



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC

Lieutenant-Governor

at the

Opening of the Third Session,

Fortieth Parliament

of the

Province of British Columbia

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Fellow British Columbians.

I want to welcome back your Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Third Session of the Fortieth Parliament.

Before we turn towards the business of this House, we should take a moment to remember some of the British Columbians whose loss we have mourned since I last addressed you.

TRIBUTES

Former Members of this House Bill Ritchie, Alex Macdonald, and Hugh Curtis.

Leaders of First Nations communities, such as Frank Frederick Sr., Harold Mitchell, Delbert Guerin, and Dr. Alfred Joseph.

Community leaders from across the province, including Joy Leach, Jim Ogilvie, Jim Quaife, Earle Darling, Bev Parnham, and Ted Lewis.

And British Columbians whose outstanding contributions helped to make our province a better, brighter, more diverse place, including Erich Vogt, Ted Northe, Paul St. Pierre, Paul Horn, Jim Deva, and Dr. Jagat Singh Uppal, known to everyone as Jack.

Finally, we pause to remember Michael Lunn and Fred McEachern, tragically taken from their families in the Western Forest Products shooting in Nanaimo.

TURNING POINT

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War – a conflict in which thousands of brave Canadians lost their lives. It was a turning point in the history of Canada and the world.

The lessons of 1914 remain relevant today.

Short-sighted decisions led to a ruinous war. After the war, more short-sighted decisions led to economic policies that led to European decline, and the eventual emergence of North America.

We can't take our position in the world for granted.

We have to recognize what made the 20th century the North American century: boldness. Risk-taking. Innovation. Creativity. Sticking to our guns.

These traits define us as British Columbians and Canadians.

They have created an identity that unites us: a free enterprise economy that rewards innovation and entrepreneurship.

An economy that allows us to realize our goal of building a strong network of publicly funded services.

For several generations, this combination has been the envy of the world.

But given a persistently slow global economy, and an ageing population that requires more services, how do we maintain these programs?

This is our turning point.

We must choose whether to grow or to decline.

If we choose to do nothing, to maintain the status quo, we will have chosen decline.

We would be choosing to tell our children they should expect nothing from us but a bill to pay.

It is one thing to say we choose growth. It is another to find new ways to grow.

By choosing to make tough choices today - balancing the budget and controlling public spending – we have chosen growth.

By choosing to foster new trade and investment ties with the emerging economies of Asia, we have chosen growth.

By choosing to develop the world's cleanest-burning non-renewable resource, and ship it to the world's fastest-growing economies, we have chosen growth.

LNG LEGISLATION

In the last session, this government took the first step, introducing the tax framework for B.C.'s growing LNG industry.

This fall session will be devoted to taking the next logical step. We will move forward with a comprehensive legislative framework.

This framework will be fair for the owners of this resource – the people of British Columbia.

This framework will create certainty for business and investment.

This framework will define how we will develop this resource responsibly, in a way that protects our environment, and continues to lead the global fight against climate change.

LNG

For an industry with a proud history, these are bold steps forward.

B.C.'s natural gas industry has upheld admirable environmental and safety records for 62 years.

While our standards - among the highest in the world - have not changed, the world market is changing quickly.

20 years ago, power generation in China was almost exclusively from coal.

The expansion of the middle class in China is one of the greatest economic transformations in human history, lifting millions out of poverty.

Make no mistake – this is another global turning point. And it requires increasing amounts of energy.

This has created an enormous environmental challenge – for China, and for all of us.

As a solution, China is increasingly turning to natural gas.

In the first half of 2014, Chinese LNG consumption rose by a fifth. In June alone, China imported 1.35 million tonnes of LNG.

This demand is much too great to be met by a single supplier.

B.C.'s 150-year supply of natural gas is an opportunity to change the world.

An opportunity to dramatically reduce air pollution in the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases.

LNG is not just a plan for the future. It's a solution for today. Consider the example of our founding industry – forestry.

For millennia, First Nations depended on trees to create everything from canoes, to housing, to works of art that still inspire wonder today.

Wood attracted the first European settlers, and was the foundation of their prosperity.

That tradition continues to this day. It continues in McLeod Lake, with Duz Cho Logging.

It continues in Haida Gwaii, with Haico.

It continues in the Toba Inlet, with Klahoose Forestry.

These companies use the forest for their communities, as they have for millennia.

Forestry is the livelihood for over 58,000 B.C. families.

For most of our history, our softwood lumber exports depended on the United States.

When that market slowed, people had to look elsewhere to work, pay the bills, and raise their families.

The provincial government looked elsewhere. Across the Pacific, to the growing economies of the Pacific Rim.

Like trees, growing new markets takes time and patience. But we can already see this strategy has paid dividends, with increasing exports to China, Japan, and South Korea.

We should never forget the real impact this had on British Columbians.

With the market restored, the forestry industry and the families who depend on it are in a good position.

Like forestry, B.C.'s natural gas industry has relied on exports to the United States.

But the American shale gas revolution has meant the export market south has dried up – and is never coming back.

Right now, there are 1,700 men and women around Fort Nelson alone, whose families depend on the natural gas industry.

For them, like all British Columbians, the choice is not between growth and the status quo.

The choice is between expanding our markets in Asia to maintain and create more jobs here at home, or face decline.

For the natural gas industry, for those families in Fort Nelson, the choice is between more jobs – or far fewer than they have today.

