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**ADDRESS ON THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY  
PRESIDENT'S TOWNHALL**

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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

## Introduction

It's been an interesting several weeks, as we welcomed new and returning students, had the Terry Fox run, celebrated homecoming, and of course, we launched a new brand.

## Brand

The branding campaign was in response to the challenges we face in the external environment, and a need to tell the world the York story and what York stands for in an accurate but simple manner. Addressing the brand was something we felt was necessary...as part of York's evolution and growth.

You see, some 52 years ago, York was created to fulfill a need. York was built to accommodate the growing demand for PSE by young Canadians. But that was a long time ago, and a lot has changed over the years. We've evolved into one of Canada's leading universities.

Today, we represent the university of the 21st century, because of the diversity of our programs, because of our strong academic quality in almost every field of knowledge, because of the diversity of our population, and because of our commitment to community engagement.

York today is not what it was 50 years ago. It is not what it was even 10 years ago, so, we wanted our brand to reflect the evolving nature of our institution. As such, it was felt that it was time to stand back and ask: Who are we? What do we stand for? What are our aspirations?

We engaged members of the community, we talked to prospective students and parents; we truly engaged as many people as possible because branding a university is about people, not products. And we wanted to ensure that our new brand celebrated our strengths, and reflected what we do.

The result was a branding campaign called "This is My Time" which accurately reflects our students. It is student-focused and it acknowledges their passion and aspirations and celebrates their future capacity to change the world. I am excited about the brand and the possibilities that it will bring. This new brand also positions us to deal with the challenges ahead...so let's talk about those challenges.

## Government

Let me first start with the current political environment. As you may be aware, we now have a minority government in Ontario. A minority government brings additional challenges in that they have to be strategic and political in their decision making process.

Earlier in the summer, the government published a discussion paper on innovation to make our PSE system stronger and held public consultations about it. The paper discussed issues like 3-year degree offerings, expanded credit transfers among institutions, on-line learning and year-round learning as approaches to reform the system.

The government also asked each institution to provide, by the end of September, an 8-page document reflecting the institution's mission, vision, aspirations and top three priorities. The document is to serve as the basis for a Strategic Mandate Agreement between the institution and the government. Of course, we have concerns about the time limitations. What's not clear is what the government wants to achieve with the mandate statement. On the flipside, this document may form the basis of our future discussions with government in a highly unstable time. Provost Patrick Monahan is leading the development of our submission, guided by the Senate approved University Academic Plan.

One thing that has been clear from government is that they are looking to find ways to bring down the budget by cutting costs and reducing expenditures. We are starting to see how they are planning to cut costs based on recent events, like teachers and statements about compensation in the broader public sector. This will be an issue that will be with us for a while. We too are worried about how we can achieve our strategic goals while managing the fiscal situation.

### Budget

How does all of this affect us? The economy continues to struggle to recover. As with many universities, we were not immune. Given that this is truly an uncertain time, we, as a PSE institution, need to continue to examine our own budgets.

Our costs are going up faster than our revenue. The government wants us to cut costs, so if we are going to be in charge of our future, we have to be mindful of our fiscal environment. To be blunt, our business model is not sustainable. In fact, at York University, salaries and benefits increased from 63 per cent to 70 per cent of the total expenses between 2007 and 2011. This trend cannot be allowed to continue.

Our budget was presented to the Board at the end of the year...and we had to make cuts. Approved cuts of 3.5 per cent in each of the next three years will be difficult to deal with as across the board cuts only provide us with short-term solutions, but over the long-term, they aren't sustainable. We need to find better ways to put us on stable footing. So where do we go from here?

We need to be as efficient as possible, while protecting the core activities of the University. We established a budget model working group led by Rhonda Lenton, Vice-Provost Academic and Trudy Pound-Curtis, Assistant Vice-President Finance and our Chief Financial Officer. They are devising a new method of allocating our resources to better support our academic goals. Phase 1 of their report was presented at the end of the winter semester, but they will continue to work over the next year to develop a more detailed model.

