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Department of
Law and Legal Studies
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Official Launch Welcome Message

Presented by Chair Ron Saunders

On Wednesday, January 18, 2017

On behalf of the Department of Law and Legal Studies, it is a very real pleasure to welcome everyone to this celebration, the launch of our 50th anniversary year. We are very pleased to have many former and current faculty, staff, contract instructors and students with us today, as well as Dr. Roseann Runte, the President of Carleton University. I also want to thank a very special guest, the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, the Chief Justice of Canada, whose presence here is greatly appreciated.

Given that we are here to celebrate the last 50 years, I want to say a few words about the department, its development, and its mission over this last half century. Don't be afraid - I'm not going to go year by year; one of our long serving members, Lynn Campbell, has been working on an extensive history of the department, and that will be available on our website in the near future. But I would be remiss if I did not start at the beginning and pay tribute to the foundation that was laid so many years ago. We began small with one faculty member - Dick Abbott - in 1967 in what was at the outset the Department of Public Law; the name reflected the fact that we grew out of several public law courses that were being offered in Political Science and Public Administration. Within 2 years we had 4 faculty members and had changed our name to the Department of Law to reflect the growing number of

courses and areas being taught and researched. In the early years, we offered a great number of service courses, which primarily supported other units in the university and were at the time only offering Combined Majors and Honours in conjunction with other departments. I think that it's important to note this because what we gained from this experience is something that remains at the core of our mission, and that is interdisciplinarity: a respect for and engagement with a wide variety of disciplinary and theoretical approaches to the study of law. While by 1980 we were producing our own graduates in standalone BA (Law) programs, we did not lose sight of that central mission of approaching, teaching, and studying law and legal institutions from an interdisciplinary perspective. The addition of our Masters in Legal Studies in 1991, and then our PhD in Legal Studies in 2011 significantly enhanced this project. In 2011 we adopted our current name, the Department of Law and Legal Studies, to better reflect and underscore the breadth of and commitment to this undertaking.

Today, the interdisciplinary study of law at Carleton University is home to over 1300 undergraduate and over 150 graduate students, making it the largest program of its kind in the country, if not in North America. We have over 12,000 enrolments in our courses this academic year alone. This speaks so much to the success of our mission: that law is not just for lawyers. Law has an impact on all of us and a strong understanding of the dynamics and politics of law makes us better policy-makers, better citizens, and better leaders; it gives us a richer understanding of who we are and how we are governed, of our place and potential in society.

What has been instrumental in achieving and promoting interdisciplinarity and broader approaches to law has been our faculty, both today and in the past. Early on, all our members had a traditional professional degree, whether common or civil law, though often in conjunction with other types of expertise and education. In 1991

we hired our first member without such a degree and we have continued to hire members with a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Traditional professional degrees are still well represented in our cohort, but we also have colleagues with graduate degrees in Law, History, Political Science, English, Sociology, Criminology, Social Anthropology, Religion, Communications, Canadian and Indigenous Studies, and, most recently, our own Legal Studies. As well, the great majority of our colleagues are cross-appointed to other units across the faculty and the university. While our faculty represent a wide range of disciplines, expertise and experiences, they are united in being committed through their teaching and research to a better and fuller understanding of the role of law in society.

I also want to acknowledge the significant contributions of our contract instructors without whom we could not offer our programs. A sincere thank you to them! Many of these instructors come to us from federal departments, government agencies, law practices, NGOs, and private sector organizations, and they often bring with them into the classroom an extensive working experience in the field. They have been with us since the earliest days of the department and have been instrumental in ensuring the delivery and success of our programs.

In the same vein, the department has been fortunate to have an incredible group of administrative staff over the years, a group that has been equally committed to our students' well-being and success. They have always served as the foundation of the department's life, and we continue to find in them a knowledgeable, helpful, and concerned support group. I also want to add a special thank you to Gina Freitag of our Department who organized this tremendous event this afternoon.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I want to acknowledge and thank the tens of thousands of students who have been in or are currently in our programs and in our courses. They are the ones whose interest, eagerness, and inquisitiveness

motivate us all to do better in fulfilling our mandate to understand, explain, and critique law in all its dimensions. We are proud of all our students and graduates, and wish them every success. I should add here that as part of our 50th anniversary, the department will be fundraising for scholarships to commemorate the milestone – a note that many of you can expect an email on this subject in the near future. Donation cards are also available at the front desk today.

The success of these last 50 years can also be seen today in the many legal studies programs that have grown up across North America in the last two decades. Success breeds imitation, and by this standard alone, we are immensely successful. That said, we remain without a doubt, the premier and most comprehensive legal studies program in the country, and our legal studies programs continue in this, our golden anniversary year, to be the gold standard.

So again, thank you very much for joining us today in our celebration – we are extremely proud of how far we have come and of where we are today. We are also committed to and confident of even greater success in the next 50 years.