

Feature Article

The Canadian Society of Biochemistry, Molecular & Cellular Biology

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The Canadian Biochemical Society (CBS) was organized at a meeting of biochemists attending the Canadian Physiological Society Meeting at the University of Ottawa on October 9, 1957, for the purpose of fostering the science of biochemistry. The first President of the organization was Professor A.M. Wynne, Head of the Department of Biochemistry, University of Toronto. The first meeting of the Society was held at Queen's University the following summer. This meeting was organized under the auspices of the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies (CFBS) which was formed in 1958 with CBS as one of the founding member societies. Since that first meeting, the Federation, now constituted with a number of other biological oriented societies, has annually organized scientific meetings at various Canadian sites with our Society's high profile participation. In 1992 the Society changed its name to the Canadian Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in order to reflect the evolving scientific interests of its membership. In 1995 the Canadian Society of Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSCMB) elected to surrender its charter and merged with the Canadian Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology to form the Canadian Society of Biochemistry and Molecular & Cellular Biology (CSBMCB). In order to strengthen its visibility and mandate the CSBMCB withdrew from the CFBS in 2000 but continued to participate in their advocacy programme. Since then our Society has organized a series of successful independent meetings, and more recently has become more proactive in advocacy issues relevant to our membership. Management of the CSBMCB is vested in an Executive Board which consists of a President, Vice-President, Past-President, Treasurer, Secretary and six Council members. Since its inception, 47 eminent Canadian biochemists have held the Presidency of the Society. Membership to the Board is by an annual ballot by the Society's constituents and members serve a 3-year term; the holder of the office of Vice-President passes annually in turn to that of President and then Past-

President. The Society is governed by a constitution and a set of bylaws and is bilingual by mandate.

At present there are more than 800 members, made up of Regular, Emeritus and Trainee members (graduate and postgraduate students). Trainee members have their Society membership dues waived during the duration of their training period, whilst Emeritus members are granted lifetime memberships.

In 1977, the Society was incorporated to position itself to host the XIth IUB Congress. This meeting which was organized in Toronto in 1979 under the Chairmanship of Dr. George Connell, was one of the most successful congresses held to date both scientifically and socially with over 7000 participants. A sizable infusion of funds resulted from the financial success of the Congress which has been shrewdly invested over the past number of years by a succession of Society Treasurers and this windfall now provides financial stability for the Society.

In 1997 the Executive of the Society in concert with the National Research Council of Canada successfully placed a bid to host the XIXth IUBMB Congress in 2003 in Canada. A great deal of planning and effort over the past six years has been expended in organizing this meeting by Dr. Joel Weiner, President of the Congress, Dr. Michael Walsh, Chair of the Programme Committee and Dr. Peter Lewis, Chair of the Local Organizing Committee and their associates. It is hoped that the Toronto venue in 2003 will again attract the international scientific community to partake of our Canadian hospitality and the superb scientific tableau which has been laid out for this meeting.

Professional activities of the Society include the organization of its annual scientific meeting, sponsorship of symposia, participation in science advocacy and the administration of a number of awards. The Society at one time sponsored an annual National Lectureship which was then replaced by annual topic-specific Winter symposia. The latter meeting, which alternated between Quebec and Alberta, has been in a hiatus for the past 10 years. Following the merger with CSCMB, our Society assumed the responsibility of maintaining the former organization's annual Winter National Meet-

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ing. This meeting had alternated between Western and Eastern Canada and has been topic oriented in nature. Since 2001 the Society's Annual General Meeting has been structured on the foundation of this latter meeting.

The Society initiated the first of its distinguished award programmes in 1966, the Ayerst Award, which was presented annually to single out the accomplishments of an outstanding young Canadian biochemist. In 1991 the sponsorship of this award changed and was designated as the CBS–Pharmacia Award, and since 1993 it has been sponsored by Merck Frosst Canada and is now titled the CSBMCB's Merck Frosst Award. The second Society award, the Roche Diagnostics Prize for Biomolecular and Cellular Research (formerly known as the Boehringer–Mannheim Award), was established in 1981 and is awarded on alternate years in recognition of a record of outstanding achievement in research in the field of biochemistry and/or molecular biology. The third prestigious award, sponsored by the Society, the Jeanne Manery Fisher Memorial Lectureship, alternates annually with the Roche Diagnostics Award. This award is given to a Canadian woman scientist who has

distinguished herself in the field of biochemistry, molecular biology or cellular biology in one or more of the areas of, research, teaching or community service.

In addition to these prizes, the Society has instituted a number of awards to benefit its student and post-doctoral members. To encourage attendance at Society scientific meetings and defray expenses, a number of travel stipends have been endowed for both graduate and post-doctoral members: The Merck Frosst-Canadian Society of Biochemistry, Molecular and Cellular Biology Student Travel Award and CSBMCB's Post-doctoral Travel Award respectively. In recent years, additional travel awards have been provided on an *ad hoc* basis by a number of other commercial sponsors, AMGEN Perkin Elmer, BD Biosciences, PENCE Alberta. A Graduate Student Poster Competition sponsored by Roche Diagnostics Canada also is held at the annual Society meeting and is complemented by similar awards to post-doctoral fellows which are provided by the Society. The Society also sponsors various graduate student activities held within their own institutions, such as poster days, scientific lectures and colloquia.