

GEOFF PLANT PRESENTATION

Good morning everyone. I want to begin by telling you that I -- there's two posted notes here which are excellent. One says, breathe and the other says slow. I'm trying to figure out which order to do what in. I also would like to welcome you to Whistler and to congratulate the organizers of this conference for putting together a program that I sincerely hope you will all find, or have already found, informative. And for those of you who have time after you have enjoyed the conference and enjoyed Whistler, I will encourage you to visit Steveston, in the Lower Mainland, on your way home and you'll discover the largest freshwater fishing vessel port in the West Coast of North America and a marvelous community.

The evolution of terrorism consists in the unpredictable and yet relentless expansion of the boundaries of the unthinkable. That reality presents huge challenges for those us who are responsible for public safety in an age obsessed by high-tech ever growing sophistication in everything from weaponry to computer systems. The events of September 11th stand out because they are so obviously low-tech. Razor blades, carpet knives, airplanes used like giant

battering rams. But, behind the brute simplicity lies an infrastructure informed and buoyed by technology. Terrorists, like all recognized criminals, use cell phones and telecommunications networks to keep in touch with each other. They engage in sophisticated identity thefts to help conceal their identities and they disseminate their plans over the internet. Our challenge then is to work together to peel back the layers of this infrastructure. To pool the resources that we have at our disposal. To expand the boundaries of the unimaginable in law enforcement.

British Columbians know only too well the consequences of terrorism. Prior to September 11th, the largest single act of air terrorism in history was the June 23rd, 1985, bombing of Air India Flight 182. That flight, en route from Montreal to London, was carrying luggage loaded in Vancouver. It exploded and crashed into the Atlantic Ocean 240 kilometers off the coast of Ireland. All 329 people aboard, many of them Canadians, were killed. Seventeen years later, the criminal case arising out of that bombing is before the Courts of British Columbia. We have learned much from Air India, and we will learn more, but we know already that the fight against terrorism is arduous, complex,

and can take years.

The issue, as the organizers of this conference have pointed out, is public safety. And a key component of that is a strong and supportive justice system. Too often I think people are tempted to put justice and public safety at odds with one another. There is an idea that public security and safety can only be enhanced by putting some kinds of limits on the rights and freedoms that we have come to expect as North Americans. The implication is that in the pursuit of public safety, the values of our justice system will suffer. But I see the justice system and public safety as complimentary processes and technology is a key to that relationship.

The goal of the Government of British Columbia and my commitment is to bring a greater level of integration and cohesiveness to the way the agents of public safety, like our police forces, work with courts, law makers, and the other important parts of the justice system. The first step, and we are on this road already in British Columbia, is to work with justice system partners to reform the justice system and ensure it is accessible, affordable, and sustainable, and through that process, enhance the

environment for public safety. Technology, in fact, is what will make it possible for us to speak of the justice system as a system.

In B.C. we're working to enhance public confidence in our justice institutions in the judicial processes that make up that justice system. And technology will continue to play a key role in helping us maintain that confidence. Already we have enhanced the technical capabilities in our court system. British Columbia has pioneered the use of video conferencing in both civil and criminal trials. Currently there are 28 court sites and 10 correctional centers equipped with video conferencing equipment. This technology reduces travel costs in a large, but widely dispersed province. But it also improves access to justice. Witnesses, counsels -- counsel, accused persons and even judges can now appear in court from anywhere in the province and beyond and help reduce the risks attendant upon high security trials and in the use of protected witnesses.

Complex trials, such as the Air India case, will have literally millions of pages of documentation and evidence, and there will be a technology legacy in the courts of British Columbia from the Air India trial

which can be applied elsewhere. The innovations that Air India has helped to create include real time court reporting, which provides a real time transcript stream to judges and lawyers.

