

Citation read on the occasion of the granting of the degree of

Honorary Doctor of Laws to

Michael Harcourt

by the Senate of the University of Victoria

November 10, 2016

Madam Chancellor, I have the honour to introduce Michael Franklin Harcourt.

Strong and colourful threads of public service – the blue, white, green, red and gold of our provincial flag and, we should add, some orange – symbolize the distinguished career and life work of Michael Harcourt.

Wide-ranging and value-driven interests define Mike Harcourt: his lifelong commitment to protecting and enhancing sustainable environments, to creating livable and resilient cities, and to ensuring our communities are socially diverse and inclusive for people of all abilities.

In the 1960s, Mike, as he is known to many people, was a community activist and a storefront lawyer, opening the very first such law office in Canada. He became - in the 1970s - a city alderman, then Mayor of Vancouver for three terms in the 1980s, and, in the 1990s, the 30th Premier of British Columbia.

While Mayor, he worked with community groups and planners to persuade the federal government to reject plans for waterfront freeways in Vancouver. When Premier, he signed the agreement establishing the British Columbia Treaty Commission, the body responsible for enabling treaty negotiations among the governments of Canada, BC and First Nations. As Premier he also established 500 new protected areas throughout the province, safeguarding precious natural heritage for today and future generations.

Proving there is life after an extensive political career, he is a published author, a respected policy advisor, sought after public speaker and active volunteer.

Another major and more recent area of contribution by Mike Harcourt is on issues of social inclusion and quality of life, especially for people living with disabilities. His interest in this area is deeply personal: in 2002, a devastating fall left him partially paralyzed from a severe spinal cord injury. Through quick response, great care and dedicated rehabilitation, he achieved a remarkable recovery. As an example of how the personal can be the political, Mike became active in spinal cord research and education, working with the Rick Hansen Man in Motion Foundation and chairing the Spinal Cord Injury Quality of Life Advisory Group.

Mike leads the Public Policy Institute for the United Way of the Lower Mainland. This Institute, the first of its kind in British Columbia, brings together policy specialists to work with senior managers in health and social services who want to better understand and to influence public policy on today's economic and social issues.

For his many contributions, Mike Harcourt has been recognized with esteem, including The Smithsonian Institute public service award, as an officer of the Order of Canada, and, perhaps the one most fitting the man and his work, the Canadian Urban Institute's Jane Jacobs Lifetime Achievement Award.

His politics has always been one of abiding optimism and immense hope, a politics of engagement with people, working together for practical solutions in public decision making. His passion and activism continues apace, as he continues to participate and contribute on issues of sustainability, livable cities and social inclusion.

Madam Chancellor, for his outstanding record of public service to our cities, our province, and our country, I have the privilege to present Michael Franklin Harcourt for the degree, Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

Written and presented by
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