

Mayor Larry Campbell

Inauguration Address

December 2, 2002

Mr. Justice Oppal, Councillors, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

We are here today as a consequence of the trust placed in us by the people of Vancouver in last month's election. In numbers never seen before, the citizens of this city spoke -- clearly and emphatically. They spoke of their desire to move our city in a new direction. They spoke of their determination to solve problems neglected for too long. Most clearly of all, they spoke of their unshakeable pride in our city -- and their readiness to take our place among the leading cities of the world.

Our civic government and the critical services it delivers reflect our commitment as a community to achieve together what would be impossible as individuals. Our task is to lay the groundwork for each of our citizens -- young and old -- to make the most of his or her opportunities. The election confirmed, in a striking way, the conviction of our citizens that Vancouver can only be truly great if we respect everyone in it. We must take everyone's concerns seriously. Nobody, in our Vancouver, is disposable. I am particularly gratified at the breadth of support this vision found across the city.

I would like to congratulate Councillors Fred Bass, Tim Louis and Sam Sullivan, who were returned to office. I welcome David Cadman, Jim Green, Peter Ladner, Raymond Louie, Anne Roberts, Tim Stevenson and Ellen Woodsworth, who were elected to Council for the first time. I think the new Council has a wealth of experience that will serve the city well.

I also would like to acknowledge those Councillors from our last Council who were not successful. It was a hard-fought campaign, but the concern for our city felt by Jennifer Clarke, George Puil, Don Lee and Sandy McCormick was clear to all. On behalf of the people of the city, I would like to thank them for their public service. Our appreciation should go as well to veteran Councillors Gordon Price, Daniel Lee and Lynne Kennedy, who did not contest the election but made their own contribution to our city's welfare.

Elections are a battlefield of ideas and values. The last campaign was no exception. In the end, I believe voters want a Council that works pragmatically and constructively to achieve objectives shared by the vast majority of our citizens. In three years, when the electorate returns to the polls, they will ask if we achieved our goals. I want to set out some of them today.

Our first goal must be to expand our civic democracy. The significant increase in voter turnout should be a sign to all of us that the citizens of Vancouver want more say in the affairs of their city. The challenges facing us are complex, but that's even more reason to increase our citizens' involvement in finding new solutions.

Our citizens are raising the bar for the incoming Council, calling for bolder responses to long-standing problems and greater grassroots participation. High on the agenda is a ward system -- a way of bringing representation home to the neighbourhood level. I have heard from countless voters that they would like the opportunity to vote in this way in the next municipal election. In the coming months, I will be consulting with all of my Council colleagues to design a process to tackle this question and other changes that could enhance civic democracy. It is my hope that initiatives supported by a majority of voters can be in place in 2005. I propose to take other steps immediately

to improve citizen access to Council, including expanded opportunities to make public submissions, more evening meetings and more meetings in the community.

We will deliver on our commitment to wider citizen involvement with a plebiscite on the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Bid early in the New Year. I want to restate my personal belief that Vancouver should be the successful bidder for the 2010 Olympics. Nonetheless, I recognize that many people have legitimate questions about the financial, economic, social and environmental costs -- and benefits -- of the Games. I believe those concerns can be resolved and that doing so will strengthen our bid. And how can we quantify the honour of hosting the world's most important sporting event? Surely, at a time when so many regions of the world are suffering the consequences of war, recession or environmental degradation, we should welcome the opportunity to make our city a symbol of what our planet can become if we replace conflict with peaceful competition and co-operation.

I believe there is substantial support for the bid among our citizens. That support can be consolidated and demonstrated by a plebiscite held early in the New Year.

To that end, I will be sitting down next week with Councillors Green and Roberts, as well as city staff, to develop a process to give voters a say on the bid as soon as it has been submitted. We will also be considering a series of measures we can take on our own to alleviate concern about the impact of the Games on the city.

Important as the Olympic Bid is, it pales beside the major issue debated in the election: the crisis of addiction and poverty on the Downtown Eastside. During the campaign, we asked how our city could be great as long as we tolerated the moral, social and economic blight of the Downtown Eastside, which has seen more than 1,000 die from addiction alone.

This debate unfolded against the backdrop of the Missing Women tragedy. These dreadful events challenge us to confront the causes and consequences of the sex trade, which affects hundreds of women and youth in this city. I stand by my commitment to ensure there is a public inquiry, when the time is appropriate, into this entire affair. It is the essential first step in the assessment our city must make of a profound evil in our midst. The goal is to establish facts, not fault; to identify solutions, not scapegoats.

In the case of the drug crisis, we are able to move, as some of my neighbours have put it, from grief to action.

The fact that all the major contenders for office during the election supported the Four Pillars Strategy is an overpowering mandate from the people to implement the strategy immediately. To this end, I have asked outgoing Mayor Philip Owen to serve with me as co-chair of a special task force to implement the Four Pillars approach. The task force will include experts in each critical area -- prevention, enforcement, treatment and harm reduction. I am asking Jamie Graham, Chief Constable of the Vancouver Police Department, to participate personally. We will be announcing participants from other sectors in the coming weeks. It is my hope to move forward with the opening of a safe consumption site early in the New Year.

