

Installation Speech

October 26, 2019

10:00 AM

Fraser Building Auditorium

DR. ROB HACHÉ INSTALLATION REMARKS

Thank you to Laurentian University and the Chair of its Board of Governors, Mr. Claude Lacroix, for endowing me with the privileges and responsibilities of office. This allows us - among other things, to proceed with this convocation.

Before we get to that however, please allow me to take a few more minutes of your time. I would like to start by saying thank you to all of our visiting guests, elders and dignitaries, Laurentian faculty, staff and students, members of the Board of Governors and the University Senate, community members, stakeholders and friends for joining us this morning. I also would like to recognize those who could not be here, but sent along their best wishes. And most importantly, thank you to my family, not only for being here today, but for all your support over the years.

Lastly to our graduates and your families and supporters, a special thanks for sharing your special day.

I am truly delighted and thankful to be joining the Laurentian family. It is truly an honour to become the 11th President and Vice Chancellor of Laurentian University.

Over the past 3 months, I have sought out and listened to the Laurentian community, students, faculty, staff, board members, alumni and other friends of the university, trying to distill the essence of the university and the challenges and opportunities before us.

With everyone I met, what I heard reinforced my initial impressions of the strong potential for Laurentian.

This includes:

A strong attachment to and pride in the University – a foundational component for the success of any institution. I heard strong support for the pathway the University has taken to be where it is today – and universal agreement on the potential of Laurentian to attain new heights and grow its leadership amongst Canadian Universities as we go forward together.

I also heard realism in these aspirations, and that we are not without challenges. While we talk about our bilingual and tri-cultural mandate with pride, we also appreciate that achieving this mandate needs to be about breaking down barriers rather than building silos.

We must seize the opportunity to be the francophone voice of University education in Northern Ontario in a way that grows the influence and impact of French and spreads the opportunities of French language and culture. A strong voice for strengthening the French language and culture. A strong voice to support the growth of Francophone communities across our vast region.

Similarly, we must champion Truth and Reconciliation in a manner that breaks down the walls of bias and establishes mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous communities which are based on ideas of reciprocity. This is critical for Canada to move forward together, maamwi, ensemble.

Beyond this, Laurentian must be a leading voice for diversity and inclusion. We must be a destination of hope for students, faculty and staff. The future of the North, as the future of Canada itself, depends on our being an outward looking, inclusive and welcoming society – and Laurentian has a special role – no, (pause) an obligation – to show the way.

We live in challenging times, with governments under financial constraints as never before and universities year over year being asked to do more with less. Our resultant challenges weigh heavily on the community and many wonder if they will hold back the potential of the Institution and even imperil its future.

That being said, I also heard great optimism for the future. I heard that, through strong, transparent leadership, we can enhance opportunities for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. We have the people, the ideas and the commitment needed to lead Laurentian in achieving its full potential as a University. A University **for and of** the North, internationally recognized in its areas of strength and regionally and nationally impactful in its contributions to Canada and Canadian society.

And what potential we have: across all disciplines, Laurentian brings together scholars of national and international renown and offers programs of the highest quality that have the potential to flourish and grow. But also, as a smaller institution, dedicated to smaller class sizes and the personal student experience, we provide outcomes that prepare our students for their futures better than most universities in Ontario and Canada. In doing so, we must also work to maximize the connections between disciplines and in bringing focus to areas where we can maximize our impacts for the North and Canada.

Our French-language programming opportunities provides our students with the ability to complete more than 50 degrees. Our bilingual programming opportunities provides our students with the ability to gain experience and master both official languages in Canada and contributes to our graduates' success. Indeed Laurentian Graduates have, not only the second highest employment rates in their fields of study of graduates from all Ontario Universities within six months of graduation, but also having the second highest starting salaries in the province as they begin their careers.

