Dear Dr. Lang and Mrs. Antonious:

Thank you for your email sent on December 19, 2017, in which you provided feedback on the Final Report of the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science and with which you attached further correspondence from the Canadian Society of Microbiologists on this matter.

Our government recognizes the value of science and the important work researchers like you do to improve our health, environment, economy, and communities. In our first two years, we unmuzzled Canadian scientists to ensure that our researchers could speak openly about their work and reinstated the long-form census. We have also made important investments in Canadian science, including $2 billion in research infrastructure at universities and colleges across Canada; $125 million for a pan-Canadian strategy on artificial intelligence; and the largest investment in the granting councils in over a decade. The Prime Minister’s appointment of Dr. Mona Nemer as Canada’s Chief Science Advisor further demonstrates the government’s commitment to science and evidence-based decision making. I am excited about the contributions Dr. Nemer will make to Canada’s science and research ecosystem.

As part of our continued support for science, in 2016, I launched Canada’s Fundamental Science Review to ensure that we are doing our best to support the research community in Canada. This was the first review of the fundamental science network in over 40 years. While the report recognizes Canada’s strong research ecosystem, it also identifies some challenges.

Our government has already begun taking strategic action to improve Canada’s research ecosystem and respond to the Review.

I launched a new Network of Centres of Excellence competition that included changes to program criteria to foster collaborative, basic research in all disciplines.

I also recently announced a cap on renewals of Tier 1 Canada Research Chair (CRC) terms to ensure that emerging researchers have the opportunity to hold one of these prestigious positions. This measure complements other changes I have introduced to promote equity and diversity in CRC appointments.

Furthermore, I launched, in collaboration with the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Health, the Canada Research Coordinating Committee (CRCC) to achieve greater harmonization, collaboration, and coordination among our granting councils and the Canada Foundation for Innovation. The CRCC will help strengthen coordination and governance in the government’s support for research, one of the key themes outlined in the Fundamental Science Review.
Review report. One of its immediate focus areas will be how to ensure strong support for Canada’s next generation of researchers. For more information, you may wish to review our open letter to members of the CRCC.

Other planned priority actions include updating the legislation for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to separate the role and function of the President and the Chair of the Governing Council. I will also work with the Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, to replace the existing Science, Technology and Innovation Council with a new science and innovation advisory body that will provide independent, expert advice on strengthening science and research and on stimulating innovation across the economy. This council will be open and transparent, and its reports will be publicly available.

I am committed to ensuring that Canada’s researchers have what they need, and I will be leading other measures that support this mission. Elements that require funding will be considered as part of the government’s budget cycle, which factors in a range of competing priorities. It takes time to reorient a complex research ecosystem, but I remain steadfast in upholding Canada’s standing as a leader in international research excellence.

Given your engagement in health research, I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of our exchange of correspondence to Minister Petitpas Taylor.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to share your ideas. I look forward to working with the Canadian Society of Microbiologists on addressing societal challenges and opportunities for new discoveries that can benefit Canadians.

Please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Kirsty Duncan, P.C., M.P.

c.c.: The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, P.C., M.P.