



Canadian Society for Chemistry | *For Our Future*
Société canadienne de chimie | *Pour notre avenir*

May 28, 2020

President's Report (June 2019 – May 2020)

It is my great pleasure to report on activities of the Canadian Society for Chemistry (CSC) this year. I would like to start by highlighting some specific success stories. The year saw many positives due to hard work and leadership from multiple members of our chemistry community. Additionally, I wish to thank all the members of the CSC Board of Directors who have worked on their portfolios and moved our programs forward. In the interest of space, I only highlight significant changes and relevant statistics.

As I write this, Canada is beginning to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. It seems so long ago, back in March with the pandemic closing in on Manitoba, that the CSC Board struggled to arrive at the exceedingly difficult, but necessary decision to cancel the Winnipeg CCCE2020 conference. It would have taken place this week. We wish to thank and acknowledge Jennifer van Wijngaarden for her stellar leadership as Technical Chair. We all share her disappointment that the conference could not proceed and wish we could have joined her to celebrate our chemistry accomplishments together.

2019-2020 Programming and Activities

Accreditation. The Accreditation Committee lead by Alison Flynn has quickly adapted to a new normal. They have already implemented a system to accredit virtual on-line courses and can conduct accreditations of university programs by a virtual review process.

Advocacy. We acted as a catalyst for Robin Stein and Tara Sprules to draft a “Call to Action” CIC News article about the helium shortage. This was the most read CIC News article this year and led to the formation of a Canadian Helium Committee that is supporting its members to explore helium recovery and other initiatives. We expect to hear more from this group!

In collaboration with the Canadian Society for Association Executives (CSAE) we wrote and sent letters to the Minister of Finance at the beginning of the pandemic to lobby for support for Not-for-Profit organizations in the face of anticipated lower membership and reduced revenues. Due to this successful campaign we are now taking advantage of the COVID-19 emergency wage subsidy program (CEWS) to assist in payrolling the National Office (NO) staff.

Awards and Recognition. For the CSC, CIC and CGCEN (not including the *Can J Chem* Best Paper or the Student awards) we have 28 awards (20 CSC, 7 CIC, 1 CGCEN). We received 123 nominations and from these, 22 award winners were selected. Six awards received fewer than 3 nominees and were not considered for the 2020 awards. There were 28 nominations of women (23%) but 13 awards had no female nomination. Of the 15 awards that had at least one woman nominated, 8 were awarded to women. In 2020, nine award winners (41%) have won one or more CSC or CIC award previously. Given the cancellation of CCCE2020, all the award winners will be honoured at the CCCE2021/IUPAC meeting next year in Montreal. Plans are also in place for some virtual award lectures.

Conferences. It was a great disappointment to cancel CCCE2020; however, we thank the organizing committee and all those who put so much time into organizing the event. We especially wish to acknowledge the team at the University of Manitoba: primarily, Technical Program Chair Jennifer van Wijngaarden with support from Conference Chair Viktor Nemykin, Sponsorship Chair Gregg Tomy and Student Volunteer co-ordinator Angela Kuchison. The Abstract book has been published in an on-line format to allow for citations of the presentations.

Looking forward, planning for the Joint IUPAC/CCCE2021 conference to be held in Montreal in August 2021 is progressing well under the leadership of Neil Burford. The 2021 organizing committee is transferring some elements of the programming from CCCE2020 to this meeting. Some other CCCE2020 programming was adopted into the virtual LOGIC event.

For those who wish to attend a face-to-face meeting this year, all CSC members are encouraged to participate in the CSChE conference (CCEC2020) to be held in Ottawa, October 25-28, 2020. The chemical engineers welcome our participation.

We are beginning our efforts in the world of virtual conference programming. Besides the LOGIC conference, which has been so successfully implemented by the LOGIC programming committee, we are sponsoring the Global Inorganic Discussion Weekdays (GIDW) seminar series. Hundreds of viewers are registering to these events which bodes well for a bright future with this communication medium.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The WIDE committee led by Kim Baines has continued to press forward with new initiatives. CWIC (Canadian Women in Chemical Sciences) Network has formed eight new chapters and will be the first official Member Resource Group (MRG). Briefly, the purpose of an MRG is to provide a network and community for members who share similar values, vision, and identity. The MRGs are expected to be entrenched into the CIC By-Laws at the 2020 CIC AGM. WIDE has completed a self-identification questionnaire to be used in future conferences to help survey progress against EDI objectives and a Code of Conduct for conferences and events is completed.

Industry and Government. To strengthen industry programming and encourage more participation, we have formed a standing CIC committee with the chemical engineers and technologists to set strategy and programming for CCCE and CCEC conferences and other events.

International Activities. At the present time, Pacifichem 2020 is anticipated to proceed in December and we hosted an organizing committee meeting last summer in BC. We are actively participating in the second ABC Chem (Atlantic Basin) conference, which is slated to take place in Morocco in December 2021. We thank Alison Thompson for agreeing to serve as the primary Canadian technical program representative for this conference.

We have recently become a member of the Executive Board of the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) initiated Federation of Commonwealth Chemical Sciences Societies. This Federation has been formed to bring chemists from across the Commonwealth together under the banner of equality for all. The Commonwealth Federation was to have held its inaugural conference in Trinidad and Tobago in May 2020. We had lined-up key Canadian invited speakers, including Dr. Mona Nemer and selected 3 Early Career Chemist delegates to represent Canada (Amanda Bongers, Alex Veinot and Juliana Vidal). This conference is now postponed to May 2021 and we look forward to participating next year. Belonging to this Federation will bring other benefits for CSC members and the first of these will be announced shortly.

Finally, I was meant to have participated, by special invitation, in the 100th Conference of the Chemical Society of Japan in March but that activity was cancelled due to the pandemic. This invitation has also been deferred to 2021.

