# Convocation 2015: June 2, 2015 Afternoon Ceremony part 1

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[BAGPIPES PLAYING]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

DON TAPSCOTT: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated. I'm Don Tapscott, and I'm the chancellor of Trent University. And I'm also proud graduate myself. I've had more than my share of honors over the years, but no greater than to be the first alumni chancellor of this great institution. And I'm actually one of four Tapscott boys that graduated from Trent, every two years. My mom's kind like a machine, just kept putting them out and sending them off to Trent.

And I'd like to begin by giving a heartfelt thank you to Mother Nature for delivering this a spectacular day. Mother Nature, you really brought it on. Thank you so much. Although some of you in the audience may notice a couple little clouds over there. It's kind of upsetting, but just stay calm and it will all be good.

Students graduating this week are sharing a special milestone with us because this convocation marks the 50th anniversary of Trent. It's been a great year, and celebrating your graduation is pretty much a perfect way to wrap it up.

For 50 years-- I sadly say with some experience-- Trent has been challenging the way that we think about the world and learning itself. And one of the parts of good news in that is that Trent graduates are in demand. And I know firsthand that as a Trent grad you are uniquely equipped and prepared for the exciting and challenging future that lies ahead.

But the future is not just something to be predicted; it's something to be achieved. And I think, in fact, you will shape it. With your Trent experience you have the tools to take full advantage of the opportunities around you and, for that matter, to reinvent yourself multiple times throughout your life.

This is your moment. It's your time to imagine, to create a life of prosperity, but also a principled life of consequence that's uniquely your own. So heartfelt congratulations to each of you, and I now declare the convocation open.

[APPLAUSE]

LEO GROARKE: Good afternoon. My name is Leo Groarke. I'm the president, vice-chancellor of Trent University. I will share with you that this is my first year as president. So this is my first set of convocations. And I'm very delighted to welcome you all to the ceremony today.

I want to wish a special welcome to people who have joined us from different places across Canada and also internationally. I will tell you that this morning, after this morning's convocation, I talked to families from Uganda, the Bahamas, and Saudi Arabia. And to those families from those countries I want to say that you should be especially proud of your children, not only because they fulfilled all the requirements for the degree, but they have survived Canadian winter at Trent University. And you might think that's a joke, but ask them what it's like to cross the Faryon bridge in the middle of January. It's a real challenge. But we believe we have made your children stronger by doing so.

I'm hoping that everyone here will enjoy this ceremony but also come away from the ceremony with a sense of what Trent is and what Trent strives to be. So let me on behalf of the university begin by acknowledging that we are located in the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinaabe, adjacent to the Haudenosaunee territory in eastern Ontario. I think especially in a week when Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission will present its file findings on the regrettable history of the residential school system, it is important to honor and recognize the traditional occupants of this land. And doing so I think-- and I'm proud to say-- is very much part of the Trent tradition.

I did want to emphasize today to the graduates that this is a day about you. So I want you to soak it up. The attention is rightly paid to you. In celebrating your successes I would say we're also celebrating the successes of the families and friends who have supported you in completing your degrees. I would like to say on behalf of all the rest of us to the graduate, thank you for allowing the rest of us to bask in your glory today.

As you leave Trent, I hope you will take with you some fond memories of what Trent is. And one of the things I'm trying to do at convocation this year is each day to talk about some things that are going on at Trent that will give you some sense of the flavor of who we are. One of them has been already mentioned by our chancellor, but I will repeat that this is our 50th anniversary. That makes this a very special convocation. I think it means that Trent is established. It's an established institution. It has a fascinating history, and it's something to be proud of.

To the graduates, I want you all to know that I expect you to be back here 50 years from now for the 100th anniversary celebrations. Unfortunately, I won't be there with you. But I think you'll have a really great time.

I thought I'd also today highlight another development at Trent. And this is that Trent will be announcing this week the formation of two new schools at the university. One is the Trent School of the Environment. And the other is the Trent School for the Study of Canada.

