

Hon. Scott Brison, PC
Doctor of Civil Laws
Acadia University

- I want to thank Acadia University for this honour. It means a lot to me, but it really wasn't necessary. After all, for 22 years, I had the honour and the privilege of being a proud Member of Parliament for Acadia University and the people of Kings-Hants.

Today is not about me. Today is your day, as graduates of Acadia. And a few short years ago, you arrived at Acadia to attain a world-class education in one of the most perfect places on God's green earth, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

Since then, you've grown and the world's changed in so many ways. The academic knowledge and understanding learned in the lecture halls, and more recently, on the Zoom calls, will no doubt help you throughout your career and life path.

My greatest hope is that your time here at Acadia, as part of this special community, help prepare you for the most important vocation of your life; that of being a citizen.

Citizenship is defined as the quality of one's response to membership in a community. Each generation is indelibly shaped by the events of our youth. Consider just three of the game-changing world events that have unfurled during your time at Acadia. Each of these events carry valuable lessons affirming the importance, now more than ever, of citizenship, our individual responsibility for public good.

Firstly, one of the lessons of COVID is the importance of good citizens. Everyday heroes, willing to put the interest, even the safety of the broader community ahead of their own. That's a particularly important instinct when you're fighting a deadly global pandemic. Along with good government, good citizenship has been essential in fighting and beating this terrible scourge.

Secondly, during your time here at Acadia, we've witnessed a remarkable shift in global efforts to fight climate change. From carbon pricing to the ESG and sustainable finance movements, the unprecedented alignment of business, government, and citizenry to get to net zero is driving game-changing innovation and reshaping a more sustainable global economy.

And we've understood the science of climate change for decades, but the social and societal consensus driving real progress today would never been possible without the passion and reason of citizens like you. Good citizens put the future wellbeing of society and the planet ahead of the indulgences of the present.

Thirdly, we've known for a long time that systemic racism has corroded the institutions we trust to govern, defend, and even to protect us. Tragic and shocking events, including the murder of George Floyd, triggered more than just protest this time.

These events helped create a social tipping point and today's citizens, unwilling to put up with racial injustice anymore, are demanding institutional reform that will create a fairer, more inclusive society.

Good citizenship means more than just calling out injustice and inequity. Good citizens demand change standing up for the human rights and equality of all. Now, as you embark on your future,

we hope that Acadia and Nova Scotia have given you more than just a good foundation for your career and life path academically.

I hope that the big events of our time, while you were here, as part of the Acadia community, helped forge you as citizens prepared to roll up your sleeves and lean in to build a better world.

I wish you a meaningful and happy life driven by purpose, fortified by love and kindness, guided by reason and understanding, and committed to progress for your community, your country and humanity. Thank you and hearty congratulations.