



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Honorary Degree Citations The degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, conferred on Dr. Cohon Tuesday, June 14, 2011

Mr. Chancellor, doing business by doing right...George Cohon exemplifies the best of socially responsible business leadership. His career demonstrates that doing the right thing for customers and for their community is not only compatible with business success, but a driver of that success. His career is a case study in how bold, creative, and difficult business decisions can make a positive difference in society and contribute to corporate profitability.

As a corporate philanthropist, Mr. Cohon is well known for his leadership in founding the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Canada and Russia to support families of children who require hospitalization. Thousands of families in communities in BC and across Canada have been the recipients of the charity's efforts. His early recognition of the need for corporate support for Rick Hansen's Man in Motion Tour rescued the tour on its Canadian homecoming and led the way for other organizations to participate, raising millions of dollars for spinal cord research. Mr. Cohon's engagement with the Rick Hansen Foundation continues twenty five years later.

A fearless pioneer and determined global entrepreneur, Mr. Cohon opened the first McDonald's franchise in Eastern Canada and later became the Canadian Chairman, President and CEO. Seeing another massive opportunity that would be daunting to most, Mr. Cohon coined the term "hamburger diplomacy" to describe the 14 years it took to launch McDonald's in Russia. Navigating a difficult and ever changing political landscape, Mr. Cohon's decision to enter the Soviet market at a time when the US president described the Soviet Union as the "evil empire", was a bold contribution to perestroika.

When the political barriers finally came down, he faced a barrage of major issues that he addressed by making a series of investments demonstrating commitment to the local Russian community. For example, the massive local supply chain investments required to get the right potatoes for fries, the right cucumbers for the pickles and the right processing to meet McDonald's global product standards ultimately led to improvements in agriculture for independent farmers in Russia far beyond just the needs of McDonald's.

George Cohon is a role model for entrepreneurs, managers and business leaders who believe that success in business is inextricably linked to a commitment to service to the communities in which they operate. A visionary business strategist, marketing legend, negotiator, international diplomat, entrepreneur, leader, community builder, humanitarian he is also a nice guy with a great sense of humour.

Among other awards, he has received the highest public service awards from three continents: he is an Officer of the Order of Canada; he was awarded Russia's Order of Friendship and the Israel Prime Minister's Medal. He has received the Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship, an honorary doctorate from University of Haifa, is a member of the Canadian Business Hall of Fame and recipient of countless other distinctions. We are honoured that Mr. Cohon joins us today.

Mr. Chancellor, on behalf of the Senate of this university, I ask that you now confer upon George Cohon the degree Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.