Another issue is our pension deficit. In order to deal with our significant pension deficit situation, we have established a process to have discussions with all of our employee groups to ensure that our pensions remain sustainable. We will also want to look at targeted initiatives like PRASE – the Process Re-engineering and service enhancement project. PRASE was initiated as a means of improving operational efficiencies. Phase 1 involved PricewaterhouseCoopers and constituted a review of our structures and processes. Phase 2 is now well underway and is being resourced through the secondment of seasoned York administrators in the role of Project Directors. Already we have made some great strides like Sm@rtbuy and the Time Reporting Tool, but there is still work to be done. Regardless, we are in a better position than most. I truly believe that if you take the time now to plan prudently, then we will come out ahead in the end.

#### Academic Excellence and Research:

These uncertainties will not affect our determination to ensure the excellence and diversity of our academic activities and that we provide our students with the best learning opportunities. We want to ensure that members of our York community have the resources and the infrastructure they need to not only learn, but to also innovate. We also continue to develop new and innovative programs while building York's capacity to advance the limits of our knowledge through high impact research.

We are welcoming a new cohort of students to the Lassonde School of Engineering. While construction on the new facility won't begin for another few months, we are thrilled to expand our existing engineering program, redefining engineering for the 21st century.

We also possess strengths in social sciences, humanities and science research, as proven by a new study released by the Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA). The HESA paper ranks us as one of the top ten in Canada for the impact/relevance of our research in Canada and top five in Ontario in real impact of both social sciences and humanities research and our sciences research. And we will continue to build on this research success by looking to develop a new Strategic Research Plan recently launched by our Vice-President Research and Innovation, Robert Haché. The plan will support faculty-level inquiry based research while strategically investing in areas where we can further existing strengths to become a world-wide leader.

And we have our Academic Innovation Fund (AIF), established by the Provost Patrick Monahan in 2010, and headed by Sue Vail, Associate Vice-President, Teaching and Learning, to provide an investment in innovation and change at York. Funding of up to \$2.5 million annually was offered for 2011-12 and 2012-13 to support initiatives that advance York's strategic priorities in relation to teaching and learning (including eLearning and experiential education) and the student experience, in particular the first year experience. In 2011-12, 39 projects, led by faculty, staff, and students, were awarded funding; and in 2012-13, 40 projects (13 new and 27 continuing) received support. The aim is to develop models and structures that can be applied across the University for the benefit of all York students.

The AIF is really a story about collaboration and innovation that is encouraging the creation of new and sustainable approaches to improving the student experience, both inside and outside the classroom.

### Infrastructure

I have the confidence that we are a university on the move. If you have visited our campuses lately, you may have noticed all the construction; as we continue to build a better learning and teaching environment for the community.

We already have some incredible new spaces for students to experience which were officially opened in the last few months, including: the Life Sciences Building, the renovated and expanded Ignat Kaneff Building at Osgoode Hall Law School, and Glendon's Centre of Excellence for French-Language and Bilingual Postsecondary Education. But these are only some of the transformations that are occurring at York.

Construction is well underway on the Spadina-York University subway extension, York Lanes is undergoing a major makeover, we have started work on the Pan Am Games stadium, and as I mentioned, we will shortly start the construction of the new Engineering Building. Although there's no doubt that while construction can, at times, be an inconvenience, I am proud of this work. The creation of new buildings, and the renovation and expansion of existing buildings, is a significant component of York University's plan to meet the needs of students in Canada's growing knowledge-based economy.

Infrastructure allows us to create new opportunities and better serve our communities, our province, and our nation, while also enhancing the student experience.

### Safety:

We continue to have concerns about the perception of safety on our campuses. York is equally committed to building a community where mutual respect extends to all levels of our social encounters and relationships, and the University expects all community members to contribute to achieving this goal. As essential partners with the University in addressing these very serious issues, students, faculty and staff are called upon to exhibit care and concern for one another. We all share individual and communal responsibility.

York will continue to invest in new and innovative safety initiatives such as our Respect Inclusivity Awareness Tutorial and a new safety initiatives campaign currently in development. We also have committed to improve our communications around security incidents by emailing security bulletins to all members of the community.

### Conclusion:

We are a university on the move. We are a university with potential. We have the people, we have the drive and determination, and we have the plans in place to achieve our goals.

As I said at the onset, we represent the university of the 21st century because of the diversity of our programs, our strong academic quality in almost every field of knowledge, and the diversity of our population. We are on the path to becoming the global university.

Thank you.