

BUSINESS PROPOSAL FOR OIL REFINERY IN KITIMAT

Hon. C. Clark: If we want to strengthen health care and education and other vital public services in our province, we of course first must strengthen our economy. Yesterday the people of British Columbia were presented with a credible and a bold proposal to do just that.

B.C. businessman David Black made a major announcement with respect to his company Kitimat Clean and his proposal to build and operate a world-class petroleum refinery in Kitimat.

Now, Mr. Black needs little introduction. He's one of the most successful British Columbia entrepreneurs. He built a newspaper empire at a time when newspapers around the world were going under. Throughout his business life he has found success where others have found failure. He is not to be underestimated.

Yesterday Mr. Black announced that he had found investors willing to back his bid to invest \$25 billion in his project. He proposes to build a \$16 billion refinery, \$8 billion in pipelines and a further \$1 billion in new tankers to carry the refined petroleum products to customers in Asia.

This is a credible proposal from a credible B.C. businessman. Without question, this would be the largest single, private sector investment in the history of our great province. It would be potentially a tremendous game changer for our children and their children. Six thousand new jobs during construction; 3,000 full-time jobs created once the refinery is in operation. And importantly, Mr. Black's proposal would keep ownership of this project right here at home in British Columbia.

I have long said that British Columbians believe in the benefit of environmentally sound economic development and are fully supportive of getting higher value for B.C. and Canadian goods in markets outside of North America.

Last July our government stood up and put five conditions in place by which we would gauge support for any heavy-oil pipelines in British Columbia. Our five conditions are the way to ensure the highest standards for environmental protection and First Nation involvement possible should any heavy-oil pipeline go through British Columbia.

Mr. Black has proposed a new pipeline across northern B.C. I want to be clear that the five strict conditions that we have very clearly set out would apply to his proposal, as they would to any other. But the difference between the first pipeline proposal and Mr. Black's is that the refinery in Kitimat could form part of the economic benefits needed to satisfy our fifth condition, although I do need to be clear that although it could form a part of that, it will not go all the way.

Thousands of jobs could create a significant economic benefit that does not exist under any current proposal. As well, Mr. Black has said that he plans to use greenhouse gas-reducing technology that would cut GHG emissions from his refinery in half.

Finally, Mr. Black's proposal radically reduces the environmental risks associated with the shipping of oil off our coast to Asia. Because refined products are transported in much smaller ships, refined products are much easier to remediate in case of an incident, and these products are already very regularly moving up and down B.C.'s coast.

I'd like to tell this House that our government has been working constructively with Mr. Black in his quest to identify a suitable location on which to build a potential refinery. Our government wants to use every tool at our disposal to move the proposal forward where it can be judged on its merits by a robust, rigorous and, most importantly, independent environmental process, free from political influence.

Like our potential with liquefied natural gas, these opportunities do not come around every day — opportunities that can strengthen our economy, sustain public health care and education and put thousands of British Columbians to work at high-paying, family-supporting, long-term jobs. Our government takes the view that we should work together to address legitimate environmental and safety concerns and find a way to get to yes on projects that will grow our economy.

This project and the LNG opportunity both require leadership, and this is where my government stands. We are British Columbians. We are Canadians. We can grow our economy. We can make environmentally responsible economic development happen if we put our minds to it. If we are clear, if we are consistent, if we are strong-minded, we can make economic development happen.

We have to take a stand. We have to make sure investors have certainty, clarity and a fair process. And we have to do that not just for this generation but for future generations.