

# EP01: PETER HOY

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

**Kerry Wright:**

Welcome to “The Path of Public Service”—a podcast series from QCC that shares intimate conversations and transformational stories of people who serve...on our behalf. QCC is proud to showcase the dedication of those who make decisions for the greater good, and strive to leave the world a better place, for all Canadians. All personal views expressed by guests and our hosts are their own and would rarely be agreed upon. While we can't offer opinion that speaks to everyone's likings or sensibilities, QCC will continue to recognize those in public service, offer a kaleidoscope of perspectives, and operate in good faith to build trust with you, our QCC member and all public citizens.

I'm Kerry Wright. After serving the public for 2 decades as a career specialist, I recently took my own career leap into producing content for both podcasts and radio. It is my privilege as Producer and QCC's host, to help present uniquely special stories that recognize the countless contributions of public servants.

In this episode, I talk openly with Peter Hoy. Having previously served 3 decades in Public Service, you'll hear his perspective on what makes a good public servant....how working in the public arena can play an even more expansive role than in corporations, and what actually surprised him the most about his very “dramatic” career change that cast aside misconceptions of public administrators while transforming just about everything in

Peter's life. I hope you enjoy this very real and uplifting story.

Thank you so much for your time, Peter and welcome to People in Public Service.

**Kerry Wright:**

As our listeners have just heard, your career journey as a public servant, spans 3 decades. Most of that time you held a variety of senior leadership roles...all of which helped facilitate both meaningful initiatives and significant organizational change. Whereas most people think about a career change, few will take action on those thoughts.

To actually step out of their comfort zone and even fewer will do so in later life. But you did. After 30 years in public service, you not only changed your career but you also took a big leap and successfully transitioned into an entirely different field as a professional actor. It's rare. I think it would be fair to say that you're a man who makes change happen. Okay, so I have 2 quotes for you here, and I want to ask you which one you think more applies to you. The first quote was by Jay Leno and he said you were either change or die and the second quote is from a doctor Alan Goldberg and he says, “There's a time to preserve at a time to let go. Your ability to know the difference will be your greatest strength. Which of those 2, resonates with you more?

**Peter Hoy:**

Definitely, the latter, Dr. Goldberg.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes

**Peter Hoy:**

I think the former is a little too abrupt in that sense. Whereas, the latter is more reflective of my journey and the journey of many people. At least the ones who have to start thinking about it.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes. Thank you.

On your path to public service. We'll start chronologically. I think that's probably a good place to start. When you were a boy, and you had dreams, what did you dream you wanted to be when you grew up?

**Peter Hoy:**

That's a really good question, and a challenging one for me because I had a rather difficult childhood in that I was 1 of 5 children who was raised as a single mother. My father deserted our family when we were all very young. Well, I was really an infant. And so, we had some pretty tough times at home. Materially, emotionally as you would imagine...with a young woman raising 5 children on her own back in the 1960's in Toronto.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes..

**Peter Hoy:**

So, a lot of it wasn't aspirational—my thinking. It was living day-to-day and trying to make the best of a difficult situation. And, I know throughout my childhood from a very young age, I struggled many times. Often, notes would be coming home from school. I had conduct issues. I had emotional issues. So, it was very, very difficult. And, it wasn't until I actually left home... not voluntarily, but as a 6-year-old to live with relatives, did I then find myself in an environment which was more conducive to a calmer, growth

environment. So, that lays some context, in terms of what my childhood was like.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes. It's difficult.

**Peter Hoy:**

It was a lot. Yeah.

**Kerry Hoy:**

It does provide context and I appreciate you sharing that because it sounds like there was hardship, and some difficulty.... I have to say, that probably changed you in ways that were advantageous, but also provided challenges as well.

**Peter Hoy:**

Very true.

**Kerry Wright:**

Would you like to share some of the ways that you found it gave you resilience?

**Peter Hoy:**

That's a very good word to use because I think that's what it did. At the time, certainly it was difficult and challenging. But, because I had to go through it, I really had no choice. Like, leaving home at 6 to go live with relatives, I was provided with opportunities that I wouldn't have been given at home. And, those opportunities, certainly, were what provided me with the foundation that I could move forward and live a productive life. Namely, the fact that I could enrol in sports and participate in athletic activities. I was very athletic as a child and it wasn't until I'd been with my uncle and his family (My aunt actually was my official guardian) they allowed me to participate in sporting activities and supported me at school in primary right up to high school. So, they opened up doors that probably wouldn't have been opened up to me had I stayed with my mother.

**Kerry Wright:**

It sounds like it offered you some refuge where you could now start to create a new identity for yourself, a new sense of community, and in some ways, start to test your own talents—your own skills at an early age. Probably....maybe even younger than most people might.

**Peter Hoy:**

Very much so. I was very fortunate in that regard because I do recall at the young age...I had to learn how to make my own lunches, how to sew, how to iron....do those things that, you know, I wouldn't otherwise have had to do...if I didn't have to do it myself. I also took on part-time jobs at a very young age—12-years-old, I took on paper route. At 14, I worked at a rink rat at the local arena, working long shifts. I wasn't going to school. I probably mopped more rooms and more floor space than most people have. I swept up a lot of garbage. But that was what I had to do if I wanted a bicycle, if I wanted to buy a record, if I wanted to buy a new pair of jeans. I really had to earn that money on my own. So, I had to be very independent. And, anything I really wanted, I had to do on my own. Yeah. So, I became very self-reliant and developed a lot of resilience as a result too.

**Kerry Wright:**

Wow. You learned responsibility early. Whereas, there are many people that...at that age are sheltered from such activities. And, here you were being an adult as well as a child. When you look back and you're reflecting, what was the message you were telling yourself at that young age? Were you starting to set goals for yourself earlier than most?

**Peter Hoy:**

I wish that I could say that I did, and that I was thinking that, but no, I think I was very confused as an adolescence, as a teenager, in terms of my situation.... what made me

happy. But, magnified by my situation, I think I was pretty aimless at that time. I worked. I always took care of myself and I was tough. You know, I wasn't thinking in terms of what my career aspirations were going to be or what is my potential as a human being, at least, not at that time. But there were a number of factors in my life...had huge influences on me, that changed that...that allowed me to open up my eyes and provided me with those opportunities to get the responsibility and enlightenment that one needs to map out their future. Besides some excellent teachers who were there for me...my family...although I didn't spend all my time with my 3 other brothers and my sister. Certainly, they had an influence on me. My older brothers were very successful in life and very responsible too. They were almost like a bit of a father-figure to me. Especially, my oldest brother, Fred, who is a cardiovascular surgeon now. Coaches in sports had a huge influence on me. Just growing up and having people who cared about you, and were responsible....and not in a permissive way but in a tough way—who basically taught me to be a man—you know, take responsibility and treat people well. Treat yourself well. Those things are important.

