



**INSTALLATION REMARKS FOR
DR. MAMDOUH SHOUKRI
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR
OF YORK UNIVERSITY**

**17 OCTOBER 2007
3:00 P.M.**

**ACCOLADE EAST BUILDING,
YORK UNIVERSITY, KEELE CAMPUS
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chancellor, members of the Board of Governors and the Senate, vice-presidents and deans, members of the faculty and staff, students and alumni, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome, and thank you all for being here today on this very special occasion for me and for York University.

If you will allow me, I want to begin where many of these speeches begin — by thanking my parents. From an early age, my parents instilled in me the value and importance of education, of exposure to diversity in culture and learning.

And while I never dreamed that I'd someday be the president of a university, I knew from a very young age that I would someday attend a university. So I begin by saying thank you to my parents, and hello to my father, who is watching this ceremony on his computer in Cairo.

The great Egyptian writer and Nobel prize winner Naguib Mahfouz once wrote: "You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions." Well, I am very proud to have had parents who were both clever and wise.

This is an exciting time to be a part of York University, a time of growth and renewal, a time of transformation. This university has always been very much a work in progress — as you can see from the cranes on campus.

But what makes this such an exciting time is that York really has come of age. We now look toward the future with strong aspirations, knowing that our reputation for excellence is second to none.

York is fortunate to have been led by people who have remained true to its motto — *Tentanda via* — the way must be tried. From founding president Murray Ross, who set the tone for the university at the moment of its creation, to my immediate predecessor, Lorna Marsden, whose vision and hard work in the past 10 years have transformed and modernized York.

I am grateful to them and to all the presidents in between for building this great university, and as York's seventh president and vice-chancellor, I am honoured to be in their company.

I want to talk today about York's first 50 years, about its principles and its values. I want to talk about the vision for York in the next 50 years. But I want to begin by talking about our shared experience as a university.

The godfather of American university presidents, Clark Kerr, once counted about 85 institutions in the Western world which were founded before 1520 but that still exist today, institutions with the same functions and with unbroken histories that survived the test of time.

This group includes the Catholic Church, the parliaments of Iceland and Great Britain, several Swiss cantons and 70 universities.

These universities are in the same locations, with some of the same buildings, with professors and students, and with their own unique governance structures.

Why has the university as an institution survived for so long?

Universities endure because they respond to society's needs and they help drive change. Throughout history, great universities have helped society argue, articulate, define and achieve the next stage of progress.

The first goal of any university is the pursuit of academic excellence — advancing knowledge at the highest level. And here at York, we believe that means pursuing a broad education.

Canada creates less than five per cent of the new knowledge in the world. We need, as a society, to educate our students and provide them with the tools to be global citizens so that they can access 100 per cent of that knowledge.

Now, more than ever, universities are global institutions. We have a role to play in addressing the challenges facing the world today, challenges like pandemics, climate change, poverty, racism and extremism to name a few.

And York is playing an increasingly important role in solving these problems. The research that happens here is helping to shape our society and change the way we live. Now, more than ever, the work we do at York matters.

In 1960, York's founding president Murray Ross said: "To have specialization but nothing else is to possess but half an education ... we shall try to break down the barriers of specialization."

I believe his words are even more true today. York's reputation for interdisciplinary education is already well established. The next step is to make York a more comprehensive university.

York has a strong tradition in the humanities and social sciences. What we need to do now is build on this foundation with further growth in science and the applied sciences, an increased focus on research and graduate studies, and the addition of a medical school right here at the heart of the GTA.

Let me be perfectly clear on this point: what we need to do is strike a balance between the social sciences and humanities on the one hand, and science and applied science on the other — all underpinned by a strong foundation of research, innovation and a commitment to social responsibility.

Intensifying research at York does not mean less emphasis on teaching, it means our students are taught by people who are world leaders in their field. It means our students are exposed to leading-edge knowledge.

I believe that research and teaching are inseparable, that they form a continuum. But pursuing knowledge at the highest level is not enough. The greatest responsibility of the university is to disseminate that knowledge, to ensure it gets out rapidly and doesn't sit on a shelf, to ensure that it is shared with every part of society. That is York's mission.

How do we ensure the timely dissemination of knowledge?

In a time of growing global competitiveness, universities need to develop effective mechanisms to ensure society is able to rapidly adapt new knowledge.

That said, the best mechanism for the effective dissemination of knowledge remains our students. Here at York, we are blessed with students who come from every culture, who speak every language. We are connected to the world because we come from every part of it.

York has strong values rooted in a culture that reflects the new Canada — diversity, social justice, accessibility and fairness. These values were a very important factor in my decision to come to York.

I'm tremendously proud of my heritage and where I come from, but I am even more proud of Canada and all that it stands for, not least of which is its incredible diversity.

I have always thought Bill Clinton got it exactly right when he said: "In a world darkened by ethnic conflicts that tear nations apart, Canada stands as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace, prosperity and mutual respect."

York has come a long way in 50 years, and we look forward with a combination of pride and hope — pride in our history and reputation as a leading interdisciplinary university. Hope for the great things yet to come — the research that will help us with the challenges we face and the generations of students that we train to be great world citizens.

Indeed, one of my great challenges as president is how to improve the quality of the student experience here at York, how to ensure students get not only the

best education possible, but that they are challenged and stimulated by life outside the classroom as well.

In some ways, York is a self-contained city between Toronto and Vaughan, a place where it can be easy to be anonymous. How do we build a better student experience into the 'commuter campus' model?

I believe the solution lies in getting involved. We need to make this a place where students not only come to class, but also spend time here at the campus becoming part of the give-and-take of life in the York community.

To make this easier, York is helping to grow and enhance neighbourhoods where students can socialize, where they can participate in clubs, colleges and student government and interact with faculty and other students.

For as large as York is, it's also a community of communities, a collection of people with diverse interests and backgrounds who share at least one goal — the pursuit of academic excellence.

Another challenge is how to strengthen our ties with alumni and friends of the university. York has some 200,000 alumni — people all over the world working and excelling in every field. They are an important part of York's history, and they have an important part to play in building York's future.

It is their achievements, and the generosity of York's many friends and benefactors who are demonstrating outstanding support on our \$200 million fundraising campaign, that allow us to dream and build and grow.

As many of you know, York is approaching its 50th anniversary in 2009 — only 14 months from now. Fifty years of building, striving, growing and achieving. And now I need to ask for your help.

As close friends of York, you can help us make the world sit up and take notice of York in its 50th year. You can help us show the world what York to the Power of 50 is all about.

It's time for us to shout about York from the rooftops, to let the world know that York has arrived, and that the best is yet to come! We really need your help to make that happen.

I want to leave you with some words from Pierre Trudeau that describe my attitude to York in the next 50 years: "The past is to be respected and acknowledged, but not to be worshipped. It is our future in which we will find our greatness."

Thank you all for coming.