

Address to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade

Robin Silvester, President and CEO

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples, on whose ancestral lands we are gathered today, and to extend our thanks to them.

I'd also like to congratulate Bridgitte Anderson on her new role. Bridgitte, you are a fabulous choice to lead this terrific organization! And I'd like to thank the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade team for inviting me back, for my 11th year on this stage.

It's always a privilege to be here, and to speak to each of you in this room, as business, government and community leaders. So let's dive in.

As we stand on the cusp of the next decade, major forces are shaping our collective future.

Globally, technology and automation are surging and Elon Musk's space program aspires to a multi-planet civilization—while Greta Thunberg recently took two weeks to cross the Atlantic by zero-emission sailboat, as she calls for urgent climate action.

Nationally, new trade agreements are opening new opportunities, yet we're on recession watch, and impacts to Canadian trade from the U.S.-China trade war have driven home the need to keep diversifying Canada's markets.

Locally, as we prepare for population and trade growth, we're seeing welcome investment in transit and transportation, including the

Broadway Skytrain, upgrades to the Expo and Millennium lines, and the Pattullo bridge replacement as well as some important goods-movement projects.

Yet, housing costs and sluggish incomes have earned Vancouver a 112th-place finish, out of 415 Canadian communities, in a recent Maclean's ranking of the best places to live in Canada.

All of these factors—technology, climate change, the economy, trade, transportation, and affordability—will shape the future of this region.

Today, I'll outline what it means for our region, in a complex and changing time, to be home to Canada's largest port.

What I hope you'll take away is that firstly, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is working, very purposefully, to ensure the Port of Vancouver is not just a national asset, but also a local asset for our region and communities.

And then secondly, I hope you'll leave energized with a sense of how we, as a region, can further build on our opportunities as a premier port city—we need your help!

Let me start with a brief overview of our role at the port authority. Then, I'll outline three ways our work is bringing port-related benefits to our region and local communities, and then two key opportunities that we have, collectively, to protect and grow those benefits.

The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is the federal agency that stewards the lands and waters of the Port of Vancouver, which is Canada's largest port and in fact about the size of Canada's next five ports combined.

As the port authority we're mandated to facilitate Canada's trade through the port, and to do so in a way that ensures safety, protects the environment, and considers communities.

That's a complex mandate, yet we've raised the bar even further. We've set a vision to make the Port of Vancouver, the world's most sustainable port. For us, that means a port that is a global leader in: delivering economic prosperity through trade; maintaining a healthy environment; and enabling thriving local communities.

So that's very briefly who we are. Now, let me highlight three ways that our work in 2019, heading into 2020, is delivering significant local benefits for our region and our communities.

First, we're bringing federal infrastructure dollars to our region, amidst country-wide competition.

In 2018 and 2019, the port authority was able to secure more than \$300 million in Transport Canada funding commitments, which we really appreciate, for road and rail projects across the Lower Mainland. That represents a lion's share of what this government has distributed across the country for trade infrastructure.

Besides enabling Canada's trade, these projects are a terrific win for our region. They'll strengthen our transportation network and mitigate challenges like congestion, emissions and noise as we prepare to welcome one million more residents by 2050.

We secured these funds amidst coast-to-coast competition—and what enabled us to be so successful was not just being Canada's largest port, but was a remarkable collaboration of stakeholders throughout the gateway to put compelling funding requests forward. That collaboration included the port authority, the provincial government,

Translink, and industry, united by a desire to build the future of this gateway and this region.

When we secured our first big funding commitment in 2018, and then our second one last summer, it validated the terrific planning, and rail modelling, and analysis that our collaboration demonstrated in our applications.

But beyond that, it demonstrated the impact that we can have, as a region, when the key stakeholders come together to advance our common goals.

In 2019, we've been scaling up our infrastructure project teams at the port authority to advance and deliver these funded projects, and we are already moving them forward, to enable Canada's trade and benefit this region.

Moving to a second way we're stewarding the port to ensure it delivers local—as well as national—benefits, let's talk about market access.

Let's consider for a moment what market access means to some of our neighbours beyond the Rockies.

In Alberta, market access is a defining issue. Entire elections turn on it. Premier Jason Kenney and the United Conservative Party were elected this year, in large part, on the slogan: "Economy. Jobs. Pipelines."

Similarly, on a trip to Saskatchewan a few years ago, I was told, —and I'll never forget this, — "If you shut down the port in Vancouver, you might as well turn off the lights in Saskatchewan."

Back here on the West Coast, while of course we treasure the environment around us, we sometimes forget that we have a huge

economic benefit by being closest in Canada to some of the world's most dynamic economies.

Having Canada's largest port in our backyard delivers that benefit by connecting Canadian and of course B.C. businesses—including many in this room—to 170 global markets. And the port gives our own communities access to goods from around the world in our stores and in our Amazon packages.

At the port authority, we're working to enable that global market access, for our region and for Canada. And fundamentally, we're doing that by investing in trade infrastructure.

Our road and rail projects are part of that, and the importance of them is underlined by the impacts that we are hearing about in the media today arising from the CN rail strike.

But we're also working to enable market access by building new container terminal capacity, because trade in containers is growing steadily and Canada's west coast will run out of container terminal capacity in the next few years.

To address the shortfall, this summer we started construction on an expansion at Centerm Container Terminal, in partnership with DP World.

Also this year, we saw our proposed new container terminal, Roberts Bank Terminal 2, through federal public hearings as part of the environmental review process. It is a critical project for Canada. We're now awaiting a panel report and then a government decision, hopefully in 2020.

That's a very brief snapshot of how we're working to enable global market access, for all Canadians—and for this region and our local communities.