And I would mention that both these schools highlight particular aspects of the world in which Trent has carved a very special niche. On the environmental side, one way to understand Trent is to look at my shirt. I will say my shirt has gotten a lot of comments today. The shirt is green because Trent is green. Green is Trent's color, but it goes much deeper than that. Trent is about the environment, not just about the beautiful environment that you see around you, but it's also an institution that has made its niche in studying the environment and in doing research on the environment.

I think it's an exciting time for Trent. I think that as we look to the future there are great prospects and opportunities for Trent. I would ask our graduates to remember that, to stay in touch. I'd like you to think that when you leave you're still part of the Trent family, just a different part of that Trent family, the alumni family, which is 44,000 strong.

Mr. Chancellor, I now want to call on our vice president of External Relations, Julie Davis, to introduce today's convocation speaker. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

JULIE DAVIS: Chancellor Don Tapscott is one of the world's leading authorities on innovation, media, and the economic and social impact of technology. He advises business and government leaders around the world and has authored or co-authored 15 widely read books, including the 1992 bestseller, Paradigm Shift. His 1995 hit, The Digital Economy, changed thinking around the world about the transformational nature of the internet.

Two years later he defined the Net Generation and the "digital divide" in his book Growing Up Digital. His 2000 work, Digital Capital, introduced seminal ideas like the business web, and was described by Businessweek as "pure enlightenment." Wikinomics, How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything was the bestselling management book in 2007 and was translated into more than 25 languages.

As a university community, we are very proud and pleased that Don is the first Trent alum to hold the distinguished role of chancellor. Like many of you here, he received his degree at Trent with a major in psychology. I now call upon Chancellor Don Tapscott to address convocation.

[APPLAUSE]

DON TAPSCOTT: Mr. President, graduates, friends, and family, heartfelt congratulations to each of you today, and to those who share in your success. It's now a tradition of two years that the chancellor would give one of the convocation speeches. So you lucky folks got me today.

So convocations speeches like this are designed to inspire the graduating class and give some helpful ideas for the future. So let me dispense with that task quickly. Graduates, today is the first day of the rest of your life. Don't be discouraged. Turn lemons into lemonade. Winners never quit. Good things come to those who wait. And what doesn't kill you can only make you stronger.

Buy a good suit, and more important, good shoes and a good shirt. It's all about the accessories. Hello. Use sunscreen. brush your teeth and floss. I can't overemphasize the importance of flossing for dental hygiene and fresh breath. Increase the proportion of vegetables in your diet. And please never show up for job interview drunk.

All right. That about sums it up. Are there any questions? Seriously, Trent has always been a very special place for me. And as I mentioned earlier, Trent distinguishes itself by its focus on collaborative learning, where students are not only passive recipients of information but work together to test new ideas and concepts. I mean, some concepts like the fine art of essay procrastinating, or how many weeks can a person reasonably avoid doing laundry before someone calls the cops.

Seriously, I came to Trent because I wanted a personalized and interactive learning experience. And even back then, Trent seemed to provide that. And it was a good choice. At Trent I wasn't just a passive recipient of knowledge, but I was a co-creator of my own intellectual capacity.

Now you may not know it, but the Trent model of collaborative learning is in stark contrast to models of the past. The Industrial Age really was an age of scale and of standardization, where someone with power and control pushed out standard units to passive recipients, mass production, mass distribution, mass marketing, mass media, mass education, where we pushed out products and advertisements and TV shows and lectures. And the model of education was focused on the teacher. It was one way. It was one size fits all. And students were passive in the learning experience.

Well, lectures did provide an opportunity for some excellent REM sleep, which has a whole host of important health benefits. I should have mentioned that. But it's some of the more expensive sleep on the market. But anyway.

So as a baby boomer, I was pretty comfortable with this whole industrial model, because of boomers grew up watching television for 24 hours a week. And we were broadcast to. And everything seemed to be I was a passive recipient of something else. I mean, the baby boomer family, mom reported to dad, and the kids reported to mom. And the communications all went one way. In our family there were five kids. I was the eldest, so the dog reported to me.