**Kerry Wright:**

I love the fact that you said, "teach me to be a man" and you know, some people might think that.... that's being a strong man but you just talked about values that are ethical. So, I love the fact that you have that perspective.

**Peter Hoy:**

Yeah. That's important because being a man in my eyes...growing up...was being a tough guy and that wasn't necessarily being responsible or being emotionally responsible. But, having the right mentors in the form of teachers and coaches and my older brother.... I learned that being a man

is more than being a tough guy. It's being responsible, it's being empathetic, it's being a good person, it's being a kind person. And, those things had a real influence on me.... I think, I hope.

**Kerry Wright:**

That's amazing. So, your path to your first step...your first major step to public service...was not a linear one. Do you recall what the catalyst for that was...to think seriously about a career in public service?

**Peter Hoy:**

My education. I was fortunate enough...that in my family, 2 older siblings went to university and many of my cousins. I saw that as a path for me. Although my marks were not the greatest, I worked hard enough that I could get accepted to go to university. I had to take a few years off between high school and university to earn enough money to go because I wasn't going to get money from anywhere else, other than maybe OSAP student aid. So, I worked full-time at City Hall, in their civil service there as an 18, 19 and 20-year-old. This was my initial introduction to government and I worked full time as a very young person. That was helpful to raise money. So, I learned about the responsibilities of a public servant—the expectations, the discipline of working 8-4 and sometimes overtime, working in a team environment. So, those were helpful and they encouraged me to study politics in university. I went to the University of Waterloo. I enrolled in political science and I specialized in Canadian government in public administration. So, that kind of set the foundation for a public service career for me. Although, at that time, I didn't think I would necessarily get a job in the public service directly. But it did open my eyes and I realized I had a real keen interest in public administration and in the of government.... the machinery of government...let me call it that.

**Kerry Wright:**

Was it aligning with your ideals or was it more than that? Was there something else that was appealing to you? Because you spoke of your values, and of course, that is exactly what is exactly what public service strives to exemplify. What was the biggest appeal for entering and pursuing that avenue that aligned itself with who you were?

**Peter Hoy:**

I was a political junkie in university. I was very active in student politics at the university level. I was also active in municipal and provincial politics with a specific party. In my university days and afterwards. So, I was a real political junkie. I went to learn as much as I could about government and influencing government and pressure group behaviour. I found it very appealing.

**Kerry Wright:**

It's true what they say. People that enter public service really, genuinely are looking to make a meaningful difference.

**Peter Hoy:**

Very much so. And, I was fortunate that my education lay the foundation to understand how government works and sort of instilled in me that keen interest in the machinery of government and decision-making, the role of the public service and then my passion for real politics—party politics, and the partisanship of politics. So, that together created a path for me to find a position in the Ontario public service. I was kind of lucky too. I was working in the post-secondary sector after university. In fact, I was the executive officer of the Ontario Federation of Students. I think it's called the CFS Ontario now which is basically a student protest group. So, I was lobbying on behalf of students on post-secondary issues, at the provincial level. And, it was through that work, and a change of

government back in 1987, with the new Liberal government coming in, that opportunities did open up for people to get into the public service and start their careers. And, I was one of those people who was given that opportunity.

**Kerry Wright:**

And, it looks like you grabbed that opportunity and ran with it. Perhaps you can share with me or walk me through some of the highlights of your career and your contributions.... that you're most proud of.

**Peter Hoy:**

Good question. There's so many over 30 years. The most challenging position that I had was early in my career. It was my second job I took on. I was appointed as the executive assistant to the Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. And, that was a very, very difficult environment. It was an organization that had a huge backlog in cases that was on the front page of the newspaper more often than not. You know, a very critical type of environment. And, I had to deal with some very difficult issues. But it was an amazing learning experience for me because I got to work with some exceptional people. First of all, Katherine Frizee, who was the Chief Commissioner appointed by the Liberal government at the time. She was an extraordinary woman who I learned a lot from. And, she was succeeded by a woman named Rosemary Brown who was appointed by the NDP government that just came in. She was the first African Canadian woman elected to a provincial legislature and I served as Rosemary's Executive Assistant for a year. Both had a profound effect on my life because they were such strong women, intelligent women...yet with their own challenges, in their own lives. Katherine had a severe disability and Rosemary being an African Canadian woman...back at that time, and growing up in Canada...had her own

challenges to deal with too. So, I learned a lot from them, and always remembered them. That was a real learning experience.

**Kerry Wright:**

That's interesting. When I asked you to share your highlights, you immediately jumped to one of the most challenging. So, can I assume that when you are given a challenge and you're able to surmount that challenge or hurdle it, that feeling that comes afterwards is very rewarding and a sense of satisfaction?

**Peter Hoy:**

I believe that. Very much so. At the time it certainly isn't.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yeah.

**Peter Hoy:**

When you are going through those challenging times, you know, and you're tossing and turning at 3:00 in the morning, trying to problem-solve something or wondering how you're going to survive the next day, it doesn't feel good. But eventually, you do persevere and you do move forward, and it's when you reflect on those difficult times that you realize they are the most teachable moments because they brought the best out of you. You are forced to go beyond what you would normally do or expect of yourself. And, that's how you grow. You don't grow through success after success. You grow through your mistakes and through your challenges and the difficult times.

**Kerry Wright:**

Exactly.

**Peter Hoy:**

At the senior level of the public service, there's some extraordinarily bright, accomplished people who have done great things. I don't put myself in that category.

But I was pretty resilient. I've got a lot of wisdom; I would say and I work hard. And, I think that's what helped me through it all.

**Kerry Wright:**

Well, working hard seems to create luck sometimes. It's funny how those two are synonymous.

**Peter Hoy:**

Ah-hmm. Yep.

**Kerry Wright:**

So, I know that there was an initiative that you were very proud of called, Spirit. And, it was helping people develop recognition and camaraderie. And, what aspects of that made you feel particularly proud of that initiative?

**Peter Hoy:**

Well, I was proud to first of all...be selected as 1 of the staff members to sit on the Deputy Minister's leadership group, which was chaired by the then Secretary of Cabinet, Andromache Cara Can Santos. The membership was comprised equally of Deputy Ministers and select OPS staff. And, I was 1 of those staff that was nominated and appointed to that group so it was a real opportunity to work with some extraordinarily talented and committed people at the senior level. I worked closely with Deputy Minister, Jill Hutchins, the then Deputy Minister of Labour to develop the whole concept of Spirit. And, it was really based upon the premise that...it seemed there was lacking sense of team in the OPS. You know, we worked in different Ministries that are spread out across the province. Public servants are often the brunt of criticism. People think we're always on strike or that we're being overpaid. And, it was demoralizing. And, I felt that as a public servant, we have to tell our story—do what we can. Number one, internally to build a stronger sense of team. And, externally, just sort of let people know—

project where we could that we are part of your communities too. We don't see ourselves as being different. We do contribute as well as volunteers. We are very active in doing good things in our respective communities. It was a lot to take hold of, and when I think back on those days, maybe I was a bit naïve to not look at the scope and try to be a little bit more realistic with it. But we decided to give it a try through some pilot projects and we introduced for the wellness aspect, the OPS dragon boat team. And, we set up a chapter in Toronto and there is a number of regional chapters too that were set up and encouraged public servants to join the team. Dragon Boat is a real team-oriented sport.

**Kerry Wright:**

It is.

**Peter Hoy:**

You paddle is there together on the water, in the boat. If you are Deputy Minister or a mail clerk, you're still equal. Everyone is the same in a boat.

**Kerry**

Exactly. Yeah.

**Peter Hoy:**

And, you have to work together to find success. And so, we felt that was a really good pilot. And in fact, it really took off. And, I know a lot of public servants that got into Dragon Boat racing after that...that initiative. That was one, and I think that was really successful. Despite its limitations. We also wanted to highlight volunteerism in the public service. The fact that we know anecdotally that there were so many OPS'ers doing great things in our community outside of their work and we wanted to tell their story.

And so, we searched them out and we talked to people, and when we found stories or found people who were willing to speak

about what they do in their communities, we highlighted those stories in 'Topical', which was then a print magazine. And, some of those are very heartwarming. Some of the things that people did... sacrifice, you know, the time...and the extraordinary things they were doing.

**Kerry Wright:**  
I can imagine.

**Peter Hoy:**  
We also wanted to encourage people to get involved if they had a passion for something. For example, if they wanted to participate, in building a house say for Habitat. You know, where those builds were happening.... how they could get engaged. Inviting guest speakers in who could speak about team building and other things that were of interest to people. So, there were whole number of initiatives that we looked at, and introduced.

**Kerry Wright:**  
Did you find that it was successful in lifting the spirit of your peers?

**Peter Hoy:**  
Some of them have. The dragon boat initiative was a good example of that. The volunteerism initiative I think was good at that. It laid the foundation for 'Spirit' as it morphed into more of a volunteer type of focus. And, I believe too that the...a few years ago...about 10 years ago....do you remember there was that Syrian refugee crisis?

**Kerry Wright:**  
Yes.

**Peter Hoy:**  
And, that the OPS really jumped in and people volunteered to meet Syrians who are also Canadian citizens who are fleeing their home country back to Canada, and refugees when they arrived in Canada. I

think that was still under the auspices of Spirit, I'm not sure. That's the thing we were really trying to promote—the good work people can do.

**Kerry Wright:**  
Yes. Absolutely. I can understand why. As we said before, most people get into public service because they want to make a difference. And, that's certainly true but there are the realistic aspects but also the misconceptions and that certainly true but there are the realistic aspects but also the misconceptions and very rewarding aspects of it as well. What do you feel you would like people to know of what working for the public service might be like?

**Peter Hoy:**  
No. I think that's a good question and they, on both sides of the ledger. Let's start with the positives. There're so many opportunities that sometimes you don't realize until you're actually in the public service. It's an opportunity to work for.... say there's 30 different Ministries...it's the same opportunity as having a chance to work for 30 different companies because line ministries and central agencies all have unique mandates. That you can have a very, very different career...varied career I should say, if you so choose. And, you can be involved with human rights, sports and recreation, mental health, the environment, the Attorney General...you know...there's just so many opportunities to learn and grow as an individual by working in the public service. If you're willing. If you're willing to expand your horizons and you choose the right mentors, and you're willing to experiment. I know that I was very fortunate in that I had some very good mentors in my career. Most of them Assistant Deputy Ministers who have been Deputies. And, the one thing that I learned from them is...which consistently they would say, 'Don't be afraid to change careers, to try something different, try to get as much

experience as you can in all the different aspects of public service, whether it be in a program, working in a regional office, policy, central agency...try it all and see what your niche is. Don't be afraid to experiment. And, that to me was really important because you can have a rewarding career that way.

**Kerry Wright:**

Definitely. So, perhaps the public service is more exploratory and not as linear as we think it might be. When you think about the people that strive and thrive, are their commonalities among them. Is there a particular quality that seems to allow someone to thrive in public service, no matter their leanings, their talents or their orientation?

**Peter Hoy:**

That's a very good question, and it's a very subjective one—one that I thought over quite a bit, during my career and post-career.

**Kerry Wright:**

But, from your perspective.

**Peter Hoy:**

My perspective? I'll share that then, as a Change Specialist. The people I valued the most, the leaders that I valued the most were those who had very strong emotional intelligence.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes.

**Peter Hoy:**

Were those who put their people first and really focused on, you know, getting the best out of the people who were working for them—motivating them, treating them fairly, providing them with the professional development that they needed. It was very, very objective. It wasn't oriented just to themselves. The leaders that I've worked with that I perhaps that I had less respect

for, were those who it was very clear that they were 'in it for themselves'. And, you could really tell that when push came to shove. Who would take accountability for an issue or deal with a tricky problem...because you're always going to get those wicked issues at the senior level in the public service. Who was there for the people; who was there for themselves? I see leaders in the public service and anywhere...private sector too...who sit on both sides.