The plight of the homeless in the Downtown Eastside was another important feature of the election campaign. I hope adequate shelter can be offered to those remaining outside the Woodward's Building within days.

This can only be the beginning, however, of our efforts. Despite the city's solid record of investment in low-cost and social housing, national and provincial programs have been eliminated. It is not fair to expect local taxpayers to make up the social deficits caused by downloading of programs and responsibilities from senior levels of government. Revitalization of the Woodward's Building is essential if we wish to spark new economic activity along Hastings St. in the Downtown Eastside. While the

costs of the project are daunting, the benefits are enormous. Apart from the economic and social advantages of new retail opportunities, market housing and social housing in the Woodward's Building itself, the city would realize additional gains by linking Chinatown with Gastown and the cruise ship terminal at Canada Place. Here, as in many other cases, we need commitment and financial support from Victoria and Ottawa. The ramifications go well beyond our city's borders, and so, too, does the responsibility to cooperate to find solutions.

The Four Pillar Strategy and revitalization of the Woodward's Building are two keys to confronting the crisis on the Downtown Eastside. If we do our work well, we should be able to eliminate the open drug market on the Downtown Eastside by the next election. We should see more people in treatment and detox. A comprehensive education and prevention program should be in place to reduce the toll of drug addiction. New housing and business investment should be generating new activity in the community.

Equally importantly, we should see a reduction in drug-related property crime and an increase in neighbourhood security across the city. I have already met with Chief Constable Graham and I share his confidence that the men and women of our Police Department will respond to this challenge with their characteristic professionalism.

Despite the progress the police have already made in reducing violent crime, Vancouverites are rightly demanding intensified efforts to make our streets and neighbourhoods safe. We will be acting, in co-operation with the Vancouver Police Department, to improve public confidence in policing, particularly among women, youth and in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities.

A safer, more inclusive city is part of our vision for the next three years. We also want a cooler city. Other levels of government can take action to protect wilderness and set aside protected areas. Our mandate is to protect the environment where people live. To that end, our Council will debate a resolution endorsing the Kyoto Accord in the coming weeks. Some have asked why this issue is not also put to a plebiscite. My answer is this: there is no debate about the need for action on global warming. The only debate is over what kind of action we should take and how fast.

In the coming year we will develop and put forward for consideration a Cool Vancouver strategy. Modelled on the successful Toronto Atmospheric Fund, the Cool Vancouver initiative will mobilize a part of our Property Endowment Fund to meet and surpass Kyoto targets within the city. By investing in energy conservation and other initiatives, we should be able to reduce greenhouse gases, generate jobs, save tax dollars and improve public health.

This initiative will be linked to efforts within the Greater Vancouver Regional District and at Translink to break the traffic gridlock that is choking the city. I have asked Dr. Fred Bass to chair the Transportation and Traffic Committee. Councillor Peter Ladner will serve as deputy chair. Our Council's objective will be to increase bus service in the city through the addition of more rapid buses, more late night service and better service on the Broadway corridor. We will fight fare increases and work for fare reductions. At the same time, we will seek new initiatives to improve traffic flow and facilitate the flow of goods and services, particularly to and from the Port.

By 2005 we need to achieve measurable progress in reducing gridlock and improving air quality in our city. We should seek to establish Vancouver as a world leader in environmental stewardship.

To achieve progress on transportation and gridlock, we need to link regional solutions to local, neighbourhood problems. Effective planning requires more public involvement at the community level. Local zoning issues, neighbourhood planning, housing initiatives and social policy have a direct impact on our daily lives. Vancouverites want a say in the decisions that affect their neighbourhoods' future. I have asked Councillor Anne Roberts to chair the Planning and Environment Committee, supported by Councillor Jim Green as deputy chair. Their mandate is to maximize community consultation and

involvement in the planning process, while minimizing unnecessary delay for homeowners, developers and business.

These changes to improve our quality of life cannot be separated from necessary measures to strengthen our city's economy. A recent KPMG study confirmed that Vancouver remains one of the world's best places to invest. Why? Because we are cost-competitive, clean, stable and home to a highly-educated, skilled and motivated workforce. We draw strength from our diverse multicultural community, which brings us entrepreneurial talent and links to developing markets. But we can't rest on our laurels.

Where we can eliminate barriers to investment and job creation, we must. I will personally be seeking advice and input from the Vancouver Economic Development Commission and other business leaders on what measures we can take to improve the City's economy. Streamlining the approval processes is a priority. We know that the development approval process in our city is longer than most other Lower Mainland municipalities. We need firm targets to reduce that time as part of a system-wide commitment to improve the quality and efficiency of services to voters. We can't succeed without the support of our civic employees. Creating a new partnership with our civic workers to achieve improvements in service and quality, while respecting their skills, commitment and experience, will be vital.

