
2003 IUBMB Toronto Congress

Background

At the conclusion of the IUBMB Congress in New Delphi in 1994, the venue for the 2003 IUBMB Congress was open for bids. As the Society's Executive expressed an interest in holding this Congress, Dr. Walsh, the Society's President, contacted Dr. Kleinkauf, the Secretary General of IUBMB in 1995 to explore the possibility of staging the 2003 IUBMB Congress in Canada. After receiving a positive response, Dr. Walsh was charged by the Executive to communicate with university biochemistry chairs in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver to gauge their interest in holding this meeting in their city. As the Toronto group was the only one to show a keen interest in organizing this meeting, the Society's Board at its Meeting of June 15, 1995 endorsed Toronto and this proposal then was ratified at the Society's Annual General Meeting on June 16, 1995. Dr. Walsh contacted Dr. Andrée Bichon, NRC International Affairs, and informed her of the Society's proposal. Since the Society is not able to negotiate directly with IUBMB, this matter was channelled through the NRC, Canada's affiliate with the International Council of Scientific Unions. Since the invitation to hold the meeting in Toronto had to be submitted to the General Secretary of the IUBMB by March 1, 1996, two organizational meetings were held in Toronto to prepare Canada's bid for the Congress. The IUBMB Executive Committee was scheduled to draw up a short list from the submitted competitors at their meeting in Edinburgh on 14 July, 1996 and those approved contenders were to make their presentations at the San Francisco 1997 IUBMB Congress. At the Edinburgh Meeting four applications had been received, Toronto, Budapest, Cape Town and Athens

The first organizational meeting of the Canadian bid committee was held on August 18, 1995 in the Department of Biochemistry, University of Toronto. Dr. Brosnan, the then

President of CSBMCB, chaired the meeting and along with Dr. Tustanoff, represented the Society. Dr. Bichon and Mr. Laurier Forget represented NRC and Dr. Peter Lewis and Dr. Harry Schachter represented Toronto's interests. The second meeting was held on the 3rd of November with Dr. Bibuhendra Sarkar replacing Dr. Schachter and Ms. Elizabeth Leyva (Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre and Visitor's Association) in attendance. Dr. Brosnan reviewed the criteria on which the Congresses are awarded. These were (1) time since last Congress was held in the nation, (2) contribution to international biochemistry, (3) infrastructure and facilities, (4) estimated attendance, (5) least cost and greatest ease of travel, (6) recent Congresses in the same geographical area, (7) probability of political problems, (8) probability of financial success and (9) attractiveness of the venue. He further developed the role of the players in the proposed bid. The Toronto organizers are to be responsible for packaging the scientific aspects of the meeting and here Dr. Brosnan underscored the philosophy of the Toronto group. Dr. Lewis and his group emphatically wanted this meeting to be organized as a Canadian meeting with input from the four corners of Canada and not ruled by the Torontonians. The nuts and bolts of managing the meeting are to be undertaken by the NRC Conference Services. This is an all-encompassing service, assisting in preparation and presentation of the invitation, mailing of congress announcements, registration, housing, meeting facilities, secretarial assistance, printing abstracts etc. Since the NRC will cover any financial deficiency resulting from the Congress, they basically will control the meeting, with the exception of the scientific programme. In contrast to the 1979 IUB Toronto Congress, NRC Conference Services now operates on a total recovery basis and share in any profits which may accrue.

In preparing the invitation brochure, letters of support from all corners of Canada, industry, academia and government were solicited by Dr. Brosnan, Dr. Tustanoff and Dr. Lewis. The responses were extremely positive and supportive from all contacted parties.

The Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre and Visitor's Association put together an excellent package in which they compared the cost of housing and hotels in Toronto as opposed to other international venues as well as outlining other proposed features. The use of the University's housing facilities and the planned expansion of the Toronto Convention Centre facility added to the strength of the Society's submission. As there was no choice available during the whole summer other than the week of July 17-25, the Toronto Convention Centre was booked for that period. A preliminary budget was presented by the NRC Conference Board based on their experiences with organizing the 12th International Congress of Pharmacology in Toronto in 1995. Initially, expenditures were forecasted to be \$1,802,000 and revenue \$1,885,000 based on 3,000 attendees. The NRC management fee of \$350,000 was questioned by the Board and Dr. Brosnan countered that there was still room for further negotiations with the Conference Board on this matter. The Society's Board approved donating \$25,000 to the Congress budget if the Toronto venue was approved by the IUBMB. A preliminary Congress organizational structure was presented by Dr. Bichon and it was approved in principal.

With the concerted efforts of the Society's President, Dr. Brosnan, Vice-President, Dr. Dolphin and the NRC Conference Services a superb proposal with expansive documentation was put together and sent off by Dr. Carty, President NRC, to the IUBMB Secretariat in Vienna at the end of February 1996, supporting the Toronto bid. Dr. Peter Dolphin attending the 8th PAMBM Congress in Puçon Chile, November 16-21, 1996 had occasion on behalf of the Society to effectively lobby a number of the attending IUBMB Executives on the merits of the Toronto bid.

