

Honourary Degrees

What is an honorary degree anyways?

by Nicole Gifford and Greg LeBlanc

Most public universities in Canada award honorary degrees annually. While such an award is seen as an institution's highest honour, most people do not understand the reasons behind the practice.

It is important to first note that while the awarding of an honou-

rary degree has obvious benefits for the recipient, in that they are recognized for their accomplishments, it is in many cases more beneficial for the university.

A committee is usually established to assess potential candidates. Considerations are made, including the individual's achievements, their local, national, and international influence, and their public profile.

According to Shane O'Dea, the

Memorial University of Newfoundland's orator, as quoted in the November issue of University Affairs (a publication by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada), "The conferring of honorary degrees is a very public statement of a university's values, hence the care and, sometimes, the controversy that goes into the selection."

The awarding of an honorary degree involves a very strategic process that clearly identifies and sometimes emphasizes potential benefits for the institution. Most often the selection is based on the above mentioned individual criteria, in addition to the expected media attention and possible in-

fluence on potential donors to the university. It is true that convocation ceremonies often attract potential donors,

and the rewarding of an honorary degree to the appropriate recipient can be critical. The choice speaks volumes about the university's values and standards.

The first recorded honorary degree recipient was Lionel Woodville, in 1478 or 1479 at Oxford University. Woodville was then the Dean of Exeter, but more importantly, the brother-in-law of

reigning King Edward IV. According to University Affairs, "Oxford transparently hoped to curry favour with a powerful individual."

Since then, honorary degree recipients have come to include artists, athletes, business people, politicians, and celebrities.

Because there are now hundreds of institutions across Canada, the number of potential recipients has increased as well.

The recipient also usually addresses the convocation, meaning the candidate's ability to deliver

an intelligent, insightful, and entertaining speech is also an important consideration for the selection committee.

UNB, which honoured the Crown Prince of Bhutan and RBC executive Barbara Stymiest at this year's Fredericton convocation, and Roy Romanow in Saint John, also holds the distinction of being the only university to award John F. Kennedy an honorary degree.

Each of this year's recipients not only attracted a significant amount of attention from the public, but more importantly personify the values that each university wishes to uphold. The bottom line? The ideal recipient accomplishes both.

His Royal Highness: honouring a 20-year partnership

His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince of Bhutan, was selected as an honorary degree recipient this year as a Doctor of Laws. He was chosen not only because of the great many accomplishments that he has made personally, but also to recognize and celebrate the 20th anniversary of an educational partnership between Canada and Bhutan.

The partnership was established to help train Bhutanese students to become teachers in their home country. A number of students have come to UNB from Bhutan and have been able to contribute to the modern education system Bhutan now prides itself on.

According to Stephen Patterson, the university orator, in his speech regarding His Royal Highness, "the benefits [of the partnership] have been reciprocal, for as much as UNB has given to Bhutan, it has received twofold in return in the form of friendships, knowledge, and institutional honour."

His Royal Highness, Trongsa Penlop, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, has been very active in encouraging the youth of his country. While pursuing his own education first in Bhutan, then in the United States, and eventually at Oxford University in Britain, His Royal Highness has continued fulfilling his duties as the Crown Prince, "with loyalty and grace," said Patterson.

At home in Bhutan, the Crown Prince is the chief patron of the Scouts Association, has taken an active role in fostering bilateral relations with India, has helped to promote environmental t a l

conservation, has served as chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan, and as a patron of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In the western world, His Royal Highness' influence has been equally broad/great. He served as patron of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies and the European Convention of Bhutan Studies. In 2002, he represented Bhutan at the United Nation's special session for children, where he spoke of the need for "international co-operation in ridding the world of poverty, disease, hunger, and pain among children."

His Royal Highness is the son of the present King of Bhutan, whose predecessors have helped the tiny mountain kingdom participate actively in world issues and relations.

Patterson concluded his discourse in recognition of His Royal Highness by saying, "with the greatest respect for the awesome responsibilities that will face you in the future, and gratitude for the warmth and affection you have shown to Can-



Nicole Gifford/The Brunswickan

Barbara Stymiest: driving the money market

Barbara Stymiest is one of Canada's leading business professionals. After being CEO of Canada's leading securities markets, the Toronto Stock Exchange or TSX, for five years, and now being the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for the Royal Bank, Stymiest has been ranked as among the 100 most powerful women in Canada.

Though born and raised in Ontario, Stymiest has deep roots in New Brunswick. After receiving her business degree from Western Ontario and becoming a Chartered Accountant in 1980, Stymiest quickly climbed the ranks of the monetary business world.

Her earliest venture was with the Financial Services Group of Ernst & Young in Toronto, where, by leaping from one management position to another, she quickly became a partner in the company.

From 1992 on, she has remained in the upper echelons of the financial business world, holding senior management positions in three major Canadian financial institutions, including BMO, Nesbitt Burns, TSX and now

RBC Financial Group. When she was CEO of TSX, she completed its transformation into a publicly traded company – the TSX Group Inc. She also revolutionized TSX, by upgrading the company's information technology system and steered the acquisition of the NGX, the energy exchange. In a word, she made the TSX what it is today, the leading securities exchange in the country with global outreach and global ambitions.

