



Chemical Institute of Canada | *For Our Future*
Institut de chimie du Canada | *Pour notre avenir*

April 24, 2022

Chair's Report (June 2021 – June 2022)

It is my pleasure to report on activities of the Chemical Institute of Canada (CIC) for the time noted above. Work during this time frame focused heavily on the National Team, particularly the now completed search for our new Executive Director, implementation of some of key recommendations of the Governance Task Force—including the change in status of the Canadian Society of Chemical Technicians (CSCT) from that of a society to a subject division of the CSC, handling of conferences during the ongoing pandemic, other issues related to staffing in the National Team, and modernization of some National Team policies. While this has been a challenging year, I believe we have come out of it in outstanding shape, ready to deal with any new problems that arise. Much work remains to be done, but we will be well placed to carry this out, especially under the leadership of our new Chair, Dr. Deborah Nicoll-Griffith. I would like to take this moment to thank her, our other board members, along with other volunteers and the National Office staff for their considerable effort this past year.

Search for the Executive Director

In August 2020, then CIC Executive Director (ED) Ian Jobe stepped down from his position with only a few weeks of notice. CIC Chair at the time, Dr. Paul Smith, spent considerable personal time during his tenure as CIC Chair in the role of interim CIC Executive Director, keeping the ship afloat in the absence of a full time ED. When I took over in June 2021, Dr. Smith agreed to stay on in this role until October 2021, to give us time to consider the ramifications of the highly impactful Governance Task Force (GTF) report, the final version of which was submitted in May 2021.

In particular, since one of the recommendations of the GTF was to completely change the way the CIC and the societies are organized into a single board instead of three separate boards that work together under the umbrella of the CIC, it was initially decided that we would wait for feedback from the constituent societies prior to hiring an ED to enable us to better enunciate the nature of the role to the candidates. However, it eventually became clear that the complexity of the changes needed could not be dealt with in an appropriate time frame, and the search for the ED commenced.

A committee comprising myself, Dr. Nicoll-Griffith (CIC Vice Chair), Dr. Jason Pearson (CIC Treasurer), Jyoti Patel (representing the CSChE), and Tony Ciarla (President CSCT), with staff input, met multiple times to discuss applicants, and eventually pre-interview nine candidates from the public and private sector. From this group, three outstanding candidates were identified, who were then invited to a more intensive interview process, including interviews with the committee above, with the society Presidents, and with a group of early career researchers including Dr. Juliana Vidal, Dr. Alyne Teixeira, Dr. Hridaynath Bhattacharjee, Prof. Amanda Bongers, Mr. Ishwar Singh and Mr. Alex Veinot. This latter group was particularly helpful in elucidating the ability of the candidate to connect with the younger generation.

At the conclusion of this process, the team unanimously identified a single candidate, who was then met with in person by the President of the CSChE, CSCT and those members of the committee who were able to attend an in person dinner in Calgary. At the conclusion of this process, we were delighted to offer the position of ED to Dr. Josephine Tsang. Dr. Tsang is a Ph.D. chemist who graduated from a program in physical chemistry at Queen's University, where she won numerous awards for her work. Post-graduation, she has held positions in academia, industry and not-for-profit. She is a long standing member of the CIC and is known to many of our members. She has participated in numerous conferences and notably played key roles at the CCCE2019 conference in Québec City. She joined the CIC as our ED officially on February 1st, 2022 and has been doing an exceptional job since then. Dr. Tsang is the first female ED since Dr. Anne Alper finished her term in the mid 1990s.

Change in status for CSCT

One of the consistent recommendations of the GTF was to reconsider the status of the CSCT among the constituent societies as a means of simplifying the structure of the CIC. For historical perspective the CSCT had its roots as a subject division of the CSC initially. Considering the financial situation of the CSCT, and the needed changes in governance, it was proposed that the CSCT move back to status as a subject division of the CSC, a change welcomed by the CSC since the technologists are an active and passionate group. The proposed new name for this subject division is "Technologists and Technicians" (TT).

This change required considerable legal effort, and a vote by CSCT members, a process that was shepherded by Tony Ciarla and Deborah Nicoll-Griffith. On October 28, 2021 at a special meeting, the CSCT membership voted to approve this change in governance and to become a subject division of the CSC effective as soon as practicable. At time of dissolution, CSCT finances were listed as in deficit, but this arose entirely from management fees owed to the CIC, and thus was absorbed into the CSC on advice of counsel. Going forwards, the CIC has committed to help the new subject Division be as successful as possible and to ensure that members of the CSCT are encouraged to continue their membership in the CSC and CIC.

Pandemic Conferences

The continuation of COVID pandemic waves has made conference planning challenging for the constituent Societies. The CSC chose to run the 2021 conference, which was slated for August in Montreal and to be run concurrently with IUPAC General Assembly. Because of the pandemic, the conference was moved entirely on line and with a great deal of effort by the National Team and by the organizing committee led by Dr. Bruce Lennox, the conference was held virtually and was highly successful. After discussions with Dr. Lennox and Joan Kingston from CIC, the Palais des Congrès in Montreal agreed to waive any cancellation charges in return for promises to return to the venue for 2027. The IUPAC committee voted to approve Canada hosting the IUPAC general assembly in 2027 in Montreal.

