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Friends, family, and all who have gathered to remember and give thanks for a good man,

Thank you for being here to honour the life of my father, Peter William MacLeod—Pete to most of us—born on December 2, 1947, and called home this February at the age of 78.

We meet in Kingston, in a Presbyterian memorial service, with the St. Lawrence just beyond our streets and the hymn Amazing Grace close at hand. It feels right. Dad loved water and good workmanship, steady faith and songs that could carry a room. He believed in foundations—of bridges, of habits, of character—and he built his days accordingly.

He was raised in Saint John, New Brunswick, a place where the smell of salt and spruce seems to settle into you for life. He studied civil engineering at the University of New Brunswick, and that choice—part vocation, part calling—set him on a path that would shape communities and, quietly, shape the people around him. Early in his career he worked across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, leading bridge and roadway projects that still hold their lines in wind and winter. Later, he moved to Ottawa to work on federal infrastructure, the kind of projects that don’t seek attention but make daily life safer and surer. When he retired, he and my mum, Margaret, settled in Kingston, close to the water he loved, close to the rhythm of mornings and long walks and time that he had more than earned.

He and Mum were married for 52 years. That number carries a world inside it—moves and mortgages, late-night cups of tea, hard conversations, shared jokes that no one else would quite get. Together they raised my brother Colin and me. They welcomed three grandchildren into a circle that always somehow had room for one more bowl, one more chair pulled close. Dad’s love for us was

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not loud. It was precise. It showed up on time. It was present at the kitchen table with a pencil and a notepad, or in the driveway with the trunk already packed. It was in the way he would fold a newspaper, make oatmeal, and slide a page across to you, saying, “Have a look at this,” as if the world’s news were simply another reason to talk to each other a little longer.

As an engineer, Dad was meticulous. He believed that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing right the first time. He could spot a wobbly handrail or a misaligned hinge from ten paces, then quietly set it straight. But the hallmark of his work wasn’t only precision; it was care. He approached public works as a form of public trust. When he mentored young engineers, and there were many, he taught them how to calculate a load and how to hold a standard. He taught them that integrity is measured in the details no one sees and the promises you keep when a deadline presses. He volunteered with Engineers Without Borders, bringing those same values to places where resources were few but the stakes were high. “If we can help, we should,” he would say, not dramatically, but as if he were stating a simple fact like tomorrow’s weather.

At home, he found his peace on the water. My favourite memory of him is from an Algonquin dawn, mist hanging low like breath you could walk through. We paddled before the sun caught the tips of the pines. The loons called, and he told me, gently, how the J-stroke tidies the wake you leave behind. He held the paddle like a tool and a prayer. He said, “Trust the blade. Let the water tell you what to do.” And for a long time we didn’t speak. That morning has never left me. Whenever life has felt choppy or crowded, I remember the feel of the canoe ringing lightly beneath us, his steady guidance just behind my shoulder.

He could also make a paddle from a rough plank, turning cedar into something that felt alive in your hands. He grew heirloom tomatoes with the same patient attention he gave to bridge piers and family budgets—staking, pruning, checking the forecast, saving seeds for another season. He read Canadian history with a pencil tucked in the spine, underlining not the dramatic battles but the quieter decisions where character showed. And he could disappear into his workshop for hours, resurfacing with a solution, a new jig, or a mended chair

that somehow sat truer than before.

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For all his seriousness about standards, he had a quiet wit that found the edge of a moment and softened it. He never passed a Tim Hortons without offering a double-double. It didn’t matter if you said you weren’t thirsty; he would pause anyway and say, “We’ll just see if the car wants to turn in.” He wrote thoughtful notes on good paper, the kind of letters that arrive on a Thursday and make a whole week feel steadier. He believed in unhurried mornings—the oatmeal set just so, the crossword half-done, the margin of time where a day can take its proper shape.

What people will miss most are those steady gifts: his measured advice, his patience that made room for learning, the way he taught without making you feel small. He was a teacher even when he wasn’t trying to be—showing us how to hold a level and a conversation, how to listen for what is essential, how to keep gratitude close to hand. He didn’t raise his voice to command respect. He earned it with integrity and consistency.

As a husband and father, Dad’s love had seasons of humour, challenge, and tenderness. Mum, your partnership with him—your shared discipline and small daily courtesies—modelled a kind of devotion that requires both strength and grace. Colin, you carry Dad’s practical calm and his way of looking at a problem until it gives up. To our three children, his grandchildren, he gave a map with more than one route: curiosity, kindness, and the unflashy courage of showing up.

Today brings its weight. We feel the absence of his footsteps in the hallway, the missing clink of his spoon against a breakfast bowl. We feel the silence where we would have asked, “Dad, what do you think?” And yet we are not empty-handed. He left us a set of tools, and not only the ones hanging neatly in his shop. He left us principles tested by time: serve your community, be a steward of the natural world, do it right the first time, practise patience, and live with gratitude.

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These are not ideas for speeches; they are instructions for life. We honour him when we bear them forward.

In the weeks ahead, there will be stories—many of them familiar, some we've never heard. A roadway that held in a storm. A young colleague who found his footing because Dad stood beside him at a critical moment. A neighbour who still remembers the taste of his tomatoes and the conversation that came with them. A morning canoe that returned with more peace than it carried out.

We will also sing. Amazing Grace was Dad's favourite hymn. He didn't wear faith on his sleeve, but he carried it like a compass. Grace, to him, was not a grand announcement but the steadying hand you feel when you're not sure you'll keep your balance. It was the second chance you offer, the extra care you take, the apology you make and mean. We'll need that grace now—toward ourselves, toward each other—as we learn to live with this loss and with the gifts he entrusted to us.

If you want to do something in his memory, consider something small and sturdy. Write a note you've been meaning to send. Fix the thing that squeaks. Offer your time to someone just starting out. And if you're moved to make a tangible tribute, we invite donations to a river conservation charity. Dad believed that if we care for our waters, they will care for us; that a healthy river holds together communities much like a well-built bridge does.

Dad, I want to say thank you. Thank you for the guidance that never shamed, the humour that eased hard days, the pride that was never boastful but always clear. Thank you for teaching me to paddle straight and steer quietly from the stern, and for teaching me the deeper lesson underneath: that the wake we leave should be tidy, considerate, and, when we can manage it, beautiful.

As we leave this place, I hope we carry him with us in how we work and how we rest, in how we speak to each other at the breakfast table, in how we treat the land and water that have blessed our lives. I hope we find him in the patient turn of a hand plane on wood, in the calm voice that says, "Measure again," in

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the porch light left on, and in the simple kindness of a coffee offered at just the right moment.

May we meet the days ahead with the steadiness he taught us, the gratitude he practised, and the grace he trusted.

Rest well, Dad.

We’ll take it from here.

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