

The Canadian College of Microbiologists: A Short History of Canadian Microbiological Associations: 1935 – 1985

1. Early Times 1935 - 1950

Local associations of microbiologists were reasonably common in Canada during the 1930's, notably those that began in Toronto (The Christmas Meeting), Ottawa (The Ottawa Bacteriological Club), and Montréal (Association des Microbiologistes de Langue Française). Although associations existed in other parts of the country, these three institutions and their members played influential roles in the formation of various national societies.

Since the early 1930's, the Laboratory Section of the Canadian Public Health Association (LS-CPHA) had held a "Christmas Meeting" at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto where many local microbiologists and others gathered to discuss scientific issues and CPHA affairs. Dr. R.D. DeFries, (School of Hygiene, University of Toronto), who hosted many of these meetings, was of the opinion that the LS-CPHA should be expanded to serve nationally, although others thought that an "Ottawa Club" expansion would be more appropriate. However, aside from casual discussion nothing much came of these opinions. Matters rapidly came into greater focus in the Spring of 1939 when Professor E.G.D. Murray (McGill University) wrote to over 300 Canadian microbiologists reminding them that the 3rd International Congress of Microbiology was scheduled for September 2 - 9, 1939 in New York and that there was no Canadian Association of Microbiologists to represent the country. A formative meeting was planned at the 3rd International but this, like the Congress itself, was disrupted by the outbreak of World War II.

In December 1939, however, a meeting was held at the LS-CPHA Christmas Meeting in Toronto to discuss a national association, and on February 29, 1940 Professor Murray wrote to numerous microbiologists in Canada with a proposal to form a "Provisional Organizing

Committee.” According to R.G.E. (Bob) Murray, Professor Murray’s son, the proposal was not received with “great enthusiasm” (cited from a history prepared by N.E. Gibbons and R.G.E. Murray, “La Société Canadienne des Microbiologistes, Its Beginnings and Some Highlights of the First Decades;” a CSM document in the Canadian College Archives prepared by the authors for the CSM Meeting at Dalhousie University, June 1976).

The “sympathy but no great enthusiasm” for the formation of a “Canadian Association of Microbiologists” was, like the disruption of the 3rd Congress, probably a result of the advent of war and nothing further was undertaken until hostilities ceased.

On December 12, 1946, Dr. A.G. Ledingham called a meeting at the National Research Council (NRC) in Ottawa to discuss the formation of a Canadian Microbiological Society. The fact that the 4th International Congress in Copenhagen passed in 1947 without a representative Canadian body being formed, speaks volumes for the degree of interest.

Nothing of substance happened during an intervening two years except as Gibbons and Murray state, “a few seeds showed some signs of sprouting.” In December 1949, Dr. Bob Murray discussed a Canadian Society with a few members at the LS-CPHA “Christmas Meeting” and followed this with a meeting with Dr. Norm Gibbons at NRC. They decided that rather than another letter campaign, which several times had failed to attract much support in the past, they would organize a national scientific meeting. This proved to be a germinal decision.

2. Founding of “The Canadian Society of Microbiologists” 1950-1958

At the LS-CPHA meeting in December 1950 in Ottawa (Christmas was now celebrated by the LS-CPHA occasionally in Ottawa and Montreal, as well as Toronto), Murray and Gibbons

hosted a gathering of enthusiasts to plan a scientific meeting. They met at the Chateau Laurier on December 17th and those present include Ted Bynoe, Ira Conners, Norm Gibbons, Al Jackson, D.J. MacKenzie and Bob Murray. They decided on a two-day scientific meeting with several sessions and a single business/organizational session on each day. It would be held June 7-8 in Ottawa. The business sessions would be called upon to decide on the officers of a “Canadian Association of Microbiologists,” its committee structure and its name.

Their decision to hold such a meeting became the source of intense discussion at the LS-CPHA Business Meeting and, in spite of many negative misgivings voiced from the floor, and opposition by the LS-CPHA Executive Council, the enthusiasts, undeterred, prepared to go ahead.