Similar problems befell the CSCChE, whose national conference was slated to take place in Montreal in October 2021. After considerable debate, the decision was made to move this conference entirely virtual as well.

At the time of writing, the 2022 CSC conference is slated for a fully in person event in Calgary in June. Considering that pandemic coronavirus waves appear typically lighter in the summer, and that the cost of running hybrid events is considerable, the decision has been made to proceed in person only. Issues such as masking requirements are still under consideration by the organizing committee. The CIC wishes both the CSC and the CSCChE a successful and safe return to in person conferences. As an aside, the virtual AGMs were so successful during the pandemic, that current plans are to run this portion of the conference as a hybrid event to encourage member engagement.

National Office

During this past year, the National Team faced numerous staffing challenges, including the turnover of a large number of staff. These challenges can be traced to some of the following issues: the lack of an existing ED, senior managerial positions being held by temporary staff who exited these positions midway through contracts, difficulties in communication while working from home, a lack of clarity on pay bands and raises, pay raises not matching inflation, and overall pandemic stresses. I would note that while senior NT staff and CIC board members worked exceptionally hard during this time, the presence of the appropriate person as ED is a critical and much needed change.

Already Dr. Tsang has started working with the Board and with the National Office team to return the system to equilibrium and to put in place controls and transparency for all involved. As CIC Chair, I have recommended that National Office staff have an in person strategic session/staff retreat as soon as the CSC conference has concluded to enable team building. The CIC board has also recommended a bonus to staff to recognize their hard work during the pandemic.

Society of Chemical Industry

This year, through the efforts of Dr. Nicoll-Griffith, the CIC reconnected with the Society of Chemical Industry (SCI) Canada with several Members (Deborah Nicoll-Griffith, Laurel Schafer and Fiona Hess) serving on their awards nominations committee. The CIC Edmonton local section won the Outreach Award for their Café CIC programming with Dr. Ken Schmidt and Prof. Dietmar Kennepohl accepting the award on behalf of the local section. Another long-standing supporter of the CIC/CSC/CSChE community, Dr. Henry Stronks, formerly of Bruker Canada (now retired) was honoured with the Purvis Memorial Award for his legendary support of chemical researchers across Canada.

Looking Forward

Looking forward there remains a lot to be done. In particular, putting into action the key recommendations of the Governance Task Force is critical. These will require substantial changes to the by-laws of all three remaining organizations (CIC, CSC, CSChE), which will have to be carried out with legal advice. This should be viewed as an opportunity to modernize the by-laws and align them with member needs. Office policies and procedures, as well as Board procedures, also need modernization and documentation. Some of this has begun with, for example, the institution of a maternity leave policy, which likely should be expanded to include parental leave.

An upcoming change in governance coinciding with a new Executive Director provides an excellent opportunity to revisit the way the National Office is structured, with an aim to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of staff members, and include volunteer members, where needed, to support identified needs, including but not limited to support of administrative needs for members and member organizations such as member resource groups (MRGs), organization and documentation of sponsorship campaigns, embedded conference planning, and outreach to younger members of the societies.

Other issues not previously addressed that remain at the time of my departure include deciding on and following a consistent process for the nomination, appointment, and election of new CIC Board members, ensuring the equitable distribution of FCIC honours and other CIC awards, dealing with the lack of an awards director for CIC, which places an exceptional burden on the CSC awards director, ensuring that CIC By-laws are clear and followed, and modernizing staff contracts.

Closing Remarks

To conclude, it has been a pleasure and an honour to serve as CIC Chair for this past year. I feel my biggest accomplishment has been being part of bringing on our new Executive Director, Dr. Josephine Tsang, in whose capable hands I am sure the organization(s) will flourish.

I would like to send a huge thanks to our Vice Chair, Dr. Nicoll-Griffith, without whom I truly would not have been able to manage the workload. She will be an outstanding Chair and will drive the institute forwards. Her passion for the CIC and constituent societies and for the creation of an equitable and fair society is almost as boundless as her energy!

I would also like to thank the rest of the CIC board, specifically Tony Ciarla, for his outstanding work and commitment to the CSCT and the CIC, in general. Zhongxin Zhou, James Diamond, Todd Pugsley and Jason Pearson were also incredibly talented and dedicated members of the CIC Board who spent countless personal hours working to make the Board the best it could be.

The national office staff have also demonstrated an outstanding level of commitment during incredibly challenging times. The institute and societies are lucky to have such a talented and committed group of people. It is my hope that their success will continue and will be mirrored in the success of the CIC and societies. We definitely need to ensure that we do our best to support them in the months and years to come.

In closing, I look forward to seeing the incredible things that await the Institute and the Societies, and it is my hope that we are able to engage the youngest chemists, chemical engineers, technologists, and technicians to be the leaders of the future.



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