



**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
SPRING CONVOCATION
JUNE 7, 8, 9, 2006**

**Convocation Address
by
the Hon. Monique Bégin, PC, FRSC, OC**

Professor Emeritus and Visiting Professor
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An honorary doctor of laws was conferred on Dr. Monique Bégin's during the Faculty of Applied Sciences Ceremony on Wednesday, June 7, 2006 at 9:45 am. The following is Dr. Bégin's convocation address.

Mr. Chancellor,
Mr. President,
Members of Faculty,
Graduates,
Families and friends of the graduates,

I considered it a special honour to be granted an honorary doctorate from Simon Fraser University when you are still celebrating its 40 years of existence. In addition to my past links with your Women's Studies Program, I too will now be a graduate of "the Instant University"! My thanks to all for this recognition.

Graduates, today is like an island in your life, a unique day. I hope you feel good about it. You have accomplished something. Each of you just completed successfully a multi-year project - no small achievement. It will always be a building block in your life, past and future. Congratulations! In the past 15 years alone, not only were more than 1.7 million jobs created for our university graduates, but it is sad to observe that in Canada about one million jobs disappeared for those with high school education or less. createdup

year. Or at some point in your life, and more than once. Traveling or living elsewhere, especially in another country, another continent, is about "the difference", about curiosity and knowledge, friendship, initiative, calculated risk taking, sharing, and much more. It is also an unexpected journey of self-discovery.

Some of you with a first university degree will go for a master's or a doctorate. Studies will then frame time for a few more years ahead of you. A third of those of you who will complete their PhD will teach in universities, the balance will work in business or government, but all of them will do research. If I rely on the AUCC figures, by 2011, universities in Canada will need collectively to replace as many as 20,000 faculty members and hire as many as 20,000 more to respond to students enrolment growth. By the way, faculty renewal is definitely contributing to the rise in faculty positions held by women. So, don't worry; studying longer for more degrees will assure you of good employment. Here, demographics play in your favour.

What after your first job, your last degree? Who knows! I still go blank when asked, usually seriously and unexpectedly, "what did I plan/wanted to do next". How do I know? Hard to tell if I drove my life or if life drove me. For life is not still. Things around us are never really fixed. The physical world, as well as the society we live in, are constantly evolving. One logical conclusion is therefore that, whatever the circumstances you may find yourselves in, you do have choices.

Change - to the economy, at work, in our cities, and so on - used to be accidental, temporary, a momentary crisis we had to go through before returning to business as usual. It has now become the new norm of our lives. I believe that the realization that life is about change, multiple changes, is overall of great benefit.

Long before it became the norm, changes had been an intrinsic part of my life. Did I know where I was going and where life was taking me? No, not really. But I always gave it my best and I did not shy away from challenges and difficulties. I have lost some and I have won some. There were moments of doubt, of frustration, of fear, of discouragement. And I learned in the process. I just had that general idea that I wanted to contribute to make the world a better place. Nothing particularly original - except that I never gave up.

It is one thing to acknowledge that change is an intrinsic part of living. It is another one to decide to drive change, to be a participant in it, and to make a difference. We often read about today's young people feeling that their future bears no hope, because of the mess we made of the environment, increased war zones, widening famine and poverty, an overpopulated planet. These are huge challenges, I will not deny it. But there also now exist all kinds of resources and technologies of immense potential. Yes, we need to respect the limits of the carrying capacity of the Earth, but we should understand that Humanity has no limits to its caring capacity.

You, more than your parents, will live in a global world, and this is very exciting. But globalization is something in the making, and it is far from being strictly financial and

economic; it is bigger than just markets. It demands a new system of global values and mechanisms of implementation. It calls for new governance models at every level.

May I leave you with a sentence I like. It is from Martin Buber, a great Austrian philosopher: *Every journey has a secret destination of which the traveler is not aware.*
Bon voyage!