



TODAY'S YOUTH, TOMORROW'S GLOBAL CITIZENS

SPEECH TO THE CANADIAN CLUB OF MONTREAL
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Strawberries in mid-winter. The purchase of foreign investments through our laptops. Goods and people flowing across borders everywhere. Unprecedented in human history.

Globalization isn't just a theory. It affects all of us, every day.

The Canadian economy is changing dynamically as we compete in a context of rapid globalization.

At the same time, Canada's political and economic systems continue to be envied. Our social safety net is renowned.

We are a culturally diverse and progressive society. Our cities are vibrant. We have great natural resources. And our citizens are educated to a high standard.

And yet think of how the sudden drop in the price of a barrel of oil may affect us.

Changes in fortunes may be swift. And with the pace of change accelerating, our next generation will need to be nimble, prepared for a globalized landscape that is constantly shifting.

In this context, I would like to suggest some opportunities for improving the formation of the next generation of Canadians. Like it or not, they will be global citizens. Their Canada, and ours, will be stronger if they have the intellectual and experiential foundation that universities provide.

They will need financial literacy, scientific and mathematical literacy, an appreciation of the complexities of culture, a respect for democracy, a capacity for leadership, a commitment to engagement, respect for human life, a capacity to comprehend large causes and effects, a respect for the rule of law, a grasp of history and the religions of the world, and a willingness to engage in making the world that we want to live in through effective government and public service.

Those are some of the duties of our schools and universities.

And there are some opportunities to connect Canadian students outward, beyond school, to the broader world during their formation that will benefit them, and us all.

Today universities are the center of the knowledge economy, giving new urgency to the fundamental questions about our mission and our role in the formation of the next generation of Canadians, and the strengthening of society generally.

What balance of abstract and technical skills do today's youth need from their schooling to succeed in their careers and lives?

Indeed, what do our students want? What do they need?

Some would answer, more technical skills. Others, more entrepreneurship. Still others, more foundational thinking skills.

I think the answer is surprisingly complex. But a part of the answer is a greater fusion of their formal learning and the so-called real world.

They seem to want and need a greater fusion of those two realities. And in the 21st century, that is often still a challenge.

Once upon a time, a student retreated into university to prepare for the world. Today students study and work, prepare and engage, all at once.

I would like to talk today about three opportunities for bringing together the world of school and the real world beyond. To do it well, we will need your help.

The opportunities are:

- First, providing more hands-on work experience while students are in their course of study;
- Second, enhancing our culture of generosity toward the public good here at home; and
- Third, creating more intentional pathways for future leaders to engage globally during their formation.

Opportunity 1: Increase Hands-on Experience

Today, Quebec companies with a payroll over \$1 million must spend 1% of payroll on training for current staff.

In a moment I'm going to suggest revisions to that 1% law that would make it possible for more students to do some kind of a co-op program during their studies.

Recently, the government of British Columbia published a list of the 60 jobs of the future. It's understandable why government might be compelled to do so, but also an impossible task.

In a knowledge economy, we know that university education brings great opportunities, but it's very difficult to be certain where the next opportunities may lie.

The future always has a way of surprising us.

We will be best prepared if we have a great diversity in the professions and occupations and preoccupations that our students pursue.

Having everyone pursue the same handful of high-paying, high-promise jobs in 2015 will leave us with a tilted world something like 10 years later.

What's important, always, is a superbly educated population, and a diversity of that education.

Our knowledge society demands higher qualifications. A recent study predicts that at least two-thirds of Canadian jobs created in the next decade will require post-secondary education.

But what kind of training?

Graduates may want to be even more able to reinvent themselves in a world where it may be just as likely that you create your own job as that you go to work for some giant organization.

Rather than a march along the familiar pathway, global citizenship and global employment may be more of a free-form improvisation in the future.

Basic entrepreneurial skills, like drumming up business, may well become ever more important.

The policy implications of this world of improvised employment are enormous. How do people take on a mortgage, buy a car, plan for their children?

Everything is being remade. Depending on your temperament, it's either exciting or terrifying.

When I finished university myself, in the early 1980s, North America was in a terrible slump. But we still had clear hope that when the economy recovered, the world as we knew it would be basically intact.