Funds for the postage of over 900 invitations were provided by NRC and the Faculty of Medicine (Dean J.B. Collip), University of Western Ontario, and Bob Murray aided by C.F. Robinow, C.L. Hanny, and A.R. Walker proceeded to organize the Scientific program. Norm Gibbons arranged with the University of Ottawa for meeting rooms and the Lord Elgin Hotel for lodgings. Costs were modest by today’s standards; registration was \$1.00, rooms at the Lord Elgin were \$5 - 6 and a conference banquet, the conventional turkey dinner, was offered at \$2.00. One hundred and seventy five people attended and later 75 of these delegates, plus 106 others who did not attend, paid \$2.00 to join the new association.

The Organizational Meetings were held at the Academic Hall and Normal School on Wilbrod Street, Ottawa, June 7 - 8, 1951. At the meeting in the Academic Hall on June 7th, chaired by Bob Murray with Norm Gibbons as Secretary, the motion moved by Ted Bynoe, seconded by C.E. vanRooyen, that “a Society be formed to organize the Association of Canadian

Microbiologists” was passed unanimously. A working party was named to decide on the details to be reported to delegates the next day.

On June 8, 1951 the meeting reconvened at the Normal School and moved by Ted Bynoe and seconded by C.A. Mitchell, a new national association was formed named, “The Canadian Society of Microbiologists – La Société Canadienne des Microbiologistes.” The working party proposed an Executive composed of Dr. R.G.E. Murray, President, and Vice-Presidents, Drs. M. Pannisset and A.G. Lochhead, with Dr. N.E. Gibbons as Secretary-Treasurer. Twelve council members and by 1954 it had grown to 380 members and was incorporated on October 21, 1958.

Fears by the LS-CPHA Executive Council and others that the new society would eclipse the LS-CPHA and result in its demise, proved groundless. The LS-CPHA has evolved from strength to strength over the decades and is now the Canadian Association for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (CACMID), a strong clinical microbiology society. The CSM, on the other hand, also evolved to serve multiple microbiological disciplines and in its turn spawned a College with birth pangs not dissimilar to those experienced by the LS-CPHA and the CSM.

3. The Founding of the Canadian College of Microbiologists 1974-1979

Dr. J.J.R. “Jack” Campbell (UBC) was President of Canadian Society of Microbiologists in 1974-75, and at the June 1974 meeting at Macdonald College, the CSM Committee on Science Policy, chaired by Dr. Andrew Rhodes (Toronto), concerned about the registration and certification of professional microbiologists, established a Committee on Registration of Professional Microbiologists. Dr. Andrew Rhodes and Dr. Campbell recruited Dr. K.R. Rozee

(Dalhousie) to chair this committee and in several meetings they discuss the committee membership and its goals. The Founding Committee which grew from these meetings was comprised of Dr. Ken Rozee (Chairman), Dr. Jack Campbell (CSM ex-officio), Dr. Andrew Rhodes (CSM ex-officio), Mr. Robert Boulanger (Societe de Microbiologistes de Quebec), Dr. Max Chernesky (McMaster), Mr. Paul Latour (Guelph), Mrs. Harriet Smith (CSLT), Dr. Claude Vezina (Ayerst) and Miss Audrey Zbitnew (Saskatchewan). It was chosen to be broadly representative of various microbiology disciplines. The Founding Committee agreed to work together in the intervening months to construct a College and to make a realistic proposal to the CSM at the next CSM/LS-CPHA meeting in Ottawa on November 28, 1974.

At that time, a plenary session was held at 8:00 pm to consider two topics:

- 1) “Proposed Registry of Canadian Microbiologists,” Dr. K.R. Rozee
- 2) “International Organization of Microbiology,” Dr. N.E. Gibbons

(Source: Letter of Dr. A.J. Rhodes to Dr. K.R. Rozee dated September 23, 1974: CCM Archives).

