
Canadian Life Sciences Societies Meeting

SUMMARY REPORT OF KEY DECISION POINTS

October 4th, 2008

Novotel Ottawa



With financial support from the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. MEETING OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS.....	1
Introduction	1
Participants introductions and expectations	2
3. THINKING CRITICALLY – CLIMATE FOR LIFE SCIENCES RESEARCH IN CANADA	2
4. ADVOCACY.....	2
5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS	2
6. WRAP-UP.....	4



1. INTRODUCTION

On October 4th, 2008, representatives of Canadian life sciences societies were invited to explore options and share their vision of a new collective voice for life sciences research that would bring important scientific issues to the attention of federal and provincial decision makers, persuade them of the need for high level support for research and demonstrate its importance for the economic and social benefits to Canada.

The meeting offered participants the opportunity to:

- Come together to explore each group's needs and vision for advocacy;
- Explore the need for a collective voice for life sciences research to be more effective in advocacy;
- Articulate the preferred future for advocacy for life sciences research;
- To decide on the next steps.

2. MEETING OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Peter Fischer, President of the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies (CFBS)

Peter Fischer welcomed all participants. He gave the background for the organization of the meeting. At the last CFBS Annual General meeting, held last June in Winnipeg, it was recognized that, due to a number of factors, the CFBS was no longer viable financially. It was consequently decided that CFBS would close down at the end of this year. However, it was also decided that CFBS would use its remaining resources to hold a facilitated meeting of life science societies, regardless of whether or not they were CFBS members, to explore the need for a united voice for life sciences research in Canada.

Peter Fischer stated that although there were a number of representatives from the CFBS present, he felt that it would be inappropriate for them to take an active part in the discussions at the meeting. He did say, however, that representatives would be available to answer any questions that participants might have. He then introduced Madalena Coutinho from the Intersol Group to facilitate the meeting.

Madalena Coutinho welcomed the attendees, introduced herself and clarified her role as a facilitator. She outlined the process for the meeting. Attendees would work in groups to address the various issues and report back to the whole assembly for discussion of the points. There would be a wrap up and formulation of overall recommendations at the end of the meeting.

Participant's introductions and expectations

Participants were invited to introduce themselves. In response to the question, "Given the purpose and the time we have, what needs to happen to make this meeting effective for you?" The following expectations were identified.

- ✿ A shared vision to develop mechanisms for advocacy
- ✿ Honest view of what could be achieved
- ✿ Consideration of including societies beyond life sciences
- ✿ Identification of benefits for the individual scientist and for Canadians
- ✿ Identification of costs and how funds could be raised

3. THINKING CRITICALLY- CLIMATE FOR LIFE SCIENCES RESEARCH IN CANADA

Participants were divided into smaller groups and invited to explore the following questions related to a need for a collective voice for life sciences:

- ❖ *In light of our present understanding of the current and future environment for life sciences, what do we see as our top 3 survival issues and top 3 breakthrough opportunities?*
- ❖ *With regard to the future, what is going on that is either shifting or changing that will have an impact on life sciences research? What are the key issues/challenges, trends, concerns and opportunities that must be addressed? What are our strengths and weaknesses in meeting those challenges and opportunities?*

Key messages from discussion

- Crucial to educate the public and politicians on the importance and benefits of science
- Importance of multidisciplinary research
- Strength in numbers - collective voices to influence politicians
- Importance of recruiting young scientists for sustainability

4. ADVOCACY

Participants were invited to explore the definition and their understanding of advocacy in its broadest aspects as it relates to life science research. Why is it needed, what are its goals and objectives?

Key messages from discussions

- Identifying target people
- Effective delivery of messages
- Positive recommendations on scientific issues
- Resource group to advise on science policy

Why is it needed?

- Little knowledge about scientific research among the public and politicians
- Need for informing the media, the public and politicians about scientific issues
- Need to develop a strong science culture in Canada

What are the goals & objectives?

- Influence government decision making with respect to scientific issues
- Engage a dedicated advocate
- Develop a common voice and a larger constituency

Ideal outcomes

- More money for science
- Increase in research jobs and trainees
- Higher profile for successful scientists and scientific achievements
- Effective scientific advisory body to government

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Participants were asked to identify the kind of support and enabling structures needed to be in place to support the initiative and achieve the preferred future.

