

**Vancouver Board of Trade**

**September 29, 2008**

**Professor Stephen J. Toope**

**President and Vice-Chancellor**

**The University of British Columbia**

Thank you for that introduction, and good afternoon everyone.

It's an honour to speak to you today, as it is every year. I take this annual engagement as evidence that the Board of Trade has an inkling of the vital role that UBC plays in the culture, society and economy of Vancouver – indeed, of all British Columbia. I'm here to say that UBC wants to build on your engagement and to deepen our relationship with Vancouverites, and with all British Columbians. I really appreciate your time and interest today.

I also want to thank Fasken Martineau for sponsoring this event. The firm is an unwavering supporter of the UBC Law School and of the university as a whole, for which I am very grateful.

As you may have noticed from the program notes, we are here today in celebration of a birthday – really two birthdays that are closely intertwined. Birthday Number One applies to UBC: we are 100 years old this year.

The second anniversary that we celebrate this year is the sesquicentennial of the Crown colony of British Columbia. I find it almost unimaginable that if we had stood on this spot 150 years ago, we all would have been lost – not to mention inappropriately dressed – in a dense and relatively deserted coastal forest.

It would be nine more years before “Gassy Jack” Deighton built the first saloon near the foot of what is now Granville Street. And yet it would be only 50 years later that the presumptuous leaders of British Columbia decided that they needed their own university.

What a remarkable act of faith – of foresight and good judgment. Because the truth is that they were not just being presumptuous: B.C., by then a young province in a still-new confederation, really *did* need a university.

Our forebearers needed doctors and bookkeepers, teachers and engineers - - educated people to build a new society. They needed more than they could import from other jurisdictions and more than they could train in the tiny McGill University College that had been set up to answer some of that need.

It took years – in some cases decades – to fill all those demands. The establishment of UBC's law faculty, for example, would have to wait until after the Second World War. But once established on Point Grey, the new campus grew and thrived – I suspect well beyond the most optimistic dreams of its founders.

If BC needed UBC a hundred years ago, it needs it even more today in a world of shocking economic dislocation, rapid social change, and a growing competition for innovative ideas and educated talent. It's hard to describe the UBC of today without resorting to the kinds of numerical rankings that often tend to wind up being more trouble than they are worth. If you get too excited about moving up on such lists, other people are apt to get too excited when, for whatever reason, you find yourself slipping down.

By the way, there is no hint of sour grapes in that observation. I am proud to say that UBC keeps climbing up the international rankings. But I don't want to tie our fortunes to a particular rank or number. Instead, I will say this:

In Canada, there are a handful of medical doctoral universities that are consistently judged to be of the highest standard – and UBC is in the top of this rarified group.

In North America, there is a similarly small group that effectively transfer knowledge into industry – 10 or so universities counted among the highest performers in the Milken Institute's Technology Transfer and Commercialization Index. In addition to being the only Canadian university in the top tier, UBC also became the first institution in Canada – in the 2006-2007 academic year – to break the \$100-million mark in cumulative licensing revenue.

That's more than \$100 million dollars that has poured back into public education in British Columbia because of discoveries made and licensed by our brilliant researchers at UBC.

In the world, there is another, even more exclusive group: three dozen or so globally influential research intensive universities, and UBC is consistently counted among these, as well. Only one other Canadian university is routinely in that group – it is in a big, cold city to our east. So UBC is an utterly unique resource for BC, in a different category completely than the other strong and important sister universities in our province.

What does that mean on the ground? What does it mean to Vancouverites and British Columbians?

Well, for starters, UBC is an economic powerhouse in its own right. It is the third-largest employer in the Lower Mainland, with more than 9,800 full-time equivalent employees – the overwhelming majority of whom have well-paid, interesting and highly productive jobs. That's why UBC keeps appearing on lists of BC's top employers.

UBC's direct expenditures total \$1.4 billion. Add the standard multiplier and the spending of students and visitors and you have a direct economic impact – in the Lower Mainland alone – of nearly \$2.2 billion.

