

Mayor Sam Sullivan, City of Vancouver

Welcome remarks - Opening Ceremony, World Urban Forum 3

June 19, 2006

Merci Beaucoup.

Thank you very much members, delegates and distinguished guests of the World Urban Forum. On behalf of the municipal council of Vancouver, welcome to you all. I would first like to acknowledge the Coast Salish people for their welcome today.

Several months ago, I went to Ottawa to visit our Prime Minister and invited him to this special session. I know the difficulty of him making this time in his schedule and I want to acknowledge him for putting cities first and for prioritizing what we're doing here. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

Thirty years ago, Vancouver held the world's first Urban Forum and that forum changed us so much. It made us think about ourselves differently, it made us talk about cities differently and it made us make decisions that were different from most of the other cities in North America. Today, we are the only city in North America

without a freeway running through it and we're a city with an active, vibrant and healthy downtown where people both work and live. We have a city, a central area, where every year the number of cars that enter our city is decreasing and today in downtown Vancouver, of all the trips that are made almost 70% are made on foot.

A number of people have worked hard over the years to make this happen and I want to acknowledge one of the most important people who made some of these important decisions. We have here our current Premier, the former Mayor of Vancouver, Gordon Campbell - I thank you for this city that you have delegated to us.

We've done a lot of things right in Vancouver but we have a lot of work to do. We're very conscious that if everyone in the world lived like we do in Vancouver it would take four planets to sustain us. We have to do better.

Recently, I announced an initiative called EcoDensity. I want to see all areas of Vancouver work to increase densities so that we can decrease our ecological footprint. We need to live lighter on the earth and at the same time make better, healthier, more interesting and beautiful neighbourhoods.

So many of our Canadian cities are sprawling in very expensive urban form and we're finding so much pressure on our finances to maintain this infrastructure. I think cities need to decide whether we want to pay for traditional infrastructure or do we want to move to something different - what I'm calling 'ecostructure.' We must decide that we don't want to maintain sprawling asphalt, water lines and sewer mains; instead we want environmentally responsible infrastructure that makes beautiful and interesting public spaces with high quality neighbourhoods, recreation, arts and cultural facilities, so that people want to live in our cities.

Just as 30 years ago the world's first Urban Forum profoundly affected our consciousness, I believe this World Urban Forum will change our destiny. I think what we are doing here over these next few days is so important to the health of our planet and the quality of life of all human beings.

I urge you to work together. I want to learn so much from you and I think Vancouver has something to share with the world. Let's work together to make this the best World Urban Forum.

Merci Beaucoup.