

Fall Convocation

St. John's, October 19, 2012

This is the consolidated text of the Reports to Convocations delivered in St. John's by Dr. Gary Kachanoski, President and Vice-chancellor

Welcome to fall convocation 2012, a very special time when we celebrate the success of the university through the success of our students.

So, of course, a special welcome and congratulations to our graduating students. The entire university community, your family and friends share in your joy and your sense of accomplishment.

We are here today because you committed to, and completed, the many required hours of study and practice. And you worked hard and diligently to meet the stringent academic requirements. This is truly a milestone in each of your lives.

You walked into this hall today as students who had successfully completed the requirements for your degrees. You will leave as graduates of Memorial University, as alumni, joining a family of over 75,000 strong. So congratulations!

I want to acknowledge two distinguished individuals who wished they could be here, but unfortunately could not join us today: General Rick Hiller, who finished his appointment as chancellor of Memorial last month; and Dr. Susan Dyer Knight who has been appointed as Memorial's new chancellor.

In addition to the wise counsel that General Hillier provided to the university as chancellor, he brought his considerable talents, commitment and passion for leadership to support our university.

Whether as chair of our fundraising campaign, or at these convocation ceremonies where he presided as chancellor, Rick Hillier served as a role model to thousands of our graduates, their families and our alumni.

I know many join me in expressing the thanks of the entire university community to Rick and also to his wife Joyce who, as a team, represented and supported Memorial selflessly, here in the province, across the country, and internationally. We also congratulate him on his induction into the Order of Canada just this past month.

And on behalf of the entire university community, I am pleased to welcome our new chancellor, Dr. Susan Dyer Knight. In addition to national and international accomplishments and recognition, Dr. Knight has been involved with Memorial in various capacities over the years and is very familiar with the university.

She is a wonderful choice as our new chancellor, and a most welcome addition to the Memorial community.

We will of course welcome her more appropriately during a formal chancellor's installation ceremony and celebration. I know that you join me in extending our best wishes to her as we look forward to her contributions as Memorial's seventh chancellor.

We are pleased to welcome a special guest with us on-stage today, Dr. Chandra Sankurathri, who will soon join the ranks of distinguished individuals named as honorary graduates of Memorial University.

Dr. Sankurathri is a Memorial graduate who has dedicated his life to help alleviate the suffering of others. He has been recognized with many awards for his charitable work and will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree this morning. You will hear more about him and from him later in this session.

Also joining us on stage today is a special guest, Dr. Raymond Findlay, who will receive an honorary doctor of science degree for his contributions to engineering education and to the engineering profession in Canada and around the world. We will hear more about and from Dr. Findlay later.

We are pleased to welcome a special guest, Dr. Marilyn Porter, who this year joined the ranks of distinguished faculty names as professor *emeriti* of Memorial University.

All our professors *emeriti* have given their professional lives in service to Memorial University's academic mission. They have inspired generations of students and helped build this fine institution. On behalf of the entire Memorial University community, I offer sincere congratulations to Dr. Porter. You will be hearing more about her later in this session.

Also on-stage is Mr. Bob Simmonds, chair of the Board of Regents of Memorial University. Bob has served with distinction as chair since 2008.

As announced just last week, he will be stepping down as chair later this fall, so this will be his last convocation in that role.

Memorial has benefitted greatly from the considerable leadership, passion, common sense, and unfailing good humour that he brought to our community.

He is a man of great integrity and has been a tremendous supporter and advocate of the university. We will all miss his contributions and we certainly wish him well as he continues his very successful professional life. Please join me in thanking Bob Simmonds.

Also joining us on stage is Mr. Glenn Collins, who is retiring from his role as university registrar and secretary of Senate this month after 42 years of service to the university.

Fortunately for us, we will continue to benefit from his guidance and experience in his part-time appointment as executive director of the Board of Regents.

Glenn has been a tremendous asset to this university over the many years and certainly to me personally as president these past two years.

Glenn, on behalf of the entire community, I thank you for your years of service and for your lifetime of dedication to university education in Newfoundland and Labrador. Please join me thanking Glenn and wishing him all the best.

Finally, we welcome our doctoral graduands to the stage. The attainment of a PhD degree is a singular accomplishment – an extraordinary commitment of time, emotional energy, financial resources, and the fulfilment of a life-long quest.

We have invited them to join the faculty on-stage as a small symbolic gesture of recognition of their singular accomplishment. I salute each of you as you join us at convocation.

Of course, every degree awarded today is the result of a personal journey requiring significant commitment and work, and is worthy of considerable accolades as a full-time endeavour.

