

Summary of Discussion
Science Advisory Board Meeting

March 28-29, 2007

Participants

Science Advisory Board Members Arnold Naimark, Chair Renaldo Battista Renee Lyons Arminée Kazanjian Keith Bailey Chris Loomis Mamaru Watanabe Rémi Quirion Stephen Bornstein Andreas Laupaucis Howard Palley Stanley Vollant	Regrets Lorne Babiuk Mark Goldberg Louise Lemieux-Charles Linda Lusby Kathryn O’Hara Jacques Simard
<i>Ex-Officio</i> Members Wendy Sexsmith Frank Plummer Bernard Dickens	Alternates Mark Raizenne Katherine Stewart
Secretariat Laird Roe Catherine Rotor Suzi Vivolo	Regrets Morris Rosenberg Ian Potter Susan Fletcher Frank Fedyk Carolina Giliberti Neil Yeates Alan Bernstein Marcel Nouvet David Butler-Jones

**Boardroom 0115C, Brooke Claxton Building
Tunney's Pasture**

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

1. Preliminary Matters

1.1 *The Chair:*

- Noted that the meeting was transitional in nature, reflecting the phasing in of the new schedule of Science Advisory Board (SAB) meetings to be launched in September of 2007; and that the foreshortened agenda was focused on strategic issues related to Science and Technology (S&T) in the Health Portfolio and on roles and functions of the SAB and the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS).
- Expressed the gratitude of the SAB for the dedicated service of retiring members, Linda Lusby and Keith Bailey.

1.2 *The Minister's Office:*

At the SAB meeting in January 2007, the Deputy Minister (DM) outlined the health-related aspects of the government's new round of priorities. At the March 28, 2007 meeting, a representative of the Minister's staff (Ken Bednarek) provided supplementary commentary on the priorities as reflected in the *Federal Budget 2007* (which identified an appropriation of \$1.4 billion towards the health file). He drew attention to the references to wait time guarantees; the vaccine against Human Papilloma Virus (HPV); Centres of Excellence; and the Mental Health Commission. He also noted the allocations for Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), and Genome Canada (GC); and that Health Canada will play a partnership role in the environmental agenda including, for example, through the implementation of provisions of the Clean Air Act.

1.3 *The Acting Chief Scientist (ACS):*

- Thanked retiring member, Keith Bailey, for his service on the SAB and presented him with a certificate and letter of appreciation from the Department. She also thanked Linda Lusby for her service on the SAB, not only as a member but also as Acting Chair and Vice Chair and as a representative on Council of Science and Technology Advisors (CSTA).
- Noted the following events and developments:
 - the February 6, 2007 Assistant Deputy Ministers' meeting on the Memorandum of

- Understanding (MOU) on Science and Research between the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the CIHR and Health Canada to strengthen linkages within the Health Portfolio ;
- the January 2007 Research Integrity Workshop on the integrity of Canadian research - agreement was reached on the requirement for national approaches to address research misconduct and promote research integrity; and
 - the Research Ethics Board (REB) orientation seminars in March 2007 for PHAC and Health Canada employees to promote awareness of the Health Canada REB.
- Indicated that continuing efforts were underway to enhance feedback procedures related to the SAB's advice, to review the role and function of the OCS and the functions of the SAB.
 - Informed the SAB about:
 - the development at the interdepartmental Assistant Deputy Minister's (ADM) S&T Integration Board of an enterprise model for describing federal S&T;
 - the proposed Federal S&T Strategy which is expected to be aligned with the government's Advantage Canada themes of knowledge, people and entrepreneurship and released late April;
 - the Science ADM Advisory Committee which, through interdepartmental working groups, is examining Human Resource (HR) barriers to collaboration;
 - S&T commitments in *Budget 2007* to create an independent expert panel to explore options for transferring non-regulatory laboratories to universities or the private sector; and
 - the Federal Laboratory Infrastructure Program (FLIP) - designed to gather information and to make recommendations to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the use of S&T infrastructure.

The SAB:

- reiterated its interest in reviewing the MOU between CIHR/PHAC/Health Canada;
- reserved its substantive comments on the Budget and the S&T Strategy until later in the agenda (see below).

1.4 Statements from Members

1.4.1 Pharmaceutical Surveillance

Andreas Laupacis circulated a summary of a business plan to support a proposal to create a *National Oversight Body and Research Network to Improve Pharmacosurveillance in Canada*. The purpose of the Oversight Body and the Research Network is to expand the body of evidence on safe and effective use of medicines in a real world context with the desire to promote and facilitate uptake of this evidence, including day to day prescribing and use (i.e. through knowledge exchange). The plan is to be put before federal, provincial and territorial (F/P/T) Deputy Ministers since funding will be from F/P/T sources.

