

Coalition of BC Businesses
Monday, February 20, 2012
Speech length: 3-5 minutes

Event: what is it?

- The Coalition of BC Businesses was formed in 1992 to represent the voice of small and medium-sized businesses in developing B.C.'s labour and employment policies.
- It represents over 50,000 businesses active in all sectors
- Their sole focus is development of labour policies that will help foster a positive relationship between employers and employees and provide a climate for new economic growth, opportunities and jobs.

Audience: who are they?

- Mark von Schellwitz – Chair, Coalition of BC Businesses
- 20-40 reps from the restaurant and hospitality industries, homebuilders, Retail BC, New Car Dealers and BC Chamber of Commerce

Key Messages

- We are charting a balanced course for economic stability in the province to create and protect jobs.
- Our agenda is job creation because that is what will grow our economy and provide the social programs we need.
- B.C. is a safe harbour for investment.

We're lucky to be living and working here in British Columbia.

You go down to the U.S. - I was there twice in the last two weeks - it's a real mess down there. They are dealing with huge issues.

You go to Europe. Again, they're coping with really difficult issues.

Here in B.C., our economy, though fragile, is still seen as a safe harbour by the rest of the world.

This is an advantage that we need to work hard to preserve.

Over the past year, I've been travelling the province talking about families.

I believe families are the most important institution in society – because it's families that raise kids to become caring adults who give back to their communities.

Supporting families is how we create a great province.

And there's nothing more important to every family than a good job that puts dinner on the table.

That's why we're focused like a laser beam on protecting and creating jobs in B.C. by strengthening our economy.

We can do that by managing our finances responsibly, controlling spending, which is crucially important, keeping our taxes low and attracting investment and jobs.

We also have to make sure that we are avoiding chronic deficits, which is something that we have seen occur in other provinces.

That means that we can't make promises that we can't pay for. And it means we have to say no sometimes. That can be difficult.

Tomorrow is budget day.

Finance Minister Kevin Falcon has been working really hard on this budget and it hasn't been easy.

While you have to wait until tomorrow for details, I can tell you we are charting a course for economic stability and fiscal prudence.

Following through on those commitments is the best way government can continue to deliver on the Jobs Plan that we set out in September.

The BC Jobs Plan is about getting government out of the way of job creation, creating infrastructure to get our goods to market and making sure that we're opening those new markets.

We are making progress on it already – for example, we unveiled the natural gas strategy a few weeks ago.

Our strategy will take an abundant B.C. resource from the northeast and move it to the northwest to turn it into a value-added export before we ship it overseas.

By developing liquefied natural gas export facilities and opening markets in Asia, we can get four to five times the price for this B.C. resource.

The natural gas strategy is going to create 11,000 jobs over the next eight years. This is an opportunity to grow a whole new industry for British Columbia.

Another history making development - Rio Tinto Alcan is making the biggest private sector investment ever in B.C., up in Kitimat.

They're spending nearly \$3 billion to upgrade their smelter and protect jobs for the long-term.

Mining expansions are being announced, including at the Huckleberry mine near Smithers. This expansion will ensure stable jobs for 300 people for the next nine years— good paying jobs that support families.

Western Forest Products is investing in modernizing their Vancouver Island operations, and we have finally broken the logjam on the Evergreen line, which will create 8,000 jobs and connect the Tri-Cities, including Port Moody and Coquitlam, into the rapid transit system.

All of these investments signal an enormous vote of confidence in the future of British Columbia and send a powerful message to investors world-wide...

That at a time of global uncertainty B.C. remains a solid, safe place to invest.

We are building the economy we need to support the services that people depend on – like health care and education.

The money for those services comes from a thriving private sector economy.

A decade ago we got rid of the high-debt, high-tax policies that are causing economic chaos in other jurisdictions right now.

Now, when many countries and jurisdictions are looking inward and hunkering down, we are reaching out.

We're determined to create jobs, to grow our economy, to maintain our Triple A credit rating. As business owners and managers, you all know how important that is.

You know first-hand that the economy is not an abstract idea.

The economy exists to create jobs.

It's what brings services to people and makes B.C. a strong province, and we're going to continue with that agenda.

We'll continue to be the safe harbour for investment to ensure that in tough economic times. We'll reduce the barriers to investment and open new markets for our products.

We're fighting for the economic future of B.C.'s families and businesses, and it's a fight we're determined to win.

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