

Families, teachers, friends. Welcome! Thank you for joining us in marking this milestone in our lives.

Class of 2009: We are here for no other reason than we worked consistently hard every moment since that first day 4 long years and 10 long months ago. Right? Right!

Consistency aside, the Beatles were right, it has not been a straight and simple road (okay poetic license for “long and winding road”). There were those times when we thought that high school would never end, and dropping out seemed a little too inviting; or when one pile of homework was simply replaced with two more, and sleep was always out of the question. Remember snoring in Math? Or Science? Or French? Or Chemistry? Or English? You do not need to be reminded of the difficult choices you have made. In spite of it all, we have our diploma in our hot little hands, and the Ministry of Education is not taking it back, in spite of the wretched provincial exams!

But you know these diplomas are far more than just a paper certificate. They represent moments of real epiphany formed when the energy of students and teachers meshes naturally. Remember that uplifting moment when we received our first good

mark on that test? The knowledgeable silence as a result of that earth-shaking argument we made in class discussion? That moment, when we were buried in a special book, when the mental fog suddenly lifted? Or in class, we suddenly felt enlightened; for example when we figured out Combinatorics in math, or le conditionnel in French. What about in History, when we saw the pattern of events repeat themselves, or when in Bio, we found out that 4 bases- A, T, C, G - contained the keys to life? And then in PE, when we finally did the 39 push-ups required for Phys Ed? This is the real fabric of our diplomas – not paper, not cellulose, not trees. Knowledge!

Let us take a moment or two to reflect on our high school experiences. It began, of course, waaaaay back in Grade 8; and if truth were to be told, a shudder goes down my spine when I think back to those days. Remember the first few days of High school? Remember how mom and dad used to drive us to school, as if we were children?!? Ohhh God... Worst of all, some of us are STILL driven! Remember the hormone-laden year of grade 9? That dance where we were certain we had found our soul mate, only to be utterly devastated two days later when someone else was holding her hand? English came in handy, I contemplated doing what Romeo did in *Romeo and Juliet*, but Friar

Lawrence wasn't available. Remember grade 10, and driving lessons, when you dented dad's car? Well Dad, the truth is out now. Grade 11, do you recall the elaborate plans we masterminded to skip class, only to feel really dumb when we were easily found out? And then, Grade 12. Teenage angst and pranks were replaced with a more serious maturity that brought you to this place today.

Scholarship and tradition brought us here, and Prince of Wales is a place steeped in tradition: I have been told that Arts Week has been going on for ten years. Where else do you find Mariachi bands in the hallways. There is science week as well, where we discovered cacti can cure cancer. And who could forget the annual musical? We've seen *Angst*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. Come Christmas time, we always have the cross-dressing teachers to look forward to at the annual Christmas pep rallies. Never again will I be able to think of sugarplum fairies without hairy legs. And there's our school's long history of athletics; Table tennis, ultimate, basketball, badminton, rugby, the list goes on and on. Git R Dun!!!

Friendships are buried in this parchment as well. Our high school has brought us all together from different paths, and in these last 5 years united us in friendships that will

last a lifetime. TREK reunions, Mini Reunions, Main school reunions. In 25 years will we still know each other as friends? With some of the couples I see out there, you may even STILL be married! All these are contained in this parchment.

We are a product of our experiences and our learning, but what of our dreams? Is there a future Nobel Laureate or astronaut amongst us? Is there someone who will discover the cure for cancer or create an iPod so small you may accidentally inhale it? Are there future brain surgeons or Hollywood actors amongst us? If this economy continues, we may even be lucky enough to have a future McDonalds's manager amongst us... But we won't be eating meat then, will we? You see this is contained in this parchment as well. Although they are dreams at the moment, they most certainly are not unattainable.

We have graduated. At this point there is no denying that the future is upon us; we are on its doorstep. Before we cross the threshold, let us reflect one final time.

We are seated with a diploma in our hands because our own hard work has brought us here. However, look around you at the number of people in this room. Look at our friends and family, who have come here tonight to watch us receive recognition. The

path seemed tricky at times, but look at us now. Class of 2009, before we pass through these doors we must thank those who helped to bring us here: Thank you Mama, Papa, Nonno and Nonna, Yeye and Nainai, Lolo and Lola, Tio and Tia, thank you for supporting us with one hand, and cracking the whip with the other, you have kept us going. Thank you teachers, you have always gone above and beyond the call of duty to make our lives miserable, (just kidding really wonderful) and helped us even when we were reluctant through the door.

So here we are, standing on the doorstep of the future with the keys in our hands. We've unlocked the door, and we've said our goodbyes. Before we step through, we must acknowledge the reality of the world that awaits us. It is the same world we have been a part of for the last 18 years, but now it's even more challenging as well as providing an entirely new perspective. No longer are we considered children.

Responsibility is ours now, like it or not. University, college, girls, guys and careers will consume our lives as we find out the meaning of "working for a living". We inherit a world with larger problems that *previous generations* could not fix; we have a polluted planet, wars continue in the name of peace, our economy verges on going bust, and

hunger and diseases reign. However, if there is one group of people who have an amazing shot at making the world a better place, it is ourselves. We have the key, we have the knowledge, and we'll soon have the experience to handle whatever is given to us. ICH DIEN, I serve – let this motto act as a guiding light for our future aspirations. It is not about you or I, it is about all of us together. As the Dalai Lama once said, “Our prime purpose in this life is to help others, and if you can't do that, at least don't hurt them”.

