



8 April 2021

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay P.C., Q.C.
MP, South Surrey - White Rock
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Sent via email to: Kerry-Lynne.Findlay@parl.gc.ca

Dear Ms. Findlay,

It's hard to believe that we recently marked one year since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and yet, we still find ourselves confronted with new challenges. In the face of this crisis, I am proud to share with you an update on how the UBC community is responding and has been supporting Canada—and indeed the world—in efforts to address COVID-19.

The past year has been extraordinarily difficult for all Canadians, with students and university communities across Canada experiencing significant impacts. At UBC, almost all teaching is still taking place online, with more than 50,000 students currently learning remotely and faculty working hard to redesign and deliver more than 3,000 courses and adapting more than 9,000 research projects to be conducted safely during the pandemic. It has been a remarkable effort on everyone's part.

Despite many challenges, I continue to be inspired by how the UBC community has mobilized to support Canada's pandemic response. UBC experts and students have been at the forefront of pandemic solutions, including through federal and provincial advisory bodies, developing innovative made-in-BC PPE, working on the front lines of the health system and playing integral roles in the development of treatments and vaccines. I've attached a backgrounder that highlights just some of the exciting initiatives led by UBC community members to address the health, social and economic challenges stemming from the pandemic.

An incredible, but perhaps not broadly understood, achievement is the contributions UBC researchers have made to global vaccine and therapeutics development. Acuitas Therapeutics, a UBC spin-off company, has developed and is contributing critical lipid nanoparticle delivery systems that are foundational to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Work led over decades by UBC professor and Acuitas co-founder Dr. Pieter Cullis on lipid nanoparticles and drug delivery systems has been a key to the many mRNA vaccines and treatments now being deployed in response to COVID-19, in addition to a host of other diseases. Another UBC spin-off company, AbCellera Biologics, rapidly developed a US FDA and Health Canada-approved antibody treatment in partnership with Eli Lilly, which has helped thrust the company into the global spotlight as Canada's most valuable biotechnology company.



I want to also take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts to support Canadians throughout the past year. We appreciate government and parliament working together to quickly mobilize programs to support families, workers, students and the research community. This support has enabled students to start or continue their educations, kept labs operating and helped to retain scientific personnel. Federal support has also been integral to pandemic research at universities, both in the short term through rapid response funding, but also through decades of investments in fundamental research that helped shape Canada's strengths in areas like biotechnology and life sciences.

Collaboration has been, and will continue to be, foundational to Canada's pandemic response, particularly as we move towards recovery. UBC and Canada's post-secondary institutions can play an integral role in partnering with government to build a sustainable and inclusive economy that leverages the potential of Canada's education, research and innovation ecosystem. By supporting talent development, research and innovation, knowledge infrastructure and emerging sectors like quantum and biotechnology, Canada has an opportunity to lead in the global economic recovery, while creating jobs and opportunity for Canadians.

As one of Canada's leading universities, UBC plays an important role in advancing research, learning and engagement on issues of national and global significance. The pandemic has highlighted the important role post-secondary institutions play in addressing key challenges, and I hope that we can continue to leverage these strengths to support recovery and a more sustainable and just society. UBC continues to advance a bold agenda focused on key priorities such as climate action, reconciliation, anti-racism and inclusion. A number of initiatives are underway, including planning for a national dialogue on anti-Asian racism that UBC will host in June 2021 to bring together a diverse range of perspectives and experiences relating to anti-Asian and other forms of racism in Canada.

As this unprecedented academic year nears its end, we look forward to the next with greater optimism and are actively planning for a broad return to in-person learning for the fall.

Thank you once again for your support and leadership throughout the challenges of the last 12 months. I look forward to building on our work together in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Santa J. Ono'.

Santa J. Ono
President and Vice-Chancellor