Border Summit in Penticton this summer.

Political leaders and business representatives from both sides of our international border will highlight the importance of our trade relationship and the opportunities for freer trade.

We will act in concert with our largest trading partner to create new markets and new opportunities for all our citizens.

Together we can build on our continental advantages in tourism, transportation, energy, agriculture, film, technology, manufacturing and small business.

Opportunities for mutual growth in every sector of our economy will buffer the blows of the global storm.

Too many barriers still exist within Canada.

We desperately need a national “open skies” policy.

The lack of progress on this priority is hurting every province and costs our economy hundreds of millions in lost opportunities and thousands of jobs.

It makes no sense for Canada to refuse airlines the right to service new routes that open up our province and regional economies in the North, the Okanagan, the Kootenays and the Island.

It serves no purpose to deny any community the right to attract new visitors, students, investors, commerce or direct air access to any country in the world.

To highlight that point and profile the opportunities for growth, an Open Skies Summit will also be held this September at the new Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre.

It will build on the spirit of 2010 and invite governments, international airlines, airport managers and businesses from across Canada and around the world to send a message that in the new world economy we all need direct, unfettered air access to our key customers.

Open skies is just one way to open up economic opportunity.

Removing interprovincial trade barriers and labour mobility barriers lowers costs, encourages investment and unites Canada.

Getting rid of costly duplication and overlap in government will reduce costs, uncertainty and risk while it increases investment and job growth.

We must act as one country, with all levels of government working in concert with one another for the same taxpayer, or we risk diminishing Canada's potential.

For any given project, there should be one process for review and approval.

We will pursue reciprocal arrangements and equivalency agreements to allow one thorough, comprehensive and scientific environmental assessment for one project.

We must learn how to act together for the betterment of the environment and the economy. That saves taxpayers' money, increases investment and increases jobs.

The federal *Navigable Waters Act* should be repealed and replaced by legislation that meets the legitimate needs of the 21st century.

A unified major project review process will speed up job creation in mining, energy, resort development and other areas.

Mining has a great future in British Columbia.

We can help capture its potential by expediting mine approvals and lowering the costs of risk capital.

We cannot do much about the precipitous drop in global commodity prices or stock values, but our government can and will act to help people working in mining and help that industry become more competitive.

In partnership with the federal government, the assistance programs now available to forest workers and supported by federal funding will be extended to other resource families facing similar difficulties.

In the long term, the outlook for mining, and the families who depend on it, is very positive.

Provincial investments are building geoscience data and expertise that will increase resource exploration and development.

The enhanced Mining Exploration Tax Credit and the extended Mining Flow-Through Share Tax Credit are stimulating investment and job creation.

Mining has benefited enormously from the elimination of the corporation capital tax and the sales tax on production machinery and equipment.

These and other measures have helped prompt a 1,300 per cent increase in mineral exploration in 2007 over 2001.

Over half of all new mine development projects in Canada are now located in British Columbia.

Those investments will help our economy rebound in the years to come.

This government will work to expand transmission capacity along Highway 37 to open mining and energy opportunities while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Energy is another core competitive advantage for British Columbia.

B.C. is a low-carbon energy powerhouse.

New technologies and the global hunger for clean, low-carbon energy and new sources of traditional energy are putting B.C. in the driver's seat.

Even with our commitment to meet 50 per cent of B.C.'s future electricity needs through conservation, more power will be needed to ensure we are electricity self-sufficient by 2016.

Electric plug-in vehicles and other technologies aimed at reducing fossil fuel dependency will place new demands on our electricity system.

We can meet those demands and create jobs and opportunities for our citizens.

Our government will build on its Clean Energy Plan with new direction to BC Hydro and to the British Columbia Utilities Commission.

We will lead North America in creating green power that retains our low cost “heritage power” advantage for B.C. ratepayers.

We will build on our plan to ensure that at least 90 per cent of all new power produced in B.C. comes from clean sources.

More work will be done this year to advance the dialogue on Site C to decide its merit.

Independent power production will continue to create new jobs in rural communities.

Your government will not turn its back on those rural jobs.

Nor will it close its eyes to the dire fact of climate change or the significant contributions we can make in reducing greenhouse gases.

We will open up new opportunities for private investment to create jobs and meet our needs.

That will not only be good for our economy, it will be good for our planet.

Our government will pursue a major expansion in transmission capacity that will create thousands of new construction jobs and reduce energy loss through transmission.

The goal of a Northeast Transmission Line will be pursued.

An integrated, expanded transmission plan that encourages small scale power projects, economic opportunity and jobs throughout B.C. will be set by year end.

We can become global leaders in wind, run-of-river, tidal, geothermal, wave, solar and other forms of clean, renewable power and leading-edge transmission technologies.