We will need renewed partnerships with the provincial and federal governments, as well. Investment in critical infrastructure is needed to support economic activity. Both senior levels of government must work with us to ensure our Port remains competitive. Our Council will do its share. We also look to Ottawa and Victoria to work with us to build a new Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre, a key part of our strategy to sustain our tourism industry. Construction of the Centre is long overdue. My goal is to see the project substantially under way by 2005.

Our economic strategy will be based on "racing to the top," using our quality of life, skilled workforce and competitive costs to lever jobs and investment. I will be seeking, in the New Year, the advice of business leaders, academics, and the investment community on elements of an Entrepreneurial Action Plan to encourage new investment in small business. Other cities in the Pacific Northwest, especially Portland, have lessons to teach us on encouraging business investment in depressed areas of the city. We need to learn those lessons and adapt them to our realities.

On all these questions, I will be looking to my predecessors for advice and guidance. I look forward particularly, to seeing Mike Harcourt down at City Hall. I know our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family today as he recovers from a serious accident. As mayor, he demonstrated that it is possible to balance the social and economic needs of the city in ways that made us stronger on both counts. My objective is to support the development of an economy based on investment in excellence, where knowledge, quality and innovation are the path to profit, not low wages or poor standards.

Our economic policy needs to be supported by responsible administration of the City's finances. I have committed to hold taxes to the rate of inflation. This is an aggressive target that will require careful management. I have asked Councillor Tim Louis to lead the City Services and Budgets committee with Councillor Ellen Woodsworth as deputy chair. Their mandate is to deliver on our commitments to safeguard the property endowment fund and to improve public participation in the budget process. At the same time, they must seek ways to re-allocate resources and staff, where possible, to support new initiatives.

We must be able to tell voters in 2005 that City finances are in order. More importantly, voters must have real opportunities to participate in the budget process. Only then can they have the confidence they deserve that Council's decisions reflect their priorities.

In my view, we need to take special measures during the next three years to ensure three key groups see their needs more clearly reflected in Council's work.

The first of these groups is seniors. As changes and cuts to our health care system take their toll, seniors find themselves pressed on every front. We need to make it easier to be a senior in this city. We need to do everything we can to ensure the elderly live with the dignity and respect to which they're entitled. I will be working with my colleagues and staff to develop and implement an action plan for seniors, including anti-crime measures and bylaw changes to make new residential developments more "senior-friendly." We will ask our City inspectors to do what they can, in co-operation with the Regional Health Board, to ensure seniors do not suffer from substandard housing conditions. We'll look for ways to reduce cost burdens for seniors. We'll reduce City fees for seniors and enact new bylaws to protect our stock of single-room occupancy (SRO) housing.

The needs, aspirations and contributions of young people also need to be reflected in the life of the city. It was inspiring to see the outpouring of enthusiasm from Vancouver's youth in response to the vision we put forward this fall. I believe that enthusiasm deserves a response that reflects our own enthusiasm for the energy and potential of young Vancouver. Financial barriers to young people need to come down. I hope the Park Board will be able to make it cheaper for youth to use community centers and other facilities. At the City level, we need to find the resources to provide more support for youth facing homelessness, drug addiction or sexual exploitation. I don't have all the answers, but young people have many. We'll be seeking their advice and input on City policies.

The creation of the position of child and youth advocate was an innovation by former Mayor Gordon Campbell that I intend to copy. I will ask Council to allocate funds in our next budget for this post, which I believe is necessary to focus the entire city government on the needs of children and youth. The benefits of strong family support, good nutrition and quality housing in the early years of life are too well-known to repeat here. Everything we can do to help kids get a good start is not only economically sensible, it's morally essential. Our Council will do what it can to assist parents, teachers and school trustees as they confront very real funding pressures from Victoria. The current funding freeze is already taking a toll on the quality of public education our children enjoy. There are those who say these cuts are essential to avoid handing a massive debt over to our children. But how can we justify imposing the cost on them today by reducing access to the education they need to be successful?

The magnitude of the issues we need to deal with should not distract us from this reality: our city remains one of the best places in the world to live. Vancouver is a wonderful place to work, but it's a great place to play, as well. My Council will take steps to make our city even more fun -- but don't expect any new laws to make it so. How people have fun is their business. Voters seem to have rejected the view that city regulations can help the good times roll. During the coming year, however, we will take additional steps to foster festivals of music and the arts, as well as to increase support for the arts community. We had campaigners for dance parties and proposals for a Love Parade, a fitting counterpart to the Pride March. I say, bring it on -- and I look to this city's fine tradition of home-grown, volunteer-driven events to extend even more opportunities for families, friends and visitors to take part in the life of our city.

Three years is not a long time. Nonetheless, there is a sense of change in the air. Our challenge is to engage the tens of thousands who participated in the election and the tens of thousands more who stayed home. They have a vision of what our city can be. Their mandate to us is to do what we can to realize that dream. As Vancouver poet George Bowering said in a book of poems he published about our city in 1984:

*The world turns within us,
While we transform it,
Fancy words, but true.*

Thank you.

- Larry Campbell