

BRITISH COLUMBIA: CANADA'S GATEWAY TO THE PACIFIC

CHRISTY CLARK

Premier, British Columbia, Canada

ONE OF THE THINGS I LOVE MOST ABOUT THE PHILIPPINES is the love of family; the passion and belief that our job, as a generation, is to make life and the future better for our children and grandchildren. That love of family is the building block of any successful society. If you ask if the Philippines is going to be more successful in the future, when I look at the love of family that is almost universal in this country, I can answer that with an unequivocal, "Yes, the Philippines is going to continue on a trajectory of phenomenal growth and success around the world."

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S EDGE

Canada's 10 provinces and three territories are spread across a massive country—we are more like a continent in many ways than a country. Each of our provinces and territories has its own distinct culture and economic priorities. We are not large in population, but British Columbia does stand out in a few ways. We are number one in Canada in economic growth and are doubling the national growth rate. [British Columbia] also has the lowest unemployment rate compared to the rest of the country since 1976; we have had four consecutive [years of] balanced budgets; we are the only province in Canada



MBC IMAGES/L. BAUTISTA

Premier Christy Clark was the guest of honor at a joint membership meeting of the Makati Business Club, Management Association of the Philippines, and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry held on 27 May 2016 at the Fairmont Hotel, Makati City. Published here are excerpts from her keynote speech and the open forum.

that boasts the highest credit rating (AAA-stable), and we are going to continue to grow based on the economic and fiscal success we have had in our province.

Over 50,000 people last year found their way to British Columbia, with still more to come. We currently have more jobs than we have people, and you cannot build an economy without people to do the jobs and fill those spaces. Thankfully, many of those people come from the Philippines. We have 150,000 Filipinos (and those of Filipino descent) living in British Columbia. At the moment, the Philippines is our number-one source of immigration across the country, and the Filipino community—because of love of family—is the fastest-growing immigrant population in Canada today.

When we look at the Philippines, we literally do see our future. It is important that we continue to grow together—which is why we are here. Nearly half of British Columbia exports go to Asia already. British Columbia is ahead of the country on that front, because some 80% to 90% of other [Canadian] provinces' exports go directly to one customer south of the border – the United States. We in British Columbia made a purposeful decision to expand and diversify the number of customers that we have, especially in the fastest-growing region in the world. Now, almost 50% of our exports find their way across the Pacific.

We have much to build on, and we will continue to do that. Last year, we exported \$190 million in goods to the Philippines. This is a great start, and there is a lot of room for growth with this very fast-growing economy. We are proud that we are opening our trade and investment office in Manila to match businesses in the Philippines with businesses in British Colum-

bia to develop a long-standing, durable relationship.

ECONOMIC PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES

British Columbia's jobs plan has been the engine of the province's growth, with purposeful focus on eight specific sectors of the economy. Technology, in particular, has been driven by life sciences, gaming, digital media and clean technology. On the life sciences side, PharmaCanada and Hi-Precision Diagnostics signed an agreement that will bring lung cancer screening diagnostics into Metro Manila. British Columbia has the best cancer survival rates anywhere in the world. We have made very significant government investments in research and technology in the area of cancer [study]. This is an opportunity for business in both [our] countries to prosper, but more importantly, an opportunity for us to share our technology and knowledge to save lives on this side of the Pacific.

We are also focusing on clean technology. In British Columbia, we have North America's only carbon tax—an entirely revenue-neutral carbon tax—which is why our economy has continued to grow. Our government is also the only carbon-neutral government in North America, shifting the way we have made our decisions. Clean technology investment and innovation has grown in British Columbia, as those businesses wanted to be closer to where its customers are. Our customers are looking to reduce their carbon footprint.

In gaming and digital media, British Columbia is now home to the North American headquarters for Sony Digital and Prime Focus Ltd. from India. Both have moved their headquarters from Los Angeles, USA to Vancouver. We are also home to Amazon, Microsoft, and SAP;

and we [still] continue to grow our technology sector.

