

AUCC Centennial Membership Meeting
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“Opening Us to Larger Worlds”

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Chers collègues et amis, c’est un grand honneur pour moi d’être parmi vous en tant que président du conseil d’administration de l’Association. C’est à ce titre que je m’adresse à vous ce matin, en souhaitant que mon allocution ne vous soit pas *trop* pénible.

The occasion of our gathering here, today, is both ordinary and extraordinary. In its ordinary aspect, we are here for a regularly scheduled meeting of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. We have them twice a year, in April and October, and here it is, October.

Part of what makes this ordinary meeting extraordinary is that it is also our anniversary. We are gathered here, in Montreal, because

one hundred years ago, in McGill's Redpath Hall (where last night we enjoyed a dinner and moving remarks from His Excellency, the Right Honourable Governor General) presidents of Canadian universities came together for the very first time.

It was, in a broad sense of the term, a *convocation*. And it began a series of conversations about the future of Canada and about the future of Canada and about the role of higher education in that future. Those dialogues continue to this day. That convocation of university presidents in 1911 marked the beginning of what is now the AUCC, and those continuing dialogues—with Canadians and about Canada—are, essentially, our reason for being.

I use the word “convocation” deliberately. Those of us who hang around universities use “convocation” a lot, but by habit we use it narrowly, to refer to our graduation ceremonies. But a convocation is more than a graduation, and it's more than a ceremony. From the Latin *convocare*, a convocation is a calling together, a calling for a special purpose.

This meeting has the potential to be extraordinary not only because it looks back at our history, but because it looks forward; because it, too, is a convocation: a calling together for a purpose.

Why are we called together, and what is the purpose?

Ceux d'entre nous qui occupent la fonction de recteur consacrent l'essentiel de leur temps et de leur énergie au progrès leur propre établissement. C'est un important volet de notre mission, qui peut bien sûr instaurer un climat de concurrence entre nous. Il est tout à fait normal que chacun de nous se soucie d'abord de son université, le contraire serait étonnant. C'est l'une des responsabilités importantes de tout recteur, mais attention : ce n'est pas sa principale responsabilité. Ce n'est pas non plus pour cette raison que nous sommes rassemblés aujourd'hui.

Similarly, AUCC works tirelessly to advance the cause of its membership—95 public and private not-for-profit institutions of higher learning. As representatives of our common agenda, AUCC staff often find themselves competing with other groups and

institutions for what feels like a particular slice of a finite pie. It's a necessary activity, and we as members certainly appreciate, support and take part in these efforts. But this competitiveness is not our highest responsibility either. It is an important part of what we do, but it is not who we are.

Our story is not about competition. It is about contribution.

We are, first and foremost, Canadians whose vocation—our calling, if you will—is to contribute to the creation and advancement of knowledge in order to make a positive difference in the world.

Every AUCC leader is responsible for advancing his or her own particular institution, but today I hope to set aside my compelling loyalty to and advocacy on behalf of my own university (in spite of my certain knowledge that it is the most worthy in the world).

As members of AUCC we are all responsible for advancing our shared agendas, but I also hope today to take advantage of my newness in this position to set aside the notion of universities as a “special

interest group” (without for a minute retreating from our efforts on behalf of higher education.)

As Canadian stewards of education we share a deeper purpose that must guide our actions, even if it occupies less of our day-to-day lives. This is what I would like to address today. Our highest responsibility is to the wellbeing of Canadians, the health of education in Canada and the ability of higher education to make a positive difference for people, for our communities, and for the world.

This responsibility—to Canadians, to Canada and to the world—shapes our story. I want to take the opportunity of this extraordinary convocation to speak to the story of Canadian universities, and our contributions first to Canadians as individuals, next in our communities, and finally as a country both within our borders and globally.

Nous faisons partie d’un continuum au sein du milieu de l’éducation, sans lequel le Canada ne pourrait pas prospérer. En cette ère

marquée par une accélération du changement, notre tâche consiste à créer les conditions nécessaires pour que les Canadiens puissent découvrir de nouveaux univers sans cesse plus vastes, et s’y aventurer avec succès. Notre ambition est d’ouvrir ces univers aux individus, aux collectivités et au Canada tout entier.

