

SAIT Polytechnic - Graduation 2011
Friday, May 27, 2011 – 9 am

Honorary Degree Recipient Speech to Graduates: Richard Haskayne

Board Chair Begin, President Lewis, Faculty, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Platform Party, Graduates, Ladies and Gentlemen...

While preparing to speak to you today, I thought back on the honorary degree recipients I've had the pleasure of meeting over the years.

There has been a wide variety: world leaders... Nobel Prize winners...humanitarians... business and community leaders...just to name a few.

Searching for the common thread among these individuals, it struck me: they aren't of similar educational background or occupation. They aren't the same age, gender or religion. But they are similar – in several important ways.

First: they all distinguished themselves in their **own** field of endeavour.

Second: each developed a reputation for their personal qualities: their honesty...integrity... and generosity of spirit.

Third: it was clear to me that each person had **given** more to society than they had **received**.

Fourth: they loved and had a passion for what they had chosen for a career – so much so, they never considered it **“work”**.

Based on that assessment, I am humbled to be among that company as an honorary degree recipient myself and I am pleased to be with you today to receive this recognition from SAIT Polytechnic.

I have admired SAIT and its accomplishments for many years and in particular, its success under the leadership of Irene Lewis because she is one of the best respected education leaders in our country today.

Through her leadership at SAIT she has had incredible success in growing the institution and specifically, she is an incredible fundraiser.

The current campaign under the direction of Keith McPhail is a classic example of the support SAIT has received especially from its alumni.

I am familiar with most of the large contributors and I congratulate each of you, not just for the money but for allowing your names to be recognized because it enhances the reputation of SAIT and demonstrates the success of the graduates of this fine institution.

Finally, I am happy also to see the new Bachelor of Accounting program in conjunction with the three professional accounting organizations in the province of which I am a member.

Of all the things I might say to you today as you take this education and embark on new careers, I decided I would underscore the value of a good reputation and its impact on your life, your career, and your sense of satisfaction or success in life.

My evidence isn't theoretical. It is based on my 70 plus years on the planet, and more than 50 years of assessing people to fill some pretty important jobs. The vantage points from which I developed my views were:

- From my early days working in our family butcher shop in Gleichen
- As a chief executive officer and chairman in the corporate world
- As chair of the Board of Governors of the U of C and as a chair of the Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee for Alberta
- As an Advisory Committee Member for the Order of Canada
- As well as a participant in a number of organizations – many of them charitable.

I am often asked about my own definition of success, not just in terms of a career but success in life in general.

Many years ago I developed seven important benchmarks:

They are: Family, Friends, Finances, Career, Health, Infrastructure and Reputation.

Let me explain them briefly:

Family: when all else seems transitory, family is forever. That secure base is vitally important in the world of ups and downs and uncertainty. It just makes good sense to give priority to these relationships. Don't ever forget your family roots, no matter how successful you are or become.

Friends: the network of friends and associates you develop over your life will be critical to any success. I believe in the old saying that: "you are assessed on the basis of the friends you keep". The best example I can site – is the great friend I have here to celebrate with me today. Don Campbell and I met in September 1953 – on my first day at U of A and have been the best of friends ever since.

Finance: the absolute size of financial numbers is not significant because it depends on your choice of lifestyle. But relative financial independence enhances freedom of philosophy and choice.

Career: a career in which you take pride is important because in the eyes of many people, it often defines who you are. My observation is that if you have a natural affinity for a particular subject, you should follow those instincts because it probably means you are good at it and if you are good at any career, recognition and financial rewards usually follow.

Health: It is obviously important to maintain a lifestyle that promotes good health. A positive attitude and a keen sense of humour are the best defences I know against stress.

Infrastructure: this is a catch all but it simply means all the support systems around you – your country, city, community, home, workplace, church, social clubs, charitable association,

family and friends and so on. Many people my age say that your social support systems are more important than our finances

Reputation: In my view, reputation is the sum of your personal integrity and the professional ethics which you apply in your personal and business affairs.

If all these benchmarks are not in balance then my definition of success has not been met.

That is to say, if you make a lot of money but your relationships or health suffers at the cost, you are not successful. Or, if you have been unethical in your relationships or in business then you are not successful.

I never cease to be amazed at the influence a person's reputation has in determining their future career

Once a person's reputation enters the equation, the decision becomes very subjective...the information can come from many sources and can be based on very small glimpses of a person's life... all of which could positively or negatively affect the outcome. Do you get the job or don't you?

My final analysis is that all you take with you or leave behind for that matter, is your reputation.

My advice to you: protect your reputation as the valuable asset it is. You cannot afford to blemish it, because the cost is simply too high.

So, what does the future hold for you graduates?

I have a few thoughts to share.

First, the economy is rebounding after a rough few years. Graduates have great opportunities as the need for highly trained workers will only increase as Boomers retire and make way for new leadership.

As a person who has had the good fortune to travel to many parts of the globe, I believe Canada is the best place in the world to live.

Even in this week's paper, the headlines read **"Canada Second to Australia in Quality of Life"**.

This article was reporting the results of on a study based on 34 major industrial countries and released by the organization of economic cooperation and economic development. As a matter of interest, Sweden ranked third and the United States ranked 7th.

I would also like to illustrate this with a favourite story going back to 1981. At the time I was the President of Hudson's Bay Oil and Gas.

I met with a chief economist of a large Swiss bank on his annual tour around the world, giving advice to, and getting feedback from, people like me. He asked about the situation in Canada and my outlook for the future.

Well, did I have a list of problems concerning our country!

Just a few items on my list that day:

- The National Energy Program of 1980 was a disaster.
- The Foreign investment Review Act was ill-conceived and poorly thought out.
- Quebec was threatening to break away from the country.

- The provincial and federal government deficits were likely to create a huge problem in the future.
- The country couldn't afford the social programs being promised by politicians; interest rates were ridiculously high at 18%; and inflation was out of control.

The sage old chief economist looked at me under his thatch of white hair and bushy eyebrows and said, "You Canadians are funny people."

Very slowly and deliberately he said, "In Switzerland, we view Canada in quite a different light than you describe. **We see Canada as having the following attributes:**

- You are blessed with a vast and beautiful country.
- You are situated next to the United States and have an undefended border – consequently, you have no national security problems and, furthermore, they are your largest trading partner.
- Your natural resources are enormous. Just consider a few - water, oil, gas, minerals, coal, agriculture, forestry and fishing.
- You have first-class infrastructure. Consider your roads, water and sewer systems, electricity, hospitals, schools, universities, airports.
- Your parliamentary and legal systems have proved excellent.
- You have developed capital markets and sound financial institutions.
- You have an educated workforce.

He continued, "Mr. Haskayne, you seem to be a country in search of a problem."

This encounter with the wise Swiss banker helped me see Canada differently. More than that, it helped me see that we can control our own destiny if we properly manage the affairs of this country. You see, all of the negatives I had mentioned were caused by our own actions – or by governments.

Fortunately, we have learned much over the past 30 years and today Canada is one of the most envied nations in the world.

I am optimistic about our collective future.

Given the eager and educated graduates here today...combined with the quality of life and opportunities that were so clear to the Swiss banker... I know we will continue to be the best country in the world.

Best of luck in your future careers... we will watch your progress with keen interest.

Congratulations.