

Keynote presentation by Dan Halyk

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome. Thank you very much PG for the kind introduction. On behalf of the Advisory Board, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Dr. Forest to the School of Public Policy. We look forward to working with Dr. Forest to continue to build on the success achieved under the leadership of Dr. Mintz. A special thanks to Ron, Robert and the rest of the staff for their continued leadership and support.

I have been asked to deliver a message to you. It has been exciting to watch the positive growth and development of the School over the past six years and I am pleased to learn that the quality of students attracted to the School continues to increase. This fact not only speaks to the growing reputation of the program, but also to you, our students, who have chosen to pursue a path in policy studies when you could have chosen any number of other academic paths. Clearly, you want to play a constructive role in the future of your society. That is what we hope you will do and that is what the MPP program is all about.

While each of you are here for somewhat different reasons, I believe it is safe to assume there is something you all share in common, and that is a passion for policy and the belief that good public policy matters in terms of a jurisdiction maximizing the quality of life and the opportunities available to its citizens. So, assuming that is the case, I'd like to offer three pieces of advice. They aren't original to me, in fact they are based on the three-word mission of The School - three words that were chosen very carefully and with a lot of thought and three words that I hope will inspire and direct your studies while here, and the application of what you learn after graduation.

First, be practical. The MPP program is not about fuzzy, theoretical or purely academic knowledge. The School specializes in real-world policy research of issues that matter to ordinary Canadians in their day to day lives. How to export more and realize a better price for our exports, how to raise our standard of living, how to reduce homelessness, how to make our health care system better. It's much easier to critique a problem than to offer concrete proposals for fixing a problem. But the School strives to do just that. It seeks to offer practical and

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effective solutions to everyday problems. So, my advice is simply to keep it practical. When you contemplate areas to study, questions to ask, examples for papers; look no further than the issues and concerns that you think about daily, or that your friends and family discuss and debate. Those are the issues that matter. If you are successful at maintaining that practical frame of mind in your studies, you will be a much more valuable addition to a company or government than if your head is stuck in an academic cloud.

Second, think globally. Your generation is getting more and more comfortable thinking globally, and that's good. Strive to remember that Alberta, and Canada, are not islands - we are constantly interacting with the world in every area of business, government and, consequently, public policy. A shortage of doctors may force us to rethink immigration policy. Our corporate tax rate will directly affect how much money is invested in Canada. Our approach to foreign investment will impact the development of our natural resources. Think practically about policy, and then think globally about implications.

Finally, remain focused. The goal of the School is to train you to approach problems with a pragmatic, economic, evidence-based, solutions-oriented and, indeed, focused point of view. If I may say, even a business-like point of view. In my business, no one would ever be charged with creating a program for simply "making the business run better". That's too vague, too big and too meaningless a concept. In business, specific problems are identified, dissected, analyzed, necessary skills and resources identified and allocated, and solutions formulated and executed at the micro level. And over time the cumulative effect of this approach causes macro-change and macro-improvement to the entire organization. But solutions are almost always found by individuals who take a laser-like focus to one challenge at a time, whether that challenge be in engineering, operations, sales and marketing, or in public policy. This approach works.

Finally, departing from the slogan of the school, I'd encourage you all to think big. I believe our School of Public Policy is training class after class of smart, civic-

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minded people who will, over time, have a significant and positive impact on public policy in Canada. Look around, you are Canada's future leaders. You should strive to have a disproportionate impact on your province, your country and the world. The MPP program will help give you the tools, but we're counting on your vision, hard work and passion to put them to work to achieve positive results.

Thank you very much and I wish you all the very best with your studies and future endeavours.