

The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, P.C., Chief Justice of Canada

Remarks at the Opening Ceremony for Allard Hall

Faculty of Law, The University of British Columbia

September 23, 2011

Your Excellency, Mr. Point, Chancellor Morgan-Silvester, Mr. Levine, Vice-Chancellor Toope, Dean Bobinski, Members of Academe, Justices, distinguished guests — the list goes on too long. It is truly an honour to be here before you this morning.

I am among those who thought this day would never come. I suffered for many years in the east wing where new faculty members were housed. It was said that my office had the best view in the world. The only problem was I had to stand up and practically get whip-lash to get a glimpse of it. Those who apologize for the building said, well, at least it keeps the elements out. But even that wasn't true. As all of us who worked and learned in that building know, buckets were the main decorative element along the corridors. The plants thrived however, and so did the students, and so did the spirit.

When I came up the hill this morning, I had my first ever glimpse of this new, wonderful building. I had no preconceptions and I didn't know whether I'd like it or not, but all I could say was 'wow'. It is truly a magnificent and transparent structure, full of light and positive vibrations. I am sure, as the Dean says, that it will guide this institution in the years to come to do great things for justice.

Students come to law school for many reasons, but underlying the multitude of interests that lead them to law is a desire to use the law as a tool of justice. Justice is innate to every sentient human being. It is hard wired into our brains and into our values. Early philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle were preoccupied with justice; and literature, from Shakespeare to our modern crime thrillers, attest to the centrality of justice in human thinking and human affairs. When we understand this, we understand how important it is that we provide the very best education to the next generation of lawyers, academics and judges. The work they will undertake is not a luxury, it is not a frill, it is essential to individual fulfillment, societal stability and economic growth. In preparing for this task, it is important that the lawyers of the future are given the right tools, the right skills and the right environment.

The building we are inaugurating today is a fundamental part of this process. No longer is the Faculty of Law burdened with a building that simply, as I said, keeps the elements out. As of today, it's the proud guardian of a building that will sustain and inspire everyone who passes through its doors for generations to come. It's my hope that this building will function as a gathering place where the rule of law is perpetuated; where justice is promoted; where service to the public is idealized; and that through its architecture and design, it will inspire.

I am most honoured and deeply gratified that you have allowed me to be part of this very special day. Thank-you.