

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR**  
**THE HONOURABLE JOYCE MURRAY**  
*Minister of Management Services*

**OKANAGAN TECHNOLOGY SYMPOSIUM**  
*The Grand Okanagan Resort*  
*Kelowna, BC*

**June 3, 2004**  
8:00 AM

*(Check Against Delivery)*

## INTRODUCTION

- Thank you John.
- It is really a pleasure to be here this morning.
- This is the sixth annual Okanagan Technology Symposium and that is quite an accomplishment.
- All the more so when you realize John Weisbeck, one of the busiest MLAs I know, is the driving force behind this conference.
- The people of the Okanagan – the Silicon Vineyard as it is increasingly known – are so very lucky to have such strong representation.

- Ladies and Gentlemen, this is what being an MLA should be all about.
- There are so many ways that government can positively influence people's lives and those are things Premier Gordon Campbell has asked of us all.

## **UBC OKANAGAN**

- In March, Premier Campbell, Advanced Education Minister Shirley Bond, and all my Okanagan colleagues joined UBC President Martha Piper and announced the new Kelowna-based UBC Okanagan.
- Clearly, the Okanagan was ready for a full service university and the government worked with Okanagan communities to make the smartest choice.

- UBC Okanagan takes existing infrastructure and existing government funding and adds the financial leverage of UBC so that 7500 new student spaces will be created by 2010.
- Equally important, a focused Okanagan College will expand trades and applied training programs throughout the Okanagan.
- Making smarter decisions, of which both UBC Okanagan and bridging the digital divide are examples, leads to greater opportunity for all of us.

## **WHAT ARE WE DOING?**

- Last fall, the government announced NetWork BC, our plan to build a next generation network.

- Our goal is straightforward: provide affordable high speed Internet to every BC community as soon as possible and bridge the digital divide.
- Bridging the digital divide means creating a new network, enabling information to travel faster and extend further than ever.
- It means opening up connection points in all communities.
- And it means helping communities work with telecommunications companies or community-led networks and create "last mile" connections linking homes and workplaces to each other and to the world.
- NetWork BC is about more than technology...

- It's about making a real, positive difference in people's lives – giving them the ability to change how they live and work in their communities – that's what is important.
- It's about all British Columbians having the same technological advantages.
- And it is about First Nations communities having the same health and educational opportunities other British Columbians enjoy.

## **WHY ARE WE DOING IT?**

- Prior to the last election, Premier Gordon Campbell toured the province and met British Columbians from remote communities.

- He recognized then the need to bridge the digital divide, and made it part of our election platform.
- Jim Mutter, President of the Premier's Technology Council, told me that when the Council toured the province, they heard loud and clear: "The top issue is high speed internet access."
- Bringing technology to remote and rural communities helps connect people and improve the quality of their lives.
- And, we believe it is government's job to respond to the needs of people, and of businesses.
- By providing high-speed Internet access to everyone, including First Nations communities, we strengthen smaller rural communities.

- People can stay in their communities and look after their families and still have jobs, wider educational possibilities and expanded access to health services.
- I believe it's important that when the public needs the services of government, they are able to access these services easily and cheaply – regardless of where they live.
- Through NetWork BC – I think we will achieve it.

## **HOW ARE WE DOING IT?**

- Now, we are not tackling this challenge alone.
- Many governments are grappling with bridging the digital divide, as I learned at the recent Microsoft Government Leadership forum in Seattle.

- It was refreshing to see that in many ways British Columbia is a leader, we are doing better than others, and NetWork BC is a prime example.
- We have worked hard to develop partnerships and strengthen relationships with the private sector, the communities of this province, and also with the broader public sector and federal government.
- An important partner is the federal government as we work creatively and ensure our plan and our communities benefit from available broadband project funding by Industry Canada.
- For example, in one project the province is contributing \$2.5 million for the capital costs of on the ground technology to receive satellite-based broadband in remote communities.

