

**Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee  
Summary of Ninth Meeting - June 12, 2001  
Hotel Marriott - Ottawa**

**Participants**

**CBAC Members**

Dr. Arnold Naimark; Mary Alton Mackey; Lorne Babiuk; Francoise Baylis; Gloria Bishop; Jonathan Bjorn Syms; Arthur Hanson; Michael Hayden; Bartha Maria Knoppers; Murray McLaughlin; Anne Mitchell; Peter Phillips; Douglas Powell; Rene Simard; Suzanne Hendricks.

**Absent:**

Timothy Caulfield (participated by conference call for the P5 Item); Robert Church; Pierre Coulombe; Thomas Hudson; Denny Warner;

**CBAC Staff**

Roy Atkinson; Norma Burlington; Linda Williams; Suzanne Fortin; Madeleine McNicoll; Kelly Brannen; Diane Fournier; Dawn Findlay.

**Others:** Lynn Kelly (Student); Stacy Phillips (Student); Marnie McCall (Environment Canada); Dominique Hussey (Gowlings, p.m.) IP/PHL Forms Item.

***Chair's Remarks:***

Dr. Naimark noted that the agenda included discussion of two major interim reports.

He advised the Committee that he had proposed that the two-year appointments of CBAC members which expire in September 2001 be extended until December 31, 2001 to allow time for substantial completion of CBAC's work on GM foods and Patenting of Higher Life Forms and for the process of appointment/reappointment to be completed. Members concurred in the desirability of such an approach.

Dr. Naimark informed the Committee that a detailed review of the budget (commitments and proposed expenditures) being conducted by the CBAC Secretariat will be presented to the Executive Committee in July. Funding of new activities will be addressed once the amount of uncommitted funding is known.

He also noted the need to begin the process of defining CBAC's strategic direction for the next three to five years including matters related to its method of operation, program plan and funding.

***Staffing changes:***

Norma Burlington, Director, Operations announced she would be leaving the CBAC Secretariat at the end of June 2001. She thanked the CBAC members for their support and the opportunity to serve them over the past two years in getting CBAC up and running with the implementation of their work plan.

Dr. Naimark thanked Norma on behalf of the committee for her outstanding support of CBAC and its work. He noted that she had been a tower of strength and much had been accomplished in a short period of time due to the strong support she had provided to them. Bartha Maria Knoppers also thanked Norma for her commitment and the assistance she had provided to her and the committee on Intellectual Property/Patenting of Higher Life Forms.

Norma Burlington introduced the new CBAC staff: Marnie McCall who is to join the Secretariat in the next few weeks as the senior project officer on IP/PHL. Madeleine McNicoll, the new CBAC Communications Manager. She also introduced two summer students: Lynn Kelly - Saskatoon; (GM Food); and, Stacy Phillips, Saskatoon (IP/PHL).

***Discussion of the Regulation of Genetically Modified Food Report:***

Peter Phillips and Suzanne Hendricks presented the report of the GM food committee. The discussion focussed on the recommendations as set out in the Executive Summary of the draft Interim Report to the Biotechnology Ministerial Co-ordinating Committee (BMCC).

Members made a number of suggestions related to the wording and content of the recommendations. It was agreed that after incorporating the suggestions made, the draft report would be referred to the Executive Committee for approval or further revision.

Phase 3 was discussed briefly. The GM food committee presented its revised proposal for key elements of phase 3. This included a second round of stakeholder consultations to discuss, primarily, the draft recommendations and barriers to their effective implementation to be followed by meetings with the general public. The extent of Phase 3 will be decided when the amount of funding available has been determined.

***Discussion of the Intellectual Property and the Patenting of Higher Life Forms Report:***

The chair of the IP/PHL project steering committee, Bartha Knoppers, provided an overview of the results of the CBAC consultations. She then described the approach taken in drafting the Interim Report. Following extensive discussion it was decided that the report should consist of two documents – one summarizing and organizing the various inputs received on the issues involved in the question of patenting higher life forms and a second that would set out CBAC's draft recommendations.

The approach proposed for Phase 3 of the IP/PHL project consists of a second round of stakeholder

consultations, focus group discussion and public opinion research.. As with GM food, the extent of Phase 3 will depend on funding availability.

### ***Communications***

Madeleine McNicoll, provided the CBAC members with a short profile on her background experience. She presented the proposed CBAC communication strategy, which also included specific aspects of the release of the initial reports for both GM Foods and IP/PHL.

### ***P4 - Novel Genetically-Based Interventions:***

Tim Caulfield attended the meeting by conference call. He described the CBAC-sponsored meeting on stem cells held on May 25, 2001. The meeting drew together representatives of the major agencies involved with stem cell research within the federal government, as well as StemNET, a government-funded Network of Centres of Excellence. The major points brought out at the meeting were:

- Health Canada's proposed bill on assisted human reproduction will have a major impact on the regulation of stem cell research
- The Tri-Council Policy Statement on Research Involving Human Subjects needs to be revised in light of new developments in stem cell research
- The identification of three pieces of work that would be useful in this area

Several suggestions were put forward, concerning possible roles for CBAC in connection with the stem cells issue, including:

- organizing future workshops each of which would concentrate on a particular specific issue identified at the May 25 workshop. The deliberations at the workshops would form the basis of a report to government.
- development of a report to government that would identify the various strands of work on stem cells being undertaken within government and elsewhere, and what remains to be done
- organizing a workshop that would describe how the regulation of stem cell research highlights broader concerns associated with research ethics in general. This could be done in the context of the proposed bill on Assisted Human Reproduction and, in particular, the nature of the regulatory body proposed in the bill with recommendations arising from the workshop going to the Standing Committee on Health that is examining the proposed legislation.

Tim Caulfield will work with Linda Williams on a proposal for further CBAC work in the area of stem cells.

### ***Conflict of Interest Issues:***

Tim Caulfield raised the issue of real or perceived conflict of interest for CBAC members working in the area of stem cells. At a minimum, he perceived it as a problem of perception. Francoise Baylis felt there is a problem, since some members of CBAC work in centers on stem cell research funded by government peer-reviewed grants, give regulatory advice through CIHR, and give policy advice

through CBAC. Dr. Naimark noted that such multiple roles are especially prominent in fields where the pool of experts within Canada is small. He suggested that the issue requires careful management with special attention being paid to the question of conflict at each stage of the relevant project.

***P5 - Genetic Privacy:***

Dr. Naimark noted that genetic privacy is being considered as CBAC's next major project. Roy Atkinson noted that it will be a significant issue for the government for the next three to five years, and that it is before the US Senate. Genetic privacy could be the biotech issue that galvanizes the public. Timing, availability of CBAC members with the requisite expertise and budget availability will determine how CBAC deals with this issue.

It was agreed that the next meeting of CBAC focus on this topic and others that might form part of its future work plan.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of CBAC was tentatively scheduled for September 20, 2001

Approved by : Dr. Arnold Naimark  
Chair  
Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee

Signed September 20, 2001