**Kerry Wright:**

Right. So, there are many students graduating right now. If they're thinking about their careers and they're considering a career in public service, what would be two good reasons to enter public service and what would be two good reasons not to enter public service?

**Peter Hoy:**

There again. A very difficult question. 2 and 2. Well, let's start with the two reasons why--the opportunity to contribute to the life of Ontario and the betterment of the province, the OPS or municipal/ federal like could apply to--the opportunity to establish a good career that provides you with fair compensation and the foundation to be able to plan your life and have a good retirement and all these things that are so important...the stability that people look for to do that. Those are the things that I, from my own experience, really benefited from. On the flip side, it can be very bureaucratic. If you are the type of person who is really, really ambitious and doesn't like living within the types of rules of a large organization, it can be difficult. You also have to be able to work very closely in a team environment. You can't be a loose cannon. No matter how talented you are. That's just a reality of working in a large organization. You have to be able to function in a team, and be able to utilize your talents, in that type of environment. A Steve Jobs or an Elon



Musk—I'm not sure how they would fit into working in the public service.

Because in the public service, which is different than say the private sector, you're accountable to the public, you're accountable to the governing party....so no matter how entrepreneurial you are, or how brilliant you are, no matter how driven you are with your ideas.... there are limitations to that. You're not there to promote your own agenda. You know, you're there to serve. You're there to execute and to operationalize public policy, and that's not the environment for everyone. We see that too. There're very bright people who enter the public service as an intern or on a contract and you just see the potential there.... but you know that's also not the right environment and they're not going to last long.

**Kerry Wright:**

Can you think off hand, throughout the years, of a moment where you really remembered it as a moment where it was truly and every shape or form, serving the public?

**Peter Hoy:**

This is a unique, maybe a unique response in my own mind and I don't know if it's appropriate but I was the Manager of a Board at the Ministry of Health and long-term care. It was called the 'Consent and Capacity Board.' It's an adjudicative tribunal that made decisions under the mental health act in the 'substitute decisions act.' These are very, very challenging decisions. These were involving people who are being placed in custody in a hospital because they posed a danger to themselves or a danger to others. They were people who were incapable of making a decision around their own health needs, finances. There were decisions that dealt with families that were in conflict over what to do with someone at end of life--really difficult moral

and ethical questions that were at play here. And, this tribunal had to organize a hearing and render a decision within seven days of an application coming forward. We did it!

**Kerry Wright:**

Wow!

**Peter Hoy:**

We got the staff at work and the adjudicators, and lawyers, and decision-makers would meet those timelines...and that could mean flying someone up to Thunder Bay, to hold a hearing in someone's home.... someone who had a severe mental health issue...in a home...a hoarder maybe even, and hold a hearing there...that was fair, transparent and rendered a decision based upon the law. Those are the things that nobody really hears about, but they're very, very, very, significant, and deal with people's fundamental rights. And, day in and day out, the staff and the Adjudicators would deliver onto that mandate. And, I found that very uplifting. I was very proud to be part of that very small agency that worked behind the scenes but made life, made decisions that had such an impact on people's lives.

**Kerry Wright:**

I can understand why. I can understand why that left an impact. You know, I know that they say that when you do good, you should keep in mind, that whatever you extend, or however you serve, you should do not because someone is looking, but because it is the right thing to do. At the same time, that recognition and that gratitude is important. You mentioned that you wish more people knew about the stories of people that serve, and so, what did you find was the best way to get people to understand the good work that was done, that could help dispel those misconceptions of what the public might sometimes infer.

**Peter Hoy:**

I think that's a very interesting question...a good one...a very valid question. It's funny you know, because I remember when I started in the OPS back in 1987. The most important position, I felt at least, was the most underpaid position. And that was the front desk receptionist.

**Kerry Wright:**

Interesting.

**Peter Hoy:**

That was the person who was there to meet people as they came in... often people who are very agitated and angry—had a bone to pick. This was the person who had to be there, answer the question, calm them down, give them the information-- sometimes, information they didn't want to hear...and on top of that, they had to answer the phones, and get berated, take all the messages for all the staff on those little pink slips, and put them in the little cubby holes there...so people get their messages. This is well before voice mail and that. And, those are the first people that actually during transformations...got cut. And, I thought that was a real problem. I can understand why through transformation, perhaps their positions were vulnerable, but those receptionist positions were the face of government and I think, really under-valued. That's important for people. People don't realize public policy is important. By all means it's important but people don't understand it often. What they see is the person at Service Ontario at the kiosk or the person who answers the phone and answers their question. And, how they are treated. That's how their impressions of government are developed. That's at least my thinking. Front-line is really important.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes. So, the front-line is far more important than we could ever imagine because it's the first impression.

**Peter Hoy:**

I think so.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Peter**

I think so. And, you want those impressions to be meaningful and to be valuable.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes.

**Peter Hoy:**

That's why, you know, treating front-line people.... valuing what they have to say, what they hear from the public.... some of the things that they think could be implemented to improve their jobs, or improve the business...I think are really important, because they have the knowledge. And often, they're the last to be consulted.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes....yes. I think now in the Ontario work place ...it's very important that people that are impacted are the people that should be consulted.

**Peter Hoy:**

Yep. I agree (so). You can organize a consultation to hear whatever you want to hear. Based upon who you decide to meet with.... who you decide to listen to. So, consultation can have many different levels, and I believe that if you are going to consult, you know, consult with, you know, a wide enough group that you can hear things that maybe you don't want to hear...but they're important to hear. Just don't 'round up the people or the voices that are most knowledgeable or have the deepest historical roots with that issue because you can almost predict what they are going to tell you.

**Kerry Wright:**  
Right.

**Peter Hoy:**  
You really have to be willing to open up...and to listen....and to listen to some things that are unpleasant because those are the things you learn from.

**Kerry Wright:**  
That's true. Yes. Absolutely. We've talked about your career in public service. What I'm interested now to find out is, the catalyst for change.....transitioning into a new career. You've made a transition that is 'dramatic.' When did you start to think about the prospect of going into acting, and can you remember the moment that you knew you were committed to taking the leap? When did you get the acting bug?