Cette tâche, nous ne l’entreprenons pas seuls, indépendamment du reste de la société canadienne, mais plutôt en tant que *maillon de la chaîne* de la société canadienne. Le cliché qui veut que les universités soient des tours d’ivoire réservées à l’élite n’a pas lieu d’être. Chaque Canadien a un rôle à jouer sur le plan de l’enseignement supérieur, qu’il soit ou non allé à l’université.

We need to tell this story not only to benefit our own schools, not only to benefit our collective institutions of higher learning, but because the wellbeing of our society, our culture and our economy depends upon it.

Over the past year, looking into our second century, we have engaged in dialogues within our membership and with others across

Canada. We addressed a simple and provocative question: “What good are universities?” Now, that’s the kind of in-your-face question that universities are famous for. We got a lot of different answers: economic answers, social answers, cultural answers, political answers...answers about the importance of education, the value of research, the contributions of universities to communities. Above all, we got personal answers. And as we listened, we began to see that there is a common thread that wove through them all.

Higher education opens us to larger worlds.

This is true for students leaving home for the first time. It is true for researchers making a discovery that unlocks a mystery of human health. It is true for neighbours who may never have enrolled in a university but who benefit from the fact that one exists in their community. And it is true for Canada and Canadians navigating through an ever-expanding and fast-changing global economy.

The role of higher education in Canada is broad; it includes everyone; and it is, ultimately, personal. By “personal” I mean that the benefits

to Canada flow not merely from universities as institutions, but also and *primarily* from the people whose lives have been touched by them.

Let us consider individual Canadians.

Universities help us discover who we are and they open the doors to all we might be. They do this not only by imparting knowledge, but also by fostering growth.

We live in a time when knowledge alone is not enough. The world we live in is simply changing too fast. Today, economic, social and personal fulfillment depends less upon what we know and more upon what we are capable of learning, and the degree to which we are able to respond to change around us. If the watchword of the 20th century was “security,” the watchword of the 21st is “resilience.” Universities are sources of skills and knowledge. But even more important, they are laboratories of change and incubators of resilience. This makes them unmatched in their ability to produce global citizens prepared to thrive in ever-changing conditions.

Le parcours universitaire des étudiants canadiens représente sans doute la phase la plus marquante de leur vie, l'étape la plus transformatrice de leur existence. D'un point de vue pratique, les diplômés universitaires ont de fortes chances de trouver un emploi gratifiant, qui les comblera. Ils gagnent d'ailleurs en moyenne 1,3 million de dollars de plus au cours de leur vie que les personnes détenant seulement un diplôme d'études secondaires. En fait, ce que notre histoire raconte, le plus important, l'essentiel, c'est que les universités profitent à *tous* les Canadiens.

As a whole, university graduates lead healthier lives and draw less upon the healthcare system; they are less likely to become burdens to the state; they are more likely to volunteer and contribute to their communities; and from time to time they take really outstanding scientific, cultural or economic initiatives or inventions, or make inventions, which benefit the lives of everyone in Canada and, essentially, make the cost of education worthwhile for all of us.

Taken together, university graduates contribute enough to society to

enable *all* of us to enjoy the benefits of Canadian life that we hold most dear. Without higher education, Canada would not be a Canada we could recognize.

Let us turn our attention to communities. Universities transform the lives of people, and people in turn transform our communities, our country and the world. Universities are deeply and intricately engaged in the communities that include them. As economic enterprises, universities contribute some \$30 billion dollars in direct expenditures to the communities in which they live. That figure is more than the pulp and paper industry or oil and gas extraction. And this is not counting the value of new knowledge, new technologies and new businesses that spring from the minds of university researchers. For our communities, universities are a resource, a destination, an economic driver, an artistic and cultural hub, a catalyst for information and knowledge, and a companion in civic affairs.

