

Director's Speech

*places of emphasis are noted in italics

Good morning talented graduates, devoted staff and proud family members.

First off, I'd like to take a moment to thank the many organizations, funding centres and individuals who have contributed to the success of [SCHOOL NAME] and its graduates. Our extensive list of supporters makes it difficult to mention each one individually, but I trust they understand how appreciative we are for their aid.

I'd also like to extend my gratitude to our many dedicated instructors and administrative staff for their commitment to ensuring the success of our students. I know I'm not alone when I say that there are few things more rewarding than watching our scholars recognize they have the power to make their dreams a reality. And it didn't even take them magic or luck, just hard work and determination.

But that's all I'll say of dreams. Students—you've spent the last several months working your heart out. Today, I want to reflect on the education you discovered both *within* and *beyond* the classroom walls. My hope is that you'll retain the knowledge you've gained in the classroom, but I also urge you to remember lessons learnt *outside* your textbooks or the test questions you studied for. As John Adams insightfully says: "There are *two* types of education. One should teach us how to make a *living*, and the other *how* to live." Education isn't just about facts, statistics or knowledge. It's also about living with compassion, dignity and a sense of responsibility.

Why does this matter? Well, I'm pretty sure years down the road you won't remember *all* the classroom material you spent late nights studying. Or the detailed textbook scenarios of how to deal with the countless problems you'll encounter as a personal support worker. But that's okay, because I trust you'll learn best from experience once your education is put into practice.

However, if there's one thing I *do* hope you'll remember when you think back on your experience at [SCHOOL NAME]—it's that learning how to support others went hand-in-hand with learning how to support yourself. Because this was more than just a school for the majority of you—it was like a second family. A place where Christmas parties and potlucks were shared with classmates and friends. A place where the staff weren't impersonal or unreachable, but quite willing to offer you personal support and friendly guidance. A place where you could count on some hot coffee and tasty treats to be waiting for you in the morning...and I'm sure you'll all agree that my banana bread is second to none.

In reshaping your relationships with your peers and teachers, I saw the barriers that usually exist between school and community break down. I watched individuals come together *despite* times of transition, upheaval or uncertainty. Most importantly, I witnessed your ability to move beyond the limitations of your own experience and better *empathize* with others, both colleagues and patients. And in the end, that's what being a personal support worker is really about.

I say this because when it comes to making a living, you could've chosen a less mentally and emotionally demanding career. Or even one that made your pockets fuller. Almost everyone would welcome a life of riches, I suppose. But by choosing to become a personal support worker, you've demonstrated the value you place in a life *of* richness. In a world where repetitive and automated jobs are taking over, you decided to pursue a calling; something that you'd love doing. You chose to participate in the human service field—something that requires *compassion* and *imagination*—in other words, a job that can only be done by someone who loves what they do. A career that still relies on the human element. For this, I *commend* you.

So when you leave here today, all I want to ask of you is that you don't forget why you came. Today you're being recognized for successfully completing the Personal Support Worker training program. But as Newton Baker said, "The man who graduates today and stops learning tomorrow is uneducated the day after."

While you came here to learn, many of you will continue your education and complete your R.P.N. and R.N. training, or explore other opportunities within the human service and healthcare fields. And whatever path you take, the truth is that you'll face tough times in the future as you have in the past. You'll experience your share of setbacks and challenges. You'll have to readapt again and again.

Regardless, I don't want you to judge yourselves solely on your professional accomplishments, but also on how well you've treated people who have

nothing in common with you but their humanity...and the way you've learned to live through helping others.

Life-long education means you have the ability to learn, determination to succeed, and the desire to make a difference in your own life and the lives of those around you. And that's why I know you'll be perfectly fine when you leave here today to test your new skills *not* only in the workforce, but within your daily lives. Because in your personal support worker training, this is what we've taught you—to keep a positive attitude, be respectable and adaptable, and to be *interdependent* and *independent* in equal measure.

And so I hope you see today as a *beginning*, not an end. Although you're sitting here now as a graduate who has finished what you came to do, when you leave I encourage you to continue embracing learning—as you graduate from one year to another, one job to another, one relationship to another or one experience to another.

I'd like to finish with a reminder of how each and every one of you has touched me in your quest for personal and professional growth. I'm *honoured* to be standing with you here today to celebrate your accomplishments. Thank you so much for being a part of our community and congratulations on your success!