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May 24<sup>th</sup> 2017

Dear Professor Reid and Dr. Main,

Thank you for your letter and for outlining a number of questions which are key for your membership ahead of the General Election on 8<sup>th</sup> June.

A number of the issues which you highlight touch on areas which are the devolved responsibility of the Scottish Parliament and where the SNP Scottish Government is taking action.

More broadly, all of these areas are impacted by the UK's decision to leave the EU. As you will be aware, the SNP believe that Scotland and the UK should retain membership of the Single Market which is critically important for many sectors of the Scottish economy and in the context of the issues you raise, ensuring continued access to talent and to research and development funding.

In response to your questions:

1. The SNP Scottish Government is investing in support for STEM learning at school, college and university.

We are working to improve the provision of STEM subjects at primary and secondary school, including through partnership work. For example, a new 3 year £1 million fund to boost primary science learning in schools has been made possible by a partnership with the Wood Foundation. At schools, Scottish Government investment is bearing results, with 6.3% more passes in Science, Maths and Computing Higher qualifications in

2016 compared to 2007.

We are also committed to encouraging current undergraduates and career changes to consider teaching in STEM. In February, we launched the next phase of the successful inspiring teachers marketing campaign and last year, we announced £1 million of funding for the Attainment Scotland Fund to develop new routes into teaching.

In November, we launched a consultation on a new draft STEM Strategy. The consultation sets out the actions we will take to raise levels of STEM enthusiasm, skills and knowledge in Scotland, including how to address socio-economic inequalities and gender imbalance. We welcome all the consultation responses and have published a detailed report providing an analysis of the responses.

2. The SNP recognises that it is vitally important for businesses and universities to have access to talent. That is why the SNP believes in a fair immigration system which is evidence-based and led by economic need, rather than by setting arbitrary targets.

In addition, we have been calling on the UK Government to reinstate the post-study work visa, which would help in attracting top international talent to our Universities while encouraging them to stay here to contribute afterwards. We will continue to call for its reinstatement and call on the UK Government to provide a guarantee for the EU nationals who live and work in the UK. We value the enormous contribution that EU nationals make to our society and particularly to our HE sector and our research capability.

We are also appalled at the introduction of a migrant workers charge and proposals to double this. We are considering the implications of this for the interests of workers, businesses and key sectors in Scotland and would welcome the opportunity to liaise with CASE further on this damaging policy.

3. We are deeply concerned about the implications of Brexit on international collaboration between UK and EU universities and the wider science community. The SNP will fight to protect measures that allow and facilitate current levels of collaboration in research and innovation within the EU.

The SNP in Government will continue to promote the image of Scotland as a vibrant centre of scientific excellence, enterprise and endeavour. Most recently, I gave a speech at Stanford University where I spoke about the role of Scotland's engineers and scientists in developing the expertise to help lead the world into the low carbon age.

4. Planned investment in Scotland's universities in 2017-18 will be higher overall than last year, with an annual investment of more than £1 billion.

The SNP Scottish Government has also committed funding of around £345 million to

support research and innovation through our Enterprise Agencies and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and a further £124 million of funding over six years (2013-19) to our network of eight Innovation Centres.

In addition, we will be inviting the First Minister's Council of Economic Advisers and the Scotland CAN DO Innovation Forum to develop a range of specific actions as part of a sustained national programme to boost productivity through innovation.

The SNP Scottish Government will also launch a new Innovation Prize, with an annual award for the collaborative project that produces the optimum commercialisation from investment activity.

Furthermore, recent figures demonstrate R&D expenditure by businesses in Scotland rose by 41% in real terms since 2007, compared to a 17% increase in UK expenditure over the same period.

5. The SNP agrees wholeheartedly that good government decision-making is underpinned by evidence led policymaking and in government, seeks to advocate and champion the use of evidence and science advice to inform our decision making.

6. During the Brexit negotiations the SNP will seek to protect Scotland's place in the single market. We believe that this will ensure the regulatory certainty that facilitates trade and ensure access to one of our biggest and most important export markets for key sectors like food and drink.

I trust that this is informative and helpful, and we look forward to continuing to engage with you and your membership in the future.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Sturgeon'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'N' and a long, sweeping underline.

Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
SNP Leader and First Minister