Energy opportunities will transform the future of forestry in British Columbia with clean, carbon-neutral bioenergy, fueled by biomass from beetle-killed forests.

It will mean new jobs, new revenue streams and new electricity.

It will create new uses for waste wood left on the forest floor and reduce forest fire hazards.

It will encourage replanting in areas that would not otherwise be reforested and generate new value in the green economy as standing “carbon sinks.”

These are the green fields of opportunity created by independent power producers.

We cannot turn our backs on them and still say that we care about climate change, rural job creation, clean power, or the future of our forest industry.

It is time to grow that potential.

Natural gas is one of the cleanest-burning fossil fuels. It too is an important source of rural jobs and investment in our province.

Our government will open up that industry while still ensuring the province meets its legal greenhouse gas reduction targets.

New policies are in place to require the elimination of routine gas flaring by 2016.

New investments will be made in carbon sequestration technology.

With that policy framework in mind, B.C. will make the most of its remarkable wealth of natural gas.

The Infrastructure Royalty Credit Program will continue to spur road and pipeline infrastructure in new and undeveloped areas of B.C.

The new Net Profit Royalty Program will generate jobs and investment in fields that are remote or technically challenging.

The Horn River and Montney Basins alone have as much as 69 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas.

That could yield over \$37 billion in provincial royalty revenue, enough to fund the Ministry of Environment for over 130 years.

And that is only two basins. And one type of revenue.

In 2008, we saw record oil and gas land rights sales of \$2.66 billion.

Beyond that, the industry pays corporate tax, personal income tax, sales tax, property tax — and more.

Those dollars go to support priorities like health care and education in our communities.

Far from government subsidizing energy, energy is subsidizing government.

That is why the Province has just enhanced the Deep Well Royalty Program.

The Bowser Basin, Nechako Basin and offshore reserves all offer significant long-term potential.

The new North will build on that abundance.

This government will work with First Nations, northern communities and the private sector to open up a new Northern Energy Corridor.

We can build on our potential to ship clean, liquid natural gas to Asia that will reduce its growing dependency on coal power and dramatically cut greenhouse gases.

British Columbia can build on its competitive advantage as a global leader in clean engine technologies that use natural gas and renewable bio-gas as fuel for trucks, buses and other commercial vehicles.

A new commercial vehicle program will help to build on that potential, to create cleaner air, lower greenhouse gas emissions, lower costs and create more jobs in research, development and manufacturing.

British Columbia can build on its position as a global leader in fuel cell, compressed natural gas and hydrogen technologies.

All of those technologies are being driven and supported by our Climate Action Plan.

Those policies stimulate innovation, research, investment and job creation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

They convert landfill gas into clean energy.

They use bio-waste to produce clean energy.

Our government will work to help commercialize biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol production that turns waste wood into clean fuel.

Energy is as much of the new forest industry's future as lumber, trade and pulp and paper.

Tough as things are for forest workers and companies today, the forest industry remains vital to our future.

The new forest industry must be nimble, productive and innovative. It can be.

Over 90 per cent of the wood pellets we produce in B.C. are exported to Europe and Japan for clean thermal power production.

The new green economy and the world's thirst for green power is driving that market.

Our entrepreneurs are turning that demand into new jobs for families and communities.

The more we look for ways to use wood, the more we will expand our wood markets.

New legislation will require wood as the primary building material in all new publicly-owned and provincially-funded buildings, consistent with the new *B.C. Building Code*.

We will lead the way in safe, six-storey wood frame construction that lowers building and housing costs.

Where wood can be employed in building designs for new structural purposes, such as the new Richmond Olympic Oval, it will be.

Where wood can be incorporated into trim and finishing, it will be — inside and out.

This will create a culture of wood that looks to wood first.

British Columbia will also push for a new Canadian “wood first” policy that can create new domestic demand for Canadian wood products.

Architects, designers, engineers and builders all need to help drive that vision.

A new Wood Innovation and Design Centre will be established in Prince George and affiliated with UNBC.

It will promote new expertise in advanced building systems, engineered wood products, interior wood design and applications, and other value-added products.

To the extent we become true masters of wood use here in B.C., we can become even more successful in marketing our wood products at home and abroad.

We will expand on the new initiative that will put wooden roof trusses on apartment buildings in Shanghai, opening up a massive new market in China.

We will market wood-based in-fill and partition wall construction.

If we can successfully promote the use of wood in key building components, we can dramatically expand our wood product exports.

We will continue to promote the landscape market that is unique to our coastal industry and is best suited to hemlock and cedar.

The Olympics will highlight and showcase our B.C. wood products and construction technologies.

As we help our forest industry build new markets, we will also help to lower its production costs.

Lower taxes, market-based stumpage, and the results-based *Forest Practices Code* have all helped.

So has the Softwood Lumber Agreement.

