

# Department of Economics Alumni Testimonials

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### When were you affiliated with the Department of Economics at MUN and what capacity?



When I enrolled at Memorial University in 1993, a degree in economics was not on my radar. The plan was to obtain a psychology degree and go on to work as a psychologist. While I enjoyed my psychology courses, it wasn't exactly what I had envisioned. As I approached the end of my second year I needed to decide on a field of study, and it was my economics' courses that resonated the most with me. I think they appealed to my interest in psychology, as it offered a structured way of looking at why individuals, and groups, make the decisions they do. In any event, I was now a student in the Economics faculty.

Prior to the completion of my Bachelor of Arts in 1998, I had decided to further my study of economics. After offers from a couple of universities, the decision was made to enroll in graduate studies at Memorial. I enjoyed the rapport that I had with faculty members and other staff, and I liked that my class sizes would be small. I officially graduated with my M.A. in 2000.

While at Memorial I also had the opportunity to tutor other students in the faculty's help centre, work as a teaching assistant grading papers, assignments and examinations and also work as a summer research assistant for Dr. William Schrank.

### What are you doing now as your career and what path has your career taken?

Currently, I am a Principal Economist with the Department of Finance, Government of Yukon. I have been with the Yukon Government since 2008, starting as the Senior Economist with the Department of Economic Development, where I worked until my branch was transferred to Finance in 2016. During my time with the Yukon Government, I have worked on a variety of interesting projects. One of my primary roles is the completion of the government's annual economic outlook publications, serving as the primary author. Working for the Government of Yukon has afforded me the opportunity to work with fantastic people, and I am certainly a better economist and public servant because of it.

Prior to the Government of Yukon I worked for a number of other departments in the public service.

My first job was Statistician/Economist with the Newfoundland and Labrador Government Department of Mines & Energy. I took this job in the summer of 1999 before I had officially completed my graduate studies. I worked for the Petroleum Projects Monitoring Division helping to model fiscal regimes for the province's oil projects, and provision of guidance related to the development of the oil and gas industry. It was a great place to start my career!

In 2001, I took a position as a Senior Policy Research Analyst with the Economics, Research & Analysis branch with the Department of Finance. I worked on a number of files and I was able to see first-hand how economics could be used to inform government decision-making. My time with Finance allowed me the opportunity to work with a number of other economists, and to this day, the skills developed in this position continue to be an asset.

After seven years with the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, it was a time for a new challenge and a change of scenery. I got both, when I took the position of Senior Economist with the Department of Economic Development & Transportation with the Government of Nunavut in August 2006. Residing in the most remote Canadian territory offered new challenges, both professionally and personally. The issues faced by the Government of Nunavut, were very different than what I had dealt with during my time with the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, so it made for some fascinating work. Also, where in my previous job there were multiple economists to do the work, now there was just me. While challenging, it did give me more freedom on how to address the issues at hand, and an opportunity to get involved in a wide variety of files, helping to make me a better-rounded economist. After nearly two years with the Government of Nunavut, my wife and I moved west to Whitehorse, Yukon, a place, we now consider our home.

### **How has your experience with the department of Economics prepared you for your career?**

Many former students may find that much of what they learn in university, is rarely used during their careers. Honestly, I look back at some of the things that I did during my time in university, and it feels like it was a different lifetime.

What my time studying economics at Memorial did provide me, was the ability to think critically, and to approach problems with an analytical lens. This has served me well during my time in the public service, helping provide sound advice to my colleagues and to the various governments I have worked for.

### **What is your best memory of the experience with the department?**

Some of my best memories are of the many late nights spent in the graduate classroom, working on assignments and studying for exams. It is strange how your perception of something changes so much over time. Back then, I probably would have told you how much I hated that room, but now when I think of those times, I only remember the smell of the cool air coming in that one, lonely, exterior window at 3:00am in the morning. I recall those nights with a fondness that I would never have anticipated.

### **What advice would you give new students?**

*People often say that I don't look like an economist. That always makes me smile!*

If your perception of an economist is someone that wears a suit and tie, that's not me! Nothing wrong with a nice suit, but I'm much more likely to be found in my office in jeans and a t-shirt. I do have suits hanging in my office for those times you might need to ditch the Foo Fighters t-shirt. Lucky for me, my wife says I clean up all right.

I tell you this because, during my career I have met and worked with many excellent economists and analysts. Some fit the stereotype, some do not, but almost all share that curiosity about why people make the decisions they do, that got me interested in economics in the first place. I believe that there are no boxes that are required to be checked for someone to appreciate the science and art of economics, and to be a successful in this field you certainly do not need to fit anybody's preconceptions.