Madam Chancellor, it brings me great enjoyment to introduce a scientist whose discoveries have earned wide and well-deserved recognition in the field of noble element chemistry. Professor Neil Bartlett is respected throughout the scientific world as one of those unique individuals who has helped reveal the countenance of nature. It has been said that art uses truth as a means to an end, whereas in science, truth is the only end. It is for the pursuit of truth that we gather today and honour Professor Bartlett.

Born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1932, he studied inorganic chemistry at King's College, University of Durham, receiving his PhD in 1958. Within a year of graduation, Neil Bartlett was attracted to Canada's West Coast and accepted a faculty position at our sister institution, the University of British Columbia. After eight years, Professor Bartlett moved on to Princeton University before becoming Professor of Chemistry at the University of California, Berkeley, where he settled in 1969.

A colleague of Bartlett's once pointed out that it is a rare thing when a single experiment excites chemists worldwide to an intense and immediate reappraisal of an accepted hypothesis. But this is precisely the effect Neil Bartlett's investigations had when in 1962 he disproved the idea that noble gases - inert elements with an octet of electrons in their outer shell - could not be made to combine with any other element. With his success in spontaneously reacting xenon at room temperature with the oxidizing agent, platinum hexafluoride, the first noble gas compound was produced and the field of noble element chemistry came into being.

From this discovery and from his later work, new light was thrown upon our understanding of the valence electron configurations of the central atom and the limitations of simple valance theory. For his achievements throughout a lifetime on the frontier of science, Professor Bartlett has received many prestigious awards and formal signs of achievement including the Corday-Morgan Medal and Prize of the Chemical Society of Great Britain, the United States Research Corporation Award, the E.W.R. Steacie Prize, the Dannie Heinerman Prize of the Gottingen Academy, the Robert A. Welch Award and the Moisson Prize to name a few. He was elected to the Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina, Halle, in 1969, the Royal Society of London in 1973, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Gottingen Academy of Science in 1977. Professor Bartlett also is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Chemical Institute of Canada and an Associate Member of the French Academy of Science.

Albert Einstein declared, "The only incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible." Through his scientific insight and disciplined research, Professor Bartlett has made the mystery of the physical world accessible to our understanding. For his contributions to chemistry and human knowledge, Madam Chancellor, it is my pleasure on behalf of the Simon Fraser University Senate to present Neil Bartlett for the Degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.