Without that agreement, our access to the American market would be even more restricted. Our industry would be paying more than double in American duties than it now pays in Canadian export tax.

Were it not for that agreement, our forest companies would have lost \$2.4 billion in U.S.-held duties.

That agreement creates certainty in a sea of volatility.

In a world of growing doubt, confidence seeks stability.

New land use plans and new partnerships with First Nations are helping to provide that.

A new Commercial Forest Reserve in B.C. will ensure harvested lands remain protected as a forest asset.

British Columbia will legally mandate Zero Net Deforestation.

The report of the Working Roundtable on Forestry will suggest additional measures to help our forest industry.

This government will continue the Forests for Tomorrow and Trees for Tomorrow programs.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are being invested to help communities meet the onslaught of the mountain pine beetle and create a more diversified, stabilized economic future.

Government is investing millions more in research, geoscience and wildfire prevention; in reallocating fibre to smaller operators, First Nations, community forests and woodlots; and in helping forest workers and coastal communities through this difficult transition.

Even with all of these measures, the collapse in the U.S. housing market, the volatile Canadian dollar, the declines in lumber and pulp prices and the global credit crunch have been devastating.

The fallout in the industry has been daunting and dramatic, and hardest of all on forest workers and their families.

Our government will continue to work closely with the federal government and industry to help.

The \$129-million Community Development Trust has provided tuition assistance, pension bridging and new employment programs to help our forest workers through these difficult times.

B.C.'s share of the federal government's new Community Adjustment Fund should help to sustain that program.

The Province will supplement that funding and focus its energies on keeping people working and helping working families.

That is why our government has more than doubled funding for tourism, lowered costs for small businesses and promoted new job creation in retail, agriculture, ranching, manufacturing, film, technology, wineries, resort development and more.

Significant increases in child care funding and higher subsidy thresholds have nearly doubled the number of licensed child care spaces receiving subsidies since 2001.

That helps working women and parents with young children.

Forty-five per cent of all jobs created since 2001 have been filled by women.

Their average weekly wage has grown by 26 per cent and is now the third highest in Canada.

Thirty-six per cent of all small businesses in B.C. are owned and operated by women — the second highest proportion in Canada.

Our government wants to build on that progress and preserve those gains.

Every job matters to the family that depends on it. When a family depends on a job to put food on the table, to pay the rent and to clothe their children, no other job is more important to them.

Governments have neither the resources nor the wherewithal to guarantee that no jobs will be lost, as recent job figures prove.

The challenge for government is to direct its limited resources where they can produce the biggest and most immediate employment benefits.

Capital construction is one of the best ways to do that.

Now is the time to build.

Interest rates are at record lows, commodity prices are at rock bottom and competition is intense.

The federal budget offers a major new pool of capital that can help the province to meet tomorrow's needs by building today.

This government will work to leverage all federal funding to put people to work as fast as possible.

It has already identified \$2 billion worth of projects that might be accelerated over the next three years.

Ours is the first province to respond with a comprehensive list of capital projects that match federal programs identified in the recent federal budget. Proposals for nearly 400 projects have been submitted to the federal government for its cost-sharing approvals.

A further \$10.6 billion in approved projects are already part of our three-year capital plan.

An additional \$1.4 billion worth of local infrastructure projects is also to be built.

That represents a total of \$14 billion in new and ongoing public capital construction and 88,000 jobs throughout the province.

Many of those projects will be launched in the next 90 days. All will be accelerated to the maximum extent possible.

Improvements in transportation and expanding public and rapid transit will complement investments in our border infrastructure, airports, ferries, rail corridors, highways and bridges.

Work will be accelerated on key transportation corridors including the Cariboo Connector, improvements to Highway 3, Highway 16, Highway 97, the Pine Pass, Kicking Horse Canyon and the Trans-Canada Highway from Kamloops to the border.

The new Park Bridge at Kicking Horse Canyon is now a reality.

The new William R. Bennett Bridge across Okanagan Lake is now complete.

The new Port of Prince Rupert is now open, attracting container shipping business and ready for expansion.

Now is the time to seize British Columbia's unique strategic advantage for the whole country. Government will focus on opening up our Pacific Gateway.

To complement the major new investments in the northern corridor, government will open up the new Delta Port, the new South and North Fraser Perimeter Roads, the new Port Mann Bridge, the new Evergreen Line and the new Pitt River Bridge and Mary Hill bypass.

British Columbia will pursue with the federal government a new Pacific Ports Authority, the expansion of a new northern transportation hub in Prince George and the phase two expansion of the Port of Prince Rupert.

We will act to further expand the job and investment opportunities associated with the International Financial Centre.

As the Olympic Games approach, we will encourage development of international businesses in all aspects of our economy.

We will be Canada's and North America's bridgehead to the Asian economies that will drive the world's economic recovery in the years ahead.

