



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
SPRING CONVOCATION
June 10, 11, 12 and 13, 2014

Convocation Address
By The Right Honourable Kim Campbell
Canada's 19th and first female Prime Minister

An honorary Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, was conferred on Dr. Kim Campbell during the Arts and Social Sciences ceremony on Wednesday, June 11, 2014. The following is Dr. Campbell's Convocation address:

Thank you so much, Madame Chancellor, Mr. President, distinguished members of the faculty, and the governing bodies of Simon Fraser University, members of the class of 2014, and your families and friends, and all who are celebrating this day. I am deeply honoured to be part of the class of 2014 with you. I must say that I am also delighted to be here because I remember when Simon Fraser University opened its doors for the first time in 1965. I was a second year undergraduate at the University of British Columbia. And quite aside from the good-natured rivalry that our two institutions have, I am very proud of the great university that Simon Fraser has become up here on the hill. It's a very distinguished institution and you've fulfilled the promise of doing things in an innovative and new and forward-looking way. And I have to confess that if I had known you were going to have pipes and drums at your convocation, I might have transferred back in 1965.

One of the things that we sometimes forget when we celebrate the graduation of a class of young scholars from university, is the context in which that education takes place. And recent events, the crisis in Ukraine, the celebration, the 70th anniversary of the landings of Normandy on D-Day, have made me reflect that all that we have done, that all that we do here takes place in the context of a really wonderful democracy. Those of us who are graduates of Canadian universities and all of us today in the class of 2014 have accomplished our achievements with the protective cocoon of the rule of law. That has made it possible for us to search for knowledge freely and fully. It has given us the freedom to speak and argue and gather in the search for truth that is such an important part of our education. And it has also embodied respect and protection for the equality and dignity of all of us.

But democratic values are under attack. In many parts of the world, leaders do not respect the values and the rule of law and the freedom that enabled us to pursue our interests, to learn and to grow and to

try and tackle the problems of the world. Sometimes they are kleptocrats, who want to use their positions to enrich themselves and their friends. Sometimes they're dogmatists, who want to make their particular view of the world dominant in their society, irrespective of how other people think. And sometimes they simply want to restore a time that they think is idealized. They fear the freedoms that have been such an important backdrop to what you've achieved today.

Like you, my education continued after university – like yours will. And one of the great parts of my education after university was eleven years that I spent in elected office in all three levels of government in Canada. I'm not only the only woman to have been Prime Minister of Canada, I am very much waiting for the second and the third and the fourth, and please do it while I'm still well enough to come to your swearing in, come ladies, let's go for it. But I'm also the first Prime Minister to be born and raised in British Columbia, the first Baby Boomer, but, also the first to have held elected office at all three levels of government: municipally in Vancouver, as a member of the legislature of the province of British Columbia, as well as in Parliament. And it was an extraordinary education for me. It really gave me a post-graduate understanding of how democratic institutions really work in a mature and effective democracy. Now, you'll notice I didn't say perfect democracy – there is no such thing. But Canada is a great democracy. And when Winston Churchill said that democracy was the worst form of government, except for all the others, it wasn't just a Churchillian turn of phrase: It was actually a deeply profound observation, and one that has become closer to my way of thinking the longer I live and the more I see the world.

The knowledge and stature that has come to me as a result of my experience in Canadian governmental institutions has come to be a piece of capital that I have been able to use in other contexts. Next week, I will travel to Senegal, to Dakar, where I will chair the steering committee of the World Movement for Democracy. When this committee asked me to be their chair a few years ago, I was a little bit embarrassed because the other members of the committee are activists from countries in the world where democracy is not secure; where many of them put their lives and freedom and well-being on the line to struggle to create what we take so much for granted here. But I came to appreciate that for them to have the former Prime Minister of a great democracy chair their committee validated their efforts and inspired their hopes. And it has been such an honour for me to do that, and I am grateful for Canadians for making it possible.

I will then go up to Paris, where I will join a group of powerful women from Europe, North America, and the rest of the world, at a gathering in support of Iranian women. Many of the leaders of the Iranian opposition are women. Now, Iran is not just a state where traditional values keep them from achieving the goals that perhaps they've set in their laws to protect women. No – Iran is constitutionally a deeply misogynist state where women are not even really second-class citizens, they're barely citizens at all. And when I meet with these brave women and men who are fighting to change the reality there, I am humbled. I am encouraged by the fact that the presence of all of these powerful women, including a woman who was Canada's Minister of Justice, Minister of National Defence, and Prime Minister, is a rebuke to all of those people who would say that women must not be

allowed to share in the governance of their country, but they cannot do that. And Canadians have given me the ability to deliver that message, and for that I am very grateful.

Your diploma, which I hope you will cherish and display, or your parents will display in a very prominent place, is a very important symbol of your achievement. All that you've accomplished, all the temptations that you've resisted to waste time, all the discipline that you've shown. All the hard work and the willingness to try again and work to try and learn and meet the standards set by this demanding university. But it's also a membership card in a very special club. The convocation of a great university, Simon Fraser University. And I believe that all of us that have the opportunity to have that membership have an obligation to observe and protect the values that made our achievements possible. The freedom to search for knowledge. The freedom to gather and speak. The respect for all of us and our unique and special characteristics. It is the obligation of democratic citizenship, and I hope that you will take that obligation and grasp it to you. I hope you will acquire the habit of voting. Now you may say well, voting, it doesn't matter if I show up or not. Well, I can tell you when I was elected to parliament in 1988, the margin of my victory was 269 votes. Now imagine if you didn't want me elected and you didn't bother turning out because you thought I wouldn't win. You could have been one of the 269 that defeated me. Ah ha! When I was elected to the legislature of British Columbia, one of the other members of the legislature was, after a recount in his riding, elected by a margin of one vote. His name was Al Passeral, and it wouldn't surprise you to know that among us he was known as 'Landslide Al.' But not only does your vote count, it is your way of expressing your commitment to the broader task of a democracy. Democracy is a blunt instrument, it's not a precision tool. It is messy, it is difficult. But when you stop and think that today what you have achieved, you have achieved in the bosom of a mature and protective democracy that values what a university is all about, that understands that universities are at the heart.

And so I hope that you will embrace that obligation, that of membership in this wonderful convocation, so that generations of young Canadians will be able, like you, to explore the fullness of their promise, to find what they can do, to push the boundaries of knowledge forward, and to contribute – not just to the democracy in Canada, but to the example and inspiration of our democracy for all of those people who can only dream of what we have here. So I congratulate you, I'm proud to be one of you, today is your day, and I wish you many more wonderful days. Thank you.