

Adel Sedra's Farewell Speech at his
Retirement Celebration on May 30, 2012

In accepting David Johnston and Amit Chakma's invitation to come to Waterloo, I knew it was going to be a challenging and exciting assignment. I did not, however, know that it was going to be so much fun. I really and truly have enjoyed leading this great Faculty over the past nine years. A number of tonight's speakers talked about the accomplishments of Waterloo Engineering, and as you would expect I most certainly agree! However, these accomplishments were made possible by the hard work of many people. This was not and can never be a solo performance. Indeed the Faculty has had a great leadership team. I was fortunate to have worked over the past nine years with about three dozen individuals who at various times served as Department chairs, associate deans and senior staff. This is the group that oversaw the development and the implementation of our two strategic plans, Vision 2010 and its sequel Vision 2015. The latter was published only a couple of weeks ago.

Our next Dean, Pearl Sullivan, was a member of this leadership team and I am absolutely certain that Waterloo Engineering will continue to thrive and move forward under Pearl's leadership and in a few short years will be counted among the top very few engineering schools in the world.

As Dean, I have enjoyed the generous support and wise counsel of a group of prominent industrial leaders; alumni and friends of the Faculty, who served on the Dean's Advisory Council and the Dean's Development Council. A number of them are with us this evening. My sincere thanks go to all of them. I would like in particular to single out the two individuals who have provided tremendous leadership to these two councils: Fred Grigsby and Savvas Chamberlain; Fred and Savvas, your support, encouragement and friendship have been greatly appreciated.

Since I will be retiring soon, I would ask your indulgence to allow me a few remarks about my career. I have been truly fortunate to have had a career devoted to the advancement of higher education. Not only is the cause great but the company is wonderful. Where else would I work, on a daily basis, with bright, highly motivated people, be they students, faculty, staff or alumni. Where else

would I get to measure my accomplishments by the success of my colleagues and by the work our graduates do to improve the quality of life of our fellow citizens and to create a better world for everyone.

I have spent the past 43 years at two of Canada's great universities: The University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo; two very different institutions, each with its distinct personality, shaped by its history and its mission. Both share an unwavering commitment to excellence and represent the diversity of Canada's higher education system, which in my view is one of the best in the world.

For 25 of these years I had the privilege of playing leadership roles in these two universities. I enjoyed these roles immensely and recommend University leadership to my younger colleagues as a most fulfilling and satisfying endeavour. I should, however, hasten to add that in my own case, none of these roles were planned. Those of you who know my interest in planning will be surprised to hear that this most certainly did not apply to my own career. In any case, as they say, "one thing led to another" and here we are more than 40 years later. The common thread in all I did whether in teaching, research or

academic leadership was the need to understand how things worked and to put an order to what appeared to me on first sight to be chaotic. I wrote my book on microelectronics to understand this subject and put an order to it so that I can explain it to others. Thirty years and six editions later, I don't think I have wrapped my mind around it completely yet!

In leadership, I attempted to re-organize administrations so as to deliver programs and services in more effective and efficient ways. I tried to design structures that fit the people we had rather than mould the people to fit existing structures. I always believed that most people want and need to contribute, but for whatever reason there can be barriers preventing them from achieving their aspirations. That's where leadership comes in, and when the barriers are removed and people succeed and thrive, the rewards are immense.

Many of you have been asking about my future plans. First, contrary to my original intentions nine years ago, I will continue to live in Waterloo, for I have grown to love and enjoy this community. The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering will be providing me with an office in the beautiful

Engineering 5 building and I hope to use it from time to time. I do intend to remain active and to continue making a contribution to the cause of higher education perhaps through consulting. The one thing I will not do is run a major organization on a full-time basis.

I derive tremendous enjoyment from teaching and writing. Thus, I hope to do some teaching from time to time. As well, I have two major writing projects in the planning stage. So, I will be somewhat busy but will make sure that I will have sufficient time left to play with my beautiful granddaughter Stella who was with us here earlier this evening.

I have tremendously enjoyed working with great people over so many years and I am delighted and honoured some of them are here tonight. I will refrain from mentioning names for undoubtedly I will miss some.

So, colleagues, former and current students, collaborators, mentors, friends and family, let me just say: Thank you! You have all helped in making my various endeavours successful and my career rewarding. And for those who worked hard to make this evening a happy and memorable one for me, a special thank you.

Good evening.