Today's upheaval feels different — bigger. The shift is of course caused in part by technology.

We all love our smart phones, our iPads.

But the smart technology will also bring new opportunities for the formation of our next generation. In English, it's being called "customized learning."

Customized learning assumes that as unique individuals, we each learn differently, and at different paces. And we can set different objectives. So what might take eight weeks for one student might take six weeks for another.

And the technology will allow us to customize individual educational programs, much like a personal trainer can customize a workout regimen to meet individual needs.

But what does customized learning have to do with co-op? And what is co-op, anyway?

Co-ops are academic programs that incorporate a significant amount of hands-on professional workplace experience while still in university. Usually they are embedded in private- and public-sector organizations.

They help a student differentiate his or her own learning experience — to customize it, in other words.

And they give an opportunity for the employer to participate in the formation of the next generation of Canadians.

Students get four things out of co-op: sometimes university credit; a pay cheque from the employer; great on-the-job experience; and either a professional reference or, sometimes, a job.

There's also a lot of evidence that through co-op, the learning is deeper, the marks are higher, and the probability is also much higher that you'll finish your degree and be a fully employed member of your community.

Concordia, which has always been about real education for the real world, pioneered co-op programs in Montreal starting in 1980.

In the past 35 years, we have collaborated with nearly 2,000 different employers. Even small and medium-sized employers find space for co-op students.

And it's expanding. At Concordia today, these programs are in high demand not just in engineering and business, but also in sociology, for example.

Co-op can help people in more traditional academic subjects find their way in the world, and help employers find great talent and add richness to their teams.

Adding a philosophy major to your staff can bring surprising benefits!

But there's another important step we should take.

With the rise of entrepreneurship, the next wave of hands-on experience at universities is entrepreneurship incubators and innovation zones.

Concordia's student-driven incubator is named District 3. It connects current students and recent graduates to start-up culture.

Inside District 3 the participants have access to the resources, mentoring and coaching they need to develop their innovative ideas for a new product or service.

Unlike co-op, their work isn't always part of an academic program, but it's still fundamental to their education.

And they're highly incentivized. Instead of building someone else's company, they're building their own company, or at least their own ideas, and those of their teams.

Just last week, a project named Spoil that has been developed at District 3 closed its first round of financing with Y-Combinator, Silicon Valley's best-known accelerator fund.

These incubators aren't just pie in the sky. They nurture great ideas. Some bear fruit.

A second adaptation is to combine co-op with incubators. Fill these maker spaces with current students, and host them within a private company or an NGO, where industry experience and mentoring are on tap.

Fondation Montreal Inc. is opening its own incubator this year with a \$1-million gift from Mouvement Desjardins. That's exactly the kind of next-generation co-op that will make a difference to student entrepreneurs.

A loosely affiliated network of such innovation zones would put Montreal in the vanguard of innovation culture.

Any company, maybe yours, could dedicate an underused conference room for six months to get started.

These young entrepreneurs deserve our support. As the OECD points out, new companies generate the most new jobs.

And almost 90% of all private-sector jobs in Canada are actually in small- and medium-sized enterprises.

In a recent survey, more than two-thirds of employers at SMEs said they'd hire more co-op students if it entitled them to tax credits.

Support from governments to expand co-op programs would certainly help.

But we can't always look to government for the next dollar. We have to think outside the box.

What if we revisited Quebec's 1% training law I mentioned a few minutes ago?

Just last week, Premier Couillard announced plans to amend the law.

If we were to shift even half of that 1% to fund co-op training, we would create a sea-change in opportunities for the next generation to enter the workforce.

Regardless of how we do it, we need to increase hands-on training during university studies.

Co-op is a powerful form of customized learning, and a powerful way of connecting the dots between school and the outside world.

Opportunity 2: Improve Citizen Engagement at Home

On to my second opportunity for building a stronger Canada through the formation of the next generation, through what I'm calling micro-philanthropy.

Micro-philanthropy is little bits of philanthropic activity by many people.

Often associated with micro-lending, or crowdsourcing funds through websites like Kickstarter, it can also refer to small acts of volunteerism, tied in a formal way to the curriculum, and counting toward a university degree.