In turn, communities transform universities, shaping their teaching and research, bringing new ideas and insights to students and faculty.

Let's expand our view again, from communities to country. Here the benefits to Canada stem from individual contributions of our citizens plus the considerable impact of globally significant research.

Notre pays a la chance de pouvoir compter sur des ressources naturelles très importantes. Cependant, la pleine exploitation de ces ressources exige des compétences de plus en plus spécialisées. L'enseignement supérieur offre le meilleur rendement qui soit pour la formation des ressources *humaines* capables de faire progresser notre économie en dépit des fluctuations cycliques du marché des produits de base.

In 1911, approximately 13,000 students were enrolled in some 18 Canadian universities. This year, enrollment has reached one million. That milestone speaks to an appreciation of higher education among Canadians. That appreciation, we must realize, is not lost on other nations. China, for example, recently increased its university enrolment by one million *in the space of a single year*. India has

identified the need for *thirteen hundred* new universities in the next decade. The emerging stars of the 21st century global economy, countries such as China, India, Korea and Brazil – have each placed a premium on investing in higher education.

Our future will be shaped, from within our borders and outside of them, by changes wrought by a growing population of creative, highly trained, well educated and ambitious global citizens. We can see the choices others are making. A wit once said “Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”

Research is another primary driver for Canada as a country, and here, too, people are the primary drivers—and the primary beneficiaries—of great research.

Canada thrives by providing a supportive habitat for talent.

Universities, aided by federal and provincial governments, have worked to create the conditions that attract people from around the world, and that keep talented Canadians here, enabling them to do their best work at home. Canada’s stature on the world stage rests

on this capability. And all of Canada participates in and benefits from this enterprise, which requires not only advanced research facilities but also lively, safe, diverse and inclusive communities that serve as magnets for people who could choose to do their work anywhere on earth.

Éducation, engagement communautaire et recherche.

Ces trois volets nous ouvrent à de plus vastes horizons et nous préparent à y évoluer avec succès. Ce sont les trois piliers de notre mission au service de l'enseignement supérieur. Les recteurs les connaissent très bien. Pourtant, chaque établissement se distingue par la manière dont il mène ses activités. L'éducation, la recherche et l'engagement communautaire ne sont pas non plus l'apanage des universités : elles font partie du tissu même de la vie canadienne. C'est ce qui les rend si importants, et rend notre mission à leur égard absolument essentielle au bien-être de chacun d'entre nous.

There are 95 universities and university-level degree-granting colleges within our Association, and I think it is safe to say that there

are at least 95 different ways that our members are responding to the needs of Canadians and manifesting these three elements of our shared mission. That is evidence of the resilience that has kept universities useful and relevant through times of change, not only during the past century in Canada but over nearly a millennium since their origins in the early middle ages.

This resilience stems from a dynamic balance between conservatism and change. We are living now in a time of intense change, and our universities individually and as a group are reflecting, responding and in many cases leading change; and that is important and necessary. I want to speak about conditions that are sparking evolution and change in Canada, but first it is important to recognize that, as universities evolve together with Canada, we must always hold firmly to the enduring values that guide us:

1. Learning. It is the creation, not just the transmission, of knowledge.

2. Academic freedom. Reasoned discourse, rigorous and extensive research and scholarship, and peer review.

3. Collegiality. We are, in fact, communities of highly diverse independent learners.

4. Openness. Academic freedom brings with it the responsibility to be transparent and accountable. And lastly,

5. Results. We are called not only to create knowledge and pass it along, an important mission, but also to respond to issues that affect individuals, communities, societies, and the world.

This last point, this focus on accomplishing meaningful change, I call our responsibility.

While we hold fast to these enduring values that make us who we are, we are called to adapt continuously to the changing needs of Canadians. Our ability to respond is, indeed, our responsibility.

Chacun des 95 établissements membres de l'Association est sensible à ce qui passe autour de lui et réagit constamment à l'environnement local et mondial. Au cours de l'année, les membres de l'AUCC ont participé, partout au pays, à des échanges intenses; ils ont discuté des besoins émergents des Canadiens, des changements qu'ils observent, ainsi que des mesures qu'ils adoptent pour répondre aux situations.