She takes this ambition wherever she goes, whether at work or in presentations. When she came to UNB two years back, she pushed the increasing importance of Information Technology in the development of business and economics in the world market. Further, that Canada needs to synchronize the regulations that govern their markets, which are currently provincially orientated.

She is taking these and many more ideas to her latest job as the COO for RBC, Canada's largest bank. UNB is more than honoured to be able to give Stymiest her Doctor of Letters.

Roy Romanow: the political legend

Born and raised in Saskatchewan, Romanow entered politics early in his life. He was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in the 1967 provincial election, at the age of 28. From 1971 to 1982, he served as deputy premier of Saskatchewan. And from 1987 to 2001, he was leader of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party, and in 1991 became premier of the province.

Romanow was a close personal friend of Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien.

During the 1981 discussions over the repatriation of the Canadian constitution, these three men worked out most of Canada's new constitution at the famous late night "kitchen table discussion". Romanow helped push the constitution to the left: he objected strongly to any protections on private property in the new Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and none were included.

In 2003, he was sworn in as a Member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, and in the same year was made an Officer of the Order

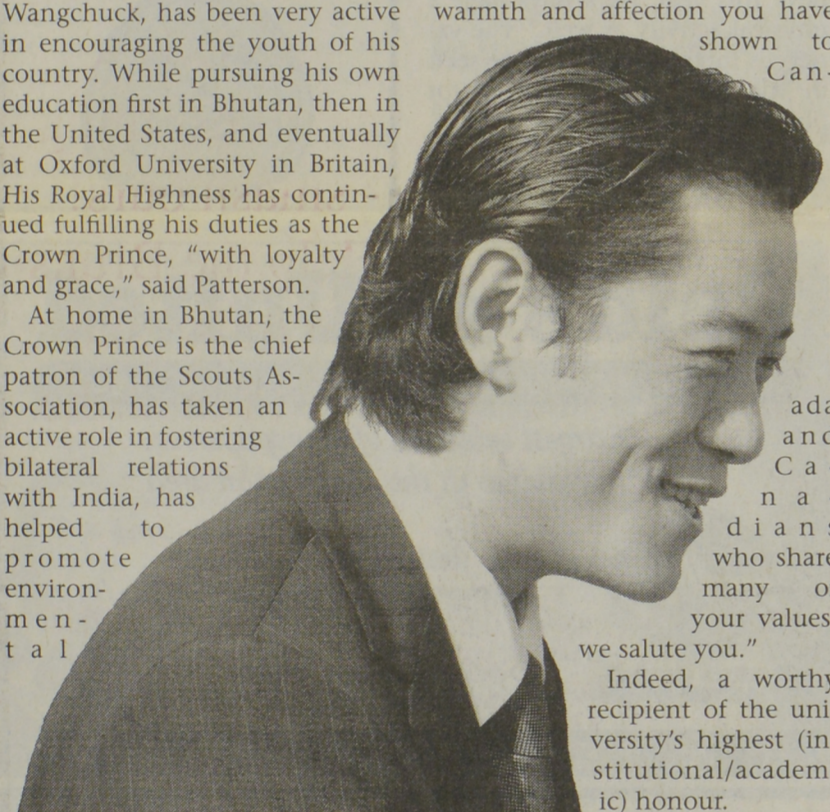
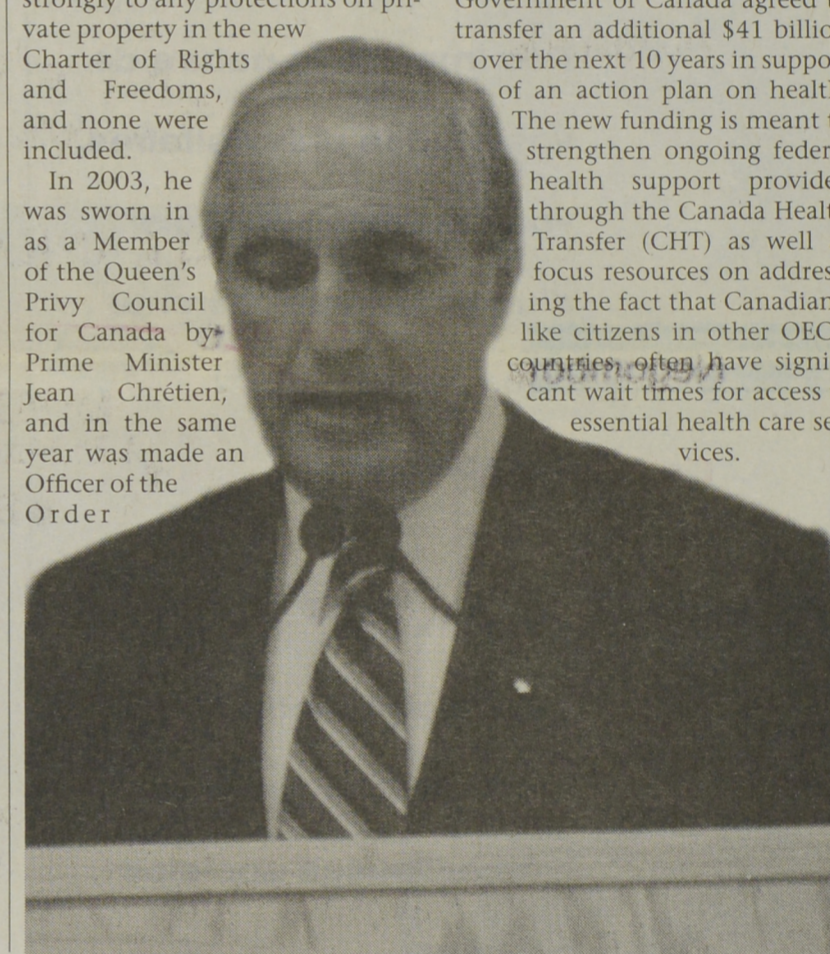
of Canada and was awarded the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

