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ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Lieutenant Governor's Medal for Excellence in Public Administration

City Hall, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: 11 December 2009

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers, Your Worship, Distinguished Guests, Fellow IPAC Members, Leaders, Scholars, Colleagues, Citizens of the Commonwealth All:

I am both 'over the moon' and humbled to be honoured today with the prestigious IPAC Lieutenant Governor's Medal. It is even more gratifying to see so many friends and former colleagues gathered to celebrate this honour with me. I am especially thankful to have my Mom here and to recognise the support that she, my Dad, and my family have offered unconditionally throughout my career. I share this award with you all, present and past. I am truly blessed.

IPAC, through this award, is a vehicle for giving voice to what is best about public service. It enables public servants from across Canada to tell their stories, to learn

from each other, and to become more worldly. It is fitting that this honour is conferred at a place like City Hall, in the city that I call my home town, in the province that gave expression to my talents for most of my career, from an organisation like IPAC that has nurtured my professional development for more than 30 years. Thank you all for your kind hospitality and for your service to excellence in public administration.

I could regale you with so many untold stories from my professional life, implicating many of you assembled here – perhaps fortunate for me that some stories remain untold, or I might not be standing before you today to be so honoured. But let's leave those stories where they originated and belong – around the water cooler, by the washroom door, and in the parking lot, the three best meeting places in most organisations. We might indulge afterwards in a tale or two over a beverage during the reception or for the diehards at a local pub.

Let me instead take this 'career moment' to reflect upon the importance of this award through the lens of my current professional preoccupation with the modern

Commonwealth. As Canadians, we cherish the special bond of trust, respect, tolerance, and understanding that is shared with the international community and among our member countries – 54 in total, now that Rwanda has been admitted to the Commonwealth.

The world our parents knew has changed. The global village first envisioned in the 1960s has been evident for some time. Our brave new world is characterised by human connectivity, borderless economies, and global competition. If we shrank the planet's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it might look something like this.

There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 North and South Americans, and 8 Africans. 52 would be female, and 48 would be male. 89 would be heterosexual, and 11 would be homosexual. 70 would be people of colour, while 30 would be white. 30 would be Christian, while 70 would be of other faiths.

6 people would possess 59% of the world's wealth, and all 6 would be from the richest countries. 80 would live in substandard housing. 70 would be unable to read. 50 would suffer from malnutrition. 1 would be near death. 1 would be near birth. 1 would have a university education. And only 1 would own a computer.

When the world is viewed from such a compressed perspective, the need for acceptance, understanding, and education becomes glaringly apparent. Leadership is essential to improve the human condition. The need has never been greater.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead observed: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."* Your involvement here today is evidence of a commitment to nation building. This is the essence of leadership. It is a heavy burden with a serious purpose. It is about making a difference and changing lives.

In my travels around the Commonwealth, I have been struck by the innovation that abounds in the public

sector. The environment is diverse, fast-paced, and ever-changing. There are mounting pressures on governments to reform their structures and processes and to achieve excellence, responsiveness, and integrity in public service. Growing complexity, not just rapid change, is causing us to rethink and redouble our efforts in public sector reform.

What have we learned? Public sector reform is everyone's responsibility. There are 'local heroes' throughout the Commonwealth. Politicians and public servants alike are the champions of change.

Governments innovate to improve citizen-focused service, to reduce cost, to increase efficiency, and to stimulate economic development. Change depends on individual country circumstances. More and more, reforms must connect with and support the *Millennium Development Goals*.

'Networked government' has succeeded the *New Public Management*. The view is of many agencies but one government, of citizen engagement, and of networking

beyond borders. We in the Commonwealth are being challenged to think collectively 'outside the box' to find new ways to collaborate.

Public sector reform is a process of continuous learning and improvement. Naturally, countries are impatient to see quick results. We have imperatives to improve service delivery and to help the neediest in society. Poverty alleviation and sustainable development depend upon placing the people most affected at the centre of decision making and service delivery.

A capable public sector is grounded in the principles of good governance. Governments need a professional and apolitical public service, guided by shared values and ethical standards. The value system of progressive public organisations today is about service, not bureaucracy. Accountable leaders have the self-confidence to model the desired behaviours. They also know instinctively that it is good politics.

In many Commonwealth countries, the metaphor of the village is a powerful cultural symbol and motivator of

national development. It recognises diversity of people and of nations as strength. We need to 'think globally and act locally'.

I have a personal connection to the activism engendered by local governance. I spent 28 of my 32 years in the Canadian public service at the sub-national level. This included a stint in civic government leading reforms in service delivery.

It has been said that all politics is essentially local. Decision-making and service responsiveness are anchored locally. And cities make a valuable contribution to the policy agenda on the national stage.

Many Canadians live in small and medium-sized communities dotted across a vast landscape. Our identity is enshrined in the name of the country itself. Canada is derived from the Algonquin word meaning 'the village'.

Great nations emerge from the ideals of village life. And they do so by giving voice to people in communities

across the nation. Canada gives us so much natural beauty and richness of community life to explore who we are and what we can be as Canadians. We are humbled, and we are grateful to God, for what we have received in each of our villages.

Achieving excellence in this context means something different than used to be the case. You may recall the 1981 BBC *Yes Minister* episode 'The Compassionate Society' in which Minister Jim Hacker visits a hospital that reports the highest efficiency ratings in the U.K. The trouble is that the newly opened facility has 500 administrators but no patients.

By contrast, many developing countries have hospitals with long waiting lists that are filled to the brim with patients. They are short on equipment, supplies, and just about every category of qualified medical, nursing, and technical capacity needed to deliver basic health services.

Both of these scenarios are true. There really were six such empty hospitals in the U.K. at the end of the 1970s. And people do go wanting for proper health care in many

parts of the Commonwealth. Indeed, today the real-world challenges of our member countries drive home the essence and importance of achieving the *Millennium Development Goals*.

Today's public sector leadership model transcends *Yes Minister*. But at times, you may feel not quite up to the task and might get frustrated by the lack of apparent progress. Take heart from these words of encouragement that are grounded in an alternative perspective of leadership.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves: who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone!

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others!

Nelson Mandela spoke these words at his 1994 presidential inauguration. I think he wanted us to better understand our gifts as leaders. We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. Please carry his words of inspiration on your marathon of hope.

You might ask what personal lessons I have learnt in a long career. My learning is symbolised by this simple eraser. I acquired it in 1971 as a STEP student starting work with the Manitoba Department of Health and Social Development. You will note that it's been well used over the years to correct mistakes, particularly early in my career. But I learned from those mistakes, and the frequency of usage diminished over time. Now, thanks to

experience and technology, I hardly have to use it. This eraser reminds me that it's O.K. to make mistakes, as long as I learn from them and correct them. It's been a good pal.

In closing, let me share this blessing for each of you, as we go from this place to resume our occupations and living in the world.

Work like you don't need the money.

Love like you've never been hurt.

Dance like nobody's watching.

Sing like nobody's listening.

Live like it's Heaven on Earth.

My sincerest gratitude and best wishes to IPAC, the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba, and the Government of Canada in all your endeavours. People are counting on us.