



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

FALL CONVOCATION ADDRESS

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chancellor, distinguished guests, colleagues, family and friends of the graduating class of 2011 – it is indeed my pleasure to welcome all of you to York.

Today we are celebrating a very important achievement in the academic calendar, and one of my favourite events – convocation.

Let me first begin by congratulating all of the members of the York University graduating class of 2011.

We are all here to celebrate you, so please enjoy yourselves. You have spent the past few years studying, writing essays and exams, researching and participating in University activities...I think you could use a break.

Faculty and staff – you have helped to develop these bright graduates, into the leaders of tomorrow. Thank you for your commitment to academic excellence.

Now, I can't talk about students, faculty and staff without also mentioning the parents, partners, families and friends of our graduates...because really, this is your day too!

As a parent, one of my proudest moments was seeing my two children walk across a stage very much like this one, to receive their diplomas.

Class of 2011, as our future leaders, it is now your turn to join the nearly 250,000 York alumni who have walked across this stage before you, to mentor, to inspire, to contribute to society and make a difference.

It is now your responsibility to share your knowledge and experiences, and enrich the lives of those around you. Like today's honorary degree recipient, Dr. Calvin Stiller, physician, scientist and entrepreneur. Or Dan Riskin, who graduated with a Master's degree in Biology from York, and is now co-host of the Discovery Channel's Daily Planet.

In this new role, he is taking his passion for science and technology and sharing it with the nation.

As graduates of York University, you are now among a very fortunate group.

You see, you have been blessed with the ability to pursue a higher education at a highly-respected university, in a country where academic excellence is a priority.

Let's face it, Canada has some of the best universities in the world...world-class institutions where leading scholars and researchers are sharing their experiences and their knowledge, challenging existing thoughts and ideas, in order to develop and maximize the potential of our future leaders.

Students travel from across the globe to study here in order to benefit from that same experience, that same knowledge that you just had the privilege to experience.

I was once one of those students. I remember finishing my undergraduate degree in Egypt...and thinking that there was so much more that I wanted to learn. I left everything ... in order to continue my studies – first a Master's degree, and then a PhD in engineering – here in Canada. And while leaving Egypt was extremely difficult, the decision to come to this country was relatively easy.

In my opinion, Canada's education system is the envy of the world.

But that wasn't the only thing that lured me here...it was also Canada's peaceful and liberal existence. Canada is a country where diversity is not only the norm, it is welcomed and embraced. And that's what makes Canada...and by extension...York university so special.

I often say that at York, we educate our students to become citizens of the world. Just look at all the graduates sitting on the stage before you. We are an international university, with more than 65,000 students, staff and faculty who can trace their origins to more than 155 countries worldwide.

This diversity has allowed our students the ability to share knowledge and ideas, and has provided them with a forum where global perspectives can be learned, tested and implemented.

Add to the fact that we are a university with some of the best scholars and researchers, individuals who are passionate about education and committed to excellence.

Now I turn to you, our newest alumni. With this education, comes a lot of responsibility. You are in possession of a great gift – the gift of knowledge.

As citizens of the world, I urge each of you to take what you have learned here and share it with others – with the community, Canada and the entire world – for the benefit of all.

Thank you.