When the world arrives on our doorstep in 2010, it will see our vitality.

Three billion viewers will see a creative economy that values culture, art and building design as critical drivers of dynamic growth.

The new Vancouver Convention Centre will be a stunning showcase that defines our new role in the global economy.

The new South Okanagan Events Centre in Penticton, Charles Jago Northern Sports Centre in Prince George, and Vancouver Island Conference Centre in Nanaimo together with new First Nations cultural centers are jewels in a hospitality network that is the envy of the world.

Olympic Live Sites, Spirit Squares and galleries across this province will show the world our B.C. spirit.

We will build on that creative economy, with a new Vancouver Art Gallery and the new National Maritime Centre for the Pacific and the Arctic in North Vancouver.

We will leverage the promise of the new BC150 Cultural Fund and the new Great Northern Way Campus.

Our software, wireless and new media technology companies will be anchors for ongoing investment in clean, creative growth.

We will create new jobs in film as top quality partners of Hollywood and Bollywood.

This is the new British Columbia that all of the world will see in 2010.

A place of new green developments from Victoria's Dockside Green to Vancouver's Olympic Village.

A place whose \$14-billion transit plan is building new rapid transit lines, new rapid bus lines and nearly doubling the number of buses in communities across B.C.

Private sector investments will be critical to our plan.

Most of the largest transportation projects undertaken in the past eight years have only been possible because of public-private partnerships.

The new Sea-to-Sky Highway and the new Canada Line are only two examples that have lowered costs, reduced risks to taxpayers and provided exceptional improvements in safety and access.

Partnerships built the new outpatient hospital in Vancouver and the new Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre.

They will build the new critical care tower at Surrey Memorial Hospital and the new Surrey Outpatient Hospital.

They are building the new Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria, and new and expanded hospitals in Vernon, Kelowna and Fort St. John. They will build the new Northern Cancer Centre in Prince George and the new BC Children's Hospital.

Working with the federal government, we will invest in renovating, retrofitting and upgrading existing buildings, to make them more energy efficient, healthier and safer.

We will invest in hospitals, schools and post secondary institutions, with accelerated expansions, seismic upgrades and other improvements.

We will invest in leading-edge research infrastructure, in e-health and “last mile” broadband Internet connections.

Our government will help local governments access new funding to upgrade their infrastructure and to capitalize on new funding for recreation facilities and flood prevention.

All of that construction activity will generate new jobs for our skilled workers.

A major part of that initiative will be new investments in housing that will improve and expand our social housing stock.

Since 2001, our government has tripled provincial funding for housing and undertaken the largest expansion of social housing in B.C. history.

There are now three times more supportive housing units across B.C. than there were then, with over 16,000 new units of social housing either built or committed.

This government has purchased 45 buildings, including 25 single room occupancy hotels, to protect and upgrade affordable housing for those most vulnerable in our society.

Dozens of new projects will create a thousand new housing units for seniors and persons with disabilities in communities across B.C.

Those new buildings will be made of wood and will provide new homes for seniors that will allow them to age in place.

Investments will be made in new and refurbished housing. We will expand supportive housing to combat homelessness and to shelter those with mental illnesses.

That new housing will be supported by a new integrated, personalized homelessness intervention strategy and a new community safety strategy.

All of these opportunities for economic growth are catalysts for confidence.

They point to a new future that will enrich our province in every region.

Nothing has done more to rekindle confidence and pride in our province than the promise of the 2010 Olympics.

Nothing has done more to leverage investment in British Columbia or to drive new job growth in capital construction across B.C.

Nothing will do more to stimulate global investment and job creation across the province than our Olympic advantage.

It will truly launch us into the 21st century.

The Olympic torch lights the way to a brighter future for British Columbia.

It is the flame that burns deep within the human heart.

It is the flame of aspirations worth pursuing.

It is the flame of resolve that turns our dreams into realities.

British Columbia has been here before. Less than a decade ago we were a “have not” province. We managed through a multibillion dollar structural deficit, the tech market meltdown, the disruption of the 9/11 attacks, record forest fires and floods and the SARS outbreak.

Government had a plan. We executed it. Hundreds of thousands of jobs were created and record surpluses paid down debt. We came out stronger.

Now, more than ever, we need to reach for our aspirations and let them guide us.

We must not let today’s economic pain dampen our spirit or keep us from our goals. We have always been driven by dreams in good times and in bad.

We will not be bullied by the moment.

Now more than ever we must dedicate ourselves to the good of our children and grandchildren and to all the future holds for them as British Columbians.

Let us not flinch from the difficult tests that lie ahead or from our responsibilities to the generations that follow.

Let us resolve to move forward with confidence. Our strength lies in the people who live here and the beliefs for which we stand.

Let us act anew, in this ever-changing world, to capture the strength of this great province and all who live here.