

Insights from the Network

Q&A With New Board Member Reza Moridi

On October 20th, 2022, Canada's Stem Cell Network (SCN) welcomed **three new members** to its Board of Directors, including Mr. Reza Moridi. Today, on International Volunteer Day, the Stem Cell Network would like to recognize the dedication of, and thank, volunteers like Mr. Moridi. SCN could not achieve success without the experts in the Network who devote their time and knowledge to ensuring Canada remains a global leader in the regenerative medicine field.



Recently, Joanna Valsamis, SCN'S Director of Knowledge Mobilization, had the opportunity to sit down with Mr. Moridi and talk about his career and reasons for joining the SCN Board.

Thanks for joining us today! Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your career?

By profession, I am a physicist. I was also a politician in the province of Ontario from 2007-2018, serving as a Member of Provincial Parliament, the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I have a passion for science, research, and innovation. Since 2018, I have been serving on several volunteer boards.

What has been your biggest achievement?

As a physicist, I published a number of research papers and taught at universities as a professor. I served as the Chief Scientist and Vice President of the Radiation Safety Institute of Canada, and helped license the Institute's National Laboratories in Saskatoon, SK, by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

As the Minister of Training Colleges and Universities, one of my major accomplishments was bringing free tuition for students coming from low-income families in the province of Ontario and modernizing the university funding formula. As the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, I helped transform the innovation ecosystem in Ontario. I initiated the establishment of Campus Linked Accelerators in all Ontario universities and colleges, and secured funding for MaRS to complete construction of the West Tower. I helped establish the Ontario Institute for Regenerative Medicine and Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence.



What advice would you give to someone wishing to pursue a similar career?

As a scientist, I would say, work very hard, and do not be discouraged! Discovery never ends and our knowledge is still very limited. Keep imagining! Research and innovation are a journey that starts with imagination. As Albert Einstein said, imagination is more important than knowledge!

What inspired you to volunteer your time and lend your expertise on the Stem Cell Network Board of Directors?

I was asked to join the Board and I accepted! It is an honour to be a part of this wonderful organization. Stem cells were originally discovered by two prominent Ontario scientists - James Till and Ernest McCulloch. I had the pleasure of meeting Jim Till in person. It was a great honour for me to pay tribute to Jim at the Ontario Parliament as Minister of Research, Innovation and Science while he sat in the Members Gallery in the Parliament. The discovery of the stem cell changed the science of medicine dramatically, opening the doors to regenerative medicine. I am delighted to join the Board and contribute towards our efforts in advancing this branch of science which has a direct impact on people's lives.

What do you hope to achieve in the next 12 months as a Board member?

I am hoping to work closely with the members of the Board and the President and CEO, Cate Murray, to ensure Canada remains a global leader in the science of stem cells and regenerative medicine. This can only be done by supporting our researchers and scientists.

What message do you have for the stem cell and regenerative medicine community?

This community of scientists is working in an area of life sciences that is quite new. As you know, medicine used to be an art – it is now more science and engineering - thanks to advances in biology, physics, chemistry and engineering. The work stem cell researchers do to bring discoveries to medical practitioners helps save lives. The economic impacts of stem cell research to our country are also significant – discoveries and innovation, and the commercialization of findings in stem cell science are helping our economy.

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Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share?

I would like to thank all the scientists, technologists, practitioners, and governments who are supporting this important branch of life sciences – thank you for your tireless efforts to improve human health and well-being while contributing to our economy.

To read more about Mr. Moridi and SCN's other dedicated Board members, visit <https://stemcellnetwork.ca/about-us/governance/>.