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To all members of the Queen's University community:

I am delighted to be back at Queen's and looking forward to the coming years and the many challenges and achievements that undoubtedly lie ahead of us. To feel the excitement of this moment, one doesn't have to believe that exponentially accelerating change is moving the world towards some sort of technological singularity. Higher education—not only in Ontario, but more broadly around the world—is in the midst of a very significant transformation. Internationalization, experiential learning, equity, inclusion and reconciliation, new teaching methods facilitated or stimulated by technological innovation, as well as a new generation's insistence on the obligations which both educators and the educated owe to humanity and the planet: all of this infuses our work with urgency and excitement.

A more immediate and urgent consideration is the revision to postsecondary funding presently being implemented in Ontario. One consequence of this will be a focus on certain fixed employment and economic outcomes—results not antithetical to universities' larger mission, certainly, but also nowhere near a full accounting of that mission as we understand it. The challenge we will face in negotiating these changes is to ensure that while we address public expectations as articulated by government, we do not lose sight of our larger and more profound goal. That is to foster human talent through cultivation of the mind and the creative spirit, and through research to advance what we know about ourselves and the world we inhabit.

We are also at the end of Queen's most recent planning initiative, the *Strategic Framework 2014-2019*. That document was intended, in former principal Woolf's words, "to strengthen the university and make it more resilient in the turbulent times ahead," and in the context of the challenging circumstances I have just described, we can be grateful for that preparation. As we enter this new and profoundly challenging phase, we are solidly positioned, academically and financially—which is certainly a necessity if we are indeed to be resilient. Yet we will need to be much more than that. We will also need to be bold, determined and ambitious for Queen's.

What we need to be and what we need to do are two different things. The latter is secondary to the former: strategic planning—the usual way in which organizations decide what they are going to do—is useful in organizing day-to-day activities around identified goals; but, in the absence of a clearly-articulated, far-reaching and aspirational vision for the University, conventional planning will yield only predictable and mundane outcomes.

We need to be self-excelling, to be led daily more by our values and conception of what Queen's University is and what it exists to do, and less by the demands and imperatives of our day-to-day transactions.

Universities are out of the habit of talking about such things. Public discourse favours a largely instrumental view of universities which can sometimes have the effect, on campus, of constraining any conversation that looks beyond our immediate economic or social impact. In our institutions, I would observe that in this era of mass higher education, process frequently trumps principle, conformity outweighs individual need, and a culture of measurement has taken hold which dismisses or trivializes anything that cannot be quantified. Most within the universities would vehemently assert that education is not industry, but the truth is that over the last decade both institutions and people within them have accepted the application of an industrial model to an activity that is fundamentally about nurturing humanity rather than producing commodities.

All of this is to say that before Queen's can decide on what will follow the *Strategic Framework 2014-2019*, we need to have a broader conversation about what matters to this institution, what it exists to do, beyond teaching, research and service, and how it can excel itself according to those criteria. While I said at the start that we need to be ambitious, ambition itself is not enough. We need to be excited and compelled by goals and aspirations that confer a higher value on our day-to-day activities and speak to our passion and convictions.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that I am initiating a conversation with the entire university community about the issues I have outlined here. The conversation will not be confined to campus, but will draw in the Bader International Study Centre, Queen's alumni and friends, as well as our immediate and broader communities.

Four open forum meetings are scheduled, the first being held on October 15th. I will also use every other possible opportunity to advance the conversation when I meet with individuals and groups throughout the year.

I hope very much that you will seek out opportunities to participate and advance the discussions. Next Spring, I intend to report to you on the conversation, to articulate the highest aspirations of our university community as they have been expressed or emerged through the process, and to indicate in broad terms a possible strategy for achieving them.

I look forward to the conversation,

Patrick .