Good evening everyone. It’s a pleasure to be here with you to celebrate some of our country’s most exceptional medical students, residents and physicians. I’m so proud to be sharing the stage with them tonight.

It has been almost one year since we last gathered together – in Quebec City – to celebrate our 150th anniversary. Our inspiration was a small group of physicians who joined forces to create our association back in 1867. They recognized that to best serve Canadians, physicians needed to be working together. With this simple goal, I can only imagine these early founders would be proud of how the CMA has grown and to see just how many physicians have taken up their call.

This commitment by physicians to join forces has made the CMA a strong voice in health care – one that has helped to create many other strong voices. Through our work, we helped establish the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Canadian Cancer Society, groups that later went on to become independent and successful.

This history could make it easy for us to rest on our laurels and be satisfied with what we’ve already accomplished. Instead, we’re turning our eyes to the future, and the challenges that lie ahead with a new sense of optimism and engagement.

The CMA is evolving to meet the aspirations of our members. We’re bringing together physicians and physicians-in-training to be leaders in improving health and health care. We’re looking to foster a more unified and supportive profession. And we’re asking Canadians to join the conversation and to share what health care looks like from their perspective.

Change is not always easy. Our board has spent countless hours considering the best path forward for the CMA, and how to best support our members. Many organizations change when they’re in crisis, and when they’re being pushed to make tough decisions. At the CMA, we’re looking ahead and we’re changing because we want to create a strong future for our association. Our decisions are difficult ones – but made with a single purpose in mind – supporting the profession and securing the long-term future of the CMA. The sale of MD fits squarely in this frame.

We are such a strong organization. We have many tens of thousands of physicians and students with us, and we have a long history of innovations, achievements and service
to Canadians. We’re looking to be more open and inclusive than ever, and we’re ready to welcome all physicians in Canada. Because we need you to help us meet the challenges confronting our profession. We need all of you.

As I met with many of you throughout the year, and we talked about the future, you shared your hopes for the CMA as we look ahead and put our 2020 strategy into action. You want to feel supported in your practices, hospitals and schools, so that your work can be more impactful and fulfilling. You want to empower your patients and work in partnership to make the best decisions for their care. And you want to put forward your own ideas for making health care better and come together with your colleagues to make them happen.

You also talked about your wellbeing, and the wellbeing of your colleagues. Burnout is on your mind, and it’s certainly a priority for us as well. Through our ongoing work in physician health and wellness, we’re looking to build an engaged, healthy and inspired medical profession. We’ll continue to be responsive to your issues and your priorities to make sure you feel supported.

When I look to the future, I know that all this is possible and more. I’m confident that we’ll be able to leverage the momentum we’ve created this year to make real change in health care. And everyone here is welcome to join us. We want every physician and medical student in Canada to tell us where we should be focussing our energy and our efforts.

The world around is changing faster than ever and the future holds the promise of opportunities. If we continue to ground ourselves as an organization through our members’ commitment to medicine, we can always respond from a position of strength and unity. We’ll be able to speak loudly and clearly on the issues that matter most to our profession. And we’ll be able to clearly see a path to building a vibrant profession and a healthy population.

It’s been so rewarding to be president of an organization like the CMA, and to have represented all of you. This experience has changed me in ways I did not expect, and I can confidently say that I’m coming out of this year as a better individual. To my colleagues: Thank you for your support and for showing me the true meaning of dedication.
- Dr. Laurent Marcoux
Valedictory address
Winnipeg, Man.
August 21, 2018

*Check against delivery*