



BRITISH COLUMBIA

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC
Lieutenant-Governor

— *at the* —

Opening of the First Session,
Fortieth Parliament

— *of the* —

Province of British Columbia

June 26, 2013

Fellow British Columbians.

Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Since the chamber was last addressed from the throne, we have learned of the loss of some prominent, beloved British Columbians. They all contributed to making this province a better place to live, and I would like to acknowledge a few of them today.

We were saddened to hear about the recent passing of former Lieutenant-Governor Garde Gardom. His dedication to public service was an example for us all.

We have also lost First Nations leaders and elders who inspired us all, such as Hereditary Chief and Judge Alfred Scow.

We mourn the loss of former members of this legislature, who all served their constituents with distinction: Larry Chalmers, Harold Long, Bill Reid, and Graham Richard Lea.

We also recognize the passing of 30 public service employees.

Across this great province, local leaders work tirelessly to make a difference close to home. These include community leaders, municipal politicians, and community activists such as, John Jeffery, Neville Cox, Art Phillips, Allan Sheridan Huddleston, Bonnie Fournier, Frank Waring, Raymond White, and Maureen Milgram Forrest.

We honour those veterans who risked their own lives to protect us: J.W. Bradley, Peter Bazowski, John Mills Calder, and Peter G. Bunn.

We pause to remember those British Columbians whose success made a difference in people's lives both at home and abroad: Hugh John Todd Young, Paul Heller, Bob Wright, David Wilson, Helen Beirnes, Tom Owen, and Dr. Wesley J. Koczka.

We remember fondly those who made us cheer, and represented British Columbia so well on the national and international stage: Leona Margaret Smith, Harold Nikirk, Shirley Firth, Alan Clapp, and George Norris.

We also mourn those who were taken from us in tragic circumstances, or far too soon: Xavier Pelletier and Anthony Sedlak.

Each has made contributions to this great province. As we mourn their loss, we will honour their memory by adding to their legacy.

I also want to recognize British Columbians and our friends from Southern Alberta who are struggling with the floods and the recovery from the high water that has so significantly affected their lives deeply.

My thanks go out to the civic leaders, civil servants and members of the emergency services who have dealt with these crises with such dedication.

Fellow British Columbians.

Since I had the honour of last addressing you from this chair, citizens across our province have participated in an election.

I want to thank all the men and women who put their names forward as candidates. Whether you won or lost, by contributing to the democratic process, you made it stronger.

In the election, British Columbians spoke clearly. And your voice was heard across the country.

Today, the government you have chosen begins the task of honouring the obligation and opportunity you have bestowed upon it.

Your new government is optimistic for the future, alive to the challenges of our times. But the global economy is fragile, and recovery has been slow. In British Columbia, we must protect our economy and the jobs and citizens who depend on it.

Your government is already at work to meet these challenges with a bold plan. A bold plan for a bold province.

Your government will work to seize the economic opportunity of a lifetime presented to all of us by our surplus natural gas.

It will begin to chart a course to a debt-free B.C., so the next generation will be able to make choices for themselves when it is their time to lead.

It will protect the economy by controlling spending and balancing the budget.

Your new government will act on the mandate you have given it, to keep B.C.'s economy strong so we can secure tomorrow, together.

STRONG ECONOMY

Fellow British Columbians. There are shared values that define us as British Columbians.

- Giving our children greater opportunities than we had;
- Caring for those who cared for us;
- And leaving our province as magnificent and beautiful as we found it

Your government believes the best way to protect these values is by growing and strengthening our economy.

Tomorrow, your government will reintroduce Balanced Budget 2013. This will be the first of four consecutive balanced budgets in its mandate.

And to ensure that future budgets are balanced, your government will toughen the balanced budget law.

A strong economy also means low taxes for families and job creators. Your government will freeze personal tax rates and carbon tax rates for five years.

Controlling spending so that we can hold the line on taxes for families is one pillar to keep our economy strong. The other requires action to grow the economy.

Through the creation of a new Ministry of Natural Gas Development, your government will bring the liquefied natural gas opportunity home, creating tens of thousands of new jobs and leading to the establishment of the B.C. Prosperity Fund, which will be protected by law to eliminate our debt.

Your government will accelerate the BC Jobs Plan to drive growth – not just in the natural gas industry, but across all of B.C.'s most competitive export sectors.

Your government will continue to improve efficiencies and timeliness of the permitting process, where backlogs will continue to be dramatically reduced.

Your government will launch a core review to make sure government is structured for success.

Your government will also drive growth in the clean energy sector and continue the development of Site C and other new sources of renewable energy to ensure reliable and affordable electricity for future generations.