Yet every year our students, along with our faculty and staff, amaze us with leadership and achievements above and beyond their required work that distinguishes them at a national and international level.

Convocation is a time for us to reflect on another incredible year of accomplishments and success across all of Memorial. There is so much to be proud of in the quality of our graduates, our faculty, staff and alumni, and in the quality and impact of the work that they do.

Our reputation is founded on the accomplishments across all of our academic disciplines and we are leaders in so many areas.

Throughout the year, on an almost daily basis, you'll see stories of Memorial's success in the local, national and international media.

We also tell our stories of accomplishment and success regularly in our annual reports, such as the recently released president's report titled *Dare or Truth*, and also in our *Gazette* newspaper, our *Research Matters* magazine, in our alumni magazine, *Luminus*, and of course on our web site.

And I encourage you to learn more about the exceptional people, places and programs of Memorial University.

The incredible growth and development of our university is illustrated by two important initiatives from this past year.

The first is *havin' a time*, our all-campus, all-year, all-faculty reunion. It was an outstanding success with over 70 events over a five-day period. But the ultimate goal of the reunion was to enable alumni to reconnect and stay connected with Memorial.

We wanted to leave a legacy for future reunions, and provide a channel for alumni locally and living away, to stay in touch and support their university. And we did just that.

The second initiative was our *Dare To* private sector fund-raising campaign which saw more than \$62 million raised – an undeniable indication of the value the people of this province have for our university.

This investment in students and faculty, in combination with improvements to the quality of Memorial's facilities, is enabling the university to continue to distinguish itself as a nationally competitive, flag-ship, teaching-research university – and a university committed to the public good and its special obligation to the people of this great province.

Of course, a key part of that success story is the strong and unprecedented support of the provincial government for our university – tremendous support as once again demonstrated not only in this year's provincial budget (the best budget allocation this year of any university in Canada), but also unequivocally in the announcement last week of significant funding for renewal of our core science infrastructure here on the St. John's campus.

This is our highest need and priority and a courageous investment by the provincial government that will positively impact Memorial, students success and the province for decades to come.

I want to acknowledge the minister who is representing the provincial government as this convocation session.

Minister, on behalf of the entire Memorial University community, I want to express our thanks for the ongoing support of your government. It really does make a difference.

For our entire history, the partnership between the university and the provincial government has been a key component of Memorial's success and aspirations.

In 1949, in the debate over the legislation that would make Memorial a degree-granting institution, our first premier, Joey Smallwood, had this to say about the heights to which this university should aspire. He said:

“There is no reason, if we have the vision and if we have the courage..., why the [Memorial] University of Newfoundland for its size should not be the most distinguished university in the whole world.”

Ladies and gentlemen, I think this is a wonderful vision for our university. The people of this province deserve nothing less. For its size and mandate, Memorial University will be one of the most distinguished universities in the world.

It will distinguish itself by the collective actions, accomplishments and success of its faculty, staff, students and alumni. By what they all do as

active engaged citizens to make the province and the world a better place to live – safer, more prosperous, more sustainable, more interesting.

And through that, let me assure you, we will continue to meet our obligations to all the people of this great province, including rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

And of course, we cannot and should not do this alone.

Receiving final endorsement at Senate just a few weeks ago, our Public Engagement Framework lays the foundation for adjusting our course and setting priorities that build on our strengths in working with citizens, communities, industry and government – priorities that will integrate our teaching and learning, and research and creative activity, with the needs and opportunities across the province and beyond.

Speaking at a special convocation in 1975, marking the official opening of what would become Grenfell campus, President M.O. Morgan asked, rhetorically: “Where is Memorial University located?” And he answered:

“I suggest it has no fixed abode in any structure or any community. It is now part of the social and cultural fabric of our society. It embodies the aspirations of our people and their pride in themselves. It will survive and it will thrive.”

I have no doubt that across Newfoundland and Labrador, the people, institutions, and places that Memorial serves will help us ensure that this university continues to fulfill its special obligation to the social, cultural, economic and scientific development of the province.

So I would like to thank all of our alumni, community leaders and partners for their unwavering commitment and support of Memorial University, commitment and support to help meet our collective challenge to have the vision and courage to build and create a distinguished Memorial University on the world stage.

Graduands: you have already had a role in this as students, and you have a role yet to come as alumni and engaged citizens.

Memorial is now part of each of you. I know that you will take to heart the responsibilities and privileges that come with your degree and make your mark in Newfoundland and Labrador and across the country and the world.

Do us proud.

Thank you.
