

---

# CSBMCB President's Report

Dr. David Andrews

Do all presidents reports start off by saying it has been a busy, productive year? It has certainly been a year of change at CSBMCB! The Society continues to promote biological sciences in Canada by providing exciting annual meetings and by supporting advocacy and policy activities. The executive have been very active in a number of areas and I think that we are making progress towards an even more energetic and vital society.

The past year has seen another excellent meeting at the Banff site that has become one of our regular venues. Once again the meeting featured a mix of top international and national researchers. It is always gratifying to see Canadians sharing the podium with the best from around the world. For me high-points included presentations of new, controversial data that later appeared in *Cell*, *Nat. Cell Biol.*, *JCB* and *JBC* in excellent talks by Drs. Bergeron, Grinstein, Wickner and others. The award lectures by Drs. Wrana and Nemer were also very impressive. I am very pleased to say that we were able to sponsor a record number of students to attend this fabulous meeting. We all thank Joe Casey and his team for the work they did organizing it.

Although not possible to organize, the weather and the scenery were fantastic, as always. If you have not yet attended one of our meetings I strongly urge you to do so. To get a feel for it imagine the best attributes of a Keystone meeting and a Gorden Conference combined. The facilities in Banff are so well suited to our meetings that we plan to meet there again in 2005! However, our 2003 meeting will be somewhat different as it will be held jointly with the International Union of Biochemistry July 20-24, 2003. If you have not already marked this meeting on your calendars - do it now! The meeting features symposia organized around 9 thematic areas that cover virtually all of Biochemistry, Cellular and Molecular Biology (more information can be found at: <http://www.nrc.ca/confserv/iubmb2003/>). It will

be an event that you will not want to miss. The organizing committee headed by Joel Weiner have done a fantastic job on this meeting.

Frances Sharom has put a lot of work into our web site this year. New features including an employment opportunities page and electronic membership pages. We plan to keep improving this site to

make it more useful and integrate it with both our major activities. In progress is a program to manage memberships that will permit us to accept membership payments over the internet and it will include our own system for managing meeting registrations in the future.

Thanks to the efforts of David Litchfield, we funded more student activities this year than in any previous year. They included:

- University of Saskatchewan - Research Day
- Dalhousie - Research Symposium
- Cross Cancer Centre (Univ. of Alberta) - Research Symposium
- York University - Research Symposium
- York University - Career Day
- UWO - Open House/Poster Day
- University of Calgary - Research Retreat

The backbone of the society is the work done by the Treasurer and the Secretary. Fred Palmer has done an excellent job as treasurer for many years. As a result the society is financially healthy, able to maintain non-profit status and continues to use the resources available in the most effective manner to support science in Canada. Our society functions smoothly and things get done on time thanks to the tremendous efforts of Gene



---

Tustanoff. He also provides much needed corporate memory for those of us that are 'transients' within the executive.

Advocacy or Lobbying - depending on your point of view - was a major activity this year. I have listed many of our efforts in this regard below:

- 1) We put out a position paper on overhead, many of the details of this position paper were incorporated into a report prepared and distributed to decision makers in Ottawa on our behalf by CFBS.
- 2) Together with CFBS we prepared a report that was used in personal visits and distributed to decision makers in Ottawa. A copy of the report can be viewed at: <http://www.cfbs.org/CapacityforInnovation.html>.
- 3) We participated in the direct lobbying of MPs and other decision makers in Ottawa. This lobby effort was conducted together with CFBS and made use of the report described above. For the first time we met with members of the opposition party as well as with the governing Liberals. In our meetings with members of Parliament and senior bureaucrats in Ottawa we stressed: A) The need for more and greater versatility in training programs for graduate and postgraduate students. B) The need for further investments to attract and retain the best and brightest scientists in order to further improve productivity in both basic and health research. C) The importance of the government living up to its commitment to future increases in the budget of CIHR. D) The importance of funding indirect costs in a manner that is accountable, transparent and efficient.
- 4) Through our association with CFBS we joined the newly formed Health Research Advocacy Network. Joe Casey participated in the 'day on the hill' organized by HRAN to promote health research directly to politicians and senior bureaucrats.
- 5) Joe Casey also represented us in the lobby effort mounted by the Canadian Consortium for Research (CCR) in Ottawa.
- 6) I addressed MPs and other decision makers in a well attended presentation organized by the Partnership Group for Science and

Engineering (PAGSE) as part of their annual gala event on Parliament Hill. The topic this year was the importance of cancer research.

- 7) Bruce Sells and I met with both Alan Bernstein and the president of CFI to promote our views on the payment of indirect costs to universities.
- 8) Several of our board members (Leon Browder, Joe Casey, Claude Lazure, Bruce Waygood and myself) have been working with a group brought together by CIHR with the intention of establishing a new grassroots organization to advocate on behalf of health research to the general public and politicians. It is currently called the Canadian Society of Health Researchers, but this working name will likely evolve along with the organization.
- 9) We have been working on the development of more sophisticated printed materials that we hope will be useful for lobbying the federal government.

Our most important goal for next year will be to increase our membership base. That is the only way to significantly increase our effectiveness in advocacy, increase participation in our meetings and assure continued enthusiasm for our society. I urge you to talk to your colleagues, inform them of what we are doing, encourage them to attend the IUBMB meeting next summer and helps us become an even more effective voice in Ottawa by joining CSBMCB.

We also want to hear from you! Any ideas that you have for improving the effectiveness of the society are always welcome.