From June until October 1974, the committee had corresponded and interacted extensively by mail and phone and by late September had devised a working document and was ready for presentation at this meeting (CCM Archives Document “CSM Committee on the Professionalization” – 1974-75).

The Founding Committee decided to meet the day prior to the plenary session on November 27th in Dr. Rozee’s room at the Chateau Laurier as all the other hotel meeting rooms were in use, to approve a final draft of the proposal. To quote Dr. A.J. Rhodes, “To reiterate what we said on the phone, I would shoot for forcing a decision out of the CSM (at this meeting)

whether or not it will sponsor the Registry of Microbiologists with the understanding that this be all types of microbiologists from mining, to industry, to soils, to food, to teeth, to animals, to man!” (Letter, September 23, 1974: CCM Archives).

The proposal that went before the plenary session the evening of November 28, 1974 was very detailed. It outlined the structure of the proposed College and its Executive Board, the appointment of a Registrar and the programs the College would undertake. Its first responsibility as a College was to certify and register Professional Microbiologists in Canada. The proposal met with lukewarm, not entirely enthusiastic approval, the major criticisms being cost and authority.

The Founding Committee, not deterred by the initial tepid response and determined to stimulate the CCM to action, made the following recommendation to the Annual Meeting of the CSM in Winnipeg June 24 – 27, 1975. It was moved by K.R. Rozee, and seconded by A.J. Rhodes, “The membership of the CCM directs their Executive Council to proceed with the creation of a Canadian College of Microbiology and to appoint its Governors and Executive Committee (and) to organize the evaluated certification and registration of microbiologists in Canada”. This was approved by a unanimous vote of the assembly. This was subsequently criticized by many influential members of the CCM because of the small number of attendees at the Annual Meeting which interestingly saw few of these influential members.

The next hurdle to face the Founding Committee was to name the first appointed Executive Committee of the newly created College whose job it would be to build on the substantial beginnings provided by the CSM Committee on Registration and the Founding Committee, and most importantly, to obtain interim funding from a reluctant CSM Executive.

At the suggestion of Jack Campbell, Ken Rozee and Andy Rhodes approached Howard McCurdy, at the Winnipeg Meeting of the CSM. After considerable persuasion, he agreed to chair an appointed Executive Committee for the purpose of founding a College.

The 25th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Microbiologists was held at Dalhousie University, Halifax on June 14 – 18, 1976. Dr. Howard McCurdy, now formally appointed by the CCM Committee on Professional Registration as Chairman of the Interim Executive of the Canadian College of Microbiologists, represented the College on the CSM Executive and at Annual General Meeting. He proposed a budget of \$18,500 per year with the necessary funds to be provided by the CSM by either borrowing, liquidation of some CSM assets or by an increase of fees. There was considerable consternation at the amount of money proposed but the assembly passed a resolution (motion F. Simpson/A.C. Blackwood) to undertake a poll of the whole membership considering the small number of members at the 1975 Annual meeting who passed the original Winnipeg Directive. This poll was to determine: (a) whether members were prepared to join a College and; (b) the degree of support for the provision of the interim financing being asked of the CSM Executive.

This particular poll never was conducted. Shortly after the 1976 Halifax meeting, Dr. Raoul Korngold of Algonquin College, Ottawa, with the support of his institution, volunteered to undertake the organization of the first Registrar's Office (the most expensive item in the proposed budget) on an interim basis at no costs to the CSM. A subsequent decision in late June and early July 1976 to accept Dr. Korngold's offer by Dr. R.A. MacLeod, then president of the CSM and Dr. McCurdy, reduced the initial start-up cost to \$4,000. This was proposed by Dr. McCurdy to Dr. MacLeod in correspondence dated October 21, 1976 (letter CCM Archive).

