

SFU Press Releases Collection

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Andrew Petter: backgrounder

January 20, 2010

Andrew Petter brings to the presidency of SFU a life-long commitment to education and extensive experience as a university teacher, constitutional scholar and academic administrator.

Petter recently completed a term as longest serving dean of the University of Victoria's highly regarded Faculty of Law where he oversaw establishment of an innovative new graduate law program, pioneered significant Aboriginal initiatives, and secured funding for major facilities upgrades.

Petter was born (1953) and raised in Victoria (Oak Bay). His family moved to Nelson, where he graduated from L.V. Rogers secondary school as class valedictorian.

He began his post-secondary studies at Nelson's former Notre Dame University (where his father was a professor) and did a stint in the early 1970s as CKKC Radio's open-line show host. There, he got a first-hand taste of politics interviewing the likes of newly elected premier Dave Barrett and former premier W.A.C. Bennett.

An avid follower of U.S. politics, his own political experience began at 19 when he was asked to serve as executive assistant to local MLA Lorne Nicolson.

Petter attended the University of Victoria (UVic) in 1976 to study political science.

Encouraged by the law school's first dean, Murray Fraser, he entered the law program in 1978.

Graduating from UVic Law in 1981, he received the Law Society of BC Gold Medal for finishing top in his class, and went on to earn an LL.

M (Public Law) with first-class honours from Cambridge University.

He briefly practised law in Saskatchewan before becoming an assistant professor at Osgoode Hall Law School (York University) in 1984. He joined the UVic Faculty of Law in 1986. He has taught and written extensively in the areas of Constitutional Law and Public Policy, and is currently a member of the B.C. and Saskatchewan law societies.

Petter taught in the UVic law faculty for five years before heeding Premier Mike Harcourt's call to run as NDP candidate in Saanich South in the 1991 provincial election. Petter spent the next decade as an MLA and held a series of key cabinet posts:

1991-93: Minister of Aboriginal Affairs

1993-96: Minister of Forests

1996: Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Seniors

1996-98: Minister of Finance and Corporate Relations, and Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Relations

1998-2000: Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, and Minister of Intergovernmental Relations

2000: Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Human Rights

During his political career, Petter played an instrumental role in the Nisga'a treaty negotiations and led the province's efforts to work with First Nations and the federal government to create the B.C. Treaty Commission.

He also oversaw the establishment of B.C.

's Forest Practices Code and of the creation of the B.C. Knowledge Development Fund to support investments in research infrastructure.

As minister responsible for the Provincial Capital Commission, Petter brought about the restoration of St. Ann's Academy and spearheaded the development of the Galloping Goose and

Andrew Petter: backgrounder

Lochside trail systems, a popular walking, running and cycling network stretching from Sooke to Victoria (on old railroad rights-of-way) and to Sidney. For that, and the parks and greenways he helped to create, Petter earned the tag of 'Minister of Rails and Trails.'

Petter chose not to run in 2001 and instead returned to UVic to resume his teaching career. He soon filled the vacancy of acting dean of the university's faculty of law and went on to serve as dean—the first graduate of the school to serve in that position—from 2002–2008.

While dean, the faculty created a new interdisciplinary graduate program and collaborated with Northern partners to deliver the Akitsiraq Law School for Inuit students in Nunavut.

As well, Petter founded a new National Aboriginal Economic Development Chair, and during his tenure the number of Aboriginal students in the faculty rose to more than eight per cent of the student body. He also secured funding for major facilities upgrades, including a \$5-million law library renovation.

Petter, who returned to teaching after stepping down as dean, was given an honorary citizen award by the City of Victoria in 2002 and received UVic's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2003.

He has written extensively in the areas of Constitutional Law and Public Policy, including works on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Canadian federalism. In 2008, he was awarded a residency as visiting scholar at the Rockefeller Foundation Center in Bellagio, Italy.

Besides running 30 km a week, Petter spends his leisure time cycling, reading, and attending theatre, opera and movies with his life partner Maureen Maloney. He is a fan of political biography, and has a passion for Marx Brothers and Frank Capra films. His son Dylan is currently pursuing graduate studies in England.

Comments

Comment Guidelines

Barry Shell

Even more detail at Petter's Wikipedia entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Petter

Tim Akers

You can bet that Petter will use his spheres of influence in the BC Government and Law Societies to ensure that SFU is able to land a Law School. A Law School is definitely overdue for SFU, and know the power brokers have brought in the right person to get the job done. SFU LLB/JD for 2011/2012?? You betcha! Considering TRU got a Law School before SFU! Then again, there is a Med School coming to SFU.

Arry Dhillon

Thanks for the link Barry.

Just to comment on Tim Akers comment.

A law school would be a great addition to SFU and truly hope one is formed in the future.

SFU will hopefully have a medical program available soon. It will not necessarily be a medical school.