Drawing on all this input, AUCC staff and members have worked over the past year to identify and articulate five perennial and emerging needs, needs that we, collectively, as stewards of education, are committed to addressing. I want to share these commitments with you today and I look forward to discussing them with you in detail.

We share these five commitments as we enter our second century:

1. We commit to broadening the view of education. Universities are part of a larger landscape of education and we cannot, alone, contribute fully to Canada unless that entire landscape is healthy and robust. We are committed to invite and lead a conversation

across Canada regarding the entire experience of education from preschool to post-doctoral, for the good of all Canadians.

2. We are committed to innovation in learning New research into teaching and learning and new technologies are providing a host of learning tools and approaches. Our three pillars of education, research and community engagement are increasingly converging, with opportunities for a more deeply integrated learning experience. We are committed to enhancing the learning experience of undergraduate, graduate and professional students by drawing on a full range of educational, research-based and community-focused opportunities enriched with global engagement and new technologies.
3. We affirm our commitment to excellence We share a responsibility to ensure that every student is fully equipped to play a role in a larger world and in a very new kind of Canada.
4. Nous nous engageons à trouver des solutions aux grands problèmes de notre monde. Nous sommes déterminés à accroître

les études aux cycles supérieurs et à adhérer à un solide programme de recherche en vue de générer de nouvelles connaissances et de trouver des solutions aux grands problèmes de notre monde de plus en plus complexe.

and

5. We are committed to cultivating engagement and partnerships.

We reach beyond our institutions to cultivate alliances, working relationships and initiatives of shared purpose. We work with and learn from community organizations and social groups in order to research and implement solutions to local and global problems.

We invite partnerships with business within our academic mandate to improve the transfer of knowledge to the marketplace. We will work with one another in collaborations among universities within Canada and around the world. By joining forces we are better able to address highly complex issues and accelerate the pace of research.

These are big, open-ended commitments. We share them with all Canadians, yet they challenge and encourage each of us differently. Later today we will have the opportunity to meet and to address

these commitments in greater detail. It will be, I trust, the beginning of a vital conversation that will lead us into a productive and inspiring second century.

Canadian higher education is not a one-size fits all proposition. There are many kinds of intelligence; there are many styles of learning; the world needs a vast palette of skills and talents to function well. If there is one thing that is true across the board, it is that Canada's future (If I may borrow a phrase from the Right Honourable Mr. Johnston) is that of a "smart and caring nation." To thrive, as individuals and as a country, each one of us must achieve our full potential, whatever it may be, and apply it with full commitment, in a smart and caring manner. This is the means by which we open ourselves to larger worlds. And we stewards of higher education enjoy the privilege and bear the responsibility of assisting in every way we can.

Our convocation is under way. Perhaps, indeed, it's never been adjourned. We are called together to continue the building of a great country. Canada.

Tous ici présents, nous avons pour mission de faire progresser l'enseignement supérieur et de permettre à tous ceux qui le souhaitent d'y accéder, au bénéfice de tous les êtres humains du monde. En réalité, nous sommes, au Canada, tous appelés à remplir cette mission. Nous formons une immense collectivité d'apprenants interdépendants, et chaque personne sera un jour ou l'autre touchée, de près ou de loin, par ce que nous faisons ou avons fait.

Let me express this one more time, with a particular image. Once upon a time, humans harnessed fire. And that made all the difference. Some live to tend the flame. Some warm themselves nearby. Some learn the physics of combustion and carry away sparks to ignite innovation in new areas. But all of us contribute to the warmth and all of us benefit from the light. This is an ageless, uniquely human responsibility. It is a testament to our humanity that we tend these beacons, from the first fires to the latest lasers. The tools continue to change, but the purpose remains the same.

We are called together in order to penetrate dark corners and illuminate larger worlds. However you look at it, there is nothing more important than this.

Thank you. I look forward to our continuing conversation.