In other jurisdictions programs have been created, for example, that bring philosophy students together with prisoners to discuss the big questions of life, such as: What is truth? What is justice? What is mercy?

Research studies show that such outreach efforts have a greatly beneficial effect in reducing the criminality of those who have experienced incarceration.

By micro-philanthropy I have in mind, however, the full range of philanthropic opportunities in our community.

Some schools have already integrated community service as part of the curriculum.

And as you know, Montreal is Canada's top city for post-secondary students, with over 225,000 of them — an incredible resource.

Imagine asking each of them for 25 hours of community involvement activities per year. That's just two hours a month, or three Saturdays a year.

But it adds up to over 5 million hours of community service, every year.

Suddenly, micro-philanthropy would be a major movement with a massive effect.

If that micro-philanthropy is tied together with the formal learning process, it will deepen that learning and that civic engagement.

It will give the broader community a meaningful opportunity to participate in the formation of the next generation of civic leaders.

There's no shortage of work that could be done to improve our society. And there's such a variety of needs, everyone can find deeper meaning in something that already interests them.

In his New Year's message this year, David Johnston, Canada's Governor General, called on us all to volunteer.

He said: "It doesn't matter how you get involved. Just do it. By helping our fellow Canadians; by participating in our civic life; by working to build prosperity in our communities – this is how we build a smarter, more caring and resilient society."

Micro-philanthropy would add mostly informal learning experiences, and would validate those experiences for university degree credit. Micro-philanthropy would also bring valuable experiential learning opportunities that simultaneously build the greater public good.

Opportunity 3: Increase Global Perspective

I think Canada ought to take steps to double our current rate of study-abroad experiences by 2020, and create an international civic engagement program.

I started this talk by commenting on the global citizenship that's in the works. In a way Concordia's own student body is a microcosm of it. We have 46,000 students from 150 countries, but 75% of them are Quebeckers.

At a recent coffee and hot chocolate event on campus, I asked some engineering students for their thoughts about their readiness to compete in such a globalized world.

One of them said to me, in complete seriousness, "But Sir, we all speak 5 languages. That's not going to distinguish us."

Funny, but not true!

On a global scale, such multilingualism is very distinctive. Being fluent across multiple cultures is also a huge advantage. It's a huge advantage for Montreal for sure.

And in a globalized world, not having a deep knowledge of other cultures creates a great vulnerability, and it can be expensive.

Just ask Target. Beyond the billions of dollars in losses, let's also think of the human impact of apparently not grasping that Canada is not the 51st American state.

In an epoch of global citizenship, we will all need to be at least amateur anthropologists.

Thinking about Canada's future in a globalized world, it's important that the next generation of Canadian leaders go out and get a more global perspective.

A couple of years ago the Government of Canada announced a goal of doubling the number of foreign students coming here by 2022, and the number is up sharply. That's a great initiative.

Unfortunately, the government passed on a parallel proposal to double the number of Canadian students studying abroad every year.

But to prosper in a globalized economy, goods, people and ideas must flow in all directions.

It's true that youth today travel more than ever before. But when they get there, wherever that may be, often they're touring, getting a snapshot of the culture, not seeking a deep dive.

Studying abroad isn't just a finishing school, a nice-to-have.

We are shortchanging Canada's future when we don't send our students out to explore the world.

Other countries take a different approach.

For example, Germany. By the year 2020, Germany is planning for 50% of its university students to have a formal experience abroad, up from its current 33%.

And countries such as Australia and Brazil are investing significantly in study-abroad scholarships.

In Canada, only about 10% of our undergraduate students have had a formal international experience by the time they graduate.

In our biggest and most diverse cities, such as Montreal, students may believe that international experiences come to them.

Little Italy is great, for sure, but it's not Italy. We need the next generation of leaders to study in China, to do a co-op in France.

For a model of the kind of goal-setting that's needed, think of our newish program to support Olympic athletes, Own the Podium.

Own the Podium had a clear goal — contend for great success — supported by clear tactics.

Five years after launching Own the Podium, Canada topped all countries by winning the most gold medals in Vancouver, and our success continued in Sochi.

