any people, graduates, faculty, students of history, will I am sure have shared my feeling for the need of a formal, authoritative, definitive history of McGill University. By good fortune I found myself in a position to take action towards satisfying this need.

When in 1973 Dr. Stanley B. Frost was within a few months of the end of his term as vice-principal, it was borne in on me that he would be a most appropriate person to undertake the formal history of McGill. He had published several books, and although his own discipline was Old Testament studies, it had obvious historical elements. Not only had he been dean of the Faculty of Divinity (now Religious Studies), but he had also been dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and was thus familiar with the whole range of research in the university. Furthermore, Dr. Frost had been especially active in connection with McGill’s libraries and archives and, perhaps best of all, had a proven record of accomplishment, of tackling difficult jobs and of getting them done.

In the course of a conversation with Dr. Frost about his plans, I asked him without any forewarning whether he would be interested in writing a history of McGill. Although momentarily taken aback by the suggestion, he quickly responded with his customary zeal and enthusiasm. In the spring of 1974 the university’s board of governors appointed Dr.
Frost director of the History of McGill Project and allocated to it some modest financial support.

Dr. Frost tackled his task with characteristic care and thoroughness with the result that the first volume of his history now appears, and the second is well under way. As will become apparent to the reader, the writing of this volume represents an immense amount of research, consultation, organization, and plain hard work. Dr. Frost's enthusiasm has been infectious and has enjoyed the support of many people interested in the history of McGill, particularly members of the Department of History in the Faculty of Arts. With great imagination Dr. Frost conceived the idea of a society devoted to the public presentation of papers on various aspects of the history of this university, papers that were often from direct participants in that history. The success of the James McGill Society has provided ample evidence of the wide interest in the subject.

McGill has always been fortunate in the degree of support so generously provided by staff, students, graduates, and friends. I have often expressed my thanks for this support and I do so again, particularly for this splendid new history. I hope it will serve not just as a source of knowledge about this university, but also as a resource for strength in the future of McGill.

R.E. Bell
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
(1970–1979)