

Background

June 2002

Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee

The Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee (CBAC) is a body of external experts established in September 1999 by the Government of Canada to provide comprehensive advice on current policy issues associated with the ethical, social, regulatory, economic, scientific, environmental and health aspects of biotechnology. CBAC is also tasked with providing Canadians with easy-to-understand information on biotechnology issues, and providing opportunities for Canadians to voice their views on the matters on which CBAC is offering advice to the Government.

CBAC reports to the Biotechnology Ministerial Coordinating Committee (BMCC), which is comprised of the federal Ministers of Industry, Agriculture and Agri-food, Health, Environment, Fisheries and Oceans, Natural Resources and International Trade.

Membership

Dr. Arnold Naimark, Director, Centre for the Advancement of Medicine at the University of Manitoba, chairs the 20-member committee. CBAC members represent a broad spectrum of society and bring expertise in diverse fields such as science, business, nutrition, law, environment, philosophy, ethics and public advocacy. All members serve on a volunteer basis.

Activities

CBAC's activities are divided into two categories: general activities and special projects. General activities are those of a broad, continuing nature such as monitoring biotechnology developments nationally and internationally; facilitating enhanced public awareness of biotechnology issues; maintaining a forum for citizen engagement; and, participating in a variety of outreach activities. Special projects involve the in-depth study of specific subjects as a basis for providing advice to government that is informed by consultation with expert, stakeholder groups and the public at large.

Each special project is directed by a project steering committee made up of CBAC members. The first projects were launched in early 2001. They address the regulation of genetically modified foods and the patenting of higher life forms.

When CBAC concludes that an issue requires early attention by government, it can issue an advisory memorandum on the subject to BMCC.

Research Methodology

CBAC has utilized three distinct phases in its preparation of advice to BMCC on its special projects.

Phase I (Expert Input): Using experts in pertinent fields to collect and analyze information on various aspects of the topic to identify and clarify the issues and options.

Phase II (Stakeholder Consultations): The release of a consultation document based on the information and analysis developed in phase I, followed by multi-stakeholder consultations designed to garner the views of Canadians involved in or with a particular interest in the topic. During this phase, CBAC seeks to validate the issues and options, impacts and effects, and to identify “values” that must be addressed in formulating advice. The phase is concluded by the release of an interim report containing draft recommendations.

Phase III (Public Consultations): Soliciting the views and comments of all Canadians and stakeholders on an interim report that contains draft recommendations. Phase III concludes with the issuing of a final report and recommendations taking into account all input received during this phase.

How to reach us

If you have any questions about CBAC, wish to obtain a copy of one of our publications or if you want information about our activities, please consult our web site at <http://cbac-cccb.ca>

Or contact us at:

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