



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

# SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

**The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC**

**Lieutenant-Governor**

*at the*

**Opening of the Second Session,**

**Fortieth Parliament**

*of the*

**Province of British Columbia**

**February 11, 2014**

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.

From different backgrounds, different parts of the province, and different walks of life, their contributions were as diverse as the province they helped to build.

They all helped make British Columbia a better place to live. I want to acknowledge some of them today.

## TRIBUTES

Last year, British Columbians mourned the passing of Nelson Mandela, who inspired people around the world and across this province.

We lost former Members of this Legislature Harry de Jong, Agnes Kripps, Newell Morrison, and former Member of Parliament George Whittaker.

Members of this house suffered personal losses. Jack Barnett, husband of MLA Donna Barnett; Ken Dix, father of The Leader of the Opposition; and Rosa Coleman, mother of Minister Coleman.

We lost First Nations leaders who led their communities and inspired all British Columbians: Gene Rheaume, Dr. Alfred Joseph, Chief John McIntyre, Chief Bruce Point, Chief Joe Mitchell, and Chief Ernie Campbell.

People across British Columbia mourn the passing of those who served us all as activists, journalists, and municipal, community and labour leaders. People like Order of British Columbia recipients Tim Jones and Jack Munro, or lesser known citizens like Muriel Dove who received a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal at the age of 97 for a lifetime of quiet, selfless service to others.

We also pause to remember 34 public service employees who passed away since we last met in June.

We pause to reflect on veterans, law enforcement officers and firefighters who risked their lives for this country and the safety of our communities: veterans like Tom Cove, who ran the poppy drive for 25 years, or Gim Wong who in 1943 at the age of 22 was the youngest commissioned officer from the Chinese Canadian community, or police officers like Louis Beglaw who died on duty in West Vancouver, and Terry Albrecht who blazed a trail for female officers in her profession. We take a moment to think of the families of Canadian Forces members deployed abroad today.

We are saddened by the loss of British Columbians who died under tragic circumstances like Naguib Damji, and Julie Paskall.

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

## **THE CHOICE**

Fellow British Columbians, many of these men and women made contributions in a different time. The postwar world they created was democratic, safe, and prosperous.

That was a generation ago. We have to have the courage to confront the reality of our own times. For almost 40 years, western economies have been growing by perhaps 2 or 3 per cent per year – or less.

Western governments face a stark choice: to manage decline and spend themselves into bankruptcy, or find new ways to grow the economy.

Too often, leaders have said they were in favour of economic development, but put off making decisions. Too often, leaders have exchanged purpose for process.

Growing the economy, economic development, means getting to yes.

## **THE PLAN**

To follow through on economic development, you need a plan.

The plan must have, at its centre, British Columbians from all walks of life: those raising young families, or just starting post-secondary education. Newcomers to our province, British Columbians who have lived and made contributions here, and First Nations who have lived here for millennia.

Economic development is about creating more opportunities for everyone, lifting people out of poverty, and allowing all citizens to reach their enormous potential.

Building on the BC Jobs Plan, your government's plan to grow the economy has five points.

First, to control spending and remain committed to fiscal responsibility.

Second, to open new markets and attract new investment.

Third, to leverage our existing strengths.

Fourth, to realize the incredible opportunity of LNG.

And fifth, to prepare British Columbians to be first-in-line for job opportunities through skills training.

## **CONTROL SPENDING**

The first step is controlling spending and keeping government small.

British Columbians have to prioritize, make choices, and balance their own budgets. They expect no less from their government.

In June, I called the house back immediately after the provincial election. The members debated and passed the balanced budget.

Controlling spending also means cost certainty and labour stability for taxpayers. This government has reached four labour agreements. Once ratified, these would cover almost a third of the public sector.

I want to thank everyone involved in this process, including the negotiators and labour leaders.

Because of your efforts, British Columbians know that government spending will not spiral out of control. And because of you, union members have a direct financial stake in growing the economy.

Your government will continue to negotiate with unions for longer term labour peace across all other public sectors.

## **OPEN NEW MARKETS / INVESTMENT**

Fiscal responsibility is the foundation upon which we build our future. The next step is attracting new investors, and opening up new markets. Doing that creates jobs here at home.

For Canada's Pacific Gateway, the future lies in trade with the growing economies of Asia. And in November, the Premier led her fourth international trade mission.

The team was truly Team British Columbia, as it included leaders from every sector and region of our province. Municipal and regional governments. Trade unions. Business. Education. And First Nations.

The hard work is paying off. Last year, British Columbia broke a record for lumber exports to China. This happened because of the joint efforts of industry and the provincial government to solidify trade relationships.

This model is a blueprint for success we will follow with the mining and agriculture industries.