**Peter Hoy:**  
That's interesting. Well, it was a transition. I retired in 2016 as planned, and I had a plan to keep myself active and busy. I sat on 2 boards, not for profits, to be able to utilize some of the skills I developed through my OPS career, as a member of their boards. And, I thought that would be very fulfilling and it was. I took on some small consulting roles with local organizations. Particularly, dealing with strategic planning and change management because I had those skills and experience. So, those are the things that I thought would help me transition along with the fact that I'm very active and compete in sport. I'm a coach. With that, and of course, my family.... But, acting sort of came out of nowhere. I have to admit, I didn't plan to retire and suddenly get into acting because I really don't have an acting background. I don't have any acting experience. I didn't at least until I became an actor a few years ago. I answered an open casting call in 2018. This is 2 years after I retired. Looking for Asian Men who can play a Samurai Warrior. Netflix was making this series called, "The

Age of Samurai", and I said, "this is interesting". So, I sent in a picture of me paddling. So, I was looking pretty intense and ripped. And, normally they just get so many responses...but for some reason the Director said he wanted to meet me. He said I like this guys look. And, that's a lot of acting...is the look. You have the look for that role. Regardless of your experience. And so, the agent who put out the open casting call said okay, they want you to read for them, and they sent me a script. I went in for the audition, and...they liked it! And, they cast me in a role as a Samurai, a gentleman named.... well, he's not a gentleman.... he's actually a Warlord—a brutal warlord named Takita Tshingan. This is back in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Japan, where it all takes place. And, I was in episode 2, of that 6-part series on Netflix. And, the agent who first contacted me, then put me on a roster. She wanted to work with me and since then I've had a number of opportunities on TV, movies and a lot of commercials. I've appeared in one motion picture, "Spiral, the book of Saw" which is on the "Saw" series—a brutal horror movie. I wouldn't watch it if I were you. In fact, I haven't seen the whole thing. And as well, I've been in "Corners"; CBC series, Untold Stories of the ER, and a number of different shows. Now, I'm doing a lot of commercials. I'm on air right now, in a Starbucks commercial, Subaru. I just finished one with RBC—actually dealing with my retirement. It's called the "Second Act". And, I'm in the midst of shooting a commercial now for Air Canada. So, these things have all come up, the last few years.

**Kerry Wright:**  
Yes. It sounds exciting actually, and it sounds like it can certainly get your adrenaline pumping—a lot of hard work too.

**Peter Hoy:**  
It is a lot of hard work. The reason it is so interesting for me and the difference between acting and my 30-year career in

public service. There are some very dissimilar things but there are a lot of similarities too. First of all, the dissimilar things—the differences. In government, I was for the most part, paid and rewarded for.... based on the quality of the information, the advice, and the analysis that I could provide on any given issue, to whoever it may be...my supervisor, manager, Deputy Minister, Minister, or whoever. And, I did it...at every level. That's my job. I was also, as most public servants.... you don't seek the limelight. You know, you don't want to be in the public eye. Usually if you are, it's because there's some trouble. So, you work behind the scenes and that is what our job is, as public servants. We work for the politicians who are in the public...who are on the public side of the ledger.

In acting, it's the complete opposite. In acting, it's not what you say that is important. Because what you say is really scripted for you. It's in your sides, you know, you get it in a script and it depends upon the character you play.... which you're judged upon in acting. How you say it and how you look when you say it. So, those are...it is diametrically opposed to what I was trained at....as a public servant—doesn't matter who you look like or how you say it in public service...it is the quality of what you say. Whereas acting, you know...you could be saying anything. But, it's how you say it and the emotional response that you can get from people...by how you say it.

Those are very unique—very unique differences. Similarities though are.... there are some real similarities too...and that is number one you know.... you have to work at it. There are some very intelligent public servants who do extraordinary things and have incredible policy ideas. Like there are actors who really have God given talent...it just comes natural. But most of us don't.

Most of us don't have those gifts, including myself of course. So, you have to work at it. Same as in public service—continuous learning, professional development, mentoring, learning from others, trial and error, studying...those things are really, really important to your career path in public service. Same as acting. You really have to take training and courses and professional development. You have to learn from others; you have to be willing to experiment, you have to be listening to criticism. And, also, it's really, really important, is just preparation. Not only do you have to do your work but you have to be ready. You have to be ready when the spotlight is on you. Whether it be a briefing for a Minister or a Deputy Minister on a specific issue...you've gotta be ready to deliver. You gotta be on that day...just like acting. You know, for a big audition, you know, you gotta be ready.

It doesn't matter if you didn't get any sleep that night. You got to find a way to be ready or be on set, and performing a scene. You gotta be ready.

I remember those mornings sometimes, getting ready for a Deputy briefing or you know, a public consultation and just feeling, oh my God, I just got off the go-train, I'm tired, my kids were up all night, I didn't have time for breakfast.... I'm going to jam a coffee down my throat and then I'm going to get into that room and I'm going to have to deliver. But, you do it because you have a responsibility to deliver.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes. Absolutely. It definitely resonates with me. I spent a lot of time doing theatre in my youth. And, exciting but definitely you're working hard, and rehearsals are long and remembering those long soliloquies...so yeah, I understand fully. You know, you talked about how as a public servant, you were there to provide strategic advice and

also....part of your job was to manage risk. Did you at any point consider acting as a career change that was too risky?

**Peter Hoy:**

Always do. Still do. One thing about acting is that you're putting yourself out there. And, whenever you're on camera or on a zoom call on an audition or you're in the audition room live with a panel of, including the casting director, the director and producer, and whoever else may be behind that table. And, they're looking at you and they're saying, okay, show us what you can do. So, your initial response when you're in front of these people, is to blank, to say, oh my God, I'm not ready or I can't do it. There's a risk and it's happened. You freeze up.

But, that's why preparation and training is so important because...number one.... the fundamentals—be prepared. Know what the character is. Have your lines down and be off book. But also, little things like breathe. Practice your breathing so that when you walk in there, you're not hyper ventilating. You know, you're calmer. You have eye line.

Because I don't have any formal training, what has benefited me is the fact that I'm an old man. You know, I'm 65-years-old. I've lived life. And, I've lived life in many different circumstances. So, when a scene calls for grief or for anger, or for real elation, I've felt that at some point in my life. So, it is very genuine. I know in acting class when I first started, they would.... you know...the teacher would say okay breathe. Here's a scene. I want you to show real anger or some real sadness here. And, what I would do...I would conjure up a something in my life where I remember I went through it. So, it was all very genuine. And, that's where it comes from. Authenticity comes from your life experience. And if you are a young actor, you may benefit by having the

nimbleness and the training, and the ambition but sometimes you lack that life experience to draw from.