We have also made a purposeful investment in our education system. This year we are starting to ensure that every child, from kindergarten to Grade 5, starts to learn how to code. By the time they enter Grade 6, every child that attends school in British Columbia will be a coder. Not only will this mean we have opportunities in the technology sector in the form of a ready-made workforce, it will also mean that the sector becomes entirely gender-equal. Young girls [will] learn technology and coding just as much and as often as young boys do. We also made significant investments in the university and the post-secondary education level, to make sure that we are investing in computer engineering and that those skills at the higher level are what people and potential employers are going to need.

We have so much to share in the area of education. We know we have to supply an educated talent pool if business is going to succeed in our province. We firmly believe that the resources of any country are nothing if you do not have the human resources and talent to make the most of it. For example, the University of British Columbia is one of the top six public universities in Canada; our public sector institutions are among the best in the world. Our [education] investments have certainly paid off in terms of being able to grow our economy.

Welcoming foreign students to study in British Columbia is a key part of our success. Last year, over 114,000 international students came to British Columbia to get an education. Not nearly enough came from the Philippines, and we are going to change that. The educational reforms that are ongoing in this country are going to make

Q&A

The Philippines is still contemplating whether or not to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership. What are the challenges that we may encounter in ensuring our government will join and ratify the TPP?

You can't always get what you want in a negotiation or an agreement, but we must look at the total balance of benefit. As a nation that has made its living off trade, we are a small population with huge resources—we live and die with trade. [We cannot] sit out on a trade agreement of this scope that involves 40% of the world's GDP. We have called on our federal government to ratify, sign on to it, before the [United States] does to try to show leadership in the world. For the Philippines, which is a very fast-growing economy and depends on trade for its success, [it will have to join the agreement.]

We have an agreement with the United States called the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that is crucial for our access in the American market, and is one of the reasons foreign investors choose to locate in Canada. In our case, if Canada does not sign onto the TPP and the USA does, in all likelihood, we will lose our access to the American markets which will be absolutely devastating to our economy.

Like Canada, the Philippines has its own trade agreements with its regional neighbors, particularly with ASEAN. Will the Philippines' current bilateral and multilateral relationships be affected by its non-participation in the TPP?

[Non-participation in TPP] will compromise a state's ability to access markets. That would be a major problem for the Philippines, as it will be for Canada. From our perspective, across the Pacific, this is where the action is; this is where the world is growing. Canada signed an agreement with Europe, which is a terrific thing for Canada, but it pales in comparison with the value of the TPP. By 2030, 2.3 billion people will join the middle class in Asia, and we want to make sure we get access to this market.

Our country has much to learn from British Columbia's policies, programs, and initiatives in green urbanism and architecture; and in smart, sustainable, resilient cities. What incentives does your government give to encourage urban sustainability?

We have done a couple things; one is the carbon tax. Carbon tax is \$30 a ton of CO2 equivalent emissions. What it has done is it has made sure that businesses and institutions, like government, are highly incentivized to reduce their carbon footprints, because it is better economics to do so, and because there's a range of subsidies through research incentives to support businesses using clean technology.

The Philippines has one of the most sensitive ecosystems in the world, and Filipinos very much want to protect the environment that they have. As dirty fuels become more expensive—which they undoubtedly will as a result of the world's determination to meet the climate change challenge—it is going to be vital for businesses who want to succeed and get ahead of that challenge to start operating in a more sustainable playing field.

The Philippines has just signed into law the creation of a Department of Information and Communications Technology. What are the key factors to move the country's technology sector forward and achieve the same success as that of British Columbia?

Government investment in research is vital; it spurs the attraction of the best and the brightest [minds]. [Consider making] sector-level investment in different areas of technology to attract and maintain talent and create sector-specific incentives. The Philippine Government would be wise to decide what it wants to be great at—life sciences or clean technology—and invest heavily in research in that area. Investment in education will also make a difference. Tech companies locate where the talent is. Talents must be home-grown as much as possible; the government must make focused investments in producing workers with the skills needed in the tech industry.

There is a big surplus of hospitality and tourism graduates in the Philippines. How can you facilitate the recruitment of our talents into British Columbia?

