

**Keith Irving, MLA Kings South
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Acadia University**

- I'm Keith Irving MLA for King South, and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Congratulations to all of you who have faced a graduating year like we have never faced before, and I hope never again.

We are still trying to make sense of the many takeaways from 2021. But as I thought about Acadia's graduating class of 2021, I began to feel somewhat hopeful about the skills you have gained.

This year, like never before, you needed to draw on the skills that have immense application going forward. This year you were asked to be critical thinkers on complex problems, good time managers, active listeners and online learners. Recognize and use these skills, whether your next chapter involves higher learning, employment, or hopefully travel. Emphasize these skills on your CV.

You have pivoted and adapted this year like no other graduates before you. You were asked to be creative and collaborative and rely on your digital skills in unprecedented ways. Turn these experiences into a competitive advantage.

I hope that another thing you take away from your time here in Wolfville is the value of community. For your time at Acadia, you were citizens of a place rated as one of the great small towns in Canada, and you enriched our community. Remember the qualities of our small town and what makes it so special and take these values forward as you move on to your next experiences and build your own experiences of community.

The final thing I want to say is to call on you to contribute to public life if the opportunity arises. The crisis of our times is climate change. To meet this extraordinary challenge, we need the energies of a new generation of problem-solvers, policy specialists, legislators who are prepared to shoulder the heavy lifting that will be required to move beyond carbon for our planet.

Our new Premier is 38 years old, and I can tell you firsthand that he brings to the office, the values and a perspective shaped by a different generation than my own, and this is exciting and energizing.

I truly hope you will mobilize the experiences and the knowledge you have gained at Acadia to shape the future of our country. Whether that is at the community level, as you have experienced here in Wolfville, or at a political level in business or in an NGO.

The world's challenges need your talents, your problem solving, your critical thinking and your ability to collaborate. These are the qualities that I may not have fully appreciated until much later in my working life. Take the insights from this year and go forth and improve our planet. The world is waiting for you.