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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

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November 15, 2005

The Honourable Minister Ralph Goodale, MP
Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Goodale,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph".

I recently received an update on the tremendous successes of the Coalition for Canadian Astronomy. This group, which brings together representatives from the scientific, academic and business communities, has designed and implemented a clearly defined plan that has vaulted Canada into a world leadership position in astronomy. This success would not have been possible without the financial support of the Federal Government in the 2001 and 2003 Federal Budgets, and from your own department earlier this year.

The Coalition is now seeking long-term funding to complete the remaining priorities identified in its Long Range Plan for Astronomy and Astrophysics (LRP). This is a productive investment for Canada. You need only review the benefits that have flowed to the Canadian economy from the LRP thus far to understand why the Plan must be continued.

For Canadian astronomers, they now have access to the world's leading astronomy projects, helping us retain our best and brightest scientists here in Canada. For academia, enrollment in astronomy at Canadian universities is booming, ensuring that this country has the next generation of astronomers who will be needed to keep Canada at the forefront of this field. For industry, tens of millions of dollars in contracts have been won to support astronomy research, providing jobs, income and tax revenue. Equally important, industry's involvement with these projects is helping our workers develop skills and expertise that are translating into spin-off technologies in a range of commercial product areas—from MRIs to theme park rides.

The Coalition reports that approximately \$235 million is needed over the next seven years to complete the remaining elements of their Plan. This works out to a relatively modest annual investment, especially when you consider the returns delivered to our economy. Independent analysis has shown a direct return of two to one for every dollar invested in astronomy, with indirect returns estimated as high as ten to one.

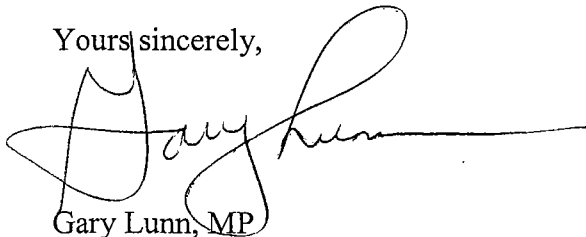
On a broader level, the Coalition has presented us with an ideal approach to scientific research. It is coordinated, focused and forward-thinking. All the relevant stakeholders have signed on to their Plan. The LRP presented a roadmap to scientific excellence, and that has now been achieved. In many ways the coalition and its LRP can serve as a model for other scientific disciplines.

If this is the approach to scientific research that the Canadian Government wants to promote-as I think it should-the funding request of the Coalition needs to be met. Without further funding, the tremendous successes that have been achieved to date will be lost. In effect, the money invested previously by this Government will be squandered. It simply does not make sense to invest something, let it build up to a world-leading position, and then walk away when the dividends are really beginning to flow.

I hope that you will seriously consider the funding request of the Coalition for Canadian Astronomy and bring this funding request to the Cabinet table. We have a great success story here and we can use it to encourage other disciplines to develop their own plans for international scientific leadership, thereby ensuring the Government's scientific investments are productive ones.

I would be delighted to support you in any efforts you make to win Cabinet support for further astronomy funding.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Lunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gary Lunn, MP
Saanich-Gulf Islands

Cc., Coalition for Canadian Astronomy