**Kerry Wright:**

I agree with that because when I think back to my youth, you're still exploring your identity, you're still trying to figure out who you are, and the more you live life.... absolutely.... you suddenly start to get a better sense about what the experiences feel like, the emotion behind it....it will become more authentic, especially since you also learn as you get older to try to reveal yourself.

**Peter Hoy:**

That's a really good point. And, I was going to say...yeah...vulnerability. When you get to a certain point in your life, you've been through it all. You know, you really don't have anything to prove to others or yourself. Or, you shouldn't. That you can be yourself. You can show your vulnerability. You can show that you're mortal, you're flawed, that you're...that you've got your strengths and your weaknesses, and you know how to bring those out, in any given situation. It's hard to explain but it's....it comes through age and I guess that's wisdom and experience is a real asset in that regard.

**Kerry Wright:**

No. No. I understand.

**Peter Hoy:**

That's why I love taking acting classes because most of the time I'm...well...working with people who are much younger than me. I just really enjoy being around their energy and their enthusiasm.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yeah. No, that's good. You know, some people will have a career and they'll act as a hobby, and you decided to go 'full throttle'. I'm curious to know what the learning curve was like and how much you were able to

jump right in because of preparation and the transferable skills essential to make change?

**Peter Hoy:**

Certainly, I think my experience in the public service doing various jobs and working in various environments certainly prepared me for the rigours of acting. As I say, you have to prepare, you have to be willing to learn, take training and to invest in that. So, the learning curve was pretty steep for acting, in that I was coming in new...and not only just from the artistic perspective but also from the organizational perspective. You know, getting an agent, learning how to work with your agent. How to get paid. The do's and don't's of self-taping, being on-set...all those technical things you have to learn. And, often you learn...like in the public service.... through your mistakes or your shortcomings. A responsible or decent person telling you that maybe there's a different way to do this next time. And, so as long as you...you have an open mind, you're willing to learn, and you have a pretty thick skin...that you're not willing to take everything personally, then you, then you can grow. And, that's what I think that I... the approach that I took in acting. I know that I have my limitations. I'm lucky that I can fulfill certain roles. You know, I'm always willing to learn. And, when someone says, hey...can you do this differently.... I don't suddenly think, oh my God, they don't like me. I just say, yeah, they got a good point. And, I ask them, what can I do differently. Give me some advice. Give me some direction. And, almost always, they will. And, you do it differently, and they say, "Nice, great job." And, that's how you learn.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes. And, learning something new, definitely, as we're told, keeps our brains younger.

**Peter Hoy:**

Oh, absolutely. Like, taking a 6-page script and having to break it down, and doing a monologue, is really good for the brain. And, that's one of the things I really like about it. Particularly, from classes...having to memorize a full-page of monologue is challenging but very rewarding when you get it down, and deliver it.

**Kerry Wright:**

It is. What surprised you the most about your new acting career?

**Peter Hoy:**

What surprised me the most? How much I like it! It's a... it's challenging and so different than what I've done for the last 30 years. People find it interesting. So, they're always asking me questions about it. I love talking about it. Not...bragging about what I'm doing but just talking about my experience, and often people ask me about how I got in, so they could maybe explore it themselves or their children can explore it because they are aspiring actors. So, I like passing on that information and sharing it. I also realize that my runway is short. You know, I'm 65 and there are some roles that I can fulfill but there will be fewer going forward. I'm willing to live with that. Because I don't...I don't rely on acting earnings to sustain my lifestyle. If I didn't act, I would be just as happy and comfortable. But it gives me that sense of purpose and a goal to be good, a good actor, a decent actor, and to grow, and to see what may be around the corner.... that anticipation that maybe...maybe there's going to be a real exciting role around the corner that.... like a big movie or something, that I fit into. Probably not, but maybe so. So, as an actor, as a retired person, it's kind of neat to be in that environment. And that's I guess the segue for me would be that...you know that applies to anyone who is in retirement. Either approaching or in retirement. You gotta have some sense of purpose because

no matter how hard, how difficult or onerous your career was, and how tired you are and worn out you are...you know.... once you recover, and you will.... once you retire and have that time to de-compress...you know...you're going to get restless. And, you're going to be asking yourselves, hey...what do I want to do now? I can only spend so many hours at the gym...so many hours at Starbucks reading the newspaper or sitting on the couch watching my favourite shows.... you want some sense of purpose. So, that's really important. And, mine is acting right now but there are so many other things that people do and can do that are just as fulfilling. And, I think that's.... that's important.

**Kerry Wright:**

I'm really glad you feel as enthusiastic about your new career because sometimes the grass is always greener on the other side...right? But for you, I sense it feels like a good fit.... even though there are challenges...and the challenges are part of why it feels like a good fit, perhaps.

**Peter Hoy:**

Yeah. Yeah. If it wasn't challenging...if there wasn't.... if it didn't challenge me personally, you know, intellectually...take me out of my comfort zone.... then no... I don't think it would be as fulfilling. I like that. But it's not for everyone. Some people are content at spending their time reading, you know, winetasting... whatever it might be. But, you know, whatever you're happy at. Just as long as, you know, it's something that suits your personality and your personal ambition. But you have to think about that.

**Kerry Wright:**

Would you have ever imagined that you would change your path if I had asked you 10 years ago?  
Not into acting? No. That would be the farthest thing in my mind. I would have thought maybe I'd do some consulting on

the side. I'd contribute to some not-for-profit organizations, I'd volunteer, I'd coach and do all the things that I was very passionate about. But certainly, not acting. No.

**Kerry Wright:**

I know that there are times whether it is right or not.... we get a good sense of who we are, from our career. How has this career change impacted your sense of identity?

**Peter Hoy:**

If I am be honest with you, it hasn't affected my own subjective sense. I still don't think any differently, act any differently. In fact, acting is again...it's exciting and all that but I paddled every day and I trained with a very elite group of paddlers. And, they challenge me. And, I find that just as rewarding. But I think the way my friends and family view me has changed a bit. It's subtle but I think they look at me and say, wow, I think that's interesting. I never thought.... I never saw that in you. Like, my siblings and that in particular. Interesting, where did that come from. I think there are some people though that find it interesting but also you know, "You're a niche actor, you're only getting that because you're an older Asian man....and there are limited roles." You know, I've heard that before and that's their right to think that. I think that it's not necessarily true but some people do think that way.

