Media Release

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Former Prime Minister Paul Martin to Speak at Pembroke Campus Convocation Ceremony as late Father Bestowed an Honorary Degree

PEMBROKE, ON - Canada’s 21st Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Paul Martin, will deliver the convocation address at this June’s Algonquin College Waterfront Campus graduation ceremony in Pembroke.

Prior to his address, the former Prime Minister will accept an Honorary Degree on behalf of his late father, Paul Martin, Sr., who grew up in Pembroke and played a major role in introducing importance pieces of legislation over his 33 year career in the House of Commons.

Paul Martin, Sr. served under four Prime Ministers as a senior Liberal cabinet minister. He is best known for his work as Minister of Health and National Welfare, where he worked with provincial health ministers to champion a national health care plan for Canadians and approved the introduction of the polio vaccination for children. The vaccine is credited with saving thousands of lives.

He was also an advocate for post-secondary education, and in a speech to the House of Commons in 1937, Martin first proposed that the federal government offer scholarships to outstanding students who were financially unable to continue their education. He himself had benefitted from the generosity of others in attending several post-secondary schools including St. Michael’s in Toronto, Harvard University in the United States, and Trinity College in Cambridge, England.

“I cannot tell you how touched I am that Algonquin College’s Pembroke Campus is honouring my father in this way”, says the former Prime Minister. “This all the more so because one of my dad’s earliest initiatives following his first election in 1935 was to table a resolution in Parliament advocating more student aid which, as he said in his memoirs, reflected ‘my own experience as a boy whose parents could not afford to pay for his education’”.

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During his more than three decades in Parliament, Martin, Sr. also served as Secretary of State for External Affairs where he was highly respected for his work at the United Nations. Prior to becoming a cabinet minister, he was a ministerial assistant in the Ministry of Labour where he helped champion a minimum wage and collective bargaining for unionized workers.

Algonquin College President, Cheryl Jensen, says this will be a particularly special convocation ceremony as the College pays tribute to a great Canadian on the occasion of the country’s 150th birthday and the College’s 50th anniversary.

“Paul Martin, Sr. left a legacy through his work in health care, social programs, international affairs and in promoting higher education. We are honoured to acknowledge his contributions to our country and are delighted to have his son, the Right Honourable Paul Martin, at our convocation ceremony to accept this Honorary Degree in his father’s hometown of Pembroke”, says President Jensen.

Martin, Sr. represented the riding of Essex East in the Windsor area of Southwestern Ontario. He won 10 consecutive elections before voluntarily leaving the House of Commons in 1968 to become the government leader in the Senate, where he remained until 1974. He finished his political career as High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

He passed away in 1992 at the age of 89 years. A few years after his death, the City of Pembroke honoured him by naming the main roadway that enters the city from the TransCanada highway, Paul Martin Drive.

Paul Martin, Jr. served as Canada’s Prime Minister from December 2003 to February of 2006. He was first elected to Parliament in 1988 and retired from politics in 2008. He was a long-time federal finance minister before winning the Liberal leadership following the retirement of Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

The College graduation ceremony will be held on Friday, June 16 at the Pembroke Memorial Centre beginning at 1 p.m. The ceremony is open to the public and will see the convocation of more than 300 graduates from the Pembroke Campus.

For more information,

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