



## Remarks of President and Vice-Chancellor William Lahey

### Encaenia 2022

#### University of King's College

Madame Chancellor, President Saini, colleagues, families and friends of the graduates, and most importantly, members of the Class of 2022! You're here! We're all here. How extraordinary!

Welcome to Encaenia, our first since 2019. How wonderful it is to be here with all of you, gathered in Convocation as the King's community has gathered for more than 230 years and as the King's and Dalhousie communities have gathered together to celebrate King's students for almost 100 years.

Encaenia is a formal event ... we are all in our finery. It is a beautiful ceremony and the beauty comes from its formality as well as the joy the formality expresses. So, let's bring on the joy!

Family members and friends and colleagues here on the stage—I know our hearts are full of joy for our beautiful graduands. We will soon be expressing it for each graduate as they cross the stage to receive their degree. Let's express it now for all of them, including those joining us on livestream, by rising and giving the outstanding class of 2022, a rousing standing ovation.

Graduates, time to return the favour. I ask you to rise and to give your best ovation for your families and friends and for all the King's and Dalhousie faculty members and staff who have dedicated themselves to your success and who have supported you in and out of the classroom over the course of your studies at King's and Dalhousie.

Thank you, Catherine Martin, for welcoming us to the territory of the Mi'kmaq. We acknowledge that we gather to celebrate on unceded Mi'kmaw land as guests of the Mi'kmaq under the treaties of peace and friendship by which Mi'kmaw sovereignty was acknowledged and accepted.

I acknowledge the African Nova Scotian communities that are among the founding communities of this province. We honour the resilience of these communities and the many contributions they have made to Nova Scotia and the country.

President Saini, it is a real pleasure to be honouring our graduates with you. Within days of your arrival at Dalhousie, you made it clear that you regarded the association between Dalhousie and King's as a true partnership by inviting me to join you in launching a coordinated response to the pandemic. You and your colleagues have been unstinting in supporting King's since the first days of the pandemic. You have been an exemplary colleague. Even though we are in the Rebecca Cohn, I hope you will permit me to say, after two years of mostly virtual collaboration, "welcome to King's!" And you look great in that King's tie!

At King's, we only have one Encaenia, whereas Dalhousie has almost twenty convocations. We however, make ours last. For you and everyone, I want you to know there will be sustenance in the King's Quad as soon as we are done here! It is something to look forward to if your stomach gets grumbly and you start to wonder how long we will be here.

I want to leave plenty of time for the other voices you will hear today. Having welcomed everyone, I end with my own short tribute to you the graduates. I do so recognizing the diversity of your experiences depending on whether you are about to receive your first degree or a post-graduate degree, and here I would like to give a shout out to our BJ, MJ and MFA students.

Graduations are always a tribute to what the graduates have overcome to achieve their degree and the learning it represents. For those who started in the King's foundation year program, you are prepared for this by being told in your first lecture that to learn is to suffer. The last three academic years have given that first lecture new and unprecedented meaning. All of you have overcome obstacles of historical if not biblical proportions. Your achievement is therefore proportionally extraordinary. Our admiration for you all is accordingly off the charts. Congratulations and thank you for being the inspiration we have all needed and still need and the world needs as we reckon with the injustices of our past and present and strive to chart a just future.

I would like to highlight one particular part of the inspiration you have provided. The burden of our response to the pandemic has fallen heavily on you and young people and students of all ages everywhere. Along with the graduates of 2020 and 2021 and those who will graduate in the next few years, you have been extraordinary in how you have carried those burdens in your commitment to each other, the wider community and the public good.

Whether you are from Nova Scotia or not, across the last three academic years, you have all been outstanding Nova Scotians, and as such you have been part of Nova Scotia's shining moment,

when we together made caring for others our collective priority. As one of your own, Hope Moon, wrote in reflections on the pandemic in August of 2020, your sacrifice for the greater and common good has been “rooted in love”. I agree with Hope that “the smallest acts of love can sustain our hope for a better world” and that “if we continue to care for each other, to hold space to grow for each other and ourselves, then there is space for the world to become better too.”

During your time at King’s, and with increased intensity during the pandemic, you have worked to make King’s a safer university and a university that contributes to reconciliation and is working hard on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. You have called upon your university not only to follow your example but to take on the role of leadership in this work and to take the burden of it from the students who will follow you. In both ways, you have demonstrated your hopefulness for the better future we can and must create at King’s and beyond. You have left a mark upon your university and on those of us you leave behind.

In honor of your work, your contributions, and your example, King’s must change to make what is already right about King’s available to those for whom it has been beyond reach and for those who have not been welcomed here. King’s must also change to be enriched by the gifts of those who will decide a changing King’s is for them.

To make these words into reality, all of us have to be as determined—and as loving—as you have been.

Graduates, we are brimming with confidence for what you will achieve and contribute and for the difference you will make. I know you will be kind but be sure to be kind and forgiving to yourself.

Here, you will be missed and remembered with affection and admiration. Let’s stay in touch.

With our Chancellor and President Saini, my faculty, staff and Board of Governor colleagues, and with our alumni, I look forward to enjoying the rest of this great celebration with you and your family and friends as you become our newest alumni.