

## **SFU Press Releases Collection**

These archival copies have been generated from web press releases maintained and originally written by SFU Communications and Marketing. Where possible, an effort has been made to preserve the public comments left on the website as well as any included photos or other images. All textual content should be faithful to the original press releases; contact numbers have been removed but they have not otherwise been altered in any way. However, this collection of documents spans multiple generations of web authoring software and not all formatting will be exact.

## **Andrew Petter: President and people-person**

January 20, 2010

'You've got a superstar.

,

That's just one comment made about Andrew Petter, the incoming president of Simon Fraser University, by colleagues, students and friends, past and present. Here are more:

David Turpin  
Harry Arthurs

Martha Piper  
Grand chief Ed John

John Borrows  
Gerry Ferguson

Geoff Plant  
Frank Borowicz

Jennifer Bond  
Jeremy Webber

Jerry Lampert  
Don Avison

Murray Rankin  
Hart Shouldice

Mike Harcourt  
Yvonne Lawson

David Turpin, president, UVic:

'He's thoughtful, he's intelligent, he listens, he's a team player, he builds the team, and he's strategic. He sees the role of the university not just in education and research, but also in connecting with society and serving it in many ways. He's going to be a great addition to the post-secondary education system, not just at SFU but also in B.C. and across Canada.

,

Martha Piper, former president of the University of British Columbia:

'Andrew Petter is an inspired choice for the presidency of SFU. He brings to the position an exemplary academic record and years of government experience-both of which will serve him extremely well as he leads this outstanding university.

'Andrew is extremely bright and is extraordinarily capable of leading SFU at this time in its development. He will be a wonderful advocate for not only SFU but also all universities

## **Andrew Petter: President and people-person**

within the province, here at home and nationally and internationally.

'In dealing with Andrew when he was minister, I found him to always advocate for post-secondary education. He understood the issues and worked with us to advance universities in British Columbia. I am extraordinarily pleased that he has agreed to assume this position and know that SFU is fortunate to have him at this important time for post-secondary education in this province.

John Borrows, professor of Aboriginal justice and governance at the University of Victoria (UVic) and currently Robina chair in law, public policy and society at U of Minnesota:  
'Andrew has an incredible ability to connect with people. His interest in social justice goes way beyond the law and politics. He's someone who genuinely tries to encourage those who haven't had much of a chance in life. He founded a law school in the North . . . and brought to it his own academic skills and integrity to educate those students to the standards of the UVic law school. It became a destination—even at 30-below and no sunlight."  
[The 'law school in the North' was the Akitsiraq Law School—a law program for a one-time cohort (2001-2005) of Inuit students offered in Iqaluit, Nunavut. It ran as a satellite of the UVic law school, in partnership with Nunavut Arctic College and the non-profit Akitsiraq Law School Society.

] Geoff Plant, former B.C. attorney-general and author of the Campus 2020 plan for B.C.

's post-secondary education system:  
'Spending time with Andrew is a chance to discover that a critical reason for his public success is his genuine interest in people, one-on-one, one at a time. You never get anywhere in a conversation with Andrew before he's found out how you are and what's happening in your life. It's a very special quality."  
Jennifer Bond, former UVic law student, now at Yale:

'I was recently describing Andrew to a friend. I said that he was brilliant, ethical, and driven and yet unbelievably modest, generous, and fun. An incredible combination to find in one person! Andrew is a visionary who leads with both wisdom and charisma.

Jerry Lampert, former president and CEO of the Business Council of B.C. (and now a B.C. Treaty Commissioner):  
'I would advise my former friends and colleagues in the business community to get to know Andrew. He's honest, straightforward and has great intellect. He approached me with a plan to create a chair of National Aboriginal Economic Development, a combination of business and law, at UVic, and asked about how to approach the business community. We were able to help, but it was Andrew Petter who did it. It allowed him to develop contacts in the business community that will serve him and SFU well in the future.

Murray Rankin, Victoria lawyer and longtime friend:  
'You've got a superstar. He listens very well to others, and is very effective at bringing out the best in people and working toward the best in solutions. When he was minister of forests, we had a meeting in Grand Forks. Andrew walked into the room [full of] angry citizens. He turned the situation around, and at the end we had a sense that we could work together. . . .

