

# Dr. Andrew Pelling

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Professor Andrew Pelling is currently a professor and Canada Research Chair at the University of Ottawa. He began his scientific career at the University of Toronto doing a BSc (Hons) in biological chemistry (1997 – 2001). After this, Andrew did his PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles in physical chemistry (2001 – 2005) under the supervision of James K. Gimzewski which was followed postdoctoral research as a Senior Research Fellow at the London Centre for Nanotechnology, University College London with Michael A. Horton (2005 – 2008). With such a strong research background Professor Pelling began his independent research group with a focus on unapologetic curiosity and novel innovation. The Pelling lab's research incorporates many scientific disciplines in order to study cell biophysics, stem cell fate, cancer cell biology and musculature diseases. The research lab he oversees at the University of Ottawa is unconventional in the sense that it doesn't just bring together different scientists from different scientific disciplines but also artists, social scientists and engineers. This unusual blend of curious minds has allowed remarkable innovation to prosper, resulting in augmented biology being used to make ears from apples and skin to be grown on LEGO. Whilst fun, the aforementioned innovations have the potential to replace and even reduce the costs of expensive biomaterials currently on the market.

Andrew Pelling, as well as being a scientist and professor, is also a senior TED fellow and an entrepreneur. Andrew is involved with, and has founded, a number of businesses. One of the companies he founded, Incubers, makes open source incubators. The aim of this company is to make high-end incubators more affordable



to scientists. This will have a knock-on effect, as it will allow science and biological experiments to be more accessible worldwide. Another company Andrew founded is called Spiderwort Inc. Spiderwort Inc. is a tissue engineering company that develops biomaterials that will offer new avenues in 3D for in vitro research and regenerative medicine.

One of the main reasons I chose to have a chat and do a profile on Andrew was because of his attitude towards science. From doing background research before our chat, it was apparent that Andrew had a lot of enthusiasm and energy for what he does and this is transferred into his research lab and companies. The curiosity and playfulness of the projects he is involved with are not only fun, but also scientifically important and useful. From chatting with Professor Pelling it was clear that he wanted his lab to be driven by curiosity, be unique and also do things on his own terms. For example, when starting the Pelling lab, right from the get-go he wanted to create a space where artists and scientists could collaborate and explore the natural world together. Whilst unconventional and brave this has resulted in new areas and avenues of research which would not have been available had he run a more traditional research group. Through researching and chatting with Professor Pelling I learned that sticking your head above the parapet and making yourself distinctive in science is a risk worth taking.