

The Empire Club Presents

HER HONOUR THE HONOURABLE ELIZABETH DOWDESWELL LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO:

HOLIDAY LUNCHEON ADDRESS

December 11, 2014

HEAD TABLE:

Distinguished Guest Speaker:

The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, O.Ont, 29th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

Guests:

Dr. Eric Jackman, President, Invicta Investments Inc.; Chairman, The Jackman Foundation

Ms. M. J. Perry, Vice President and Owner, Mr. Discount; Director, Empire Club of Canada

Mr. Matthew Rowe, Manager, Operations & Partnerships, Prince's Charities Canada; Director, Empire Club of Canada

Ms. Angela Saini, Singer and Songwriter

Mr. William White, Chairman, IBK Capital Corp.; Director, Empire Club of Canada

Ms. Andrea Wood, Senior Vice President, Legal Services, TELUS; President, Empire Club of Canada

Welcome Address by Andrea Wood, President, Empire Club of Canada

The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell was appointed Ontario's 29th Lieutenant Governor following a distinguished career. Her Honour is an accomplished civil servant and is passionately devoted to the advancement of humanity. She cares deeply about the environment, which she considers the fundamental basis for life on earth. She has lead provincial, federal and international institutions and has served on the boards of corporate and non-profit organizations. Her years as Under-Secretary-General at the United Nations profoundly shaped her worldview and continue to inform her thinking. As Lieutenant Governor, the focus of her mandate is Ontario in the world. She listens to Ontarians and engages them in meaningful dialogue about what they can contribute and learn from others.

Her Honour's aim is to bring multiple perspectives to the table, encourage innovation and cultivate ideas for the betterment of Ontario and the world. Ontario can both learn and lead.

Ms. Dowdeswell was born in Northern Ireland, is an officer of the Order of Canada, and *holds ten* honorary degrees. It is an extraordinary accomplishment.

Ladies and gentlemen, mesdames et messieurs, please, join me in welcoming the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell

Thank you very much, head table guests. Ladies and gentlemen, let me assure you I am not about to break out into song.

Thank you also for the entertainment. That was a delight and puts us all in a festive mood. I am very pleased to be here with you today, to be among some friends, and recognize that those of you who are here did brave the first exploration that we have with winter to come, so I am delighted that you were able to be with us today.

I actually serve as Honorary Vice President of the Empire Club of Canada, something I just found out about. I keep getting surprises almost every day, and I am delighted to attend this first annual Christmas luncheon for the first time in my term as Lieutenant Governor. This is also probably my last major public event for 2014, and so it has caused me to reflect just a little on the remarkable journey that I have been on since late September. In many ways, it seems like quite a while that I have been in this position, and yet it is only about ten weeks, so the important lesson is that I think I have about six months in a new job when I can continue to make all kinds of mistakes before people start calling me on it. But in the spirit of accountability I want to share with you just a quick glimpse into what has been a very hectic schedule. I want to mention the generosity of so many citizens who have actually engaged with me in that

short period of time and also some of the insights that I have gained. But the bottom line, just to jump to the end, is that I feel so privileged to hold this position, and I thank each and every one of you and others who have given me such support and encouragement in the early days.

Canada's particular constitutional framework, our sovereign democracy, has allowed our system of governance to evolve in a peaceful and orderly manner. I serve as the Chief Executive of the province of Ontario and the representative of The Queen in this jurisdiction, so task number one is to protect the integrity of the system with loyalty and impartiality, to advise, caution, and warn.

What is much more public, however, is the second role that I play. I have the unique opportunity to celebrate the achievements, large and small, of citizens in this province. We commemorate the sacrifices of our military and the dedication to duty of those who provide essential services in all of our communities. And we recognize and encourage a healthy spirit of volunteerism among young and old alike that make our communities more humane and compassionate. I have spent the greater part of my life in some form of public service at the provincial, federal, and international levels, and, through my experience, I came to experience a great deal about Canada as I met with and listened to people in communities the length and breadth and the high arctic, in this country. And my experience overseas, while working

with the United Nations, gave me that rare opportunity to actually look at my own country through other people's eyes and from a different perspective outside the country. But I have to say that in the past 90 days, I came to appreciate, as never before, the extraordinary breadth and depth of people and achievements to be found right here in Ontario. And most of us do not know about it and do not celebrate it.

