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THE ROLE OF INCLUSION IN BUILDING SMART CITIES

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, and good morning, everyone.

Let me start by saying I am proud of the fact that so many of Toronto's city-builders are in fact graduates of York University—including the Mayor of Toronto, John Tory; Deputy Mayor Denzil Minnan-Wong; nine of Toronto's city Councillors; and GTA Mayors Virginia Hackson (Town of East Gwillimbury); Maurizio Bevilacqua (City of Vaughan); Bonnie Crombie (City of Mississauga); and in the GTHA, Steve Parish, the Mayor of Ajax.

City-Building as Community-Building

I'd like to consider two questions in my remarks today: how can we build cities that are smart *and* inclusive; and what is the role of universities in building inclusive cities?

In thinking about smart cities, the focus of attention has largely been on the technology and data that allow us to forecast and adapt to people's needs by enhancing the efficiency, sustainability and resiliency of cities. For example, it is estimated that by deploying smart technology, Toronto could save \$1.2 billion and create 19,000 new jobs over 10 years.

I do not want to minimize the potential benefits of smart cities. At the same time, increasing inequalities and stagnating productivity underline the need for *inclusive growth* rather than simply *market efficiency*.

Indeed, as Konrad Yakabuski noted recently in *The Globe and Mail*, some evidence suggests that “we face the risk of Toronto becoming a hub for well-paid tech hipsters, pricing out middle-income earners, who move to far-flung exurbs, leaving the city increasingly polarized between the creative-class-dominated neighborhoods in the centre, and the low-income, largely immigrant communities in the inner suburbs.”

So, we need to ask ourselves how government, civil society organizations and the postsecondary sector can work together to build cities that are smart *and* inclusive—that utilize a range of policy tools aimed at improving the life prospects of all citizens, both in terms of jobs and education, and in terms of housing, transportation and the environment.

This will require that we enact policies that benefit the bottom 40% (OECD, 2017) in support of the opportunity equation.

The Opportunity Equation

As recently highlighted in a report by the United Way Toronto & York Region, this equation is essential for creating access to opportunity for all citizens.

In brief, city-building cannot be done in the absence of community-building.

This means that we need to ask how we can provide infrastructure and resources that allow people to connect and learn from one another, sharing and collaborating on innovative ideas that improve the well-being of all members of society.

We need to examine how our decisions and our policies differentially impact various segments of societies.

An example is the collaboration between York University's Isabella Bakker, who does work on gendered budgeting, and the City of Toronto's Equity, Diversity & Human Rights Division, to introduce a gender-based budgeting process to help address gender inequality.

In short, successful cities will require:

- Inclusive growth—an investment in community-building broadly conceived versus infrastructure; and
- Inclusive innovation—a focus on social innovation and diversity of thought in organizations and societies (including the social sciences and humanities and the creative arts) versus a focus on STEM only.

Universities as City-Builders

I will give an example of this momentarily, but first, I would like to say a few words about the vital role that Ontario universities are playing in responding to this opportunity by:

- preparing globally educated citizens with the talent needed for the province's future, reflecting emerging labour market needs and the new global talent landscape, as well as the critical skills needed to assess the local and global impact of the decisions they make;
- working with the communities we serve to build strong cities; and
- playing an oversized role in basic and applied research needed to drive development and innovation.

Educational institutions are increasingly becoming anchors in their communities, contributing to city-building and community-building.

New university models are based on the recognition that in a rapidly changing labour market lifelong learning becomes a norm, and what is needed are broad-based, transferable skills; digital competencies; critical thinking; and research and communication skills.

Our Vision: Access, Connectedness, Excellence and Impact

In my recent Installation speech in taking up the role as York's 8th President, I spoke about our commitment of weaving together four fundamental pillars: access, connectedness, excellence and impact.

This commitment reflects our vision to provide a diverse student body access to a high-quality, research-intensive learning environment, and to maximize the contributions we make to the social, economic, cultural and other well-being of the societies we serve.

Developing Talent

Inclusive growth is fundamentally connected to the access agenda. Accessibility is essential in a global knowledge economy where postsecondary education will be necessary for more than two thirds of all new jobs.

We must continue to do whatever we can to remove the barriers for all eligible students seeking higher education.

I am a first-generation student myself and well-aware of the profound opportunity that I had to be growing up at a time and in a country where it was possible for me to access post-secondary education.

Education positively impacts income, health, and life expectancy (OECD, 2016:133).

College graduates earn, on average, \$1 million more than their high school counterparts over their work life, and university graduates earn \$1.5 million more.

Accessibility need not, and should not, come at the expense of excellence. In fact, accessibility can lead to greater and more diverse forms of excellence if it is accompanied by connectedness and impact.

