

Thank you, Connie (Leung).

Good Evening! I am delighted that you could join us here tonight.

It is great to be back in Hong Kong, almost exactly a year to the day since we last met. We have a great deal of news to bring you concerning the past year, as well as a look ahead.

I want to begin with an item of interest that I touched upon last year. It is a once-in-a-lifetime event that begins exactly 66 days from today – the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. As you may already know, UBC's Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre will be the venue for men's and women's hockey and men's sledge hockey during the games.

That means that in exactly 67 days, Canada's defending Olympic champion women's hockey team will be on the ice at UBC to face off against Slovakia in the opening round. Not only that, but exactly 65 days from today, the Olympic torch relay will pass through the Vancouver campus on the final leg of its journey from the ancient Greek city of Olympia to downtown Vancouver.

Are we excited? Yes, we most certainly are excited – excited and honoured to again be at the centre of a globally significant event.

In order to take full advantage of the Olympic experience, we also have a series of critical dialogues and public symposia planned from now until February – just as a university should. These events will enable the community to hear UBC experts explore a wide range of games-related subjects such as public spending priorities, drugs and sport, and other important topics.

While the 2010 Games are one of the hottest topics on campus, another hot topic in our current economic environment – not surprisingly – is money. When I was here last year, the global economic crisis was just beginning to take hold. Shortly after that visit, I issued the first of a series of four letters to the community outlining how the crisis was affecting UBC.

Overall, I would say that, although there are some bumps in the road ahead, the situation is not critical. In fact, we are much better off than other Canadian and most US schools, particularly with respect to the health of our operating budgets, our endowments and pension plans.

But what is even better news is that the provincial and federal governments continue to be the greatest financial supporters of the university. In fact, the 2009 spring provincial budget actually increased our base operating support. This is very good news, which was reaffirmed by the September provincial budget.

For anyone wanting more substantive details, those four letters are still available for viewing at the president's office homepage – simply go to president.ubc.ca.

Some of you may recall that last year I reported on the process of reviewing our strategic plan. I am delighted to report that the plan has been ratified by our Senates and by the Board of Governors. Now called *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan*, and it is now available for viewing on the web at strategicplan.ubc.ca.

One of the first things you might notice is that the vision for the University, in essence, remains consistent with that of *Trek 2010*. But we now focus more on UBC as a complete learning community for students, faculty and staff – working together to promote global citizenship and a sustainable and civil society.

To that end, we have identified corresponding values and clearly linked commitments and action items, and we have also specifically linked the plan to a new UBC budget process.

One of the fundamental commitments in Place and Promise is to student learning – a subject that we have heard loud and clear is of particular interest to alumni. In fact, probably the question I am most frequently asked by alumni is: “is the university doing anything to improve undergraduate education?”

The answer is an emphatic *yes*, and we already have a wide range of initiatives under way.

For example, our LEAD initiative is designed to focus us more on undergraduate learning, and specifically on utilizing the research of Nobel-laureate Carl Wieman and others on what constitutes an outstanding learning environment, both inside and outside the classroom.

Enhancing undergraduate learning also means greater focus on student engagement. One of our primary areas of interest is on student housing and on building a sustainable and vibrant campus community. While UBC leads Canada in provision of on-campus

housing, we need to do more. We have already surpassed the target of 1,000 student beds at UBCO. At UBC Vancouver, a student housing strategy has been presented to increase the housing opportunities by some 2,500 beds within four years.

Internationalization of student opportunity is also a key priority. We've already got some wonderful programs in place, such as Go Global and International Service Learning, but currently we are only able to provide opportunities for about 17 per cent of our undergraduate students. I would like to see what it would take to get us closer to something like 30 per cent over the next five years.

Overall, we are exploring a wide range of enriched learning opportunities for undergraduate students. In fact, if you look at the Student Learning commitment in Place and Promise, you will see a specific action item to provide all students with at least two special educational enrichment opportunities during their course of studies. These enrichment opportunities can take the form of a research activity, first-year small class experience, international learning, community service learning, or co-op or internship opportunities.

I also want to briefly touch upon two initiatives which are allied to the new strategic plan. First, the Board has approved a move into the first phase of a major fundraising campaign – one that will allow us to further diversify our funding sources and that will be premised on harnessing philanthropy behind clearly articulated university priorities.

The other is a new identity we have forged for UBC. If you have visited our website recently, you will have noticed a distinctly different look and feel founded on the motto *UBC: A Place of Mind*.

A couple of years ago it became apparent to us that we needed to find a way to better tell UBC's story in a compelling way. A great deal of consultation and research went into this initiative to determine which characteristics would best serve to *differentiate* UBC within a crowded market. We concluded that there are three.

The first is that we have students with the academic qualifications to attend any university in the world.

Second, our research achievements have earned UBC widespread recognition as one of Canada's and the world's finest universities.

Third, the inspiring locations and openness of our campus environments lend themselves to essential forms of human interaction – social, intellectual and international – all of critical importance in stimulating an atmosphere of deep learning and leading edge innovation.

We started a campaign back in September focused first in BC that features bold headlines and imagery telling stories of the amazing things that happen -- From Here, UBC...this unique *place of mind*. This campaign will roll out nationally and internationally over the next 18 months.

Although it is too early to tell, we are optimistic that this strategy will succeed in telling UBC's story to wider audiences, and will strengthen our efforts to attract new strategic partnerships, and to recruit even more of the best and brightest students and faculty from around the world.

In order to help reveal the essence of your university's new identity, I want to close with a short video. Before we do that, please know that, along with our annual report, you will also

receive a copy of Place and Promise tonight, and you'll also find a comprehensive version of it online.

I hope that in the coming year when you think of *place* - this place we call UBC - you'll think not only of the Point Grey and Okanagan campuses, but also of the UBC-supported clinics and hospitals around the province whose doors are open at this very minute serving the needs of four-and-a-half million British Columbians. I hope too that you'll think of the UBC Learning Exchanges in the downtown eastside and in Kelowna, whose doors are also open to provide a "hand up" to residents of those communities.

And I hope that when you think of *promise*, you will think of all that this *place of mind* can yet become, and all that UBC's students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community supporters can yet learn ... can yet discover ... can yet contribute ... each of us in our own way.

Thank you once again for being here this evening.

Warmest holiday wishes to all.