

Premier Gordon Campbell
Speech to World Urban Forum
Vancouver, B.C.
June 19, 2006

To all of the delegates here today, let me say what a privilege it is to be here with you at the third World Urban Forum.

I was in Vancouver in 1976 when we had the first forum. This forum is about turning ideas into action, taking the ideas that are spawned in conversation and dialogue that you will have over the next number of days and number of months and putting them to work for citizens all over the world.

For the world is relentlessly urbanizing. More and more and more people are coming into our cities and our towns to look for a better future, and all of us know in this room that sometimes the futures they find are not as full of hope as they may be. But the session this week gives us a chance to rekindle the light of hope in the eyes of communities around the world by learning from one another, by teaching one another and by sharing with one another.

From Tokyo to Stockholm, from Manila to New Delhi, we face many challenges. But I think in a session like this week's we should also recognize the progress that has been made, the new technologies that are available and the new understanding that can strengthen our cities, our towns around this great world.

We all want our cities to be human and healthy and vital places for people to live, and we can make a difference. This forum can make a difference in people's lives, in citizens' lives in Africa, in Asia, in North America and South America, in Europe, in all parts and all corners of this globe.

Think back to 1976, 30 years ago, and as you enjoy this city and these urban surroundings today, I invite you to reflect on the fact that this place has been built, has been shaped by the environment that we live in — the mountains, the ocean, the rivers. One of the things that 1976 called us all to do was to see the city that we lived in, the region that we lived in, with different eyes, and as we saw with different eyes, to open our minds and open our hearts to different solutions to the problems that plagued us.

Today we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people. When the first Europeans came to this place, the Coast Salish people said to them: “You are welcome, come and be part of this place.” And today if we look to the future, it is that welcoming of cities that is so important for us to embrace, for every city is a place of not just people that are residents, but a place too for strangers, a place that creates new opportunities for new dialogues and new life as we create living urban structures, as was mentioned earlier.

Today if you leave this room, you can go to the water’s edge, you can walk along the water to Burrard Inlet, around what we call Stanley Park, along the north shore of False Creek and to the south shore of False Creek, all the way up to Spanish Banks and around the corner to the Fraser River — miles and miles of waterfront walks which is there because the citizens of this city demanded that they be taken advantage of by the development community, and they be taken advantage of by the city.

Today, as you feast your eyes and enjoy the environment created by the great urban park known as Stanley Park, you should know that 30 years ago that great new park called Pacific Spirit Park had not been created. Today it sits as a sister park to Stanley Park.

Today in our city you can see construction taking place for over \$2 billion worth of public transit. In 1976 there was no light rapid transit, rail transit, no SkyTrain in the Lower Mainland. Because we came together and said we have to move people, not cars, we have had great success in connecting our region, reducing the impact on the environment, and we continue to invest in that. As Mayor Sullivan reminded you, it is planning and thinking of what we want our cities to be like that allows us to create the communities we want to live in.

Coming out of 1976 there was a vision for Vancouver. That vision called for a downtown where people would work but also where people would live, where people would enjoy themselves, where people would learn and exchange cultural activities. So at one point, in the 1980s, early 1990s, we decided that we would rezone our downtown. We took 25 million square feet of potential office space and turned it into a residential neighbourhood which you now call Yaletown. As you visit Yaletown you will find urban shops, you will find a neighbourhood, you will find community centres, you

will find parks, you will find an urban place where people like to be, because at the end of the day our task is to create a place where people want to live.

Thirty years ago there were 5,000 hectares of property called Burns Bog – the Lungs of the Lower Mainland – which was ripe for development, for dense development, commercial development. People in this community said to government: no, we want you to work together, we want you to protect that land, we want it to be there for future generation after future generation. So today Burns Bog is protected in part because of the work of federal, provincial, regional and local jurisdictions to save that important piece of our air quality and our water quality in the Lower Mainland.

Sustainability is achievable, but it requires us to see the world with different eyes, and it requires us to recognize that what we may do today will make a difference which we may not see immediately. It's been said that the world changes far more slowly in two years than you believe it will, and far more expansively in ten years than you believe it will.

This week at this forum we plant seeds, seeds which can grow in every part of the world, seeds which can nourish our environment, that can help clean our air and clean our water. As we organize and as we learn and as we know that what we do with what we see can be accomplished, we must recognize that we must take ideas and put them into action. It is not simply what we say to one another; it is what we do when we leave these forums. It is what we put to work in our towns and our cities and our countries all over the world.

In Vancouver we pride ourselves, and in British Columbia and Canada, we pride ourselves on being an open, tolerant community that celebrates our diversity, the great diversity of individual citizens coming together, each carrying a thread to the tapestry that we weave as we build an even brighter future for all of us.

We face major challenges from crime, pollution, sustainability. Thirty years ago we said in this part of the country that we faced an affordability challenge in housing. Unfortunately today, in 2006, there are many people that will say to you we face an affordability problem in housing. It's not because we haven't tried to respond to it, it's because we haven't found the answer yet. If we haven't found the answer, we have to be willing to embrace new ideas. We have to be willing to work with one another and to

learn what works in different communities and different parts of the globe and different parts of our country and share those ideas.

As we create living, human, healthy communities, I encourage all of you to think of the words of the great philosopher who once said: “Whatever we may do or dream we can do, begin. Boldness and genius and power and magic happen.” Cities await your touch and your actions to create their magic for the people we all serve.

Thank you.