We are always eager to have more people from the Philippines find their way to British Columbia. We work as hard as we can to ensure there are many opportunities in British Columbia to attract workers. I wonder why we spend so much money trying to keep people out of Canada when we should be spending all of that money trying to bring people into Canada. We cannot forget how our country was built by immigration. The strength of Canada is in immigration. ■



it easier for Filipino students to make the transition to a British Columbia school. We are also increasing the number of partnerships between our two institutions. On this trade mission, two B.C. institutions, North Island College and the University of British Columbia, have signed agreements for Filipino students to study in our province and also to enable faculty and knowledge exchange between [our institutions].

OPENING CANADA'S DOORS

I also had the opportunity to meet with Ayala Land Inc. to discuss its investments in British Columbia—a beautiful 250-unit residential apartment building which sold out in a matter of hours. And I understand Jollibee will be opening its first Canadian restaurants in Vancouver. We are very much looking forward to welcoming Jollibee to British Columbia. These are just two of the top Filipino companies showing significant confidence in our economy, and we want to continue to grow that.

In British Columbia, we have recently passed a motion in our legislature calling on our federal government to ratify the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement to make sure that Canada is a part of this vital tool for the growth of the world's economy. Forty per cent of the world's GDP is generated by

TPP member countries; I hope the Philippines will become a member of the agreement so we can all be brought a little closer together through trade.

Yesterday, I laid a wreath at the monument of Jose Rizal, a great hero of this country. I remembered what [Rizal] said: "He who does not know how to look back from where he came will never get to his destination." No truer words have been spoken. We do share many things in common—none of us have forgotten our values; what is important to us, what drives us, and where we came from. Our country, like [the Philippines] in many ways, is a country of many people from all over the world. British Columbia has been especially gifted—like the immigrants who have found their way to our shores—people who brought their desire to succeed and strived to make a better future for their children.

We are especially blessed by Filipino immigrants who have found their way to British Columbia. They are entrepreneurial with a strong work ethic and love of country and family; values that we share very much, and things that tie us together across this great Pacific Ocean. Despite the distance, the familial and person-to-person relationships have never been stronger. This coming century is truly the Pacific Century. With two countries that sit on the



The Makati Business Club invites guest speakers to its General Membership Meetings and MBC Briefings to discuss public issues and trends, whether local or global, that have an impact on Philippine development. MBC Forum highlights the speeches and discussions at these gatherings. The full text of speeches and other presentations may also be found at the MBC website, www.mbc.com.ph.

edge of the Pacific Ocean, surely this century must be one where the Philippines and British Columbia come even closer. I look forward to working together to build a dream for our families and for our countries that we share in common. ■

Excerpts edited by
VICTORIA Y. SIBAL
Programs Officer

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

CHRISTY CLARK

Christy Clark was sworn in for her second term as British Columbia's 35th Premier on 10 June 2013 and was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Westside-Kelowna in a by-election on 10 July 2013. She previously served as the MLA for various jurisdictions in British Columbia from 1996-2005 and from 2011-2013. She also served as Deputy Premier, Minister of Education, Minister of Children and Family Development, and vice-chair of the Treasury Board. Born and raised in Burnaby, she later on attended Simon Fraser University, the Sorbonne (France), and the University of Edinburgh (Scotland), studying Political Science and Religious Studies. ■



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IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA



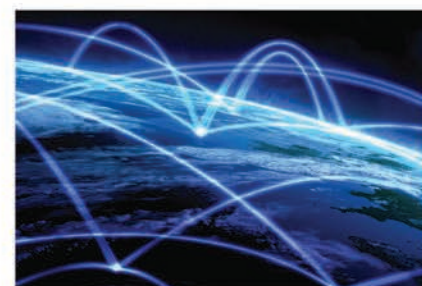
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International Trade and Investment Office – Manila

Level 37, CEO Suite
LKG Tower, 6801 Ayala Avenue
Makati City 1226
Philippines

Tel: +63 2 859 2811 / 859 2814



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