In the area of technology and innovation, your government is creating a new ministry to ensure we are doing all we can to grow this industry, as we said we would do in the BC Jobs Plan.

More B.C. ideas need to move from labs to the market. This means working with our post-secondary institutions to stay on the cutting edge of research and providing better support for the innovators who want to shape the economy of the future.

Growing our province's economy also depends on getting four fundamental things right:

- Working in partnership with First Nations;
- Making sure citizens have the skills they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow;
- Infrastructure to get the goods created by industry and people to customers;
- And expanding markets in Asia.

Your government will continue ongoing efforts to secure non-treaty economic benefit agreements with First Nations, and is committed to finalizing long-term treaties and partnerships, including additional revenue-sharing agreements, to seize economic development opportunities, particularly in the area of liquefied natural gas – which must, can, and will create a legacy for all British Columbians, including those who were here first.

Preparing the workforce with skills that match current and future job opportunities where people live and in the communities they love, is essential to ensuring that British Columbians are first in line for jobs.

To continue equipping our institutions, set targets to match skills to jobs and ensure a seamless delivery of skills training from high school through to entry in the workforce, your government will develop a comprehensive 10-year skills-training plan.

Ensuring our products connect to markets and to each other is fundamental to economic growth. Your government will continue its historic investments in transportation infrastructure.

This year will see the completion of the South Fraser Perimeter Road. Several other major improvements will move forward, including the ongoing completion of Trans-Canada Highway four-laning program and the next phase of consultations to replace the George Massey Tunnel.

Asia is the ancestral homeland of so many of our citizens. It is also the home of incredible opportunity for new investment that creates jobs here in British Columbia.

Your government will continue to knock down barriers and open doors in Asia and grow our trade surplus.

This is why the provincial government is creating a new ministry uniquely focused on developing and executing the international trade strategy, with a particular focus on Asia.

Your Premier will also continue to lead annual trade missions to Asia on behalf of all British Columbians.

SECURE TOMORROW

Fellow British Columbians. A strong economy makes it possible to afford the vital programs and services we need to care for each other, to educate our children, to keep B.C. a safe, just, and clean place for everyone to live.

A strong economy secures tomorrow.

Today, British Columbia leads the country for best health outcomes. Your government will work to maintain this by continuing to drive innovation and change across the system, and keep spending focused on patients.

Your government will deliver on an end-of-life care plan to double the number of hospice beds by 2020 so we can better care for those we love in their last days.

Your government will also work to better care for the well-being of our province's most vulnerable citizens.

Significant reforms have been made at Community Living British Columbia. Your government will ensure they are fully implemented and benefitting the families who depend on us.

Your government will also act to implement the Early Years Strategy, announced in the previous budget, and to be recommitted tomorrow in this House. And preparatory work will commence for the future implementation of the Early Childhood Tax Benefit, to help make life more affordable for young families.

Children and families need stability, in their homes and in our schools. Continuous labour disruption does not help our children compete in the world. And it does not help our kids learn.

Your government will work to bring together teachers, parents, and school boards to achieve long-term labour stability in our classrooms.

For parents and families, your government will bring in the \$1,200 BC Education and Training Grant for every child born after January 1, 2007, to help parents save for their children's post-secondary education.

This money does not belong to government to spend at taxpayers' expense. It belongs to parents to save on behalf of their children.

A safe and just province is also central to preserving our quality of life. Your government will work to enhance public safety and security for all British Columbians, and implement the Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy.

Your government will also maintain its leadership in the effort to stop bullying. A new online reporting tool and threat assessment guidelines for all school districts, backed by protocols and comprehensive training, set B.C. apart – and we must do more.

Our province is a better place when children have the courage to stand up to bullying and when parents, teachers and friends stand strong with them.

Fellow British Columbians. Your government is honoured by your choice and is committed to drive forward with passion and resolve so that British Columbians can prosper today and tomorrow.

This is an historic opportunity for our province.

This can be the generation that strengthens the economy to secure tomorrow.

This can be the generation that puts our province on the course towards a debt-free future.

It is the greatest of gifts we can give to our children and to their children – the opportunity to be unburdened by the choices of generations before and free to make choices for theirs and generations ahead.

This is the opportunity and the obligation you have given your government. Let that work begin.

To the members of the Legislative Assembly, I congratulate each and every one of you for standing up and running for office.

You and your families have already sacrificed much to be here, but on behalf of all British Columbians, I appeal to each and every one of you to continue to put the citizens you represent first and strive every day to make this wonderful province only more magnificent in every way possible.

I wish you all success in this first session of the 40th parliament of the Province of British Columbia.

Splendor sine occasu.

Splendor without diminishment.