But this was enshrined in popular culture, like Father Knows Best. We went to church on Sunday where a minister broadcasts to us. Companies pitch advertising to us one way. My teacher broadcast to me at school. When I entered the workforce I had a boss who wanted to tell me what to do and supervise me.

And this is all changing. And it's good. And the Trent model's important because today's young students have grown up interactive and immersed in interactive media. Communicating, rather than being the inert and isolated viewers of television, like their boomer parents.

And soon this is going to extend. We won't have to just sit there and watch the Toronto Maple Leafs lose. We can actually shriek directly into the television. And what's more, the players will hear us. So this has got a lot of potential.

So collaboration is important, not just because it's a better way to learn. The spirit of collaboration is penetrating every institution in all of our lives. So learning to collaborate is actually part of equipping yourself for effectiveness, for problem solving, for innovation, and lifelong learning in an ever-changing knowledge economy. And the digital revolution really accelerates this.

Now, some of you out there may have heard of the inner web. It's this place where you go where all of these computers are connected. Some of you may have gone to the Google. Has anyone here gone? Just ask it a question. It gives you answers. And you can put up instant grams, and go to the whole twitterverse and just tweet away, or twerp or whatever.

Seriously, I'm going to invest in the internet. I'm just waiting for it to take off. Seriously, we're entering a new age of participation where collaboration is spreading across the world, kind of like measles in 2015. But I digress again.

And teams are critical to almost everything. So rather than superiors and subordinates, peers can now come together and create value, sometimes on an astronomical scale. So thousands of volunteers collaborate in creating Linux, the world's most important computer operating system. Hundreds of thousands of amateur astronomers are part of Galaxy Zoo, mapping the galaxies.

Millions of people have worked together to create Wikipedia, an encyclopedia in 240 languages. And according to the big study that's been done, the quality's roughly the same as the one created by the learned professors and Pulitzer, Nobel Prize winners. Just an interesting fact on that, the most visited page of all time is a tie between the entry for bacon and the entry for a book I wrote, called Wikinomics. But anyway.

And hundreds of millions of people participate in networks that involve private companies, governments, civil society, individual. I call them global solution networks. They're trying to make the world a better place.

So that's not to say that there isn't a dark side to all of this. 20 years ago I wrote a book called The Digital Economy, which my publisher, at least, says was the first bestseller about the web. And I just did a 20th anniversary edition where I wrote a number of new chapters. And I had to reflect on what's actually occurred in the last 20 years. And in the book I said this is a time of vast opportunity and promise.

I said it's also a time of potential danger and some bad things could happen. Quote "There could be dislocations in labor markets, with old industries and jobs disappearing and the rise of structural unemployment." Well, look at today. This is the first time in human history where we've had economic growth but we haven't had commensurate job creation.

And there are many causes for this, but the biggest one, weirdly, is technology. The technology originally attacked the blue collar part of the workforce. And now there's a new wave of the technologies that are coming out that are targeted at the heart of every part of the workforce. And the whole debate between Uber and the taxi industry-- where Toronto was shut down yesterday over taxi protests-- whoever wins that, it'll be a Pyrrhic victory, because a decade from now they'll all be autonomous vehicles driving around.

The Goober-- Sorry, the Uber. It's partially owned by Google. I should call it the Goober. The Google autonomous vehicles has gone 1.5 million miles. It's never had an accident. Actually it had one. It was rear-ended from behind by a human.

So we're witnessing youth unemployment levels in the Western world from 15% to 16%. So this situation is not only immoral, it's a great powder keg.

The second thing I said back then, I said this could happen. We could have the destruction of our privacy in an unprecedented and irrevocable manner. Well, this is a big topic on the minds of a lot of thoughtful people. And since the book was written, there's been a big change in how we safeguard our privacy.