Mike Harcourt, former premier of B.C.

:  
'As a person he's intellectually very sharp, curious and quick. But watch out for his wicked sense of humour! Plus he has deeply held values on environmental and social justice issues, particularly around aboriginal rights, economic development and self-government.

'He became minister for aboriginal affairs in November 1991. Within a month he had signed B.C. onto a federal government-B.C. First Nations Summit Treaty Process agreement. B.C. for the first time in 130 years recognized aboriginal rights and title. By September 1992, a B.C. Treaty Process and Commission had been established. Andrew's skills and commitment were important reasons why these historic changes took place so quickly and well.

**Andrew Petter: President and people-person**

,

Harry Arthurs, former president of York University and former dean of Osgoode Hall Law School: 'He broke my heart when he moved to UVic. However, I forgave him and followed his career with admiration. He has a real talent for dealing with difficult people and situations. He's honest, straightforward and a genuine democrat. But he's also an activist and a strategic thinker, capable of making tough decisions and following through with them.

,

Grand chief Ed John, a leader of the B.C. First Nations Summit Task Group and a hereditary chief of the Tl'azt'en Nation in northern B.C.

:

'In his former role as a minister, to establish the process to negotiate treaties in B.C., that was a big undertaking. We never completely agreed on everything-it's not the nature of the business-but he worked with us to move the province's agenda forward. He understood the history and the dynamics.

'And I found he doesn't jump to conclusions; he is pretty meticulous about gathering information and sifting through it before he makes a decision. He should be a judge, not a president. I'm kidding! I think he'll do an excellent job at SFU, judging by his term as dean at UVic, and his relationship with students. Students are his focus.

,

Gerry Ferguson, Distinguished Professor of Law, University of Victoria:

'Andrew is foremost a warm and caring person. His passions, in nearly equal portions, are higher education, social justice, and baseball. His legacy after seven years as dean of the law faculty is that he came to a very good faculty and left it even better. I have no doubt he will do the same at SFU.

,

Frank Borowicz, governor and past chair of the Vancouver Board of Trade, and a founding father of the UVic Law school:

'He's a very high-energy guy, and determined. He has very high standards and he's disciplined. He's a scholar, an intellectual and a teacher. The fact that someone like Andrew would apply his intellect and qualities to public service is a tribute to him and our system, regardless of political labels. It is one hell of a commitment, and Andrew made it to serve the community.

,

Jeremy Webber, Canada Research Chair in Law and Society, UVic:

'Andrew Petter was a superb dean here, vigorous, energetic, with excellent judgment and a keen sense of what a university should be doing. He is a leader of vision and skill. He was a wonderful communicator to students and to the public. He also has a keen sense of public responsibility - a quality that is essential in a public institution that has a crucial public role to play in educating the youth of the province and contributing to the growth of knowledge and expertise.

,

Don Avison, former president of the Research Universities' Council of B.C.

:

'I believe Professor Petter will be a very good president and a great addition to the SFU community. He has an extremely sharp intellect, he is curious by nature and he welcomes the opportunity to engage others in helping to shape policies and directions.

'I knew him first as a constitutionalist and I thought his work was consistently excellent and often provocative. When I worked with him on the Social Union Framework Agreement-another Canadian exercise in "Constitutionalization by Exhaustion"-he was a powerhouse and he brought some moments of perfection to what was otherwise a very imperfect process.

Hart Shouldice, former president of the UVic Law Students Society (in 2007, during Petter's last year as dean):

'Andrew's continual willingness to listen directly to student concerns speaks to his diplomatic nature as an administrator, and his actions time and again reflected a students-first attitude and an understanding that an institution is nothing if not for them. I think it is safe to say he may be the only law school dean in Canadian history to engage in a lunchtime arm-wrestling match with a student!'

## **Andrew Petter: President and people-person**

Yvonne Lawson, administrative officer, UVic faculty of law:

'You guys are so lucky. He's wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. He trusts people, he's a solid delegator; he has confidence in his people. It's exciting to work for someone like that. He thinks things out, and you understand where his decisions are coming from. Even when people don't agree with the decision, they understand and appreciate where it came from.

,

[Comments](#)

[Comment Guidelines](#)