We demonstrate our commitment to Indigenous ways of knowing through Indigenous Studies, the School of Indigenous Relations, the Maamwizing Research Institute, a 50% Indigenous content requirement in the Arts, Indigenous faculty across many disciplines including architecture, education and health to name a few. We work to centre Anishinaabe worldviews through our architecture on campus as in the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre, the Arbour at the University of Sudbury and through our wayfinding signs across campus in anishinaabemowin. We are committed to building a university where indigenous students are welcomed, feel comfortable and accepted, and flourish to graduate prepared for successful futures as leaders in their fields and in their communities.

Laurentian strives to be a leader in unlearning so we can move forward to truth and reconciliation. Together we must break down barriers and mend the wounds of the past as our society moves forward towards equitable and mutually respectful relationships.

Laurentian is a leading University in the Health Sciences with a special opportunity and mandate to serve northern rural and under-serviced areas. Through our Northern Ontario School of Medicine, in partnership with Lakehead University, we are moulding and graduating physicians with a special appreciation of and affinity for the North and rural environments, the challenges of health at and over distance, and the special skills required of the medical community to provide the health care every person in Canada needs and deserves. Through our Faculty of Health, one of the most rapidly growing areas of the university over the past decade, we are providing graduates to meet all of the broader health care needs of our communities. Health care today is far more than physicians and nurses – it is effort of entire teams of health care providers and allied health professionals, and we are leading the way in providing skilled graduates to meet these needs.

Together, our Faculties of Health and Medicine have the potential to continue to develop and grow to lead the way in achieving the health outcomes all Canadians deserve – and which can provide leadership for healthcare practice around the world.

Earlier this year, we declared ourselves as Canada's Mining University. I have made a special effort during my initial days to understand what that means and how Canada's Mining University is a University that is inclusive of all disciplines. What I have learned is that Mining is an outcome, focus and opportunity broadly across disciplines and, because of who and where we are, we have a special ability to provide global leadership to grow and sustain our fragile planet. The focus on mining at Laurentian is holistic, going beyond science and technology to remediating impacts on the environment, to building healthy communities and workforces, to developing the business acumen for Canada to succeed in a competitive world and to ensure that we have the social and moral compass needed to steward our planet for generations to come.

The materials we extract from this Earth are required to sustain this planet and all of its living things. At the same time, their extraction and processing provide some of the greatest threats to the very promise that they hold through their use. At Laurentian, we have a special opportunity – indeed a special obligation – to show the world how a future of technology can also be a sustainable future, grounded in the moral, social and societal values of which we can all be proud.

Canada's success and global leadership is dependent on having a creative and innovative society, grounded in a culture of research and innovation. We do research as a University because it makes the university an exciting place for our students and they benefit immensely from learning at the cutting edge of their fields. This is essential to the long-term success of the University – and a key to the long term success of the North and Canada. Over the past decade, Laurentian has become one of Canada's leading research universities and now has the highest research intensity for any university of its size in Canada. We must continue to grow our investments in research, scholarship and associated creative activities, as well as the social, societal and commercial impacts to be derived therefrom. We must do so in order to truly provide the best possible comprehensive learning experience and academic opportunities to position our students for success and to help our external communities and stakeholders achieve their full potential.

I commit to everyone gathered here today – and indeed to everyone across our broader community – to work tirelessly over the next five years to empower our faculty, staff and students to achieve the full measure of success for which we have the potential – and which everyone in the community deserves.

To our graduates, as you go forward today into the world, you are leaving a special place, a place that has nurtured your curiosity, intellect and moral compass. As you leave us, be confident that you have been well prepared for the journey ahead. We hope that you will remember us fondly, maintain and grow your relationships with your former classmates and those of us at Laurentian that you leave behind. We hope that you return to visit often and will serve as advocates for Laurentian and mentors to generations of students to come.

Parents, family, friends and supporters, we are extremely grateful that you have entrusted your loved ones to us and truly hope that we have also met your expectations in providing them with the tools, knowledge and judgement to enable their success.

Once again, thank you for bestowing these honours upon me. Now as they say – on with the show.