British Columbia also became the first foreign government to issue bonds in the China RMB market – a vote of confidence that will not soon be forgotten by our partners in the world's fastest-growing economy. A vote of confidence that will pay dividends with trade and jobs here in B.C.

One of the hallmarks of your government has been its determination to eliminate unnecessary and duplicate regulations in government.

In ten years, this has resulted in cutting over 150,000 regulations and unnecessary red tape.

The Core Review, which is already underway, will identify further steps to make sure your government is efficient, and structured for success.

## **LEVERAGE OUR STRENGTHS: NATURAL RESOURCES**

In British Columbia, economic development has traditionally been led by the hardworking men and women in small communities in our resource industries.

And because of our resource industries, B.C. outperforms expectations.

When our resource industries thrives, all British Columbians benefit, right across the province.

Forestry and mining alone employ more than 86,000 British Columbians, and generate billions of dollars in economic activity, and revenue.

Your government can and will do more. Under the BC Jobs Plan, this government is committed to enabling the opening of another six mines, and expanding nine more by 2015. Two new mines are open, including the first metals mine in a decade. Major expansions have been approved for another six.

## **LEVERAGE OUR STRENGTHS: TECHNOLOGY**

Technology is already B.C.'s third largest industry with major hubs in Victoria, Vancouver and Kelowna.

British Columbia has a thriving technology ecosystem today, with a potential to become an international leader. In health care, the sector will improve patient care, health outcomes and reduce costs. In natural resource development, the sector will improve safety and productivity. In education, it will allow us to build a personalized education for every single student.

Your government has established a ministry tasked specifically with growing the technology industry, and to ensure we train the talent to meet its needs.

## **LEVERAGE OUR STRENGTHS: LNG**

Across the Pacific, a remarkable transformation is taking place. By 2020, the middle class in Asian countries is forecasted to triple to 1.7 billion people.

This transformation has already started to create a corresponding demand for energy – cleaner, safer energy. By 2030, LNG demand is projected to increase two and a half times.

LNG is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create 100,000 new jobs throughout B.C., and a Prosperity Fund to eliminate the provincial debt.

It's also the greatest single step we can take to fight climate change.

The People's Republic of China accounts for fully one quarter of the world's carbon emissions. This is chiefly because they rely on coal to generate power. By switching even a small percentage of that to the world's cleanest-burning non-renewable resource, China could reduce emissions by over 90 megatons per year.

That is more than our total provincial emissions in a year and a half.

Natural gas is the world's cleanest non-renewable fuel, which would make an appreciable difference in the global fight to cut emissions.

And this government is taking steps to realize this opportunity.

Agreements have been reached for the two parcels at Grassy Point, with Aurora LNG and Woodside, respectively.

This government is taking steps toward establishing the LNG Buy BC initiative to match B.C. businesses, small and large, with LNG investors and projects.

This year, this government will lay out an overall framework for LNG that includes taxation, environmental actions to help make B.C.'s LNG industry the cleanest in the world, and First Nations benefits.

## **LEVERAGE OUR STRENGTHS: OUR PEOPLE**

And as thousands of new jobs come on the horizon, injecting new revenues into communities, we also have a great responsibility: ensuring that First Nations are full participants and beneficiaries of the new economic growth.

Some of our First Nations communities have been left out of economic growth for too long. We must be the generation that not only puts British Columbia on a path to new economic growth, but also ensures that First Nations are an integral part of that growth.

This will help them become the self-sustaining communities their leaders envision – healthy, safe, wealthy communities where every child gets a great education; communities where every child has an equal opportunity for a prosperous future.

B.C.'s greatest strength has always been its citizens. We have shown the world there truly is strength in diversity.

This is particularly important to remember in 2014, the 100th anniversary of the Komagata Maru Incident. In the 100 years since, the South Asian community has made significant contributions to this province – one of our cornerstone communities.

We also have to make amends for the discriminatory policies of the past. In this session, this government will introduce a motion to formally apologize for the historical wrongs done to the Chinese community.

We cannot undo these wrongs. But we have to acknowledge them, confront them, and learn from them.



## **SKILLS TRAINING**

To make sure British Columbians are ready to be first-in-line for the job opportunities that are coming, the government continues to engage private sector businesses, private sector labour unions, and educational institutions on skills training.

In B.C., we launched a Skills and Training Plan to ensure just that.

And while LNG presents British Columbia with a unique opportunity and a unique challenge – skills training is a Canadian issue. As a nation, we need to do a better job of preparing the next generation for the jobs that will meet them.

In British Columbia, we are looking at both a wave of retirements and new economic growth across the province driven by surging natural resource industries.

We have the opportunity and the challenge of a million job openings over the next decade. We need to improve the number and quality of trades and technical graduates.

