

HONOURABLE CLAUDE RICHMOND

Excerpts of Speech

\$225,000 Grant Presentation to the BC Wheelchair Sports Association

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

12:00pm

Legislative Buildings

Victoria

Of all the events I do as a minister, the ones I find most rewarding are related to persons with disabilities.

Did you know that on December 3rd, the Province will join with the United Nations to honour the 25th anniversary of the proclamation of the International Day of Disabled Persons?

This Day is a great opportunity for British Columbians, and people around the world, to celebrate the progress that's been made in improving the lives of persons with disabilities.

This year's theme for the International Day of Disabled Persons is "Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities."

According to the United Nations, individuals with disabilities in many countries face an employment rate of only 20 per cent.

Here in B.C., 44 per cent of working-age British Columbians with disabilities are employed, some 132,000 people.

This is good, but we must strive to do better.

The provincial government provides, annually, a \$4.3-billion system of support for persons with disabilities – so they can participate more fully at work, at home, at play and in their communities.

I'm proud of our Disability Strategy, led by my ministry that envisions a province in which British Columbians with disabilities have real choices.

This year we've revamped our \$20-million Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities to ensure it is even more responsive to individual needs. This program is available to all British Columbians with disabilities.

Our new inter-active WorkAble Solutions web site connects people with disabilities to employers throughout British Columbia, and employers to a large pool of skilled, tremendously loyal workers.

This leads me to our '10 by 10 Challenge'.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

We've challenged communities and local businesses, across the province, to increase the employment of persons with disabilities by 10 per cent by 2010 – just in time for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

This means an additional 13,000 persons with disabilities working over the next two years.

To date, 46 communities, such as Victoria, Prince George, and Invermere, have officially taken on the Challenge.

In every region of the province people are talking about the real, tangible benefits to employing a person with a disability. These include the very positive impact on business customers and on other employees sharing the same workplace.

It's been so gratifying to read upbeat articles in newspapers from Vancouver, Williams Lake, Kelowna and many other communities.

Work is important, of course, but it's not everything.

We know a healthy lifestyle is a balanced one – one that includes work and play.

That's why our Government seeks out partnerships with valued provincial organizations to expand opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in recreational and leisure activities.

And we have an excellent partner in the BC Wheelchair Sports Association.

Since 1971 their work has been to nurture a culture of participation, especially among our young people.

Their athletes are fine examples of what's possible in the face of physical challenges.

And, did you know the Association has bid to host the 2010 World Wheelchair Rugby Championships?

An outstanding display of confidence and leadership!

We're all rooting for you!