# Convocation 2016 - Honorary Doctor of Laws Dr. Roy McGregor

## 5 minutes 59 seconds in length

[Trent University logo]

>> ROY MACGREGOR: Thank you so much Nadine for that very generous introduction. Chancellor, President, distinguished guests, graduates, parents who paid --I mean parents.

[Laughter]

It took me 50 years to get into Trent.

[Laughter]

So I don't know. You did what? Three or four years and you're already out. 50 years! I think maybe it had something to do with my grade 12 report card which I brought. So in the mid-1960s, Huntsville High School. I applied. English: 53. Slipping badly the teacher says.

[Laughter]

History: 37. Consistent.

[Laughter]

Algebra: 47. Chemistry: 49. I almost passed. French: 37. Latin: 31. Health and phys ed: 64.

[Laughter]

The principal of the school, Doug Stone, took a red pen and wrote right across the bottom

[Impersonating Doug Stone]

Going, going you fill in the rest Roy.

[Laughter]

So I didn't get to Trent. But I want to talk to you and I will try to keep it brief because I know it's cold and it's your day not mine. Second chances, making mistakes, learning from failure. They let me back into Huntsville High School in the fall. A new family moved into town. A very, very cute girl. I was very keen to ask her out. There was one hitch though. Her father was the new chemistry teacher. So I had to pick up my socks and I did I'm glad to say and that cute girl is still cute. She's sitting here.

[Applause]

So Ellen and I had four children, two of whom came to Trent. Both graduated with three-year degrees after being here for four years. Why is that?

[Laughter]

I think that's how they make money.

A long time ago Ken Dryden and I wrote a book and there was a television production as well about home game. We were extremely interested in what makes talented people, prodigies. We did a lot of studies on – We'd spent a lot of time with Wayne Gretzky and with Walter Gretzky. I remember Wayne Gretzky saying at one point – he said you know I didn't become the player that I am by 50-minute practices, structured play, or anything like that. It all happened in the basement, in the backyard, and in the driveway. Try and try again. Work on something until you get it right. We did a lot of looking into different aspects of learning, cognitive ability, and became interested in the work of a Swiss psychologist called Jean Piaget who said that with a child you have to let a child make mistakes because the only way you will ever really truly learn is from those mistakes and trying and trying and trying again. So making a mistake or having a failure is not a bad thing. It's something we tend to over protect our children from now. And structured plays a good thing.

In my profession writing, good writing, is actually good rewriting. You try it once, you do it again, you try it again, you try it again, you try it again until you think you've got right and even an editor is going to change a lot of it, but it is working at it. Another writer whom you will all be familiar with, J.K. Rowling, of the Harry Potter fame put up a whole bunch of her rejection letters on Twitter and on social media this spring. She wanted people to see how often she had been rejected. How many times people said that she couldn't do anything right and it wasn't even worth their taking the time to read her manuscript. Harry Potter only got published apparently because the eight-year-old daughter of an editor of Bloomsbury saw the manuscript around the house and started reading it and got heavily into it, loving it. Convinced – she convinced her mother to go have a good look at it as an editor and eventually you have millions and millions of books sold. She says, the author of Harry Potter, failure is so important. I've met so many people who don't want to try for fear of failure. Another writer, Agatha Christie – five years of rejections before anyone would take a chance in any of her books. Dr. Seuss was told his books were too weird. No one would ever want to read them. Lucy Maud Montgomery, a Canadian. Five years of rejection. She threw her book – the book that she'd written into an old hat box, left there for two years until somebody told her haul it out and let's try it again, that's Anne of Green Gables. 50 million copies have sold.

Never, ever give up. Keep trying. You're on your way and I'm going to give you a word of advice from the greatest philosopher Canada's ever produced, Wayne Gretzky, you miss one hundred percent of the shots you never try. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

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