This spring, your government will seek to connect British Columbians with opportunities through a 10-year skills training action plan for youth and older workers seeking to retrain. British Columbians can look forward to enhancements to the Industry Training Authority, as well as the re-engineering of our secondary and post-secondary institutions to ensure our students have the skills for the jobs of the future.

Because British Columbia needs each and every one of you. Those about to enter the workforce, those already in the workforce who need to upgrade skills. Those who have never been in the workforce – including and especially the disabled, single parents, and First Nations.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

As British Columbia grows, so does our capacity to ensure the highest quality of life for British Columbians we can afford.

The only path to a secure tomorrow lies in a strong economy.

That starts with having the physical infrastructure in place. Over the past 13 years, our province has seen the biggest ever improvement in transportation infrastructure.

Important investments have been made in our road infrastructure, our bridges, ports and airports. This has created more convenience for British Columbians whether they are travelling, commuting, or getting their goods to market. It has also enabled economic growth and the new jobs that come with it.

Over the coming year, your government will develop a new 10 year transportation plan that will identify the areas of greatest need for investment as we move into the next decade.

## **SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

And while the investment necessary for infrastructure may command the most attention, social infrastructure is no less important. It is a growing economy which enables your government to continue to make investments in the services that British Columbians depend on.

B.C. health care is already one of the most efficient in the country. We have the second lowest costs per capita and deliver the best outcomes, bar none. To ensure our health care remains the best in Canada, we must continue to innovate. We must find new ways to invest every health dollar to achieve the best outcomes for patients.

Thanks to students, educators and parents, British Columbia's public education system continues to rank among the highest in the world. Our children must have the best chance possible to realize their full potential, so your government will continue to work toward creating a personalized education plan for every student and an agreement to ensure a decade of labour peace in our classrooms.

For communities to succeed, they must be safe. Growth can be rough around the edges, bringing new problems, especially for smaller communities. While crime rates have fallen over the past number of years, the number of British Columbians who are victims of crime, especially violent crime, remains too high.

Last year, the Member for Abbotsford South was named Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General to lead a Blue Ribbon Panel on reducing crime and its cost in our province.

Over the past year, government has taken significant action on domestic violence and on missing and murdered women. That's why, this year we will introduce a long-term, comprehensive strategy to move towards a violence-free B.C. and ensure women, including Aboriginal and vulnerable women, have the supports they need to help prevent violence, to escape from violent situations, and to recover if they have been victims of crime.

As well, our ERASE strategy has made B.C. a national leader in bullying prevention, and several provinces have reached out to learn from us. ERASE will continue to remain a dynamic and cutting edge strategy to help ensure our schools and communities are safe and caring places.

## **MODERNIZATION**

Responding to challenges as they emerge and improving quality of life for British Columbians means making sure government policies reflect the reality of the times.

It means making common sense changes to antiquated rules to reflect the way British Columbians actually live.

After hearing from over 76,000 British Columbians about modernizing B.C.'s liquor laws, your government will enact the changes that you have suggested.

In this coming session, legislation will be passed to reform liquor policy to give consumers greater convenience, protect health and safety, and give business new opportunities to grow.

From vineyards in the Okanagan, to craft breweries on Vancouver Island, to small businesses across our province, modern rules will set the table to grow our economy and create jobs.

As well, British Columbians have had no meaningful legislative reform to protect our precious groundwater supply for more than a century.

After four years of detailed consultations with British Columbians, your government is ready to introduce a new Water Sustainability Act, to help ensure that our water stays healthy and secure for future generations.

We were among the first jurisdictions in the world to account for the real cost of carbon with a carbon tax. Last year, the governments of California, Oregon, and Washington states followed our lead and signed the Pacific Coast Action Plan.

Working collaboratively, we will help them develop or improve carbon pricing programs, merge standards on low-carbon fuels, and work together to embrace clean energy.

And this government will continue to stand up for British Columbia with our Five Conditions for any new or expanded heavy oil pipeline. It is an articulation of the way we do business in B.C. – responsibly.

## CONCLUSION

Those are the challenges of our time. And as one great leader once said:

*“We choose to do this not because it will be easy, but because it is hard, because it will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”*

John F. Kennedy said those words more than 50 years ago. The central challenge facing that generation was different – they lived in a period of incredible growth. They could afford to go to the moon.

The challenge facing our generation may be less dramatic. But it is no less important.

Finding new ways to create new opportunities, care for those who need it, and protect our environment – to maintain the institutions set by our parents and grandparents.

To grasp the opportunity for economic growth.

To give our children the chance to succeed and surpass us, as each generation should.

In 2013, British Columbians looked to the future and gave a mandate to your government.

A mandate that they expect the government to fulfill. A better future, a brighter future. A more prosperous and greener future.

A strong economy. A secure tomorrow.

It is your government’s task to deliver.

Thank you.