Back then I said, be careful what you put online. It was called data minimization. Well, that's no longer feasible, because everywhere we go we're laying down a trail of digital crumbs. And what happens in Vegas stays on YouTube. So new approaches are required. I'd like to tell you what they are, but I can't because I have to protect my privacy.

Thirdly, I said there's a danger that we could have a severe bipolarization of wealth. Well, income inequality is one of the biggest topics today. It was listed as the number one global risk at the World Economic Forum this year. And it's the topic of the number one bestselling New York Times book Capital in the 21st Century by French Marxist economist, Thomas Piketty. Now while many disagree with his remedies, it's very difficult to debate his scholarship, which is very, very sound. How can this be? We have growing wealth, but we also growing social inequality.

I'll mention one other. I said, what will be the impact of the digital economy on the quality of life? Well, this is a big, hotly debated topic. As for the idea that technology makes us stupid, many measures of smartness, including IQ, standard test scores, number of university graduates, suggest otherwise.

However, there are concerns. Back then in the book, I quoted the brilliant thinker Alan Kay. He said, "Another way to think about the roadkill on the information highway is will there be billion who forget that there are offramps to destinations other than Hollywood, Las Vegas, the local bingo parlor, or the shiny beads of the shopping network." So these are all big changes that are happening real-time. And it's going to be up to your generation to reverse the dark side, to ensure that the promise is fulfilled.

Now on a cheerier note, today you're graduating with specializations in high-demand fields, chemistry, physics, computer science, geography, psychology. Psychology worked out pretty well for me. And not withstanding unacceptably high youth unemployment levels in Canada, you're probably thinking you chose pretty well. And so you did. Employability in those fields is high. Nearly all of you will find work related to your field of study, most of you quickly, nearly all of you within a year of graduating.

But you also may be surprised to know that your colleagues who are graduates in the arts and humanities and so-called other soft fields will also find work related to their passion as well.

However, your generation is really facing these new challenges, not just from the prospect of technology-induced structural deficiencies in labor markets. You know, when I graduated I was set for life. That's the way I viewed it.

Today purely from a knowledge perspective, you know that you're set for, I don't know, 15 minutes. And what's important when you graduate is not just what you know, but it's your capacity to think. It's your capabilities. It's your ability to solve problems and research and put things into context and understand the interrelationship between things and your desire to reinvention your knowledge base. Most recent estimates, you will reinvent your entire knowledge base seven times in your life. So very different. We just thought we graduated and you kept up in your chosen field.

Some of you-- and this is great-- will become entrepreneurs or join small companies, because collaboration opens up a whole new world of opportunities. See, little companies can now have all the capability of big companies without the main liabilities. I never dreamed of creating a business when I first graduated from Trent. But today many, many young people will do that. And when I became an entrepreneur, it was the best decision I made.

Talent can be outside your boundaries now. My daughter co-created a little company called Knixwear. It's reinventing women's underwear. High-tech, multitasking underwear. Your underwear should do more. Underwear for the good. Don't ask. Anyway, they have a little company of five people that's a global manufacturing and marketing juggernaut. And they source their patented technology from Korea, and they have marketing people on the internet.

Furthermore, more and more society will create wealth through networks of collaborators rather than Industrial Age behemoths, a word, by the way, that I learned studying social sciences at Trent. So this is very important, and I would like you each to think about this. It's important for the country because, among other reasons, 80% of new jobs in Canada come from companies that are five years old or less. And if we're ever to overcome the so-called jobless recovery, entrepreneurship will be the key.

So wherever you are, I'd just like to ask you to design your life. And I don't just mean your professional life. I didn't have to design my life. Everything was pretty clear. Design your media diet. I didn't to do that. There were three TV stations.

One downside of the digital media is it's really causing a breakdown in public discourse. We can now follow our own point of view. And there's a real danger that you may end up in some little self-reinforcing echo chamber were all you hear is your own point of view. And the purpose of information is not to inform you, but maybe is to give you comfort.

Read the newspaper, online or otherwise. Don't just scan. Read whole articles. I force myself to read an article from beginning to end, every day. Listen to the CBC, or what's left of it. And develop your BS detectors, because there's lot of BS out there in cyberspace.

