

## **Algonquin College - June 14th Convocation**

School of Advanced Technology Programs &  
Police and Public Safety Institute Program

Thanks for the opportunity to share this important occasion with you today. As a former graduate of Algonquin College, and now an active member of your Board of Governor's - I couldn't be more thrilled to celebrate in this significant milestone in your lives. So much awaits each of you following today's convocation ceremony and the many accomplishments you have achieved to this point.

My field of study, while at Algonquin in the 80's (Okay . . . early 80's!) was in the booming area of Computer Technology. At the time it held the promise of being "the next big thing". Upon reflection, it absolutely was.

Interestingly, Computer Science was not my first career pick. I carefully considered a very different career path. Another one of my dreams was to become a Police Officer! In fact, I remember spending the better part of a day trekking around the City of Ottawa with a couple of plain clothes constables - to get a "day in the life" perspective on this important life choice. My father, God bless him, organized this for me to ensure that I carefully and practically selected the right path.

Obviously, I went on to pursue a career in Information Technology . . . and did a little moonlighting as a bouncer at the Col By Campus on Pub Night! Hey, life is full of compromises!

As I prepared for today's speech, I've been reflecting upon how instrumental Algonquin had been in preparing and positioning me for more than twenty years of prosperity in my field of study - and beyond . . .

Obviously, the Information Technology field has changed dramatically over time - and it's been a real challenge to stay current, given how broad and deep this topic has become. In fact, at this stage of my career, I spend far more time on the business side of Information Technology than I do about the underlying technical infrastructure.

As an integral part of managing SAP's Public Sector business coast to coast, I engage with clients in such matters as program governance, change management, best practices in relation to business processes & workflow, and benefits realization.

In essence, I help public sector clients get practical business value from the considerable investments they make in Information Technology.

I totally love my job!

Put simply, Algonquin College equipped me with what I needed to get started. From this point, I suppose we are all responsible to make our own luck out there in the marketplace and in life. My general recommendation to everyone here is to be true to your beliefs, stay focused on your dreams - whatever they may be, and seize the day.

My hope is that many of you will make your luck right here in the great City of Ottawa, where we are celebrating our 150<sup>th</sup> year as a growing and prosperous society . . .

We absolutely need you - right here at home!

Ottawa is truly a remarkable City to raise a family and lead a wonderful, balanced lifestyle. In fact, any minute now I could get called to rush my wife into the delivery ward of the Queensway Carleton Hospital as we are expecting our next child! I can't imagine a better place for a child to grow up - we truly have amazing long term prospects in Ottawa.

For those of you graduating from the Police and Public Safety Institute, I realize that you may be assigned to serve elsewhere in our great Province of Ontario or beyond.

Please know that our City has a relatively high growth rate; in 2001, the total population of Ottawa was approximately 800,000 people; City projections suggest roughly 1.2 million citizens by 2021.

As Ottawa grows, our need for your skills and services will clearly be on the rise. If you move away from Ottawa, we will hope to have you back at some point in the future.

For those of you in the School of Advanced Technology Programs, you may have a number of questions in mind concerning the health of our technology sector.

Obviously, this sector has had a number of very rough years, following several waves of market correction starting with the dot com era through to the telecom bust several years ago. These were clearly painful times for our region.

I've observed that many of our local companies have become stronger than they were before - with better market driven business models, a focus on customers and long range growth and profitability. There are strong signs that we are we are rebounding. Let me share a few key indicators, to support my point.

According to my friends at OCRI, in 2001, Ottawa had an employment high in the tech sector of 79,000 people. Even though, our region faced over 30,000 layoffs over 2001, 2002 and 2003, we managed to maintain employment in this sector to a floor of 64,000 jobs. And, OCRI's latest survey conducted late in 2004 indicated employment of 68,000.

During this same period, Ottawa's tech sector has grown from 1,100 to 1,700 companies. Venture capital spending in Ottawa last year hit \$250M. In the first quarter of this year, another \$38M was invested into a dozen of these companies.

Compare this with the last market downturn of '93, and I'm sure you would agree, we have weathered the storm more resiliently, and we are recovering more effectively. So, the entrepreneurial spirit and capability for continued growth and prosperity is alive and well in Ottawa!

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Board of Governor's of Algonquin College, congratulations. Our best wishes to all of you for a long and prosperous career leveraging the great skills you've developed at Algonquin College.

Thank you.