It builds on the foundational advantage the port brings to our region, which is the 42,000 direct jobs—and even more indirect and induced—that the port system enables across Metro Vancouver.

Turning to a third way the port authority's work supports this region and local communities, let's talk about environmental protection.

This is paramount for a port city, and it's front-and-centre in our work at the port authority.

Our focus on this area is driven by our mandate to protect the environment and by the expectations of a highly-engaged region—and for that matter, the personal commitment of all of us who live here and want to protect the environment around us.

As Canada's largest port, we're able to employ a team of 17 environmental specialists and we have a full suite of environmental programs that are increasingly getting international recognition...which is a great encouragement in our work.

Let me outline some of this work, which provides direct benefits to local communities.

A decade ago, we became the first port authority in Canada, and only the third globally, to offer shore power to the cruise industry at Canada Place. To date, that program has avoided more than 20,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases, and we've recently expanded the program to two container terminals as well.

We've also been encouraging lower-emission ships at the port for a decade now, through a program called EcoAction, which provides discounts on port fees for ships that use cleaner fuels and greener technologies. This year alone, we've already rebated nearly \$2 million under EcoAction. That's a direct investment in a cleaner port and cleaner air for our communities.

And we continue to seek further improvements. Heading into 2020, we're excited to be working to facilitate LNG bunkering at the port, as ships become ready for this cleaner fuel.

Moving to land-side operations, let's talk about container trucking. In the past weeks, you may have heard about a concerning study out of the University of Toronto looking at health impacts from vehicle emissions, and particularly trucks, in Toronto and here in Vancouver.

The research included an air quality data along Clark Drive and concluded that government needs to take stronger steps to protect communities from air emissions, including getting older trucks retrofitted or taken off the road.

Frankly, we agree. In 2008, we were the first port authority in Canada to bring in comprehensive environmental requirements for the container truck sector. We are currently trying to phase in more stringent requirements for this sector, including tougher truck age caps, to get old, high-emissions trucks off the road, and we'll continue to focus on this.

I've now outlined three ways the port authority is helping bring port-related benefits to our region and communities. Let's turn to two opportunities that we have, as a region, to broaden those advantages.

First we have a great opportunity to further advance this gateway's trade infrastructure.

We've done well, as a region, to secure federal funding for our current round of road and rail projects, but we need to do more. The Canada West Foundation recently warned that, over the past decade, Canada has been tracking downward on two major global indices of how the world views our trade infrastructure.

As a country, we need to invest more in trade infrastructure to drive our competitiveness. Here in Vancouver's gateway, as a critical enabler of Canada's trade, we must be making the case, every chance we get, for continued federal investment in Canada's trade capacity, here in our region.

On a local level, we need to be speaking up for trade infrastructure, in our communities and in conversations with elected officials—and on that note, we need each of you here today to support our road and rail projects, and our expansion projects such as Terminal 2.

As business, government and community leaders, your voices carry weight. If you stand with us, as Metro Vancouver's business community and as local leaders, I am confident we can advance the projects that are so vital to our region's future.

And finally, to turn to our second big opportunity as a region—and in my view our single biggest challenge—let's talk about land.

Our region is in the grip of a crippling affordability crisis. In recent years, we've witnessed dizzying price-escalation in our housing market. Simultaneously, local incomes continue to trail places like Saskatoon, Guelph, and St. John's. Every day, we hear stories of young people leaving our region because they can't afford to stay.

That's the crisis we know—but there's the related, and almost unrecognized crisis: we're rapidly running out of industrial land.

Industrial lands account for 4% of the land base but 27% of our region's jobs. They're critical for the distribution and logistics facilities that enable our trade ecosystem. Yet the wild speculation that has driven up housing prices has also swept through our industrial lands—and we've seen those lands snapped up, converted, and permanently lost.

At the port authority, this is the single-biggest challenge that keeps us up at night. And it should keep everyone in this room who cares about the future of our region—and I'm sure that's all of you—up at night.

Last year—in a chilling decision, for many of us—the Metro Vancouver Board approved the conversion of the Flavelle sawmill site in Port Moody to condo towers. That site was one of our last opportunities for marine terminal expansion in the region. That decision confirmed that, as a region, we do not have the land-planning oversight that we need to protect our collective economic future.

It's been 11 years now that I've sounded the alarm on industrial land, on this very stage. Eleven years.

In that time, I've seen and participated in many efforts to address this challenge. However, I have become convinced that, despite our best efforts, we do not have the levers we need, locally, to fix this on our own. I believe those levers lie with the provincial government.

This, then, is our opportunity.

We need to stand together, as a region, as we did so successfully on trade infrastructure, and we need to call on the province to step in, create a strong central land planning function for our region and bring coherence and vision to how we manage land—not just agricultural land, but all land uses.

So let me pull all this together.

As we look toward the next decade, against a backdrop of global change and disruption, the Port of Vancouver presents a critical opportunity for our region and our communities.

Already, the port enables 42,000 direct jobs across Metro Vancouver—and thousands more indirect and induced jobs, just in the goods movement sector alone, never mind that trade itself.

Already, it has helped this gateway secure coveted federal infrastructure dollars that will support our region's growing transportation needs.

Already, it provides global market access to local businesses, and globally-sourced goods to our communities.

And already, the port authority is leading world-class mitigation programs to protect our environment and the well-being of our communities.

Yet we can, and need to, build on all this—and we can grow our opportunities as a port city by better enabling the port's future.

Together, we need to advocate for long-term investment in our gateway's trade infrastructure. And together, we need to call for a strong, regional planning authority that can bring big-picture, long-term thinking to how we manage our land.

If we can do these two things, I believe we can directly shape our future, as a region and as a world-class port city.

Thank you.