Live the values of your generation. Well, maybe except in the endless photos of your brunch on Instagram. You leave that one behind. And develop a plan for lifelong learning, not that you know where you're going to go, but that you put in place the machinery to enable you to reinvent your knowledge base.

Continue your university experience, perhaps by an additional degree, but also what a full life, that's purposeful, that's transformation and makes a difference.

Collaboration is going to affect you in another way, as citizens. Trent describes itself as "the champion of collaborative learning that's personal, purposeful, and transformative." And many of you came to Trent because you care, you want to make a difference, perhaps in your profession but also in the world. And this is a time of great transformation.

So by all means, go out, get a good job, set up a company, work for a government agency, be a teacher, be prosperous. You know, Spock, "Live long and prosper." But we need more from you than that. And my hope is that you'll not only be effective professionals but that you'll be agents for change in these troubled times.

Because I'm sure it's no revelation to you that our society has many problems. And my generation is leaving you with not the best situation. Kind of sorry about that. Many of our institutions of the Industrial Age that have served us well for decades are in various stages of being stalled or frozen or in atrophy, from old models of government, the financial services industry, science, education, media, the corporation, they seem paralyzed. Leaders of institutions, many parts of our society have lost trust. The global economy has stalled, and the world is deeply divided. It's too unequal, it's too unstable, and it's too unsustainable.

And your generation is going to have to turn the situation around. You need to find new solutions for our connected world. And each of you will have a role to play. You need to participate and change in your workplace, in your community, in your country, and in causes you to join as a global citizen. And you will need to teach your children well.

Now, I've never been more optimistic in my life about the future of things than sitting here looking at you. I believe that you're uniquely equipped to lead this change. Because as you enter the workforce in society, you not only have the intellect and the capability, you have at your fingertips the best tools ever for innovation, for research, for learning, for finding out the truth, and even for organizing collective responses. So your Trent experience will serve you well.

And as citizens, I hope that you'll demand a more transparent government and that politicians engage with you more than simply asking for your vote. That was the Industrial model. You vote; I rule.

Now, I don't mean to put too much pressure on you guys, but I'm kind of pinning all my hopes on the fact that you'll bring about a whole new era of democracy. We had a first wave where we created representative institutions, but there was a weak public mandate, and citizens were inert. You've grown up interacting, and you don't want to be the passive recipient of government, and that's good. Let's move to a second era that's characterized by more transparency, stronger representation, and a culture of public deliberation, and of active citizenship.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that each of you become a candidate for prime minister or leader of the world, or something like that. Change will happen for you in every home, in every community, every business, every research lab, every classroom, organization, every nook and cranny of society. And it's an opportunity for each of you, if you will it.

So I said my generation has not done the best job of ensuring that the world you're inheriting is a better one. We made some big mistakes, but your time has come. And with you rests the hopes of the world. Carry this mantle well. And hey, if you want to collaborate with me, I'm @dtapscott on Twitter. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

LEO GROARKE: Thank you, Mr. Chancellor, for your words. I would say I think it's fortunate to have you as chancellor. And I think our graduates are fortunate to join an alumni base which includes you among it. I'd now like to call upon our Dean of Sciences, Professor Holger Hintelmann, to present the candidates for all degrees.

HOLGER HINTELMANN: We ask that you hold your applause until all graduates have received their degrees and been congratulated by the registrar, Tracy Al-idrissi. Mr. Chancellor, I'm pleased to present for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Honors Program candidates whose names will be read, whom the Senate has duly declared worthy of the honor that they may receive the degree at your hands.

[READING NAMES]

Please join me in congratulating the recipients of Bachelor of Arts degrees in the Honours Program.

[APPLAUSE]

Mr. Chancellor, I'm pleased to present for the degree of Bachelor of Science in the Honors Program candidates whose names will be read, whom the Senate has duly declared worthy of the honor, and that they may receive the degree at your hands.

[READING NAMES]