And that's not counting the effect of companies that are started by UBC graduates or that spin off directly from UBC discoveries. It also overlooks the value-added component that every UBC graduate who stays in BC brings into the workforce.

The numbers are not as big on the new UBC Okanagan campus, but there is no question of the transformative effect that UBC is having in Kelowna. I was there last week with the Premier for a sod turning for three new buildings, a \$74-million Engineering and Management building, a \$42-million Arts and Sciences building and a \$33-million Health Sciences Centre.



These are part of a \$350-million capital plan – an incredible investment in Kelowna, in education and in the future of British Columbia. Of course, this investment would not be possible without our partnership with the provincial government. Premier Campbell’s government has invested wisely in UBC - - and UBC is delivering on that investment.

The third building that we set in motion in Kelowna last week – the Health Sciences Centre –points to UBC’s broader influence in the province. Thanks to a timely investment by the provincial government in 2003, UBC has, in the last five years, doubled the number of physicians being trained in British Columbia – we now produce 256 new doctors every year.

Already working in collaboration with the University of Victoria and the University of Northern B.C., we will soon be

adding the Southern Medical Programme at UBC Okanagan. The effect is to encourage more graduating students to enter general practice in all regions of BC. This is a benefit beyond measure for hundreds of communities outside the Lower Mainland.

We have undergraduate and graduate trainees in Terrace, Hazelton, Fort Saint John, Prince George, Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton, Nelson, throughout the Fraser Valley and all the way up Vancouver Island, from Nanaimo and Comox to Port McNeil and Port Hardy.

Back in Vancouver, I hardly know where to start. This year, we have 43,600 full and part-time domestic students and 5,600 international students. The latter add immeasurably to the intellectual and cultural fabric of UBC and of BC.

These international students are among the best in the world, recruited to UBC for undergraduate and graduate work. Some will stay in Canada as top contributors to our society and our economy. I have met young engineering graduates who are now BC-based entrepreneurs; science grads who are contributing to discoveries in BC's biotech industry. Other international students – many others – will make lifelong friends and connections here, but return home, extending B.C.'s social linkages and commercial alliances to the far reaches of the globe. I meet them all the time in Korea and China, in India and Germany.

Being among the best institutions in the world means we can also attract the best faculty. There was a great, short article earlier this year in the U.S. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, under the headline: “A Harvard sociologist heads for the Great White North.”

The article began: “One of America’s notable sociologists ... is about to take part in a faculty trend that might be worthy of analysis in its own right: He’s moving to the University of British Columbia.”

“Like a growing number of professors at elite American institutions, Neil Gross, 36, an assistant professor of sociology at Harvard University, has answered Canada’s call. This fall he will join the sociology department at British Columbia as a tenured professor.”

The article went on to complain that more than two dozen top U.S. academics had moved to UBC in the last while. These would include people like Dr. Judy Illes, whom we recruited from Stanford, where she was an Associate Professor of Pediatrics and a program director in the Stanford Center for Medical Bioethics. Earlier this month, Judy opened what we call the National Core for

Neuroethics, which at this point is the most advanced centre for the study of neuroethics in the world. Neuroethics asks the hardest questions imaginable about how to approach brain research and clinical treatment from ethical viewpoints.

We were also delighted in the past year to welcome Dr. Michael Krausz. Trained at the University of Berlin, Dr. Krausz is a world authority on addiction treatment and especially on the implications of dual diagnoses of addiction and mental illness. He is now the first Leading Edge Endowment Fund Chair in Addiction Research and a clinical researcher at St. Paul's Hospital. The Leading Edge Chairs are a welcome provincial investment in research.

When he first arrived, Dr. Krausz said he was tempted by the strength of UBC, but equally engaged by the challenge and the opportunity that he sees in the Downtown Eastside. He is

committed to making a difference in this community – to bringing to bear the best psychiatric and medical knowledge in the world in the effort to come to grips with drug use, crime, homelessness and mental illness in Vancouver’s most fragile neighbourhood. Dr. Krausz is already leading the charge in promoting collaborative action amongst doctors, social workers, police, and youth workers in the Downtown Eastside.

