

Eulogy – Derek Smyth

By John Chai

Danielle and family, I was sitting down there and was wondering what else I could add to the praises that previous speakers had remarked of Derek. Today, we celebrate the life of Derek. May be I can continue with describing his service at the Business Environment Council?

Derek represented Gammon Construction on the BEC Board of Directors since 2004, around the same time when I joined BEC's Board. We were both rookies then. Recounting positions that Derek had served: He had chaired BEC's Finance Committee before he becoming the Chairman of the Membership Committee in April 2012. Derek was also an active member of BEC Headquarters Transformation Project Task Force. Overall, he was instrumental in helping to set BEC's strategy and implementing many programs which accounted for BEC's recent successes.

Derek is exemplary as a business leader in embracing sustainable development as the business case. He had successfully led and participated in many industrial initiatives in advocating a balanced approach in managing the economic, social and environment trilogy. Such are well documented in research reports, white papers, and policy submissions, all of such could be accessed publicly. I would, however, want to discuss matters that are less documented: our feelings toward Derek.

I have asked staff and colleagues of BEC to describe Derek in two to three words or in a phrase. I received many responses and could only recite a few here. "Derek is warm, unpretentious and is a gentleman." "Derek is always grateful, he is dedicated and sincere." "Derek is genuine and he is a caring leader." "He is a true leader and a force of inspiration." "Derek is a passionate contributor." "He is fun-loving, genuine, and passionate." "Derek is full of energy, he is passionate and caring." "Derek is a warmhearted friend and teacher...."

To me, I don't have two to three words or a phrase to describe him. I have only one word: Derek simply "knows".

In environmental terms, he knows the limited natural resource of the planet Earth. He knows that actions that we take and lifestyle that we choose to have would have an impact on the environment. He knows that we are no more than a custodian of the environment for the future generations. He knows that when we leave, we want to leave behind the minimum of our environmental footprint, so that future generations can enjoy the planet as much as we have and our previous generations had.

In humanity terms, Derek knows that he was amongst the privileged. The privilege is certainly not in term of monetary wealth but that wealth of his in “the ability to give”. Through his belief and his actions; he had impacted positively future generations and those less privileged.

In our span of life, we cross many pathways of others. Some of those, we wish they can get off ours or we can get off their pathways sooner. For people like Derek, how we’d wish that he stayed longer on his pathway. ...

When we looked back at our pathways, we had found that Derek had left for me and for you some indelible footprints: Footprints not of the environmental kind but that of humanity. I know that for the rest of the journey on my pathway, I will be looking back at these footprints, and seeing the meaning of “environment” and “humanity” through Derek’s lenses.

With that remark, I wish you peace.