

Notes for an address by  
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to the  
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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**



Thanks. It's great to be here. And a special privilege to be here on International Women's Day.

Given my topic, I know you will join me in paying special tribute to the outstanding women who have made such a difference in building our universities and cities.

I want to begin my remarks by asking you to take a walk with me. Imagine if you were walking on a street near campus and you saw:

- University buildings facing inward, with brick walls and no windows
- Storefronts nearby that were dollar stores or sex shops
- Buildings in disrepair or vacant, and a general air of neglect.

Imagine if you went back 10 or 12 years after that and saw:

- University buildings facing outward, with windows casting light on the street
- Stores, cafés, bookstores and art galleries
- Renovated buildings, new homes, and a positive sense of renewal.

This is a true story but it didn't take place in Toronto. It's about the University of Pennsylvania. In the mid-90's, things were pretty terrible in this part of Philadelphia. The University was excellent, but the neighbourhood was in serious decline. From that very low point, the university became a city builder. And over a decade it turned things around superbly.

So I have to say to myself – relative to that story... Our starting point in Toronto is pretty good. Imagine the results we could achieve... if we decided to be city builders too.

I think it's important to say that I am not a developer. And I am not the Mayor of Toronto. They are very important city builders and I have huge respect for them. But I am not making their speech. I have to make my own speech. I am an educator... who happens to be the President of a great university.

And this makes me a different kind of city builder. That said, we share many of the same objectives. Because what is good for Ryerson University – is also good for Toronto.

I want to start by giving you a bit of background on my University, in case you do not know it well. Ryerson has undergone an incredible transformation.

If you grew up in Toronto, then you know the Ryerson of today has come a long way from the Ryerson you knew then.

Our annual budget of \$300 million makes us a major employer in downtown Toronto. The economic and intellectual impact on the City comes from:

- 21,000 undergraduate and graduate students
- 1600 faculty and staff
- More than 64,000 registrations every year at The Chang School of Continuing Education, the largest in Canada
- A \$210 million campus expansion just being completed.

Our students bring to the City and the University a cultural diversity that enriches and strengthens both our communities.

Academically, Ryerson is unique. Students choose Ryerson because they know what they want. It's where you go if you can complete the sentence: "I am going to Ryerson because I want to be..."

- An engineer, scientist, urban planner
- A specialist in geographic analysis or architectural science
- A journalist, broadcaster, actor, dancer, theatre technician
- A fashion designer, photographer, film-maker
- A professional in new media or communications
- An interior designer or tourism manager
- A nurse, social worker, specialist in early childhood or public health, a nutritionist or midwife
- A public servant, politician, a student of human nature or criminal justice
- An information technology manager or an entrepreneur.

When students graduate from Ryerson – from undergraduate or graduate programs – they are ready to start their careers -- right here in our City. 75% of Ryerson alumni stay in the GTA. This is probably the most fundamental city-building. Educated and creative people – With talent, energy and ideas that contribute to progress.

The confidence I have in my University – is also the confidence I have in my City.  
And here's a great story.

Egerton Ryerson is walking up Victoria Street one day in 1850. He just bought six acres for the government of Upper Canada. He's walking along with cows wandering nearby. He can hear the rumbling of stagecoaches on Yonge Street. In 1850, the population of Toronto was 31,000 people. It went from the waterfront to Dundas Street in the north. And east-west it went from Parliament Street to Garrison Creek – this is about Bathurst Street today. Beyond these boundaries there were other small towns: Davisville, Yorkville, Eglinton. Like Toronto, they were surrounded by farms and forest.

I read this story in a brochure about the Ontario bicentennial. Here's my favourite sentence:  
"Toronto was still a small town...but banks and business had a sense of anticipation... that Toronto was poised on the edge of future economic dominance." Good prediction. One hundred and fifty years later, we have a lot to celebrate. And there are many dimensions of this success.

The Toronto Board of Trade had a great idea for its Annual Dinner. It showcased Toronto's cultural industries. I thought President Glen Grunwald had a wonderful quote. He said, "A great place to do business -- must first be a great place to live." It's an important connection. And one that others believe our City has achieved.

We recently had a visit from Hank Webber, who is a Vice-President at the University of Chicago. He was full of praise for Toronto. He called it "a global city." He said it's known for its superb educational institutions, culture, and entertainment – and an attractive city for people to live. He told us Toronto is considered an economic engine, the home of deal-makers, and leaders in business, law, and services.

It was very positive to hear this analysis, but I had to wonder – Is this how WE see ourselves? Certainly things have changed over the years.

Jane Jacobs reminds us, in her book *Dark Age Ahead*, that Peter Ustinov once described Toronto as "New York run by the Swiss." She points out that, now, "Torontonians returning from summers or sabbaticals away cite litter and homelessness when they speak of culture shock on their return."

