

## **Canadian Women in Communications - Power Hour**

**June 18, 2002 Park Hyatt Hotel**

Thank you, Dennie, for your warm welcome. I'm delighted to be here this evening to help Canadian Women in Communications re-launch the Power Hour in its new home here at the Park Hyatt.

Since I became aware of CWC, I have been a true supporter of your work and of the many doors you open for women – doors to information, to learning, and to productive professional relationships in the business community. I think I can speak for many women in saying that a national organization like CWC would certainly have been of great benefit in the days when I was getting my career off the ground!

When I look back at how I started out after university – in my first job as a high school teacher -- I had no idea that would be the first step on a challenging road which would take me from teacher to journalist ... to documentary filmmaker ... to provincial Cabinet Minister ... and now to TVOntario.

It's funny, but as you get older, often a pattern emerges as to what you've done and what you do. This is certainly true in my case. The pattern, all through everything I've done, is my commitment to ... and interest in education. This is important because everything you do in a job contributes to your reputation. In my case early on I developed a reputation for caring tremendously about what I was doing, working hard, and delivering.

But when I look back now, and only now, I can see another pattern ... which is the role my contacts have played in all I've done - contacts not made with any goal in mind because one didn't really think about "networking" 20 or 25 years ago to the degree one

does now - but contacts made over the years in the many groups and organizations with which I've been involved because of my interest and belief.

Over my career I have met and worked with hundreds of people, maintaining and growing many diverse relationships along the way, and I can tell you that the stronger and wider your network, the more chance you have to succeed ... the more likely you are to see the step ahead, the more chance you have to move into that place ... and the more likely you are to have the moral support from your network once you're there.

Since tonight is all about networking, I want to tell you a bit about its role in my career, and hopefully, offer you a few simple suggestions on how to take make networking opportunities work for you.

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Personally, I'd like to think I've taken something special away from each job that has stayed with me to apply to future experiences – and believe me, in every instance networking played a key role, probably because I gathered contacts as I went from job to job, and they stayed with me over the years. They were people who shared my beliefs in the importance of teaching and the responsibility that came with it.

When I moved into television, I focussed on issues that I felt hadn't had enough attention: such as youth crime, battered women, homelessness, single parents, sexual harassment, capital punishment, and mental depression. Because of my interest in these subjects, I became involved over time with various organizations and individuals working in these areas. Looking back, I can see now that it was only a matter of time before I would be approached to move into the political world. I had become so involved in so many areas - it was a natural progression.

I ran for the provincial legislature in 1995, and in 1997 was appointed Ontario's Minister of Citizenship, Culture, and Recreation. I guess it was there that I realized for the first time the value of a strong network to one's career.

I learned many things during my years in politics, but the importance of building a supportive network was certainly key. I learned how important volunteers are – and I saw that elected officials really owe their election to the hundreds of people who help them in so many ways ... from raising money, to knocking on doors, stuffing envelopes, and giving moral support. I know I would not have succeeded had it not been for this network. You may well ask where all these people came from. Certainly there were the regular politicians, but many others came from my networks of fellow volunteers in the many areas where I had been involved over the years.

Since my appointment as chair of TVOntario - again the result of my career in education, teaching and as Chair of Ryerson, my political career in Government - my contacts remain enormously important in many ways.

To fill you in for those who don't know, TVOntario is the province's educational broadcaster. Our entire program schedule in English and French is carefully planned and structured to engage the minds of people of all ages.

We deliver educational content through television and the web. Last year we created our new E-learning Centre, which is now providing a range of online services that supplement Ontario's education system. That's what makes us "Where Education Matters - on air and online".

Our newest web-based educational product, officially launched at the end of March, is called CareerMATTERS. It's a Web site that provides learners of any age with the tools and resources to develop a personalized path to employment. Sponsored by Bank of Montreal, CareerMATTERS includes information on all the high school and post-secondary courses needed to enter any given field of work.

So how does CareerMATTERS have anything to do with networking?