There can hardly be a better example of the potential effect of having a globally influential university on your doorstep.

But there are other examples, many that once again bring direct economic benefit to the community. UBC has produced a cumulative total of 129 spin-off companies, 95 per cent of which are BC-based. These companies have collectively generated more than \$4 billion in sales and 40,000 employment years.

A recent example, the company Galvanox began as a mathematical modeling exercise in basic research. Now it promotes a promising new copper leaching process that is nearing its first commercial field test. The technology dramatically reduces pollution and emissions during the on-site refining of concentrated copper, with the first license being issued to a BC-based copper mining company.

I'm proud to say that four of the eleven National Centres of Excellence in commercialization created by the federal government this year are at UBC: The Centre for Drug Research and Development, linking basic research to clinical drug applications; the Centre for the Prevention of Epidemic Organ Failure; the Prostate Centre's Translational Research Initiative for Accelerated Discovery and Development; and Advanced Applied Physics Solutions, Inc., which is attached to the TRIUMF particle collider on the UBC campus.

I have been concentrating on bio-tech, biomedical and high tech issues, but I want to emphasise that there are many initiatives that may seem less high-flown, but that are already having an impact, economically and environmentally.

There was a great new one reported in the papers last week. A UBC spin-off called Ostara has just won a \$2.5-million contract with a Portland suburb to draw high quality chemical fertilizer from liquid sewage. The process helps to purify the community's waste water and at the same time generates a product that will enable the town to recover its investment in five years.

This technology is not central to UBC's reputation for sustainability, but it leads directly to that topic. The Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Sustainability Endowments Institute creates an annual College Sustainability Report Card, and this year, UBC was the only Canadian school to score the top mark accorded to



any university in North America, where it ranked within the top 15.

We were congratulated for things like our administrative commitment to sustainability, for our local food and recycling programs, for our green buildings, for transportation initiatives that have reduced campus car trips, and for a massive retrofit that lowered our use of energy and water and our output in sewage.

I know, though, that the work of people like John Robinson and the Centre for Sustainable Cities has also captured people's attention. I know in part because the UN Secretary General invited me to a conference in New York last spring as one of only 20 university presidents from around the world gathered to talk about sustainability. During the conference, former U.S. President Bill Clinton, a guest speaker, singled UBC out as one of three universities that he described as "sustainability leaders."

I would not want to leave you with the impression that research only matters when it leads to direct applications in health care or sustainability, or to corporate spin-offs. One of the reasons that UBC is now globally known - - bringing notice to BC - - is our fundamental research. By that I mean research that promotes understanding and knowledge without a clear idea where it may lead. For instance, Prof. Luciana Duranti is leading a global research effort dedicated to ensuring that the digital records we generate today – including medical records, bank balances, legal documents and insurance policies – will remain accessible as technologies rapidly advance. Digital records form the foundation of our computer-driven society, and this basic investigation seeks to establish methods and produce guidelines for preserving accurate and authentic digital records over the long term.

As I mentioned, UBC is working hard to build a more sustainable community on our Vancouver Campus. We are increasing the opportunity for people to live near their work, and minimizing traffic throughout the city. And on that count, we have, in the past 10 years, increased transit ridership by 185 per cent, and reduced car trips by 14 per cent, even as the UBC population grew by nearly one-third. That achievement is unmatched anywhere in Canada.

The goal is to create a vital, lively, healthy – and sustainable – community where people can work and learn and shop and play, where they can walk or take transit easily, and where most of what they need is readily at hand. We're also working to ensure we plan to keep these developments to a high standard, while retaining a level of modesty and scale that will make them affordable for staff, faculty and students of UBC. Already, 65 per cent of the people who live in the neighbourhoods on our campus work or study at

UBC, and this does not count the occupants of our student residences.

