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## CSBMCB President's Report

This has been something of a transition year as our Society begins to implement the results of last summer's vote to leave the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies. Following extensive e-mail consultation with our membership initiated by Peter Lewis in early 1999, the Executive passed a motion at the May 17 Board meeting in San Francisco

**“That the CSBMCB/SCBBMC should withdraw from CFBS at the conclusion of the 2000 CFBS Ottawa Meeting and annually hold two separate meetings, the Winternational and a separate summer meeting held apart from the CFBS venue. In addition CSBMCB/SCBBMC will support the science policy activities of CFBS by an annual contribution”.**

When the issue was put to the Society later that summer, a majority of our members voted almost two to one in favour of withdrawal from the CFBS. In essence, this is the partial withdrawal that many members suggested, since we are continuing to support the work of the Federation in science advocacy both financially and in person. The CSBMCB will pay the Federation levy for the 2000 calendar year, after which we will negotiate a yearly contract to back the Federation in its efforts to support and promote science. Although there has been some amelioration of the poor funding for research, with budget increases to the three granting councils and the formation of the CIHR, we have a long way to go to make up for the cutbacks and erosion of funding over the past ten years. Nevertheless, this is a good time to write and thank the Prime Minister and his colleagues in Cabinet for diverting more funding to the granting councils, while pointing out that we are still seriously underfunded.

One of the driving forces for change in our relationship with the CFBS was the desire to revitalize the AGM. Enthusiasm for generalist meetings is waning, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract a large percentage of Canadian life scientists to any one meeting. This is a pity, because meeting and keeping in touch with colleagues working in the same educational and political milieu has many benefits. Withdrawal from CFBS gives our Society flexibility in where and when to hold its annual meetings. (Last summer's Western

Hemisphere Meeting in San Francisco with the ASBMB and Pan American Societies was a foretaste of things to come). This year we will be meeting with the CFBS in Ottawa for the last time before striking off on our own. Already plans are afoot for next year's CSBMCB AGM, which be on the interrelated themes of bioinformatics, genomics and proteomics (see Gene Tustanoff's report in this issue of the Bulletin). In its present conception, the AGM will be a super Winternational-type meeting in the summertime. The key to success with these meetings will be in picking topical themes with sufficient breadth and depth to attract at least 200 participants, and a program that will establish an international reputation. Now, of course, we have no-one else to blame if our AGMs are not a success! We really need our members to help with the planning and organization of these meetings. Don't forget, in 2003 we will be hosting the IUBMB meeting in Toronto.

One of the serious problems facing the Society is the 'greying' of its membership. We are not attracting many new members from the ranks of the newly appointed investigators, particularly those in research institutes. We need new recruits to ensure that the Society (and in turn the CFBS) has political clout. Politicians are influenced by numbers of potential voters. New members and their ideas are also needed to help run scientific meetings and promote science and research in Canada. Practically speaking we also need the revenue from membership dues to ensure active representation in Ottawa, and to continue our programs like national research prizes and student/PDF travel awards that will nurture a new generation of Canadian scientists. (CSBMCB has already committed \$20,000 to help young scientists attend the 2003 IUBMB meeting in Toronto). You could help CSBMCB enormously by recruiting one or two new members. Run off copies of the recruitment letter on page 33 for non-members in your unit or Department and try to persuade these colleagues to join CSBMCB. Also, let trainees know that the Society has decided to waive



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membership dues for graduate students and PDFs as of 2001.

Now a word in praise of some senior scientists. Our Society is deeply indebted to two of our active emeritus members. Please join me in thanking Dr. Gene Tustanoff for his outstanding service as Secretary to the Society and Dr. David Tinker for ed-

iting the Bulletin. Not many of us could manage the load they carry on top of our academic duties. We are also very grateful to Fred Palmer who is doing a wonderful job as treasurer.

Lastly, my best wishes to you all for a productive and rewarding year.

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## CSBMCB Vice-President's Report

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Your Vice-President is traditionally in charge of overseeing science policy issues that affect Society members. The past year has seen large changes in the way biomedical research is supported in Canada, with the establishment of the CIHR, coupled with substantial increases in base funding. After many lean years, this is welcome news indeed! However, there are still many issues affecting research that need to be addressed. CFBS currently carries out science policy/advocacy activities in Ottawa and elsewhere on behalf of its member societies, including CSBMCB, supported by the Federation levy portion of our annual dues. Starting in 2001, CFBS will continue to provide these services to CSBMCB on behalf of its members, but on a contract basis. Dr. Bruce Sells, Executive Director of the CFBS, regularly provides information to the CSBMCB executive on science policy, and meets with politicians on our behalf. During May 2000 meetings with Parliamentarians, we have indicated that we would like to see the following issues addressed:

1. Although the recent federal budget increases have restored funding for research to previous levels, we still need a real increase in the percent of GNP spent on scientific research. Canada still spends a very low percentage of GNP on research compared to the US and Europe. We are losing international science competitiveness as each year goes by. Although the establishment of CIHR will mean increased funding for biomedical research, funding provided to basic scientists through research grants from NSERC also needs to be increased substantially.

2. Universities (especially in Ontario) are starved for operating funds. They have few resources to renovate space for new research equipment provided through CFI, to maintain the equipment as it ages, or to pay for skilled

personnel to operate it. The province of Ontario is spending little of the increase in transfer payments on post-secondary education. Undergraduate class sizes are large, and growing, buildings are decrepit. A partial solution is for the federal government to provide funding for the overhead costs of research.

3. The scientific community is concerned about the brain drain. Many highly skilled trained scientists, especially at the Ph.D. and post-Ph.D. levels, are either emigrating to the US, or moving into the private sector. Part of the problem is the very low salaries paid to graduate students and post-doctoral fellows in academia (probably close to the poverty line for a family with children). We need more graduate and post-doctoral fellowships, with higher salaries, to keep these people in Canada. Given the large number of retirements looming on the horizon over the next 5 years or so, we will need them to establish the next generation of academic and research scientists.

Your Vice-President would welcome the input and comments of members on science policy areas that you would like to see on the table in Ottawa!