Recommendations

- Establish a Council, called Life Sciences Canada, composed of representatives from interested societies
- Council to elect an executive of 5-6 people
- Council to have a virtual meeting (via teleconference) annually to discuss issues, priorities and actions

- Create a business plan
- Establish costs and raise funds
- Hire a full time lobbyist
- Establish a secretariat

Next Steps

- CFBS to distribute the summary report of the Oct. 4 meeting to all participants
- CFBS also to send a copy of the CFBS budget with the meeting report as a background for discussion of costs
- Each society represented on Oct. 4 to discuss recommendations from the meeting and issues of funding
- Each society to respond by November 15, 2008 to CFBS with respect to interest in forming the new Council and in having a virtual meeting of the Council before the closure of CFBS at the end of the year.

6. WRAP-UP

Madalena Coutinho and Peter Fischer thanked the participants for their input and valuable contributions. Madalena requested that they complete the feedback form which would be summarized and annexed to the meeting report.

Canadian Life Sciences Societies Meeting

October 4th, 2008

Novotel Ottawa

33 Nicholas Street, Ottawa

Red Experience Room (2nd Floor)

8:45 Am – 4:30 PM

Summary of meeting evaluation

18 feedback evaluation sheets were collected from those present. The following represents a summary of the ratings and comments.

Rate the workshop results

1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree

1. The workshop achieved the stated objectives
5 (5 rating) – 10 (4 rating) – 1 (3 rating) – 1 (2 rating) – 1 did not complete
2. The format of the workshop was appropriate to achieve the stated objectives
6 (5 rating) – 9 (4 rating) – 1 (3 rating) – 1 (2 rating) – 1 did not complete
3. I got the opportunity to express my views
12 (5 rating) – 3 (4 rating) – 0 (3 rating) – 1 (2 rating) – 2 did not complete
4. The participant's personal journal was helpful
1 (5 rating) – 2 (4 rating) – 2 (3 rating) – 2 (2 rating) – 11 did not complete
5. The facilitation of the workshop was effective
10 (5 rating) – 6 (4 rating) – 0 (3 rating) – 1 (2 rating) – 1 did not complete
6. The presentations were effective
1 (5 rating) – 10 (4 rating) – 1 (3 rating) – 1 (2 rating) – 5 did not complete

Overall impression of the workshop

1 being poor and 5 excellent

4 (5 rating)

1 (4.5 rating)

6 (4 rating)

7 did not complete

What key messages will you take back with you?

- Life Sciences Canada (LSC)
- There is a desire to maintain advocacy among LSS
- Life Sciences Canada will probably not organize meetings
- A majority of the societies must agree to go forward before the next step will be taken
- A life sciences advocacy group has value
- Societies must approach their members with the proposal for a unified advocacy group
- There is a need for advocacy
- Vision and plan for unified life sciences advocacy group
- Considerable interest and agreement on common issues
- Societies to decide on life science council
- Advocacy group is desired, need of branding, LS continuous from health societies
- CFBS is no longer viable
- There is a need for an umbrella organization for advocacy
- Life Sciences societies recognize that need for advocacy requires collective work
- The need for a life sciences advocacy group and possible mechanisms to achieve this
- CFBS is dead
- Need umbrella organization
- Need for advocacy
- Broader range of definition for advocacy
- Consensus on need for umbrella society
- Need to chart a new direction

What do we need to do from here to maintain momentum?

- Feedback from societies on merit of LSC
- Call for virtual meeting of those who participated
- Meet the deadlines
- Get someone to volunteer for next jobs
- Member societies must commit to the formation of an advocacy group

- Government must establish funding for LSC
- Consultation with membership
- Consult with my society
- Determine next steps
- Respond to report
- Consider next steps by CSPA if agreement
- Opportunity to get opinions from separate societies
- Consensus of desire to follow up
- Review report from this meeting and convey to another through the internet
- Timeline from here to December deadline
- Get enough societies to buy in
- Make sure all members talk to the executive councils and sell the thing
- Short turn around on report
- Go back to individual societies membership
- Keep talking - by e-mail, etc!
- Keep focused on the issues

The two things that were of greatest value to me were...

- Interactions and chance to meet colleagues
- Moving forward on new organization
- Very high turnout
- Good interaction amongst those present
- Good fund raising activities
- Networking with fellow society executive members
-]Discussions surrounding a common need for advocacy
- Meeting other Canadians
- Meeting others
- Discussions concerning advocacy and education
- Discussions with different perspectives
- Organization of meeting
- The diversity of the group
- Members of the groups attending
- Size of the group was good for facilitation
- Open discussions
- Hear other societies views
- Hearing the huge opposition to increasing society fees by reluctance over insignificant amounts per year

- Meeting other societies
- Interacting with national societies
- Meeting new people with similar concerns

Other comments and suggestions

- Focus more discussions
- Great hotel
- Great idea
- It was good to have this room – basically worked well with the exception of the pillar and low number of available electronic outlets