Publications. Alex Brown has agreed to serve as the CSC representative on the ownership board of *Physical Chemistry Chemical Physics (PCCP)* journal.

Young Professional Network (YPN). We joined with the chemical engineers and technologists to develop a proposal for a Young Professionals Network. A thorough benchmarking of similar groups in other scientific societies formed the basis for recommendations. It is thought that the YPN could become a new MRG once they have been entrenched into the CIC By-laws.

Malheureusement, nos efforts envers le bilinguisme ont souffert cette année à cause d'une pénurie de main-d'oeuvre au bureau national et un manque de moyens pour financer les traductions. Quatre des treize membres du conseil d'administration sont bilingues mais c'est toujours difficile de donner au bilinguisme l'importance qui devrait être la sienne compte tenu de l'ensemble des priorités auxquelles nous faisons face.

The CSC and the CIC

The CSC is part of a closely knit system made up of four key players: the CSC, the Chemical Institute of Canada (CIC), the Executive Director (ED) and the NO staff. The CIC supervises the ED who is responsible for managing the NO staff. Together, the ED and NO staff provide administrative services to support the 3 constituent Societies, Subject Divisions, Local Sections, and Student Chapters. The President of the CSC is a member of the CIC Board and it is through

this mechanism, and through direct interaction with the ED and NO staff, that one must secure resources to run the Society and advance new initiatives or programmes. It is a very complex structure and it takes a while to understand how it functions.

I worked in industry where I gained over 25 years of management experience and specific training in corporate governance and organizational design. Therefore, by background and by interest, I concentrated on understanding the intricacies of the CSC/CIC/ED/NO interactions. It became clear how difficult it was to advance new initiatives for our members because of these complexities. I decided to make it my mission to shine light on the situation to expose it and open it for further examination. One year was not enough time to accomplish this and I am grateful that the CSC Board and membership voted to let me do a second term as President in 2019.

Consequently, a great deal of my focus these two years has been at the CIC Board where I was a Director. I have worked diligently to encourage a more active and inclusive culture for all Society Presidents and Vice-Presidents. I attempted to ensure that our respective programming and initiatives were prioritized appropriately, given the many pressures that the ED and NO faces. There is a delicate balance to represent the best interests of the CSC, but also work towards the benefit of three constituent Societies, Subject Divisions, Local Sections, and Student Chapters. It is not always easy to manage.

“ There is a crack, a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in. ” - Leonard Cohen

An opportunity to admit more light arrived this year. After a particularly difficult interaction between the CIC and CSC Boards this winter, the CSC Board asked the CIC Board to strike a Governance Task Force to examine the structure of the Institute and Societies. Our proposal is to identify and recommend functional changes which could improve operational efficiencies, reduce decision making times, streamline costs, clarify accountability, and bring a renewed and refreshed operating model to the organizations. This Task Force is currently being formed and will include CSC representation. I am convinced that this exercise will benefit the CSC community enormously and set the stage for positive change.

National Office

I know that many members have been concerned about changes in the NO staff over the last year. In late 2019, CIC Board, which oversees the NO, approved a significant restructuring in which Bernadette Lockyer and Gale Thirlwall left the organization. We highly valued their work and support over many years, and we were saddened to see them leave so suddenly. The CSC Board participated in a very productive meeting with the CIC Board to further understand these changes and we expressed our concerns about NO operations. We continue to work actively with the CIC Board to help set strategic direction and priorities.

The NO work environment is an important concern, especially during the pandemic. I have influenced the CIC Board to take a more active role in NO human resource matters and the

atmosphere of the NO is being monitored more closely. Some of you will know that the NO has temporarily adopted a virtual office model. This was precipitated by subletting the Ottawa office to reduce overhead costs and is now perpetuated by COVID-19 pandemic work-from-home practices. We appreciate that the NO staff have been greatly disrupted by this upheaval. By January 1, 2021, we anticipate a new permanent physical office that will allow the staff to be together for their mutual benefit: more coaching, peer mentoring, and team spirit.

Closing Remarks

I thank you all for allowing me to serve as CSC President these two years and I look forward to serving as Past-President in the coming year. I also wish to thank members of the CSC and CIC Boards, past and present. Although we do have challenges ahead, I am optimistic for the future.

Our Vice-President, Steven Holdcroft, has been a wonderful support for me. He is fully versed on the issues we face and will be able to engage immediately to lead us onward.

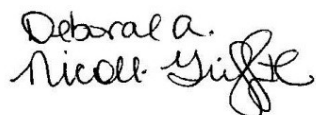
Kim Baines, our Past-President, has been a vital mentor to me and I admire her focus and concentration on key activities. She has completed a huge portfolio of initiatives which bring value to the community and create an inclusive and safe event environment for all of us. She has also improved our nomination process to solicit optimal candidates for open Board positions.

I have greatly valued our Treasurer, Jason Pearson, for his optimism and diplomacy in shepherding the CSC to a positive financial position. This has been done through specific strategic efforts, in collaboration with Joan Kingston our NO Finance Director, as described in Jason's report.

Finally, I wish to thank Ian Jobe, ED, and all the NO staff for their dedication and adaptations to the COVID-19 situation. Managing all the demands arising from the complex structure described above is a very tall order and these last months have been under extreme conditions.

We arrive at this juncture having instituted several new approaches for CSC governance that allow us to have more ownership of the CSC's direction and provide opportunities for members to engage and shape the Society. In the future I expect that this will be even better as we review simplifying our organizational structure and adopting appropriate changes.

In closing, I look forward to working with the CSC, the CIC, the ED, the NO staff and all our chemistry colleagues to develop future programming and value for our members over the coming years.



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