This government is working every day to ensure British Columbia is ready for the coming opportunity.

The Skills for Jobs Blueprint aims not just to re-engineer our education and training system to meet the needs of tomorrow's economy, but to ensure today's students enjoy the best opportunities and career possibilities.

The BC Jobs Plan aims to create the opportunities and career paths for those same students to capitalize on.

The BC Jobs Plan is this government's strategy to grow the economy and enable job creation. It focuses on eight key sectors: Agrifoods, Forestry, Mining and Energy, Natural Gas, International Education, Technology and Green Economy, Tourism, and Transportation.

In three short years, we have seen real progress. 50,000 jobs have been created, with some 2.3 million people now working in British Columbia.

Last week, this government released the three-year update of the BC Jobs Plan.

It places a renewed emphasis on four cross-sector priorities: small business, manufacturing, Aboriginal Peoples and First Nations, and international trade and small business.

This government is focused on helping to open new markets for small business, because there is no more effective way to create jobs and opportunities for British Columbians to build their careers and raise their families here at home.

LEADERSHIP

Members of the legislative assembly – to choose growth, to move forward and create a legacy for our children – will take leadership.

Leadership from each and every one of you.

For thousands of years in British Columbia, through countless other changes, one thing has remained constant: the land sustains us.

If we continue to cherish it, if we continue to invest wisely, it will sustain our children. And their children.

Leadership means being consistent on economic development.

Not saying what is politically convenient.

Leadership means developing a real partnership with First Nations, and giving them the opportunity to participate meaningfully in a thriving economy.

The Supreme Court ruling on Aboriginal land title presents a new opportunity.

It is an opportunity to finally resolve disputes and make decisions together that reflect our common interests and shared vision of a better future.

It is an opportunity to move forward towards a more meaningful, inclusive and fair partnership.

Leadership means having the patience, courage, and vision to work together towards implementation.

Leadership means being accountable for every tax dollar that passes through these doors in one form or another.

That starts with a firm commitment to control spending, find savings, and balance the budget.

That means expecting the same of Crown corporations and municipal governments, and just as importantly – giving them the tools to do so.

Leadership means accepting the responsibility to govern, even when the going gets tough.

Some would advocate handing over responsibility to third parties – to abdicate the trust given to us by the citizens of British Columbia.

Leadership means accepting their trust, respecting that unique privilege, and shouldering the burden.

Leadership means working to build prosperity and jobs while preventing tragedies like the tailings pond breach in Mount Polley, and recognizing there is no contradiction there.

This government will continue to investigate what happened.

It will continue to work towards preventing it from ever happening again.

And it will do so while continuing to support one of the most important industries in our province.

And recognizing the communities and public servants who have worked tirelessly to ensure public safety – and continue to do so.

Mining employs more than 30,000 British Columbians. And just like the people of Lively, they need to know they will not be abandoned.

To the people of Lively, and the families across the province who depend on mining: we stand with you.

We can always do better. But we will get there together.

In trying times, it can be tempting to surrender leadership. To follow. To change position with changing public opinion polls.

British Columbia has always been a leader in Confederation. British Columbia has always been a leader in the world.

We will continue to lead.

Leading means standing up for our values.

It means enduring short-term challenges for long-term success.

It means being determined and unwavering in the pursuit of opportunity.

The people of British Columbia deserve nothing less.

TEACHERS

I want to speak directly to the men and women who have dedicated their lives to educating our children: B.C.'s teachers.

And to the parents and students who were affected by labour disruption this year.

With patience, hard work, and determination, British Columbia got a negotiated six-year agreement.

This government has worked closely with public-sector unions to achieve fair and affordable agreements.

Now including our teachers, we have agreements with two-thirds of B.C.'s public sector, representing almost 200,000 hardworking men and women.

British Columbia can look forward to five years of labour peace.

This is unprecedented. We cannot let this opportunity pass.

Teachers, parents, and administrators can all agree: students are the first priority.

In many ways, students have been showing the way, with world-leading results.

Today, we have an opportunity to build an education system worthy of them.

We have the chance to give them more opportunities to achieve in a changing world.

Now with this common purpose – we have to move on.

Together.

This dispute sometimes brought out the worst.

It's time we showed the next generation our best.

CONCLUSION

My fellow British Columbians.

The way forward is clear.

For over a generation, the funding commitments of Western governments have exceeded their means.

In LNG, British Columbia has an opportunity to increase revenue and maintain the same world-class services we rely on.

We have an opportunity to leave our children and their children an inheritance worthy of them.

This is a chance – not a windfall. It will not be simply given to us, but achieved after a lot of hard work.

Thomas Edison once said: “we often miss opportunity because it’s dressed in overalls and looks like hard work.”

Members of the legislative assembly, this is our opportunity.

And make no mistake: there will be a lot of hard work ahead.

But British Columbians have never looked down on hard work.

The core services this government provides need to be protected. And the inescapable truth is that they can only be protected if we can afford them.

The opportunity afforded by LNG is more than a chance to make a smart investment.

It’s the expanded patient care tower in Victoria, and the one planned in Vernon.

It’s the new law school at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops.

It's Kordyban Lodge in Prince George, which gives Northern cancer patients a place to recover closer to their families.

It's more than 5,800 housing units for the homeless in Vancouver alone.

These services and institutions are our children's birthright as Canadians and British Columbians.

To keep that promise, we need leadership from all of you.

Our children deserve no less.

Thank you.