The calendar has been very full. I have met citizens old and young from north and south, commemorated milestone moments in our history and honoured so many that have served us selflessly and compassionately. The Lieutenant Governor's Suite has been full of art, music and storytelling, and I have listened and learned. I have taken part in something like 150 events in just ten weeks, so do the math: If I look a little weary around the edges, you will understand why. But statistics cannot possibly convey the full range of emotions that I have experienced. From pure unadulterated joy and fun to moments of quiet reflection and, indeed, some considerable sadness. I think of the intimidation that I felt, meeting a feisty 99-year-old Italian woman, who was receiving a good citizenship award, when she told me that she had just last week completed a 2-kilometre walk—just a little intimidating. And then there was the young man from grade seven, who urged me that I really should be spending my time focusing on alleviating poverty and homelessness and confidently went on to explain to me why. It made me wonder what on earth I was thinking about in grade seven,

but I do not think it was that. Or the intellectual stimulation that has come at roundtables organized by students and professors at Laurentian and Brock Universities just recently. Or the insights into the challenges that are faced by our northern fly-in Aboriginal communities, like KI, where I came away understanding the knowledge of elders and also the hopes and dreams of Aboriginal youth as they walk in two worlds.

The year 2014 has been a memorable year for Ontario, with many events throughout the province to mark the 100th anniversary of the year of the outbreak of World War One and the 75th anniversary of the start of World War Two. I had the immense privilege of participating in several of these commemorative events, including a service at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Toronto to honour a congregation whose members fought in the Great War—a significant portion of their congregation who went to war, as a matter of fact—and then the investiture of Ontario veterans of World War One as knights in the French Légion d'Honneur.

I have also been honoured to present bravery medals to courageous members of Ontario's police and firefighting services, and, more importantly, I guess, to afterwards meet with their young sons and daughters and sometimes the grandchildren of these, asking them to tell me stories about their father, about their grandfather. And I do say "father" and "grandfather" because none of them actually were

women at that time. And it is wonderful to see those young people come in to the Lieutenant Governor's Suite—into “the castle,” as so many of them call it. They have never been in the legislature before. This teaches them something about our current system of governance but also teaches them a little bit about the history. And so they wander around looking at the paintings and the artefacts and ask questions and come away saying, “You know that important woman talked to me about my dad.” And it makes the occasion all the more special for some of our young and upcoming citizens.

I have also had the opportunity to award excellence through awards to journalists in the ethnic media, researchers in applied and social sciences, or young creative Aboriginal writers, and to applaud many other outstanding Ontarians who are simply demonstrating effective citizenship in the interest of all of us. They include a Toronto police sergeant who risked his life to help an American soldier under fire in Kandahar, Afghanistan. They include a professor from McMaster University whose research into cardiovascular disease is helping to shape global policies for prevention and treatment. They include singer Gordon Lightfoot now, who could not enjoy this job being on stage with Gordon Lightfoot, a national treasure whose evocative poetry and music are of course known around the world. They include the senior citizen from Burlington, whose expertise as a volunteer with the Red Cross is such that he is called

upon to help with natural disasters and emergencies across Canada and the United States. And that is just to name but a very few of the extraordinary Ontarians who are making a mark on the world as well as on our province.

And the final role that I play, as some of you may be aware: It has been a tradition in the last several years for lieutenant governors to choose a theme or themes for their term in office, from citizenship, culture and the arts, accessibility, Aboriginal literacy to the promotion of the rightful place for women and girls. And each of my predecessors left indelible marks through their selflessness, their hard work and dedication. This is really an opportunity for each lieutenant governor to shine a light on important issues—issues that transcend politics and time, issues that would benefit from some systemic thinking and genuine dialogue with multiple perspectives and multiple sectors.

When I was invested, I decided to author a slightly different approach. And that was because I wanted to start by listening. To that end, I have been spending the first months of my mandate hearing from Ontarians their ideas about Ontario's place in the world. We stand at such an interesting moment in history, living as we do in a fast-changing, interconnected, and very complex universe, where the world's most important problems are also those of Ontario. I mentioned in that address, three main challenges that I think face all of us, and they are all interrelated challenges. The first is to assure responsible and inclusive prosperity

by harnessing a strong and healthy innovation ecosystem to create opportunities for all of our people. How do we fuel and secure dynamic economic vitality and productivity? How do we develop talented, diverse and highly skilled work forces? How do we create opportunities for young people and jobs that provide dignified work?