**Kerry Wright:**

You know, it was an opportunity that you recognized, and by the way, it's easy to say go out there and grab opportunities but people have to recognize them first. And you did. But what would you say now is your primary motivator for continuing to make such a dramatic change?

**Peter Hoy:**

I want to become a better actor. I want to actually develop my skillset, develop my artistic side so that I can take on roles and

really deliver, as an actor. And, feel really comfortable doing that. That will mean a lot more training, more time on-set and learning from others. I probably should watch a lot more TV and movies. I don't watch enough. Because that's how you learn too. By observing. Those who are really good and very experienced in their trade. So, that really motivates me.

**Kerry Wright:**

Failure as you know, you spoke about it...can also build confidence because it gives you a new tool set to handle new challenges. Does this resonate at all with you? Are you finding you're building your toolset because of a specific challenge?

**Peter Hoy:**

Absolutely. That's a very important point and yes...every day. If you know anything about this business, I think I'm averaging about one booking for every ten auditions. So that means nine out of 10 times, I'm getting rejected. You know, sometimes I'll get a call back which is a second chance because they like me. But still, the odds are, you're up against some very good people. They're auditioning sometimes 50, 60, 70 people for a role, and they may pair it down to 20 people for a call-back. And, from that, they may cast 1 person or maybe 2 people.

So, the chances are very good when you get an audition that you're not going to get it. And, again, you have to be prepared to deal with that, and say okay.... not see it as personal failure. You can't lose confidence. So, what you have to do is say okay, how did I prepare for that.... what worked and what didn't work.... like, do a 'lessons learned' each time, and say what can I do next time to be better? Whether it be, more prepared, being less over the top emotionally, studying. I could have gone onto you tube and watched a couple of episodes of that show to get a sense of the

nuances of it...and the emotion of it. Little things like that count. And so, you're constantly being rejected. That's just part of the business. And, it's not for the faint of heart in that way.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yeah. I mean at the very beginning, you spoke about resilience, and I think probably resilience and persistence have been the 2 primary attributes that you possess that have sustained you through the acting career. And, sort of an understanding that just keep going out there. Similar to fishing. You know, if you just put one line...on hook out into the sea, you might get lucky. But you're putting a whole net into the sea to see what you can get out of that, and that's admiral.

**Peter Hoy:**

Thank you.

**Kerry Wright:**

For People who are perhaps thinking of a second act, later in life, who are listening today, 'how can I prepare for a meaningful retirement?'

**Peter Hoy:**

That's a really important, important question. And, an important matter for anyone that is considering it. First of all, retirement, no matter how early you are in your career with the OPS, may seem very, very far off. And, you may say to yourself, I've got lots of time to think about it.... lots of time to plan, but believe me, time goes so fast. You know, suddenly, you know, before you know it, you're on the cusp of retirement. You wonder exactly, just like when you look at your family...how did my kids grow from being infants to being in university. It happens. And, so you've got to start thinking about it, at a relatively early part of your career but you know, what do I want to do? Maybe, I don't want to finish my career in the OPS. Maybe, I want to go



to the private sector. Maybe, I want to move to a different level of government. All those things are quite legitimate. But if you're on a career path in the OPS, at some point, you have to start thinking about, what do I want to do? What do I want to do in my next act? Retirement's not the finale. Let me tell you. If people are retiring at 65 even, you know, based on the average lifespan of people in our society, they're going to be retired for 30 or 35 years. That's a whole second act. There's so much opportunity there.

**Kerry Wright:**

So, to pursue a dramatic shift isn't madness?

**Peter Hoy:**

No. It's not. But it depends upon the individual. How much risk you are willing to take on, your own ambition, your energy levels, your health, your finances. But within those different buckets, notwithstanding the limitations you may face, and each of us have limitations, you have to find a niche for you. And, someone's niche may be joining a team to conquer Everest, as extraordinary as that. Another person's niche may be to read 5 books a month. They're all legitimate. All worthy goals. But the key thing is...know yourself, know what motivates you, what makes you feel satisfied; your family situation (whether you have a spouse or not) would allow, and is conducive to, and thinking about that. You know, when I looked at retirement, it gives me an opportunity to do things that maybe I've never done before. So, it's like an open book and it's up to you to fill in all those empty pages. Sure enough, the initial feeling is relief after a tough career. You know, you just want to de-compress, you want to go on that long trip, you want to go to the cottage, you want to do whatever you may have or do as recreation but I can tell you, and every study I've read bears this out...at a certain point, you've got to have

more than that. You've got to have some sense of purpose. So, start thinking about that. And, then of course, that sense of purpose is critical but it has to be realistic too. You have to have the financial means to be able to achieve that. So, there will maybe some limitations there based upon, you know, your financial situations. So, that's important at a young age to start planning for—thinking about finances and how much you're going to need when you retire. Because the public's pension plan is a really good backbone to your financial stability. But it doesn't address everything. Even with CPP and OAS, old-age security etc., which kicks in at 65, that may not be enough to meet your needs. So, you have to start thinking about other things like RRSP's and state planning which is really important. Just as important too, which is like a third leg on a stool, is your physical and mental health. Because if you don't take care of those, it's really going to limit what you can do when you retire. So, be mindful of that, in terms of your diet, how active you are—take care of those little things. You don't have to be, you know, a lead athlete but just try to keep your body moving. Mentally too—to keep stress at a manageable level, be kind to yourself. Those are the types of things too, that I think with a good financial plan, and a sense of purpose will like give you that foundation to move into retirement, and actually have a good one.

**Kerry Wright:**

What do you think you've learned about yourself through all of your careers?

**Peter Hoy:**

How mortal I am. We're humans. I'm very human. I've many flaws. Done some good things but I've also done some things I wish I could do over again, and do better. But that's being a human being. You learn to accept yourself, and if you can accept

yourself in spite of your flaws, then you can find some happiness.

**Kerry Wright:**

And, I know we've touched upon this but if you could just give 1 piece of advice to a listener seriously thinking about a later-in-life, second chapter or a fulfilling, rewarding retirement, what's something critical for them to hear.