One of Canada's Olympic gold medalists and proud Concordia student, Alexandre Bilodeau, is with us today. He's a star example of how an intentional program of support can set up winning conditions for a talented individual.

Own the Podium shows how Canada can compete on the world stage when it puts its mind to it.

In a globalized economy, if only about 10% of our students study abroad, then the vast majority are missing key experiences. We could double that figure by 2020.

To do that, we would need a national commitment, an explicit intention.

Think for a moment of Quebec's many home-grown companies that now operate around the globe: Bombardier, CGI, SNC-Lavalin, Cirque du Soleil, CAE.

These enterprises — and all enterprises of much size, really — will need to hire the culturally savvy — citizens of Canada who are also citizens of the world.

The effects on our GDP of study-abroad programs may not be easily measured right away, may not be easily visible. But we need longer-term, more intentional engagement.

Montreal's Institut du Nouveau Monde points out that many countries have international service organizations that offer six- to twelve-month volunteer stints abroad.

You've heard of the Peace Corps in the U.S. or the Service Civique en France. The UK, Germany, Italy, and now the European Union have programs, too.

Why not Canada? Why not Quebec?

Concordia has its own Volunteer Abroad Program. We send student volunteers to Uganda. Once they've arrived, they work on the ground with local NGOs aligned with their interests.

Concordia undergraduate students voted for a fee levy to fund the program. That's an expression of the Concordia community's commitment to global civic responsibility and experiential learning.

Money is the top barrier in all this. But don't worry, I'm not going to propose a higher tax.

We know employers would love to have more new hires with international experience.

And although 85% of students show interest in studying abroad, more than three quarters say they can't go because it's too expensive.

To think about how to bridge the funding gap, I look to AmeriCorps, a domestic volunteer program in the US.

AmeriCorps reverse engineers the cost: In exchange for volunteer service now, they help participants with their university tuition later.

I might propose a version of this exchange, a made-in-Canada fund. Knowing how we love acronyms, in English it could be called LEAF — the Learning Experience Abroad Fund.

Not a holiday, but a study- or volunteer-abroad sojourn that provides deep engagement with another culture, that pays dividends in the lives of our future leaders of civil society and in the society itself.

I would argue that despite what our passports say, we aren't born into citizenship.

We *become* citizens — through education, through jobs, and by participating in our democracy.

Voting is one way to be engaged, and it will always be important. But the fact that we vote in secret can seem, especially to our youth, like an impersonal, drop-in-the-bucket gesture — an 18th-century system for engaging 21st-century citizens.

We saw a superb example of citizen engagement last November, at the *Je vois Montréal* citizens summit.

The brainchild of Concordia's outgoing chancellor, Jacques Ménard, it engaged people to commit to improving our society by supporting projects that matter to them.

Je vois Montréal relied extensively on the new roles for social media in making a world we want to live in.

Digital technology allows us as individuals to be more intentional, too. And these technologies are changing the world, and fast.

We all now have the ability to express and broadcast our opinions in ways most of us never imagined when we were young.

That self-expression is a great start to citizen engagement. But as that student who speaks five languages told me, today's youth crave authentic, *hands-on* experience that distinguishes them.

The globalization game is already well underway, so we might as well play to the best of our ability, in a way that feels authentic, socially just, and sustainable.

Recap

Quickly, to recap my three suggestions:

First, expand traditional co-op and entrepreneurial opportunities;

Second, deepen civic engagement programs here at home. Integrate micro-philanthropy and academic programs.

Both of these involve deepening the partnerships between universities and the communities we serve, and closing the gap between formal and informal learning;

And third, double the number of Canadians studying abroad and create a volunteer service program abroad, as so many other countries have done.

Perhaps these social innovation programs will be devised in one of the incubators in our growing network around Montreal.

Or perhaps you know of examples that can be adopted or adapted. Please don't hesitate to contact me with your ideas.

Ces propositions visent à renforcer le Canada, mais elles susciteront sans aucun doute de la résistance. Il faudra de la créativité, du temps et des efforts pour les concrétiser.

Je vous remercie de votre attention et vous souhaite une très bonne fin de journée.