Electronic evidence presentation for an electronic podium which will enable the evidence to be seen everywhere in the courtroom. An electronic exhibit management which will track and manage the presentation of exhibits. Exhibits will be linked to the trial record for retrieval as needed. The judge, the jury, counsel, accused, and the gallery will all be able to see those exhibits through a closed circuit video system. And an interpreter communication system will allow for interpretation from isolation booths without disruption to the court. Air India is a trial that will involve witnesses from British Columbia, from elsewhere in Canada, from the United States, from Japan, from India and from Ireland. Crown's list of witnesses is almost a thousand witnesses long. The challenge in presenting and defending a case of this magnitude is truly significant, but it also presents tremendous justice system opportunities.

We're also using technology to enhance the security of our court system. Right now we are

developing something called the Prisoner Information Management System, or PIMS -- I love acronyms. This system will help us manage the security and other needs of thousands of people who come into custody in the Province of British Columbia each year. While video conferencing will hopefully reduce the number of prisoner transports of associated risks in moving high risk people, management of the individual and associated risk continues to be critical. And this is what PIMS gives us. It gives us a common lockup management tool for the people in custody, including online access to photographs, descriptions of physical characteristics, and other valuable information. It gives us a security management tool for assessing and managing risks associated with an individual or case and it gives us an automated transportation scheduling and management system. PIMS will access current case and historical data and make it available to sheriffs and correctional officers.

At the same time we're also reevaluating our court houses and other facilities. The new realities of trials like the Air India case require that our public buildings, which here, as I'm sure elsewhere, were usually built for architectural value, are also safe

and secure places to do the business of justice. So, we have begun to review the physical security of our buildings so that they may be kept secure, but still accessible. For example, at the Vancouver Law Courts where the Air India trial will take place, a new high security courtroom is being constructed and expanded technology and video monitoring will be employed.

At the same time, and perhaps more relevant to some of your discussions here at this conference, my ministry and the Government of British Columbia are developing technologies that will facilitate information flow throughout the system, and ultimately, across jurisdictions. British Columbia was among the first jurisdictions on the Continent to recognize the benefit of using technology to coordinate the elements of the justice system, and British Columbia remains a leader in implementing integrated justice.

My colleague, Rich Coleman, the Solicitor General, has already talked to you about PRIME. That is, the Police Records Information Management Environment. That is an integrated police records management system that will bring up to the minute information to every police officer in the province. PRIME gives police instant access to information about investigations,

criminal records, suspects, property and vehicles. It's not just a records management system, it's a real time communications tool that integrates information across jurisdictions. But, importantly for my purposes, it's also compatible with something called JUSTIN. That is B.C.'s Justice Information System. A single integrated database comprising almost every aspect of a criminal case, including the police reports to Crown counsel, our prosecutors, Crown case assessment and approval, Crown victim and witness notification, court and trial scheduling, and document reduction. The value of JUSTIN is that it standardizes business practices across the province and allows justice system workers to be more efficient in processing cases. It is, in fact, the use of technology to bring the disaggregated actors of the justice system together so that they, in fact, work with each other rather than at cross purposes. JUSTIN allows disclosure between police, Crown and defence to be a fair and open process. And together, PRIME and JUSTIN work together to promote public safety and contribute to creating a public justice system that is more consistent, efficient and fair. Individually, both of these systems have tremendous value and I



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encourage any of you who are here from outside British Columbia to make sure that you look for officials from my ministry and ask them to tell you about JUSTIN and show it to you. The fact is, together, these become even more important potent tools and it is the combining of resources inside British Columbia and then outside British Columbia, that I see as our greatest advantage in the fight against all crime.

By working together, breaking down the barriers of traditional privacy and protection of police information, and sharing information, sharing resources, and sharing technologies, we can build public safety networks that will beat all criminals, even terrorists.

I know that there are here today people who are committed to that level of cooperation and to those innovations that will make our justice system what it needs to be for the 21st Century. I want to thank you all for your dedication to that task. When I come to events like this as Attorney General, I come not just as someone who wants to work with you to make these things real, but I also come to bear witness on behalf of the larger community to the work that you do on our behalf. To commend you for it and to encourage you to

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keep up the struggle and the fight to seek out innovation and new ways of working together. We all of us, as citizens, depend on all of you to make our justice system a place that keeps us safe, secure and respects the values that we all cherish. I wish you well in the balance of your deliberations and thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you this morning.