I can see people saying 'Well, there are reasons for that.' And I am not saying it is 100% true. Plus I know there are great things alongside the not-so-great. In fact, my perception is that we are doing okay. If I had to give Toronto a grade... There is no doubt in my mind that if we keep going in this direction we are a solid "B" ... But I am asking – is that good enough? And I am answering – it is not good enough for me.

Maybe I can't change everything. But there are some things I can do. And, just like the Toronto banks and businesses back in 1850, and the University of Pennsylvania in the 1990's, I am willing to bet on the future of my City.

So where do I start? Let me tell you about a little experiment I did. Every year the universities of Ontario have a massive Open House for high school students. It's called the Universities Fair. Last Fall, we had 12,000 students picking up Ryerson material.

At random, I asked them: "Do you know where Ryerson is?" A lot of students said "no." Some said it was "Behind Sam the Record Man." I expect they are not alone. People who know where to find U of T, or York – might have trouble finding Ryerson.

Well, I promise you that will change. Within 5 years, everyone will know where Ryerson University is. And more of you will want to spend time in my neighbourhood. That's what 'university as city-builder' means to me:

A well-known University footprint in the City... and giving people reasons to visit, and to live nearby.

The Ryerson campus is about 8 hectares, or 21 acres ... between Dundas to the south and Gerrard to the north, ... Jarvis on the east and Yonge on the west. But it doesn't end there.

This Fall, the Ryerson Faculty of Business will move to a new home on Bay Street. When Business on Bay opens its doors, Yonge Street will run right through our campus. I have had the privilege of being at York, Sheridan, U of T, and UOIT in Oshawa.

But when I got to Ryerson I learned the true meaning of what it is to be “downtown.” We are next-door-neighbours with Dundas Square and the Eaton Centre. We are around the corner from Church Street and St. Michael’s Hospital. We are up the street from the East Bayfront section of the waterfront. Our university weaves in and out of its neighbourhood. And this gives me a bigger challenge ... and a bigger opportunity.

I was reading a book called “The University as Urban Developer.” It says the whole notion of “campus” comes from the Latin word meaning “field.” When we think of most universities, we have a picture of buildings around a green space – a quad, a circle, a square.

This reinforces universities as separate from their communities not only physically, but notionally – ‘We are in here, and the world is out there.’

But this is changing. More and more, universities realize that city building is a shared responsibility...and it brings mutual advantage.

There are great examples out there of universities as city builders. You could go into useful detail on each and every one. But I picked a few features from five different universities (and there are more I could have chosen) to give an overview.

I mentioned the outcomes at the *University of Pennsylvania*. But here are some specific things the University did:

- It purchased, upgraded and sold 20 vacant houses
- It partnered with the City to provide new streetlights
- It supported community gardens and tree-planting
- It helped renovate apartment buildings
- It donated land to establish a new school.

I see my friend Gary Polonsky from *UOIT* and Durham College. The campaign for a new university in Oshawa involved the whole region and took 12 years. Among many features, one great example of city building out there is athletics and recreation. The University partnered with the City on a new tennis centre, soccer field, and twin-pad arena that are shared by the community. It’s a win-win situation.

The *University of Cincinnati* has gained a national reputation for selecting renowned architects to design its new buildings – people like Frank Gehry and Michael Graves. Here in Toronto, we have the remarkable example of *MaRS*, the Medical and Related Sciences Discovery District – A model of public-private collaboration... Two square kilometers focused on taking research innovations to market by bringing science, business and capital together in one place.

The *University of California Berkeley* is working with the City on improvements at the campus perimeter – things like landscaping, lighting, pedestrian safety, and transit. I like the way they describe it. They say the streets at the edges of campus should be 'seams' linking campus and community, and not borders dividing them. So what characteristics do all these initiatives share? Pride is at the top of the list. There is also a commitment to the highest standards, and excellence in design.

And taking the long view, usually about 20 years. Also working within existing parameters, like the lack of available land (that's something I know well!)

I really like this next one – you can't be afraid to take things down as part of building them up:

When the University of Cincinnati increased on-campus residence, the first thing they did was demolish a 27-storey residence built in the 70's – then they went ahead with mid-rise buildings and putting residence rooms on the top floors of a parking and retail structure.

Another characteristic is making a major investment...in the community as well as the university...being willing to take a risk with confidence in the return.

Finally, and most importantly – partnership. The predominant feature of universities as city builders is finding great people to share ideas and put them into action. The emphasis is on action.

In some ways universities are notorious for building walls around themselves...and for not taking the ball and running with it. But I am here to tell you today that I am lacing up my sneakers. And I will say right off the top I would welcome hearing from creative partners and strong investors.