During follow-up discussion, it was noted that CIHR would be a good candidate to host the initiative given its range of scientific and management expertise. It was suggested that whichever organization plays the host/lead role should involve Statistics Canada and PHAC as strategic partners. An effective pharmacosurveillance system has many potential applications including its role in implementing policies on conditional licensing. However, it was also noted that the federal government is reticent about conditional licensing while the provinces are more supportive of such an initiative.

1.4.2 PHAC/SAB Task Force

Renee Lyons updated the Board on the March 27, 2007 meeting, with representatives from PHAC, Health Canada's SAB and the OCS, on the key roles of the Board in terms of the science related to PHAC. She outlined the following areas of interest/issues for future discussion and consideration:

- Identification of trends impacting public health [societal (privacy, environmental, population trends/migration), and S&T (information/technology, security, Antimicrobial Resistance)];
- Validation of the strategic directions PHAC is pursuing (e.g. organizational and programmatic issues, balance between international focus and Canadian focus, responsiveness to emerging issues);
- Identification of key gaps in PHAC's S&T (post-doctoral program/sabbaticals - including international possibilities, career path in public health);
- Identification of potential partners in S&T (academia - need research to identify possible barriers); and
- Capacity building (knowledge translation, human resources, training, schools of public health).

The Task Force recommended that:

- Health Canada consider devoting time to societal trends at the 2007 Science Forum;
- The preliminary discussion items described above become the focus of an ensuing meeting of the Task Force in late spring/early summer 2007; and
- the SAB approve of the "areas of interest" cited above as a focus of future discussions by the Task Force.

During the following discussion, the SAB:

- endorsed the approach suggested by the Task Force
- indicated that with the SAB's enhanced focus on PHAC, consideration should be given to increased representation of public health expertise on the Board. Ms. Sexsmith advised that a review of the Board's expertise, in relation to the strategic priorities and mandates of Health Canada and PHAC, is underway; and
- suggested that aboriginal health receive special attention in the Task Force's deliberations. Frank Plummer noted that PHAC has been tasked to develop an Aboriginal Health Policy, in response to legislation that was passed by the Senate.

1.4.3 Joint Task Force of the AAFC/Health Canada SABs

Arnold Naimark noted that this file has moved slowly since the meeting of the Task Force in December 2006; primarily due to staffing changes at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Wendy Sexsmith also noted that the Department is in the process of discussing this initiative as the Minister's approval is required prior to moving forward with the engagement of a consultant in order to develop a discussion paper.

2. Science, Technology, Innovation

2.1 Federal S&T Strategy

The SAB was advised that:

- the nascent Federal S&T Strategy is likely to include **three themes**: knowledge; people; and entrepreneurship, to be pursued by with reference to **four core “principles”**: promoting world-class excellence; creating partnerships focusing on priorities; and enhancing accountability.
- Health Canada's Chief Scientist, PHAC's Scientific Director General, and officials of CIHR have been involved in ADM-level briefings on the Strategy and that a number of issues were raised about the importance of investments in science and technology in the health sector and the regulatory system for both improving the quality of life of Canadians and contributing to its economic competitiveness.
- Health Canada, PHAC and CIHR are continuing to work with Industry Canada and Finance Canada to help ensure that key strategic policy commitments are maintained and put into operation. Key themes in the Health Portfolio's forward work on the Strategy will be: the continued recognition of the importance of health research; public good and regulatory science; the central role that science, and in particular health science, plays in defining Canada's place in the world.
- reflections of the conclusions contained in the Council of Canadian Academies Report, about areas of strength, are likely to be contained in the ultimate Strategy.

The SAB requested that it be provided with copies of the Strategy immediately upon its release and concluded that it may wish to have an opportunity to discuss the implications of the Strategy in advance of the SAB's next scheduled meeting in September 2007 - perhaps via a teleconference.

2.2 2007 Federal Budget

The SAB reviewed the Knowledge Advantage section from the *2007 Federal Budget* which identified the main elements of the government's approach, namely:

- providing S&T leadership through the upcoming Federal S&T Strategy;
- promoting world class excellence for research leadership;
- targeting research to priorities; and
- linking research to business needs.

The Budget signals that some non-regulatory areas could be transferred to universities to increase linkages and allow enhanced student training. The Board expressed its concern about the transfer of federal labs to academia and raised questions about the willingness and capacity of universities to accept responsibilities for activities that may fall into the gray zone between "regulatory" and "non-regulatory" categories.

