

**Fall Convocation
St. John's, October 21, 2011**

**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. A special welcome and congratulations to all of our graduating students. I am honoured to join you, and your families and friends, on your special day.

Today, I am sure, is one of the proudest moments in each of your lives, and a proud moment for your families as well. Your talent and hard work has finally paid off and brought you here today – to your graduation day. So congratulations!

Each degree awarded today is the result of a personal journey requiring significant commitment and work. In particular, however, I would like to acknowledge our PhD graduating students here today.

The attainment of a doctoral degree is a singular accomplishment – an extraordinary commitment of time, emotional energy, financial resources and the fulfillment of a life-long quest.

As a small symbolic gesture of recognition, a tip-of-the-hat if you will towards soon to be peers and colleagues, we have seated our PhD students here on stage, and we extend our congratulations to each and everyone one of them for their remarkable achievement.

Honorary Graduands:

I would like to welcome and acknowledge David Vardy, a great citizen of our province who will be receiving a doctor of laws honorary degree in recognition of his significant and dedicated service to the government and people of our province.

I also extend a heartfelt welcome to Dr. David Crystal, who will receive the honorary doctor of letters degree. Dr. Crystal is being recognized for his long and important role in language studies, an area in which Memorial has distinguished itself. You will hear more about them and from them later in this ceremony.

Professors Emeriti:

I would like to also acknowledge the outstanding, long-serving faculty of Memorial University who have been named professors *emeriti* this year.

They include:

- Dr. Vit Bubenik, Linguistics
- Dr. Mahmoud Haddara, Engineering and Applied Science
- Dr. Robert Lucas, Chemistry
- Dr. Marilyn Porter, Sociology
- Dr. Peter Sinclair, Sociology, and

- Dr. Laurence Thompson, Chemistry

Joining us to formally receive the designation is Drs. Bubenik and Lucas. And you will be hearing more about them later in this session.

All of our professors *emeriti* have given their professional lives in service to Memorial University's academic mission. They have inspired generations of students and helped us build this fine institution. On behalf of the entire Memorial University community, I offer sincere congratulations to each and every one of these distinguished academics.

It is indeed a privilege for me today to also welcome Dr. Mary Bluechardt to her first official St. John's convocation as our new vice-president (Grenfell Campus). Dr. Bluechardt started with Memorial this past July, coming to us from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, where she served as dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Prior to that appointment she was the director of Memorial's School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, so she was already very familiar with the province and Memorial, and we are looking forward to working with her in her new role as a member of the university's senior leadership team.

One year ago, right here in this building at fall convocation, I was installed as the new president and vice-chancellor of Memorial. It was truly a life-defining moment for me and my family. And each and every day since then, it has been an honour and a privilege to serve as president of your university.

And one year later, the entire Memorial University is pleased to celebrate yet another installation. This morning at convocation Dr. David Wardlaw was installed as Memorial's new pro vice-chancellor.

In addition to taking on the role of pro vice-chancellor and member of the Board of Regents, Dr. Wardlaw also serves as Memorial's vice-president (academic) and the university's first provost, a position with leadership and responsibilities for ensuring that the university's operations, budget, policies and administrative structures are aligned in support of the academic mission and strategic priorities.

So, Dr. Wardlaw is assuming a huge responsibility. But as his biography in your convocation program indicates, he is exactly the right person for the job.

During his academic career, Dr. Wardlaw has made significant contributions in research and academic leadership. He also has a track-record of initiatives and achievements in improving the teaching and learning environment at universities, with a focus on improving the student learning experience.

As an academic leader, he has been recognized for his balanced approach to the development of both the teaching and research missions of the university, and is also committed to engaging K-12 students.

Given his leadership and experience in academic administration, and commitment to student learning initiatives, I am sure you will agree with me, Dr. Wardlaw will make a great provost and vice-president (academic), and pro vice-chancellor.

So, please join with me in extending our warm welcome and congratulations to Dr. Wardlaw for his installation this morning as pro vice-chancellor.

It has been an incredible year of accomplishment and success as Memorial continues its upward trajectory.

Many of these exciting initiatives and accomplishments have been summarized in the new President's Report 2011 - Highlights titled *Great Minds Think Differently*, and also in our Gazette publication, our Research Matters magazine, and of course on our web site.

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

And this year, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the official opening of the Elizabeth Avenue campus here in St. John's.

With the incredible growth Memorial has seen in recent years – growth made possible because of the tremendous support we receive from the provincial government – Memorial University as it stands today bears little resemblance to its first iteration on Parade Street, or even the four-building campus which opened on Elizabeth Avenue in 1961.

In 1952, almost 60 years ago, the cornerstone was laid for the new campus. New programs in philosophy, commerce, geology, linguistics, pre-forestry, physical education, sociology, and psychology were added to the curriculum.

And on October 9, 1961, nine years after the cornerstone was laid, the province's first and only university opened its doors, on the outskirts of St. John's, on what was then known as Halliday Farm.

A new campus was welcome news for students in 1961, a time when the Parade Street campus, established in 1925, suffered from significant overcrowding, and increased examination and admission standards aimed at reducing or controlling enrolment.

At the opening ceremonies in 1961, fifteen thousand high school and university students paraded along Elizabeth Avenue. On the viewing stand were Eleanor Roosevelt, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, Premier Smallwood and the presidents of 41 of Canada's 42 universities.

