



Robert Oliphant

M.P. for Don Valley West
Député de Don Valley-Ouest



January 30, 2018

The Honourable Kirsty Duncan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Science and Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

I wish to begin by thanking you for your continuing efforts to support the scientific community, expand evidence-based decision-making and improve the culture of curiosity in Canada. The appointment of Chief Science Advisor, Dr. Mona Nemer, was an essential step in our furthering a culture of transparency and the promotion of science, and I look forward to more developments from your office. I am writing to you today regarding our government's response to Canada's Fundamental Science Review, known as the Naylor Report.

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to tour the Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research, and to speak with representatives from the Munk Cardiac Centre. They expressed the importance of federal funding for fundamental scientific research in Canada. I have also received correspondence from constituents who are members of the science community at York University, the Krembil Research Institute, and University of Toronto affiliates such as Holland Bloorview and St. Michael's Hospital, who are advocating for such funding. I am sure that you are considering the findings of the Naylor Report carefully. However, I would like to add to your consideration the information I have learned from my visit with researchers as well as the concerns of my constituents.

The Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research (TRCFHR) is an excellent example of an organization which would benefit from federal support. While touring the facility, I was excited to see many young scientists working on important heart research. The TRCFHR brings together engineering, medical and science scholars to develop new diagnostic techniques, innovative treatments, and tools to help people prevent, manage and survive heart failure. They collaborate closely with the University of Toronto, SickKids hospital and University Health Network, mixing students with established researchers to form a dynamic and incubating research environment. I am confident that many of Canada's future industry experts will come from organizations such as the TRCFHR.

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However, organizations such as the TRCFHR face challenges associated with funding. Like all researchers, they are dependent on grants. While fortunate to receive a generous initial philanthropic donation, TRCFHR's focus on fundamental research leaves them vulnerable. A failure to continue funding could lead to a severe set-back in the hope for cures and treatments for heart disease, and to a significant hit to the next generation of Canadian researchers.

I encourage you and the Prime Minister to visit the TRCFHR and see for yourselves what can be done when young and established researchers work in a well-funded collaborative environment.

As you know, the importance of fundamental research is not limited to heart disease. There are many areas of investigation currently being tackled by innovative health scientists and institutions: Alzheimer's, infectious diseases, antibiotic resistance, and mental health, to name just a few. For Canada to remain competitive in an increasingly complex global stage and to retain our best and brightest young scientists, we must deliver a sustainable and accountable funding model. We need to ensure that we invest not just in priority-driven or partnership-oriented research, but independent investigator-led research as well.

I hope this letter has helped illustrate the importance and advantages of supporting fundamental science in Canada. I believe that if you have the chance to visit Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research, you will find your visit insightful and inspiring.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Oliphant". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Oliphant" clearly distinguishable.

Robert Oliphant, M.P.
Don Valley West