2.3 Health Canada's S&T Strategy

The ACS provided an update on Health Canada's planning exercise. She informed the Board that the ADMs supported the planning effort and agreed that the Chief Scientist should be the "champion" of the project and process. She advised that the next steps being contemplated include: striking a working group, consisting of senior branch representatives; and engaging a consultant to work on the strategic aspects and define what other departments have accomplished regarding science plans. She also indicated that comments or guidance from SAB members are welcomed.

The SAB referred to the key general elements of a science plan discussed at its last meeting. It noted that these general elements would need to be expressed in ways that take into account the special characteristics and needs of individual branches. The SAB reiterated the essential requirement for a regular system of assessment of the quality and relevance of science activities in Health Canada and its individual branches - a system that includes internal as well as independent external peer assessments.

2.4 PHAC S&T Strategy

Frank Plummer informed the Board that PHAC is in the process of looking at how its science is organized, as a first step to the development of its science plan.

3. SAB Operations

3.1 Terms of Reference

Arnold Naimark presented an amended version of the Terms of Reference (ToR), focusing on the "scope and purpose" section of the ToR. The draft amendments provide for the formal recognition of the inclusion of PHAC's science activities under the purview of the SAB and

sharpen the SAB's areas of responsibility. These changes, and others proposed by the OCS to define the process by which responses to the SAB's advice to the Minister will be generated, are to be submitted to the Minister for approval pending the outcome of the review of the SAB, the OCS and their relationship. The SAB concurred in this approach.

3.2 *Role of the Chief Scientist*

The Board reiterated its view of the importance of the Chief Scientist's role in facilitating the implementation of the SAB's mandate. Thus the Board would welcome an opportunity to provide advice on the job description of the Chief Scientist and to have appropriate input (perhaps through the SAB Chair) in the selection process used in the appointment of individuals to hold that office.

3.3 *Self-Assessment Initiative and Evaluation Questionnaire*

The Board reviewed a "*self-assessment and evaluation questionnaire*" developed some years ago in order to understand more fully what was originally expected of the SAB in a practical sense and to use that understanding in examining the evolution of the SAB's activities as a starting point for developing a self-assessment approach that reflects contemporary circumstances.

3.4 *SAB Executive Committee*

Arnold Naimark proposed the creation of a SAB Executive Committee. This committee would include two SAB members and the Vice-Chair and would serve primarily as a resource for the Chair in dealing with emergent matters and program planning. The SAB approved of the proposal. The Chair will approach interested members in due course. The full Board will be kept fully informed of the activities of the Committee and Board members will be welcome to participate in the Committee's deliberations.

3.5 *SAB Membership*

The Board discussed the vacancy in the Vice-Chair position. Andreas Laupacis identified his interest in filling this position. The Chief Scientist noted that the Minister appoints the Vice-Chair, with input from Health Canada, PHAC and the Chair of the SAB. Arnold Naimark advised that Andreas Laupacis has graciously agreed to fill in on an *ad hoc* basis in case of an emergency, pending the Minister's appointment of a Vice-Chair.

In addition, members discussed the composition of the Board, namely its size, the skill set required to respond to the needs of the Department and PHAC and to fulfill its mandate. The ACS informed the Board that the membership was being assessed against the strategic priorities of the Department and the Agency in an attempt to ensure an appropriate complement of members. The areas of expertise that should be taken into consideration in developing the final slate of nominees for Board membership include:

- environment;

- industry;
- biotechnology;
- regulation, including risk assessment; and
- an ex Health Canada employee.

3.6 *Agenda Planning*

Specific meeting dates for the 2007/2008 SAB meeting year, within the following periods, are in the process of being determined. The Secretariat will work with SAB members to identify the best dates for the year's four meetings:

- late September or early October, 2007 - full scale meeting;
- November, 2007 - special meeting in association with the Health Canada Science Forum;
- March, 2008 - full scale meeting; and
- June, 2008 - special planning meeting.

The ACS is in the process of discussing, with the senior members of the Department and the Agency, strategies to determine the best methods of identifying appropriate issues to bring to the Board.

3.7 *Update from the Secretariat*

Laird Roe, Acting Director, Policy, Planning and Partnerships, OCS, provided a brief update on staffing changes within the Secretariat, and the development of a training package in connection with the use of the SAB's extranet (distributed). He also reported on the issues raised in the meeting evaluation forms completed by SAB members.