

Vision Youth Gala

Feb 23, 2013

Good evening friends:

Thank you Eric and Justin for your tributes, and the team of Visionairs who made the tribute video. It's very well done. Congratulations to Eric and Vision Youth on your 13th anniversary.

Thank you for inviting me to share this evening with you. Looking back, one of the most important thing I did as a public servant was my engagement with our youth across Canada.

I have spoken at a number of your gala events in the past, and many of the students who have gone through the Vision Youth Programme are

now successful adults. This evening, we are seeing a new generation of graduating Visionairs who will have major impact on Canadian society.

As we all know, success does not depend only on IQ, it includes EQ and the willingness to work hard. All the parents here know that I believe in formal education because, whether we are rich or poor, it is the greatest equalizer in society. I not only believe in it, I practice it. I remember telling my father not to extend our Christmas trip because I had to get back to Hong Kong to study for exams. I was 11 years old.

Working hard and getting high academic score is very important. However, in order to succeed in life, you'll need a lot more. This is where Vision Youth comes in. It provides programme for their Visionairs to develop

confidence and improve leadership and communication skills.

Having done a lot in both my private and public life, as well as observed others, I am going to point out a few skills that I know are important for this generation.

For all of us, no matter where we come from, we must be proud of our heritage. Canada, as a multicultural country, is a leader among nations, and how we got there is because of our cultural pride and our national loyalty. Pride in our heritage means we have nothing to hide and can move on with life. Those who succeed in Canada know that we must learn the history, tradition and culture of Canada, and adapt.

How do we do that? Language is the key. Once we have language, we can communicate. In my case, I started learning English in middle school in Hong Kong. What gave me an advantage in life is that I make friends easily, and love learning about other people's lives and cultures. Curiosity is the key that keeps me going to this day.

When we like people, we not only make friends, we become more knowledgeable about our political, ecological and social environment, and we also tend to spend time volunteering. Today, this is a requirement in school, but I want to point out that volunteering outside our own community and comfort zone can be a huge learning experience.

In a city like Toronto, we have the advantage of experiencing other cultures, being in daily

contact with people from all over the world. We have the opportunity of being open to other ideas and ways of life.

A number of years ago, I was invited by a primary school principal to celebrate a non-religious Christmas party with all the students. Classes were in the morning, followed by the celebration. I remember one student was in tears because his mother told him he had to go home, and was not allowed to stay. Parents' attitude towards intercultural relationship has a great influence on the next generation.

In my case, the fact that I make friends easily has not only been fun, it has also made life and work easier. Choose your friends wisely, and if you are good to others, they will be there to assist you when you need help.

I have often been asked how I manage to achieve so much in my life. It helps to have good time management skills, a positive attitude and be able to focus. Even at a very young age, I could focus to the extent that I almost stopped eating around exam time. This is not something I would recommend to anyone.

We all have our good and bad days, so how do we get through the bad ones? I know I have said this before at one of your past events, but I'll say it again, "keep smiling." You will make yourself feel better, and others around you, happier. Besides, you will confuse your enemies. Trust me, it works.

Another survival technique I have is to wear something colourful to work on a dull and

miserable day. People tend to smile when they see me because colours affect people's moods, and it can improve our work environment.

You all know that I have retired from the Senate of Canada last September, after having served Canadians publicly for 14 years. I believe there is a time for everything in life, and for me, this is the time for myself, and my family. I continue to care about Canadians and my community, but now, it will be at my own pace. Those days of running to catch flights every week are over. Now I have more time to travel and to complete my 7th book.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in helping our youth for your time, effort and patience. I wish Vision Youth and all

past, present and future Visionairs even greater success in the future.

Thank you.