Let me share with you my University and City building objectives over the next 5 years:

I am announcing we are moving forward with a campus plan – that recognizes there is no boundary in the traditional sense. Ryerson has only 60% of the space it should have for a university its size. But there is no land stretching out in any direction. So, in reality, our campus plan will be a 'Campus & City' plan.

This means our guiding principle will be strong relationships – within our own University community, with the City, provincial and federal governments, local residents, business, and developers.

Our most pressing needs are more academic and research space – as our community of scholars and students continues to push the boundaries of a University growing in reputation and achievement.

Given our neighbourhood density, we will pursue campus intensification as an important objective. We hope to consider innovative opportunities to acquire property that will use our resources responsibly, and serve Ryerson's long-term space needs.

Along with that, we will pay attention to properties adjacent to our campus in a way that will encourage amenities (such as food services and retail), and discourage incompatible use.

As a priority, we will build a Gallery and research centre to house the Black Star Historical Black and White Photography Collection – 300,000 photographs donated to Ryerson this past year. It is hard to convey the power of this collection. It includes pictures taken by world-famous photojournalists covering all the major events of modern history – the kind of pictures you would see in *Life* magazine, *Look*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. It is considered the most significant cultural contribution ever made to a university in Canada. And it will be an outstanding addition to the cultural life of Toronto.

I look forward to creating a welcoming front door for the University. And a presence on Yonge Street which, as I mentioned earlier, will run through our campus come September. I hope this means we can work together to make our stretch of Yonge Street an area that makes us smile instead of cringe. Because we are talking about the places our families walk.

We will actively work with our neighbour, Covenant House, and other agencies, to provide education and employment alternatives that reduce the number of young people living on the street.

Ryerson University needs 2,000 more student residence spaces, integrated within the neighbourhood in creative and positive ways. This will also help attract top students from outside the GTA, nationally and internationally. Our students need a new and expanded Library – and more quality study space. We hope to make an announcement this year...on an innovative learning centre that will give the University the facilities it needs – and also provide areas for community use.

Ryerson students tell me they want a more pedestrian-friendly campus – and I agree. We aim to close our section of Gould Street to traffic. If you shop for groceries at the Gould Street Dominion, you should be able to meander home along a campus road.

We will look for every chance to enhance green spaces, and make them inviting, beautiful, and safe.

When opportunities arise, we will work with the City on improving athletic and recreation space – I am on record as saying I would have bought Maple Leaf Gardens given the chance, not only for Ryerson but for the community too.

Our vision includes partners who look at neighbourhood spaces as opportunities for coffee shops and stores that are clean and bright, imaginative and attractive.

We will find ways to make this most historic, heritage part of Toronto a magnet for quality redevelopment.

I have every confidence that our goals are achievable. And I know what it will take. The University Board of Governors will play a critical and central role. From the experience of other universities, it is clear we will need their expertise and strength, their vision and their ability to make things happen. Our strong relationship with former Board members will also be a continuing source of sound advice. We will engage our university community of scholars and users.

Our Master Planning Group, for example, includes representatives from the disciplines of architecture, design, urban and regional planning, all taught at Ryerson. I rely on my colleagues not

only for guidance about the University, but also knowing they have a dedicated professional commitment to strong design in our City.

We will seek ways to bring into our discussions the best and brightest members of the design and planning communities of Toronto and Canada. We will involve neighbourhood associations and groups to develop community-based strategies for respectful and positive change. We will initiate and invite discussions with potential partners to identify and move forward on building projects.

We will analyse and implement the best ways to leverage investment and development opportunities, in consultation with government and partners who come on board.

Our relationship with the City will be vital. I understand there are tools in the proposed City of Toronto Act that will help us move forward together – and we look forward to exploring that. Our goals will be consistent with civic pride and renewal.

Most of all, it will take the will to make change. And the spirit to take positive steps with confidence and determination.

In summary – we have an opportunity to define the Ryerson University of the future. And, with it, the City we can build as part of our campus plan. I am offering economic opportunity. And a chance to do something great. We will work with His Worship the Mayor, City Councillor Kyle Rae, the Premier, Ministers Smitherman and Bentley, As well as partners dedicated to building the City with us.

We are asking people to join us. But, with respect, we are not waiting around. This City must move to be a really great City. I am stating my belief that we cannot thrive unless our City is great. I am declaring today that Ryerson is prepared to do its part. I guess you could say I am rolling out the bandwagon.

Because the future of Toronto is not about pointing fingers. Or trying to figure out who should fix it. It's all of us.

I take my inspiration from Daniel Burnham. He was the architect who created a City Plan for Chicago in 1909. "Make no little plans," Burnham said. "They have no magic to stir the blood and probably will not be realized. Make big plans. Aim high in hope and work."

Thank you.

