

# What's Next for the Crossroad of Biotechnology?

The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Crossroad conference in 2005 was the ideal occasion to revise the Crossroad format making it more specifically focused, says Michel Desrochers, Director General of NRC's Biotechnology Research Institute. This year's conference was dedicated to bioprocessing and manufacturing. Alternate topics are planned for the upcoming conferences, encompassing core research activities ongoing at NRC-BRI, as described below.

## Industrial Bioprocessing and Environmental Biotechnology for Sustainable Development

"The new trend is sustainability," says Adrien Pilon, Director of the Environment Sector of NRC-BRI. "Lowering green house gas emissions, finding alternatives for fossil energy, developing new enzymes and technologies that will help the environment—it's all part of a new bio-economy that is working to develop solutions for the future."

This will be the heart of the next Crossroad of Biotechnology. "We'll be talking to and hearing from key industrial leaders, users of the end-products, researchers who are developing new products and industry stakeholders," explains Pilon. "At the heart of the matter will be how we can design economically viable products and processes that won't hurt the environment and have a positive social value impact. We'll be showing success stories, talking about environmental testing, exploring alternative energy sources and looking at new products. We'll be covering all of these aspects using a practical approach."

The NRC's Biotechnology Research Institute's Environmental Sector focuses on the development of bioprocesses for the prevention, remediation and monitoring of pollution, as well as developing new processes for fighting climate change and achieving sustainable development.

## Healthcare

Using state-of-the-art technologies, the Health Sector focuses its expertise and resources on cancer and infectious diseases. However, the 2007 Crossroad event will focus on one very specific topic: the development of novel therapeutic strategies based on the disruption of protein-protein interactions.

"It's a bit of a hot topic," divulges Andy Storer, Director of the Health Sector of NRC-BRI. "But that means it will be of great interest to pharmaceutical and biotech companies across the country."

Storer explains that the event would bring people up to speed, as the area is an "unconquered frontier. Up until three or four years ago, this area was really felt to be a tough topic to tackle."

Even so, Storer and his team are ready to take on this controversial topic, as companies need more information. And, that, says Storer, is exactly what the 2007 Crossroad of Biotechnology event will do.

## Bioprocessing

For anyone who was at the 2005 event, bioprocessing will be a familiar topic. However, says Bernard Massie from NRC-BRI's Bioprocessing Sector, the 2008 event while still bioprocessing oriented, will build on futuristic approaches.

The event, says Massie, will focus on gene therapy. "It's hard to predict what will happen in three years," says Massie. "That's why we want to look at what's here now and what's coming for the future."

For example, explains Massie, while there are a number of blockbuster drugs available now, "it's not inconceivable that in a few years people will get treated by engineered cells."

After all, concludes Massie, "if you want to fix the problem it just makes sense that you have to go to the genetic level."



2006

2007

2008