

*Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee  
Twelfth Meeting - March 28, 2002*

*Summary*

*Participants*

CBAC Members

Mary Alton Mackey, Gloria Bishop, Timothy Caulfield, Arthur Hanson, Suzanne Hendricks, Bartha Maria Knoppers, Murray McLaughlin, Anne Mitchell, Arnold Naimark, Denny Warner

By Teleconference

Peter Phillips, Douglas Powell

Absent

Lorne Babiuk, Pierre Coulombe, René Simard, Jonathan Syms

CBAC Staff

Roy Atkinson, Conrad Bellehumeur, Kelly Brannen, Brian Colton, Claudia Fournier, Lynn Kelly, Richard Konchak, Madeleine Lagacé, Marnie McCall, Denise Reid, Natalija Svoletis, Linda Williams

Guests

Robert Slater / Associate ADM - Environment Canada

Pierre Charest / DG, Office of Biotechnology - Health Canada

Joy Kane / Policy ADM – Justice Canada

George Michaliszyn / Director, Life Sciences Branch - Industry Canada

Don Mackenzie - Consultant

*1. Chair's Report*

Dr. Naimark introduced Don MacKenzie who is assisting with the GM food project. Claudia Fournier was introduced as CBAC's new liaison officer. Conrad Bellehumeur was also introduced as CBAC's new communications advisor.

- 1.1. The minutes of the meeting held on November 22, 2001 were approved.
- 1.2. With respect to the process of appointing/re-appointing members the Chair advised that the Advisory Panel had submitted its membership recommendations to the BMCC.

- 1.3. CBAC completed the fiscal year 2001-2002 within budget and it was estimated that, after taking ongoing commitments into account approximately \$600,000 would be available for new projects or activities in 2002-2003.
- 1.4. CBAC recently appeared before the Standing Committee on Health regarding the labeling of GM foods. Dr. Naimark, Peter Phillips, and Suzanne Hendricks discussed the rationale for the draft recommendation on labeling contained in the Interim Report.

## **2. *Review of GM Food Project***

### **2.1. Acceptability Spectrum**

The Exploratory Committee (consisting of representatives from the NGO, environmental, citizens, faith, health, farm, industry, retail, developers, and processing sectors) formed to explore the utility of the Acceptability Spectrum as a tool to facilitate dialogue on social and ethical issues was reported to be making reasonably good progress and it was recommended and agreed that the project proceed to its third phase, which would entail a multi-stakeholder meeting to test the tool.

### **2.2. Final Report**

The Steering Committee for the GM Food project reported that it had formulated the first draft of recommendations for the final report after reviewing feedback on the Interim Report, including that received from officials in Health Canada, DFAIT, Environment Canada, and the CFIA.

A general discussion ensued in which several items requiring more precise explanation were identified. The issues of labeling and monitoring of long-term effects of GM foods were the main focus of discussion. Anne Mitchell re-iterated her support for mandatory labeling and pointed out that a majority of respondents to the Interim Report were of the same opinion.

## **3. *IP/Patenting of Higher Life Forms Project***

- 3.1. Marnie McCall provided an update on the status on the development of the final recommendations, for the final IP/PHL report and noted that a summary of comments on the Interim report (most concerning recommendations 1-6, 10 and 16) was included in the meeting package, along with an analysis of the arguments in the Harvard Mouse case (prepared by Lynn Kelly). She noted that the analysis of input and the options for final recommendations were “first impressions” only and members would receive an in-depth analysis and proposals as soon as possible.
- 3.2. Bartha Maria Knoppers noted that the Supreme Court Hearing on the Harvard Mouse is slated for May 16, 2002. In order for the government to have CBAC’s Final Report before the Supreme Court issues its judgment the second round of face-to-face briefings with stakeholders could not proceed as originally planned and that an alternative

approach would need to be found. Options for the form of the recommendations in the Final report were discussed and bearing in mind the tentative nature of the analysis, it was agreed that members will have another opportunity to review the proposed final recommendations in light of an in-depth analysis.

#### **4. Discussion of Program Priorities**

4.1. A general discussion was held on the topics CBAC might explore in its future work program based on a summary prepared by Linda Williams as background to the presentations by departmental officials. Educational activities might be appropriate.

#### **4.2. Presentations by ADMs**

##### *4.2.1. Robert Slater / Associate ADM - Environment Canada*

Robert Slater suggested that CBAC advise the government on developing a system to monitor the *long-term effects of GMOs*.

##### *4.2.2. Joy Kane / Policy ADM – Justice Canada*

Joy Kane described the working group on *privacy and genetic information* drawn from approximately 12 departments and indicated the group's view that looking at the situation in other countries will be very beneficial in helping Canada decide on an action plan

##### *4.2.3. George Michaliszyn / Director, Life Sciences Branch - Industry Canada*

It was noted that it has been four years since NBAC's report and that there have been many major developments since then in the biotechnology industrial sector. There are currently 3000 agricultural products and many pharmaceuticals in trials, and the government needs to get ready to deal with the *accelerating pace of product development*, from financing, regulatory and human resource perspectives with the need to integrate economic and social benefits.

##### *4.2.4. Pierre Charest / DG, Office of Biotechnology - Health Canada*

Pierre Charest explained that the role of the Office of Biotechnology is to provide information on biotechnology to Canadians. He noted that Health Canada is looking at the issue of gene banks and genetic information versus health information.

#### **4.3. Discussion with ADMs**

A general discussion with the departmental officials ensued that indicated there were no topic areas of interest to government that CBAC had not already identified in its own deliberations on a future work program.

#### 4.4. Next Steps

The Chair noted that CBAC would need to crystallize its program plan as soon as possible and that this process should include the new members of CBAC. Accordingly the matter of program priorities would be the main subject of CBAC next meeting to be held in June after Bio 2002.

Approved:

June 20, 2002

Dr. Arnold Naimark

*Chair*

*Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee*