

12 June 2012- The Filipino summer festival *Pista ng Bayan*, held last June 03 in Vancouver, drew record crowds that included city and provincial officials led by hugely popular British Columbia (B.C.) Premier Christy Clark.

*Pista ng Bayan*, which the Philippine Consulate General in Vancouver co-organized with leaders of various community organizations, is the largest Filipino festivity in Metro Vancouver held yearly to commemorate the proclamation of Philippine independence.

Philippine Consul General to Vancouver Jose Ampeso led the festivities and spoke on behalf of the Metro Vancouver Filipino community.

In his remarks, the Consul General paid tribute to the Filipino community for their hard work, discipline, good citizenship and contribution to both the Philippines and the host country's economy.

"While we continue to grow in numbers, we continue to flourish and prosper. Due to our hard work and good citizenship, we have contributed much to the local economy and earned the admiration of our hosts. Our presence here is viewed as a very positive contribution to the increasingly multicultural setting here in B.C. and in Canada," he said.

In her speech, Clark, who was in the Philippines recently to open the B.C. Jobs fair and meet with the Philippine Secretaries of Foreign Affairs and Labor, drew wild cheers from the crowd when she proudly proclaimed in her remarks that "in my heart, I am a Filipina!"

"I may not look like Jessica Sanchez, and I certainly can't sing like Jessica Sanchez, I may not look like I'm of Filipino descent, but in my heart, in my heart, I am Filipina!" the Premier yelled.

Clark's remarks were seen by observers as a pointed reference to the half-Filipino Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Mable Elmore, who was also in attendance. Clark represents the B.C. Liberal Party, while Elmore belongs to the rival left-wing B.C. New Democratic Party.

Elmore made history in the last election as the first B.C. MLA of Filipino descent. She is a frequent guest at Filipino fiestas and gatherings. Clark, meanwhile, has also endeared herself to Filipino voters because of her charm, wit, accessibility and willingness to spend time with immigrants and common folk.

Upon the Consulate's recommendation, the Department of Tourism (DOT) office in San Francisco also used the occasion as platform to launch the Philippines' new tourism slogan, "It's More Fun in the Philippines." DOT Director Rene de los Santos hopes DOT will be able to tap the growing tourism market in BC and western Canada. END