



A letter from OICR's President and Scientific Director

People across Ontario and beyond are experiencing the positive impact of discoveries and innovations made by OICR's researchers. Whether it is cutting-edge liquid biopsy technology, or easier access to a clinical trial, these improvements in cancer care did not happen overnight – they are the result of years of hard work by our scientists and other researchers around the world. With this in mind, we are pleased to present our 2023-24 Impact Report, which highlights innovations today, and the work OICR is doing to ensure the next waves of innovations will be ready for future generations of patients.

Over the last year, OICR has continued to work with our partners to strengthen the Ontario cancer research community, harness the latest technologies and deliver solutions to those living with cancer. In this report you can read about how these efforts continue to put Ontario at the forefront of the future of precision medicine for cancer while at the same time creating jobs and propelling the province's life sciences economy.

Part of my excitement around our accomplishments during the past year is that OICR is not only making headway in established areas of cancer research but is also helping to lead the way in entirely new fields. That includes fields like radiopharmaceuticals, where OICR has supported innovators like Hamilton-based Fusion Pharmaceuticals leading advancements for this new type of cancer treatment that employs radioactive isotopes attached to proteins, such as antibodies, to target and destroy tumour cells. Following years of support from OICR and its strategic partner FACIT, the company's excellence and promise were recognized when it was acquired by Astra-Zeneca in a deal worth up to \$2.4 billion USD. I congratulate Dr. John Valliant, Founder and CEO of Fusion, and the Fusion team on this incredible success, which is further proof of the strength of cancer research in Ontario and validation of OICR's approach.

OICR researchers also continued to push the envelope of another game-changing technology in the form of so-called 'liquid biopsies', which allow for the diagnosis and monitoring of cancer using a blood test instead of a tissue sample. This advancement is especially important for those at a greater risk of cancer due to hereditary cancer syndromes. OICR-supported researchers showed that these liquid biopsies could detect developing cancers much earlier in a landmark study this past year. Working with researchers in Ontario and across Canada, leaders from OICR's Genomics Program and the OICR-supported Ontario Hereditary Cancer Research Network are now conducting a clinical trial to expand access to this new test and make it available to more individuals who need it most. It is inspiring to see this research advancement, and others, being translated into the clinic and improving the lives of those with cancer.

I am proud to say that OICR continued to make great strides in patient partnership, and I am thankful for our collaboration with OICR's Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) and other patient partners who made significant contributions towards our achievements over the last year.

My gratitude goes to Beth Ciavaglia for her strong leadership of PFAC and to Terry Hawrysh for serving as the new PFAC Chair. I look forward to continuing to work with our patient partners to strengthen our research and its impact on patients.

Reflecting on the importance of patient partners to OICR immediately brings to mind the legacy of Andrea Redway, a patient representative on the OICR Board of Directors, who sadly passed away from cancer in April 2024. Her impact at OICR and beyond will be felt for years to come and her courageous advocacy for cancer patients and research will continue to help motivate and guide our work.

We were fortunate to have Andrea serve on our Board and to also benefit from the strong guidance and expertise of her colleagues. I would also like to thank Malcolm Campbell, Kevin Empey and Geoff Porter, who have completed their service on our Board, for their leadership, and welcome Jennifer Chan, Laurie Harrison and Nancy Ross as new Board members.

The task we face in solving cancer is enormous, and it cannot be accomplished without partnership and collaboration. I offer my sincere thanks to all our partners, including hospitals, universities and other organizations across Ontario, and beyond, for your commitment to our shared goals and our collective progress towards them.

Importantly, OICR would not be able to pursue these goals without the continued support of the Government of Ontario. This support is bringing made-in-Ontario solutions to patients, building up our life sciences sector and strengthening our province. My thanks to our government partners for their ongoing belief in our work.

I also thank all OICR's dedicated staff members and funded researchers for their unwavering commitment to improving the lives of those with cancer. Your dedication is powering the progress that we are making against cancer, and I look forward to another year of breakthroughs and discoveries that will light a path toward a brighter tomorrow.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Rima Al-awar for her many years of service to OICR as Director of OICR's Drug Discovery Program, Head of Therapeutic Innovation at OICR and her massive contributions to the Institute and Ontario's drug discovery community. Rima announced that she will be stepping down in the fall of 2024. She can be proud of the powerful drug discovery engine and talented team she has built at OICR. I know that our Drug Discovery Program will continue to be successful in its drive to discover new therapies. I wish Rima well in her future endeavours and am happy that she will remain an advisor to OICR.

In this report you can read about how OICR and our partners are working to not only bring solutions to those with cancer today, but also harness the latest technologies and Ontario's immense research capacity to change how cancer will impact our communities in the future. If you have any comments or questions about our research, please contact us at info@oicr.on.ca.

Dr. Laszlo Radvanyi
President and Scientific Director