The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1A 0A6

December 15, 2017

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of the Canadian Society of Microbiologists-Société Canadienne des Microbiologistes (CSM-SCM), we write you to express our strong support for the report of Canada’s Fundamental Science Review Panel (the Naylor Report). At the Society’s Annual Conference this past June in Waterloo, Ontario (with approximately 500 participants from Canada and beyond), a consistent topic of conversation and discussion was the Naylor Report and the critical need for the Government to implement all of its recommendations. These recommendations surrounding Canadian research governance, funding levels, infrastructure, personnel, facilities and operations represent crucial and achievable targets for the Government. Implementing the recommendations will help to mitigate Canada’s current decline in competitiveness and scientific loss. For example, at the University of Alberta alone, four microbiology professors have accepted positions in the US, abandoning their faculty appointments and start-up companies, including our former CSM-SCM President, who served as an excellent female mentor to aspiring young scientists in Canada. Through actions taken based on the Naylor report we can begin restoration of Canada as a place that nurtures discovery, research, and development.

Recent conceptual and technical breakthroughs place microbiology at the center of health, agriculture, environmental, and industrial sciences. Several key areas where this is evident are: the microbiome and recognition that microbes are inextricably tied to health and disease, antibiotic resistance as the biggest threat to public health we face, synthetic microbiology and its potential to revolutionize industries in multiple scientific disciplines, and global biogeochemical cycles and climate change with microbes as drivers of all key elemental cycles on earth. We need to strengthen our commitment to the study of the basic biology of microbes, ecology of their communities, and biotechnology derived from microorganisms to advance in these areas.
Canada’s microbiologists are recognized internationally for their integral roles in science and their contributions to health and the environment. CSM-SCM members also have key advisory roles in Canada, for example in providing expert testimony for the Human Pathogens and Toxins Act. They work closely with multiple federal and provincial agencies to develop strategies aimed at tackling the challenges faced by our society. Implementing the recommendations of the Naylor Report will enable Canada’s microbiologists to continue pushing the boundaries of knowledge, improving the health and safety of Canadians, and bringing new innovations to our economy.

The home for many of Canada’s microbiologists is in academic institutions, and these serve as the training ground for scientists of all levels: they hire undergraduate students, train graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, and ultimately develop and instill the skills needed for technological advancement and scientific innovation. These trainees represent the future of Canada’s economic growth and innovation success. They also contribute to the economic development by starting companies that are built on their basic science discoveries. We welcome all opportunities to continue working with the Government of Canada on addressing societal challenges and opportunities for new discoveries that can benefit Canadians.

Sincerely,

Dr. Andrew Lang, President
Memorial University of Newfoundland

CSM-SCM Executive
Dr. Marie Eliot, McMaster University; 1st Vice President
Dr. Janet Hill, University of Saskatchewan; 2nd Vice President
Dr. Christine Szymanski, University of Georgia/University of Alberta; Past President
Dr. Mohan Babu, University of Regina; Secretary/Treasurer
Dr. Christopher Yost, University of Regina; Meetings Secretary
Dr. Stefanie Vogt, University of British Columbia; Postdoctoral Representative
Ms. Rhiannon Wallace, University of British Columbia Okanagan; Graduate Student Representative

cc. Hon. Kirsty Duncan
Minister of Science