**Peter Hoy:**

Don't limit yourself. Don't place arbitrary barriers around yourself or your ambition or your desires. The world is your oyster. It's up to you. Don't underestimate yourself. Don't undervalue yourself. Don't let others limit you. Even those who are really close to you. Often, actually, this is a really important point in my mind because I've learned a lot. I've had a lot of time to think about this. And, it relates very much to the public sector. So much of our time is spent with others telling us what we should be doing or how we could be better people or how we could do something better...(or) There's tons of consultants, lifestyle coaches, there's just your parents, you know, your spouse, all telling you how you could be a better person, or how you could do something differently, or how you could... what you should do to be more fulfilled.

But you know, when you think of it, only you really know that. Only you do. It's yourself and you really have to have the courage, and the humility to be able to sometimes shut all that stuff out, and say, 'okay, what is it that I want...not in a selfish way but because I am who I am, and this is what motivates me. And, these are the things that I know I want to do. This is what I wanted, and this is me. And, it may be something that is contrary to all the advice that people tell you. So, what. You've got to follow your own sense of purpose and your own heart. And, cut out all the noise.

I think that's really important. You know, we spend our whole lives where people are telling us what to do, and telling us how to act, and how to behave...and telling us how to be better. But, it all boils down to...you really have to understand yourself.

**Kerry Wright:**

Absolutely. What you're saying is wise. And, you mentioned the word, courage. I believe it takes courage. It takes conviction. Certainly, self-awareness. And, as you mentioned earlier, emotional intelligence as well.

**Peter Hoy:**

Yep. Self-awareness is really important. Yeah. Takes courage and the willingness to put yourself out there, and even make mistakes. And, not being afraid to make mistakes. That's how you learn. That's how you grow. It's true. It really is. If you're successful in everything, and everyone is telling you're successful, you know, you're gonna find there's limitations.... where you want to get to. At least, inwardly. You may on the surface, appear to be incredibly successful and happy but that self-actualization has to come from inside, and usually that comes from sometimes a bit of suffering, sometimes from a bit of defeat...losing something. And, you see this in politics. You see it everywhere. That often, a person who, in the end wins, is someone who has gone through a very difficult road or has gone through tragedy or something. Like, I firmly believe politicians don't become good politicians until they've actually lost.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes.

**Peter Hoy:**

They learned humility. That's so critical in some areas.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes. Absolutely. And it takes away the complacency as well.

**Peter Hoy:**

Yep. They realize they have limitations and the people have spoken. And they grow up from it. They become humble....and they become better people and better politicians, consequently.

**Kerry Wright:**

I think you're right.

**Peter Hoy:**

That's just an example. Politicians. It could apply to any profession—bosses, it could apply to even being a good spouse.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes. That's a great observation. I think that was...a beautiful answer. Yeah.  
What makes you want to get out of bed with a renewed energy to face the day?

**Peter Hoy:**

For me, it's to get out on the lake with my training group and do 10 kilometers on my stand-up paddle board, with the sun beating down or sometimes the rain coming down. Sometimes we're on the waves, sometimes, we're on flat water, sometimes I'm in the water swimming. I do that most days. And, that's really what I look forward to. That gets me out of bed.

**Kerry Wright:**

It sounds lovely.

**Peter Hoy:**

I'm really into stand-up paddling. I race competitively around the province and even internationally. I coach and I instruct children and adults with classes...on how to paddleboard, in the Oakville area.

And, I'm also going back to an old pursuit of mine which is dragon boating. I'm training

with a team now to race at the world club crew dragon boat championships next month in Sarasota Florida. I'll be racing with a team based out in the east coast called the 'Dragon Beasts.' And, I'm really looking forward to that.

**Kerry Wright:**

Very good. You know, there's that expression...I think they attribute it to John Lennon. Life is what happens to you when you're making other plans. And, even though you've talked about the importance of planning and preparation, there's also an element of your career over time, that is not planned. It was more of...I'm just going to take a risk and experience this.... see what happens...and then you're letting the experiences dictate where you're going to go next. So, instead of making plans in a linear way, you're saying, hey, I don't have to go from point A to point B...and have that all planned out. I can just live my life, live the experiences, find out what I like and then go from there.

**Peter Hoy:**

That's a very important point, I think. Yes. I totally agree with it. Because I have some ideas of what I like and what I can do fairly well, and things that I'd like to maybe pursue. And then, as you say, you do it...and you see where it takes you. Some things you realize, hey, maybe there's some potential. But all along the way, it's not you individually, there it's the people you interact with, in those areas that really have a huge influence. And if you don't go out of your way to pursue those things, or at least explore them, you're not going to have a chance to really have those critical interactions. That's where you meet that person who has such an influence on your life or gives you those words of encouragement.

**Kerry Wright:**

Yes. And life becomes transformative makes you feel more alive.

**Peter Hoy:**

Yeah. No doubt. And also, you know, I don't take myself as seriously as I used to...and that's important. You know. Just laugh at yourself and don't take yourself too seriously, and have a lot of fun.

**Kerry Wright:**

What never fails to make you laugh?

**Peter Hoy:**

My children.

**Kerry Wright:**

Good one. What gives you joy?

**Peter Wright:**

Good food. Sorry, not good food. Clearly, it's nature. I love nature. That's my passion.

**Kerry Wright:**

Let's go for both. Food and nature together.

What does everyone need to make the world a better place?

**Peter Hoy:**

Empathy.

**Kerry Wright:**

A beautiful answer.

Well, I want to thank you for all you've done in public service and to inspire people to trust themselves.

**Peter Hoy:**

And thank you. You've been a great interviewer and host, and it's been a great experience for me. Thank you. Time to get out and go for a paddle.

**Kerry Wright:**

Thank you so much for tuning in. Also, sincere thanks and appreciation to Peter Hoy. His story reminds us that we can persevere and strengthen even in the most challenging situations. As with paddle boarding, do your best to stay afloat, challenge yourself to get better, try new things and have fun. If you start to lose your balance, look at the horizon. This simple act of self-awareness will serve as your steady guide. If you enjoyed this series episode, please help us spread the word. Tell a friend. It really goes a long way. Until next time, please take care of yourself. I'm Kerry Wright. That's a wrap. Bye Bye now.