On April 4, 2001, Romanow was appointed to head the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada by Chrétien. He released the Romanow Report in 2002, which outlined suggestions to improve the health care system.

Romanow recommended sweeping changes to ensure the long-term sustainability of Canada's health care system. The proposed changes were outlined in the Commission's Final Report, Building on Values: The Future of Health Care in Canada.

The Report set the stage for another round of federal-provincial-territorial bargaining leading to a significant agreement in September 2004 whereby the Government of Canada agreed to transfer an additional \$41 billion over the next 10 years in support of an action plan on health.

The new funding is meant to strengthen ongoing federal health support provided through the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) as well as focus resources on addressing the fact that Canadians, like citizens in other OECD countries, often have significant wait times for access to essential health care services.



Romanow "builds on values"

Speaks about "crossroads" to pre-convocation audience

Before a room packed with reporters, politicians, profs, and students, Roy Romanow powerfully spoke about the future of Healthcare in Canada. Having recently completed his commission on Healthcare, called *Building on Values: The Future of Health Care in Canada*, Romanow had his thoughts well laid, and captivated

the crowd for over an hour.

Romanow began by expressing his deep thanks for receiving his honorary degree and his respect for UNB and New Brunswick. "It's a nice homecoming," stated Romanow, a native of Saskatchewan, who is very fond of our fine province.

Thereafter, with all seriousness, he laid out the state of Medicare in Canada and stressed that "its certainly at a crossroads."

"I see medicare as a window into the heart & soul of a country," expressed Romanow, "because of its beliefs and ethics."

The beliefs of Canadians are spelled out in the Canada Health Act, created in 1984. It defines five qualities that Healthcare must exhibit: fairness, equity, caring, compassion and opportunity.

"They are a reflection of the values that we hold," said Romanow. He then gave two reasons why

he believes that Healthcare is at a crossroads: first, because of a decade of under funding; and second, because of a failure to effect essential reforms in the system.

Though this is not a new debate, for reforms have been needed in the past, he went on to state that we are in an "unprecedented era" for technological advancement.

Furthermore, Canadians' "frustration lies on a fertile field" because of the recent court decision in Quebec.

Romanow then attempted to dispel the myths of Healthcare that many Canadians hold. First, it is not a "monolithic" system. In fact, there are 14 systems in Canada, one for each province, territory, and the country itself, meaning that each is slightly different in its approach to administration.

Secondly, there is a mix of public and private funding which look after different aspects of Healthcare. Of the \$130B spent each

year, only 30 per cent is publicly funded through the CHA. The rest is a combination of private insurance and other forms of payment.

Lastly, public administration of Healthcare is not expensive. "The notion that we can't afford healthcare is a myth," stated Romanow.

When compared to the US's private Medicaid, the Canadian system is nearly twice as efficient at delivering coverage. Administrative costs account for 31 cents of every dollar spent on Healthcare in the US, largely because of risk assessments, lawsuits, duplication, etc. In Canada, only 17 cents per dollar is spent on administrating.

Because of the high expense in the US, almost 1.5 million Americans filed for medical bankruptcy in 2001. More than half attributed this to the way in which the system is administered.

Medicaid now costs 15 per cent of the US's GDP, which will grow to 21 per cent by 2014; in Canada

Medicare is only 6 per cent of the GDP.

What is needed to change the system?

Yes, money is part of the answer, but only if it buys reform. Beyond that, more services need to be included in the system, such as long-term care.

Lastly, the CHA requires a sixth value – accountability.

"[It needs to] report to Canadians on a regular basis what we're spending and what it's buying," asserted Romanow.

How have things been progressing since he gave his report in 2002?

Ottawa has become a bigger spender with some improvements in Aboriginal care and an attempt at setting benchmarks which led Romanow to state that we "may" be on the road to recovery. But, only "if there is a national public and political will to do it, [will it happen]."

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