The second and related challenge has to do with the fragility of our planet, and that is really our mutual vulnerability with others around the globe. I would like to think that our citizens in Ontario understand that a healthy environment is the foundation for life on earth. We are among the most scientifically literate people in the world, but the question is whether or not we have the imagination and determination to set ambitious goals to mobilize our talents, our energies and our environmental resources in a shared vision of what our future would look like.

And our third challenge as we protect the environment and develop economically will be to ensure social cohesion. This year alone has been a time when we have seen firsthand tribalism around the world exploding into violence even on our own doorstep. We have the great good fortune to live in a free and open society in which all races and creeds are respected, and we view our ethnic and religious diversity as a source of strength; however, although we live in one of the most pluralistic and tolerant societies in the world, we cannot afford to become complacent. With changing demographics—that mainly means those of us that are

growing older—and with increasing poverty, homelessness and mental health issues, we much reach across divides, get to know each other better, humanize one another and create spaces both public and private where we can work and play together in just and sustainable communities. Generosity of spirit, tolerance, and commitment to social justice must continue to be nurtured.

Ontario and the world are really mirror images of each other. To succeed at home, we must contribute to the world; to contribute to the world, we must be successful here at home. We are, as the poet John Donne wrote, “involved in mankind,” so how can we contribute to the rest of humanity, and what can we learn from each other to meet the global and local challenges that we face in common? To achieve an Ontario that works for everyone will require uncommon dedication, creativity and energy. And I invite all Ontarians to join me in this challenging yet exciting journey into our shared future.

I thank the Empire Club for inviting me here to say a few words with you today. Thank you for being such an attentive audience. And I would like to leave you with one parting thought: We generally think of peace as freedom from war, but we are not at peace if there is not enough food to eat, if there is not adequate shelter, if people are sick and cannot get medical care, if they are impoverished and cannot escape poverty’s grip. In these terms, millions of our fellow human beings on this planet cannot be said to be at peace. So at

this special time of year, whether you celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas or Winter Solstice, in the name of The Queen, and on behalf of all Ontarians, I wish you and your families a happy holiday season and a peaceful and prosperous New Year to come.

Thank you. Merci.

**Note of Appreciation by Matthew Rowe, Manager,
Operations and Partnerships, Prince's Charities
Canada; Director, Empire Club of Canada**

Thank you very much Andrea. Thank you so much, Your Honour. The annual Christmas Luncheon with the lieutenant governor is a great tradition for the Empire Club. And I think the reason for that is because, you know, we have many politicians come here and speak at this podium, but Christmas and the holiday season is a time for coming together, for putting aside one's differences. So I think it is very appropriate that we do not have a politician at this time of year, but, rather, someone like yourself who is able to represent all Ontarians under one common banner and with the goal of making us a better society, a better place and better people.

I believe it was former Lieutenant Governor Hilary Weston, who described the office of lieutenant governor as being a fragile one, as one that is always struggling to prove its relevance. And I think that that is the same with the monarchy in general, but it is through adaptation, through change, that it remains so strong, so, at the same time as appearing so fragile, it is extraordinarily strong. And it is one of the reasons why Ontario and Canada and, indeed, all of the Commonwealth around us, enjoy such a high standard of living, such a high standard of governance. It is because of the strength of this system that is rooted in a

human being. It is not all about a piece of paper or piece of fabric but, rather, a living, breathing person. And I think that rooting that in our basic humanity is one of the reasons that makes this such a great system.

I want to thank you again for your kind and inspiring words, and I think I speak for all of the guests gathered here today when I say that I think you are going to make a tremendous representative for Her Majesty. I think she is very lucky to have you.

Thank you so much.

Concluding Remarks by Andrea Wood

Thank you, Matthew. I would like to thank our generous sponsors of today's lunch: IBK Capital Corporation, thank you. Mr. Discount and Eric Jackman, thank you very much, for sponsoring student tables this afternoon.

I would like to thank the *National Post* as our print media sponsor. This meeting will be broadcast on Rogers TV.

Follow us on Twitter at @Empire_Club and visit us online at www.empireclub.org.

Thank you all for coming. I wish you and your families very happy holidays, and we look forward to seeing you in 2015. Thank you.