When we were looking for sponsors for CareerMATTERS, I called Tony Comper, the head of BMO, whom I had worked with when I was President of the Canadian Club, and who I knew shared my commitment to education. I also called on Angela Ferrante, the former writer at Macleans ... and now head of Donations at BMO ... and explained our project. Needless to say, those contacts didn't hurt in our securing the Bank's support for CareerMATTERS!

Our other products such as our TVO Kids' DON'T SIT STILL TOUR and our Reading Rangers to promote literacy secured sponsors through contacts I'd made in a similar way.

Those people with whom I had worked in the past knew of my commitment to education and youth, and for my part, I felt comfortable picking up the phone to arrange an appointment for me to present my strong arguments for their support of TVOntario.

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People who have common interests work better together and networking makes this possible. Here are a few suggestions, which might make your networking work for you.

You see, it's not enough just to attend events or belong to associations (but it's a start) ... you have to actually get out there and DO the networking.

My first suggestion is that you always set a clear objective that relates to your particular professional situation. Maybe it's as simple as introducing yourself to a specific person you want to meet. Or maybe your goal is to meet five completely new people in your industry. In any case – establish your objective in advance and stick to it. Take the initiative and go to places where you're likely to meet the type of people you want to meet, gather your courage, and meet them. For some people this can be difficult. Even for us in the communications field, meeting people and developing productive relationships can be intimidating.

Remember the value of making an effort, and practising it, and that you will gain confidence from approaching new people. It's a skill you can learn.

President Lyndon Johnson's daughter, Lucy Baines Turpin, lived in Toronto for a few years and I remember her telling me that she learned her tremendous skills in meeting people and connecting with them from her Dad. She said that her father always made her and her sister, Linda, tell him three things about three people that they met at any event they attended. She said she learned quickly at an early age to ask questions ... where are you from, what do you do, all the "usuals" - and it has stayed with her. She had developed and built on that skill as she grew older. It's a good lesson to learn because people love to talk about themselves, and it's amazing how they warm up once they've confided in you...and this creates a bond that you can build on and develop.

Secondly, you can only succeed in making the most of an opportunity if you've done some research first and you know who your audience is and what their interests are. Once you have an idea of who you'll be dealing with, you'll be better equipped for the

challenge of starting a conversation. So remember, before you go, understand what you can bring to the event, and what you can take away from it.

And it's always best to come prepared with your message. If you need a particular person to serve on a committee or partner in some business project .. or whatever .. go with your objective clearly in mind. For example, recently I had to attend an event that I wasn't really looking forward to, but I knew that someone who could be a key partner for us at TVOntario might be there, so I prepared my argument and read up on that person's interests, in the hope that I might meet him and could talk about something of interest to us both.

The process sounds a little calculating, and I don't mean to sound that way or to advise you to be that way ... but if you are genuinely interested and committed to what you're doing at work or in a volunteer capacity, it really is genuine and doesn't suggest phoniness.

Thirdly, and this is key, once you have made a good new contact, be sure to follow up. Make a call, send a note, or drop an e-mail. This will not only show good initiative, it will firmly establish your connection and your message in the person's mind.

The founder of Granada TV, the late Sidney Bernstein, always followed up meetings I had with him by sending me a book that had to deal with something we had been talking about. Peter Herrndorf, the former head of TVOntario, now at the National Arts Centre, is a master at this and often sends clippings of mutual interest to his contacts. It's amazing the impact this kind of gesture makes on people.

And lastly, you must remember that networking is never a one-way street. You have to be prepared to bring something to any new relationship. Whether it's your skill, your expertise, your advice ... or your own network of contacts or your support, moral, financial, whatever.

Of course, not every new contact will produce the result you're looking for – but as they say – you can't win if you don't play.

One last thing, women sometimes overlook the value of networking. Because of their balancing act between career and family, many women find it hard to make the time to network. Recognizing the truth of all this and that there are periods in a woman's life when she won't have as much time as a male colleague might, I still feel that if you're committed to your career, you should try to do a few things to expand your network, even in your busiest years. You can pick up later and do more.

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In closing, I would like to thank the people at CWC and all of you for this wonderful opportunity to speak with you this evening. I wish you all the best for a prosperous and successful summer. Happy networking!

Thank you.