- The federal government is contributing satellite-based broadband capacity worth more than \$7.5 million.
- We are also working with the broader public sector – that is crown corporations, and the province’s health authorities – on the second part of our plan:
- Building a consolidated next generation public sector network that combines all of government’s technology spending so that we can get the best deal on a new provincial network.
- The savings generated by this unique approach enable the province to bridge the digital divide at no net cost to taxpayers.

## **WHAT STAGE ARE WE AT?**

- So – where are we today with our plan?

- Today, there are 198 communities in British Columbia that have high-speed Internet.
- We aim to connect a further 70 communities by the end of this year and connect the rest within the next two years.
- BC schools will be upgraded or connected this summer.
- In the Kootenays, the province has successfully facilitated an arrangement between the Columbia Mountain Open Network and TELUS that will see high speed broadband digital internet services provided in communities from Winslow to Grasmere for the first time ever.
- Using federal broadband satellite capacity, we will connect 30 of our most remote communities to high-speed telecommunications technology.

- At a minimum, 22 of these communities are First Nations, and all will be connected by fall.
- At the heart of our plan is innovative procurement that levers public spending to benefit remote communities across the province.
- I think it's a good example of how the NetWork BC project team is developing strong relationships that will help us achieve our goal.
- It's a great partnership, and it's a great deal for BC.

## **WHAT RESULTS ARE WE EXPECTING?**

- Much of how this plan will serve healthcare delivery is still in on the drawing board.

- Later this morning, Dave Nikolejsin, Assistant Deputy Minister for the NetWork BC project, and two health authority CIOs will lead a panel discussion on the need for a common province wide network.
- Parallel development of ICT applications must also occur.
- The new network will serve the needs of our health care system and enable even more of these exciting kinds of initiatives.
- The new network holds such great potential – we are limited only by our imaginations.
- I recently had a chance, through teleconferencing, to experience first hand the possibilities of tele-health.

- I provided funding for a unique community learning centre in Tache, (pron. TA-CHEE) a community that is part of the Tl'azt'en (pron. SLOT-SEN) Nation, 170 km. northwest of Prince George.
- The Tache community has worked very hard with the Province and the UBC Faculty of Medicine to develop a learning centre that is staffed by 7 local youth and 1 elder.
- This community learning centre, which the Tache refer to as the Tl'azt'en (SLOT-SEN) Learning Circle, is a place where First Nations families can come and learn about the Internet and, among other things, how a doctor in Tache can view diagnostic results located in Vancouver over the Internet.
- Tele-health will undoubtedly strengthen and improve the health care provided in this remote community.

- Right now, we have tele-health capabilities at 120 sites, within 60 hospitals, health centers, and mental health centers throughout the province.
- Families in rural communities have better access to critical services such as pediatric cardiology, maternal fetal medicine and mental health consultations because of the Internet.
- This same technology also provides BC's medical professionals with easier access to regular contact and professional development with their colleagues, regardless of where they work.
- The convergence of health care delivery and the capacity of information and communication technology provide us with the opportunity to improve British Columbians access to health care in very real ways.

- It is an exciting time: We are a step closer to the Premier's goal of healthcare when you need, where you need it.

## CONCLUSION

- Fundamentally, NetWork BC is about fairness, and providing better access to health care, education and business opportunities, whether you live in Atlin, Bella Bella, Crawford Valley or New Westminster.
- Our plan is key to ensuring our province has one of the most computer literate workforces in the country, and is one of the leading high tech centers of the world.
- BC is already recognized as a leading edge province when it comes to technology.

- Through NetWork BC we will work with the private sector to make the public sector more successful at providing services to all British Columbians.
- We want to ensure that the people of B.C. can benefit to the fullest - whether they are improving their education by taking distance learning classes, launching a new business, or learning about the best ways to manage a medical condition.
- NetWork BC is a smarter plan, allowing British Columbians – wherever they live – to make the most of their potential.
- Thank you.