I don't think they could have imagined where we find ourselves today. Residences started going up in 1962. Other buildings were added in the 1960s, such as Education in 1966 and Chemistry-Physics in 1967. In 1968, the Thomson Student Centre appeared. Earth Sciences. Business. Engineering. The buildings kept going up. Memorial kept growing.

And now on this campus alone, we have more than 40 buildings on 250 hectares. And across all of our campuses, almost 19,000 students, and over 1,000 faculty and 3000 staff now call this university home.

And despite challenging provincial demographics with declining K-12 enrollment and significantly fewer grade 12 graduates, Memorial has had and continues to have significant demand for its quality programs and significant enrolment growth.

And that's great news for the province because in today's globally connected, competitive, and complicated world, our success and sustainable future depends on talented people with creative ideas and a passion for innovation and discovery, and many of those people are in the audience graduating today.

But, if we are to continue to fulfill the promise of the first 85 years, fulfill the promise of the past 50 years here at this location, then for the same reasons that a new campus was welcome news for students in 1961, we need to renew, rebuild, and invest here at our St. John's Elizabeth Avenue campus.

Today at our St. John's campus we have an inventory of some new modern buildings and facilities, and signs of the start of renewal (cranes in the air). But we also have a significant number of the initial older buildings (four over 50 years old) that are well past starting to show their age.

And just like in 1961, our space crunch is already limiting enrolment growth and access, and impacting our learning and research environment.

So it's time to make some serious investments to ensure student success and the success of this great province for the next 50 years.

As Lord Rothermere, Memorial's first chancellor said at the opening of the new campus in 1961, "The natural resources of Newfoundland are vital to her prosperity. But whatever the natural resources of a country might be, <and we are blessed with many>, the most important asset will always remain the ingenuity and skill of her citizens."

So if we want to continue to attract talented faculty, staff and students – people who want to come here, to live here and raise their families here, we must offer appropriate and competitive facilities and infrastructure that will ensure their success.

And as we go forward, Memorial's continued success will be shaped by the same collaborative effort involving every segment of Newfoundland and Labrador society that has brought us this far.

All sectors – government and non-governmental organizations, industry, business and the private sector, unions, churches and, most of all the people of the province – contributed to the birth and development of this institution.

It was this collaborative effort that created a university that is, as has been said many times before, “intricately woven in the social, economic, scientific and cultural fabric of Newfoundland and Labrador.”

And I am pleased to say that we are well into the preparations for celebrating this collaboration and our great history with our 2012 reunion.

This will be Memorial’s first ever all-year, all-faculties and all-campus reunion – and next year from August 8th to the 12th in St. John’s and in Corner Brook we are looking forward to celebrating all things Memorial.

This past year, we have started laying the foundation for adjusting our course, and setting our new priorities and direction for Memorial for the next five years. We have completed the development of our new research strategy, and teaching and learning framework.

And over this fall and winter, we are developing our engagement framework to build on our strengths in working with citizens, communities, industry and government, engagement that will link teaching and learning, and research and creative activity with the needs and opportunities across the province, and beyond.

We will create a collective spirit of collaboration and cooperation between the university and our communities, a place with true partnerships and trust, and the exchange of knowledge and resources for mutual benefit.

And it is through this foundation, that we will work together to adjust our course, set our new priorities and fulfill our mandate as a nationally competitive, flag-ship, teaching-research public university – a university unequivocally committed to the public good and its special obligation to the people of this great province.

And, of course, nothing symbolizes the university's success more than our convocation ceremonies and the success of students.

Graduating students: your effort, determination, and talent has brought you here today, to convocation, and in just a few minutes you will hear Chancellor Hillier say these words: "I admit the candidates to these degrees and confer upon them all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities associated with the degree."

Today we publically acknowledge and celebrate :

- that you have acquired the breadth and depth of learning, experience, and know how associated with your degree;
- that when complications and life surprise you, you will be able to understand, innovate and adapt;
- that you are prepared for the next stage of your life, whether in work or further studies.

And I can say without reservation, that in today's world, the value, benefits and importance of your learning, your experiences and know-how have never been greater – never greater for you personally, but also never greater for your community, country and the world.

As UNESCO's World Declaration on Higher Education states, "Higher education institutions should educate students to become well-informed and deeply motivated citizens...citizens who can think critically, analyze problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, and accept social responsibility."

That's why the last part of what you will claim today as graduates is so important – the responsibility that comes with the degree. The responsibility, I suggest, to be active, engaged citizens and to make the world a better place to live – more safe, more prosperous, more sustainable, and definitely more interesting.

Graduands, I know that you will take to heart the responsibilities that come with your degree and make your mark in Newfoundland and Labrador, and across the country and the world. And in the months and years to come, be proud to stand up and say, "We are alumni of Memorial University."

You are not just graduating from any university. You are graduating from Memorial University, a university established in 1925 as a living memorial to the fallen in the Great War and in subsequent conflicts, so that, to use the words taken from our university memorial wall "...in freedom of learning their cause and sacrifice would not be forgotten."

So graduands, you are the rightful heirs of the bold young people who stepped forward to preserve our freedom, generation after generation. The torch now burns brightly in your hands. Never let it go out.

Thank-you.