With the rise of globalization, cities and universities are more connected than ever before, increasingly seeking out greater collaboration to increase our competitiveness and attract more high-quality students from around the world; building research and institutional partnerships; and working more closely with each other to maximize our impact and shape public policy.

As an example, Toronto's four university Presidents have led a collaboration to support student mobility and address student housing—projects known as StudentMoveTO and StudentDwellTO.

Another example is York's Glendon Campus, which has been designated Southern Ontario's Centre of Excellence for French-language and Bilingual post-secondary education, connecting bilingual and Francophone communities to the city and province.

Research & Development

The third pillar in York's vision for 21st-century education is excellence. As a university president, I am well-positioned to tell you about the tremendous intellectual capital across this country, which is driving and catalyzing innovation locally, nationally, and also regionally.

We have been seeing a call across the board for more robust and dynamic innovation ecosystems, locally, regionally and nationally—and universities are responding:

- in the development of emerging new program areas such as AI;
- by transforming teaching through experiential learning and entrepreneurial activities, and how we think about the classroom; and
- through the amplification of both basic and applied scholarship, research and creative activities.

While universities account for less than thirty per cent of total OECD research and development expenditure, universities and public research institutes perform more than three-quarters of total basic research (OECD, 2016: 64).

In Ontario, the higher education sector is the second largest performer of research and development, carrying out an estimated \$5.2 billion in work, translating into thirty-four per cent of the province's research activities in 2014.

But after three decades of growth, expenditure in R&D by universities and public research institutes in OECD countries began flattening out in 2010.

Continual investment in research is essential, including state-sponsored public research in areas such as basic science, where the private sector is often not well-equipped or motivated to invest.

Innovations such as Global Positioning System (GPS) and DNA technologies would not have been possible without the scientific and technological developments enabled by public research.

The impact of our work for building inclusive and sustainable cities is evident in pioneering urban research, including work as diverse as affordable housing being conducted at our Schulich School of Business' Brookfield Centre in Real Estate & Infrastructure; youth homelessness; and disaster and emergency management; as well as a first-ever academic-industry partnership with IBM Canada and NSERC to develop a cloud-enabled platform with cutting-edge modeling and simulation technology.

York's CITY Institute brings together dozens of researchers, including Linda Peake, who is here with us today, and who was recently awarded a \$2.5 million SSHRC Partnership Grant to research how rapid urbanization is affecting the lives of women living in poverty and to inform policies and practices for reducing economic and social insecurities faced by women.

York Region: Key Engine of Ontario's Economy

I will close with one final example of the impact that universities can make by bridging access, connectedness and excellence—namely, York's partnership with the province, Markham, York Region, the private and not-for-profit sectors, and Seneca College in building a new campus in the City of Markham.

With the help of a \$127-million commitment by the Ontario government, a \$25-million commitment by York Region, and the contribution of a five-acre site contributed by the City of Markham, the campus will open its doors in 2021 and will reflect the role that universities can play in city-building based on a new kind of community partnership.

Markham Centre Campus: A Campus with Impact

Working with regional and municipal economic development offices, we have been convening discussions with key industry sectors and social agencies to understand future workforce and community needs in designing curricula for more than 20 degree programs (some in partnership with Seneca), identify opportunities for research collaboration, and support experiential learning for students.

We are working to leverage existing infrastructure by engaging with local stakeholders, including land developers, secondary schools, business owners, and public institutions such as the Pan Am Centre, YMCA, Markham Public Library and health care institutions, to identify our respective needs and find opportunities for mutual benefit.

We have opened YSpace at an adjacent location—a new innovation and entrepreneurship centre that provides co-working and maker space for students and community entrepreneurs and innovators to build and scale their ventures, connect with industry and non-for-profit partners, and access programs designed to enhance their entrepreneurial skills.

Located in one of the fastest growing regions in Ontario, the new campus and YSpace will cultivate new connections that foster a strong and growing culture of teaching, learning, research and innovation in Markham, contributing significantly to the region economically, socially and culturally.

Conclusion: Essential Ingredients

In June 2016, the OECD committed itself “to redefine the growth narrative to put people’s well-being at the center of governments’ efforts.” A vision for cities must not be just smart, but also inclusive, in order to build and sustain vibrant, livable and economically robust urban centres.

Making that happen will require a number of essential ingredients, including:

- a whole-of-government approach working in collaboration with the private sector and educational institutions;
- the matching of skills and jobs;
- cognitive diversity in organizations and in cities, which includes the important role for STEM and STEAM fields in community-building;
- and public investment in universities to support the development of the talent pipeline, research and innovation.

I close with an invitation to us to pursue inclusive, smart cities as the road less travelled by, as that will make all the difference.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the enormously exciting opportunities that lie ahead of us and for the shared benefits of taking an inclusive approach to growing Ontario’s social and economic prosperity in an increasingly globalized knowledge economy.

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