On receipt of the Society's application for hosting the 19th IUBMB Congress, the Society was invited to make a formal presentation to the IUBMB Executive in Gifu, Japan on March 29, 1997 instead of appearing in San Francisco as originally scheduled. As Dr. Dolphin had already established rapport with members of the IUBMB Executive, he was delegated as President of the Society to present the Canadian bid in Gifu in the company of Mr. Laurier Forget, NRC Conference Services. Dr. Dolphin put together a very slick dossier summarizing our bid document along with a number of pertinent graphs which were used as background for the Gifu presentation. With his persuasive manner, Dr. Dolphin was able to privately sway a number of the IUBMB Executives to support the Toronto bid and consequently Canada was chosen by a margin of one vote to hold the 2003 IUBMB Congress.

After formal notification was received from IUBMB that Toronto was to be the site for their 2003 Congress, a meeting of the Bid Committee was convened on April 23, 1997 in Toronto to finalize the structure and organization of the Steering and Executive Committees for the Congress as well as outline the responsibilities of the membership of these committees. After discussion, a time table, 1997 -2003, was drawn up outlining a schedule of Congress matters that had to be attended to. In addition, an organization flow chart was presented by Dr. Bichon. At that time, the Society was asked to consider signing an Agreement (i.e., contract) with the National Research Council of Canada which laid out the obligations (financial and organizational) of both parties in staging the 2003 IUBMB Congress.

The Committee met again in Toronto on Sunday, November 16, 1997 to finalize the structure and organization of the Steering and Executive Committees for the 2003 IUBMB Toronto Congress. The Agreement between the National Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Society of Biochemistry, Molecular and Cellular Biology Society was discussed and modified to the agreement of both parties. The following changes were made to this agreement: the Society was to contribute \$25,000 to the Congress

budget, \$5000 in April of 2001, \$10,000 in April of 2002 and \$10,000 in April of 2003. If a profit is to accrue as a result of the Congress, the Society will be the first to draw back its \$25,000 contribution and the rest of the profits are to be shared on a 50-50 basis between the Society and NRC. This amended document was subsequently signed on behalf of the Society by Dr. Weiner, President CSBMCB and by Dr. S. Vohra, Director General, Administrative Services, NRC. The Society nominated Dr. P. Dolphin and Dr. W. Bridger, Vice-President Research, University of Western Ontario, to be the Society's representatives on the Congress Steering Committee. with Dr. Bichon and Mr. Forget acting on behalf of NRC. After a thorough assessment of potential candidates, the Executive Board of the Society selected Dr. Joel Weiner to represent the Society as the Chair of the Executive Committee of the Planning Committee and to be President of the 2003 Toronto IUBMB Congress, Dr. Michael Walsh to Chair the Programme Committee and Dr. Peter Lewis to head up the Local Organizing Committee. The appointments of members to other committees were left to the discretion of the Executive Planning Committee. A reception for the IUBMB Executive at the 2000 IUBMB Birmingham Congress was planned with Tourism Toronto taking on this responsibility, and a web site for the 2003 Congress approved. Informal talks were held with Dr. Zimmerman, President of the International Federation of Cell Biology on the possibility of holding a joint Congress with IUBMB and IFCB, however, this was untenable and the idea was not pursued further. Dr. Hickey, University of Ottawa, had contacted Dr. Dolphin with the suggestion that Canada would be seeking the venue for the 2003 International Genetics Congress and he thought it would be possible to explore holding a joint congress. Dr. Tustanoff contacted Dr. Whelan, President of IUBMB, to seek out his feeling on this matter. This idea was then discussed with the Executive Board and it was unanimously decided that this was impractical and therefore unacceptable and Dr. Hickey was so informed. Dr. Dolphin was seconded to the Toronto IUBMB Planning Committee as an ex

officio non voting member and is to remain on the Society's Executive Board until 2003, acting as liaison between the Society and the 2003 Organizational Committee.

On June 17, 1998, a meeting attended by newly appointed Executive of the Toronto IUBMB Congress and representatives of Society's Board was held in Edmonton concurrent with that year's CFBS Meeting. Dr. Weiner laid out a nine-page draft of a critical path he prepared for the organization and implementation of the Congress. The document outlined each task with a time frame associated with the various aspects of the Congress. Dr. Walsh reported that he was in the process of forming a general plan for the scope of the meeting and was seeking input from all quarters. Dr. Lewis presented the new Congress logo and letterhead which were designed in Toronto and chosen over those submitted for the contest held by the Society. The subject of satellite meetings and possible conveners was discussed. Dr. Weiner concluded that NRC will set up a home page for the Congress on the World Wide Web.

Subsequent Congress planning meetings were held on October 16, 1998, May 28, 1999 November 6, 1999, November 18, 2000, April 27, 2001, October 12, 2001, January 12, 2002, April 13, 2002 and August 17, 2002. Liaison between the Society's Executive Board and the Congress Planning Committee was put in place at the November 16, 1997 meeting in the person of Dr. Dolphin, however, this relationship was never sustained. At the Society's Alliston Meeting the Board appointed Dr. David Andrews to stand in for the late Dr. Dolphin and attend Planning Committee meetings as a non-voting member in order to keep the Society's Executive apprised on Congress developments.

E. R. Tustanoff.
Secretary, CSBMCB.