I know that there is some frustration amongst our neighbours with truck traffic and some fear of physical change on the campus. I know because I get buttonholed on these subjects all the time! But I urge doubters to take a longer view, to join us in imagining what we already see as the time when UBC on Point Grey will be a demonstration of sustainable living, with an exciting community that attracts the best students in the world living side-by-side with people who value performances at the Chan and the Freddie Wood; who visit the Belkin Gallery, the Museum of Anthropology, and our soon-to-open Beaty Biodiversity Museum; who hike through Pacific Spirit Park and the Botanical Gardens; who want to contribute to urban agriculture at the UBC Farm; and who enjoy living with neighbours who come from across Canada and around the world.

Now, I could frighten those of you who are thinking about getting back to the office by saying there is much more to come. I could, for example, segue from what a great university like UBC can do for this community, to what UBC needs in return.

I could worry aloud about funding, saying that even though we administer more than \$150 million in loans, grants and bursaries, almost three quarters of our students end their fourth year with an average debt load of \$22,000.

I could talk about the indirect costs of research – the heating, lighting and office-space kinds of expenses that are funded to an average level of 60 per cent for our competitors south of the border and only at 20 per cent in Canada.

I could complain that tuition does not yet meet enough of the real cost of a student's education. This is especially true of the professional schools: Sauder, law, medicine, etc. In all the research that has been done, the cost of tuition has far less impact on access than the availability of well-designed student aid. For some people, the idea of significant debt may be a deal breaker, and that is why we are working with governments to try to change the way we support Canadian students.

Students in the professional schools understand well the value of their degree and they are sometimes willing to invest more if it means we can raise the quality of their education. Students in the Sauder School of Business, for example, actually voted last year by an overwhelming majority to raise their own fees in order to pay for improvements that they believed would help UBC attract and retain even better professors and the very best students. They

were disappointed – and a little surprised – when the provincial government rejected their appeal.

In finishing out my potential list of worries, I could end with something – perhaps predictable – about the importance of supporting education and research in tight economic times. How now, more than ever, we need a well-educated populace and a steady stream of innovation.

It's all true.

But I think it is more appropriate simply to say thank you, to the federal government for its investment in research – and in indirect costs. Thank you to the provincial government which provides the majority of direct funding for students and which continues to support vital capital projects such as the three new UBC Okanagan buildings for which we turned sod only last week.

Thank you to UBC alumni – which I know includes many of you in this room. You are our most important resource, our best ambassadors and our greatest supporters. We have been working diligently in the last three years to improve our alumni communications – to ensure that you know everything you need to know about what’s happening on campus, and some things you just might want to know as well. We must continue to work even harder to improve our engagement with our own graduates.

In closing, I want to reaffirm how proud and amazed I am at what UBC has accomplished in 100 years. I am inspired by what it has accomplished even in the two years since I arrived to take over as President. That’s a short time. I can still see with the eyes of an outsider – I can still marvel at that which Vancouverites are at risk of taking for granted.



Let me conclude on that note. I came here to UBC because I know that UBC is one of the world's leading research universities. It is producing discoveries and innovations that advance human understanding and that make our world a better place. UBC is also a magnet for talent, helping to retain our most gifted students here in BC, and attracting bright and ambitious young people from across Canada and around the world. UBC is also a connector - - linking new ideas and best practices into our local communities, and bridging Vancouver and the Okanagan to global networks of innovation. I worry that Vancouverites may be a little blasé about UBC. Please don't overlook this great resource in your backyard.

Instead, I invite each and every one of you to engage with UBC. We are here to serve – and the evidence suggests we serve well. Call us, use us. Send us your best students and your most intractable problems. Hire our graduates and – please, please –

support our research. And urge others to support us as well. Come and visit our astonishing campuses.

Despite the economic uncertainty that hangs in the air today, I believe that Vancouver, British Columbia and Canada remain incredibly well-placed to leap into this new century, to show leadership in the world. Our unique, globally influential, research university is crucial for us in making that leap. With your support, UBC can make this, our second century, even better than the first.

Thank you.