In a short period of time, much planning was accomplished as described in a letter to Dr. MacLeod by Dr. McCurdy. A Federal Charter was to be sought, the other Canadian partners in the CCM National Registry of Microbiologists were identified, the qualifications of those to be certified were identified, a Grandfather clause for membership without examination was instituted and the start of reciprocity discussions with the American Society were discussed and approved.

Dr. MacLeod replied (October 26, 1976: Letter of CCM Archives) that he would recommend to the CSM Executive Council that the \$4000 be supplied and that the poll be delayed until the appointed Executive Committee of the College under Dr. McCurdy could undertake their work as outlined above. He wrote that the Executive of the CSM would expect a report on these activities at the next meeting of the CSM in June 1977 in Calgary.

It was not until December 10 – 11, 1976 that the appointed Executive Committee met, hosted by the Canadian Society of Laboratory Technologists (CSLT) in their Hamilton offices.

The membership included:

Dr. H.D. McCurdy, (Windsor) Chairman	Dr. H. Pivnick (Ottawa)
Ms. H. Tellier (Association de Microbiologistes de Quebec)	Ms. A. Zbitnew (Saskatchewan)
Dr. R. Cunningham (Guelph)	Mr. T. Jones (CSLT)
Mr. P. Latour (Guelph)	Dr. J. Whitby (London)
Mr. A. Shearer (CSLT)	Dr. R. Korngold, Algonquin College, Acting Registrar

The Committee very quickly disposed of the directive by the CSM that a poll be held to ascertain the degree of membership interest. A motion that one be held was defeated and replaced by the following motion (J.L. Whitby/D. Cunningham, December 10 – 11, 1976 Minutes of the CCM Executive Committee),

“The Executive Committee commits itself to initiate a program of soliciting registrants by qualification, examination or grandfather clause as soon as possible and that the response to this initiative, will continue the measure of probable success of the Canadian College of Microbiologists.”

The Committee then confirmed Dr. Korngold as Temporary Registrar; began discussions with representatives of both the Association des Microbiologistes de Québec and the Canadian Society of Laboratory Technologists; directed the Temporary Registrar to proceed with obtaining a Federal Charter; established two levels of certification, basic and advanced (the American Society system); defined the requirements for both basic and advanced certification; established a grandfather clause for admittance without certification of qualified microbiologists until December 31, 1978; established examination committees representing various sub-disciplines and set examination fees of \$50 and annual dues of \$30 for admission to the College. With these decisions, the appointed Executive Committee effectively established the College.

At the June 1977 meeting of the CSM in Calgary, Dr. McCurdy presented the report of the College to the CSM Annual Meeting (Minutes of CSM Executive and Council June 20, 1977, Calgary, Appendix 5 and 6: CCM Archives). As a result of publicity carried out by the CCM Executive, the College was assured of about 100–150 initial members as gauged by the response in supportive letters and phone calls. This report was met with general approval and the CCM funds (\$4000) promised by Dr. MacLeod were released to the College. The CCM ship was launched.

During the formative year 1978 considerable controversy developed in the Canadian microbiological community concerning the policies and intentions of the College. At issue were several concerns that sparked vigorous debate in the absence of clarifying information. Perhaps, not unexpectedly, the most contentious centered around who could be considered a professional

microbiologist for purposes of College Certification given the various levels of education and different fields of employment of prospective applicants. Initial attempts by the College during the year to explain and define this multifactorial issue were met with substantial misunderstanding and resistance. This was not helped by the fact that several prominent microbiologists, including Dr. Norm Gibbons, a founding member of the CSM, had their eligibility to join the CCM tactlessly questioned. However, the Executive of the College persevered, obtained Federal Incorporation in May 1978, and developed entrance and examination standards and registration policies. These culminated in July 1979 in a call to the microbiological community in industry, agriculture and University Departments for applicants for admission by examination and experience. By August, explanatory brochures were in the hands of all interested parties, and the first certification examinations were written by applicants on the 4th and 5th of October 1979 in rooms provided by Microbiology Departments across the country. In addition, recruitment of those admitted as experienced microbiologists under the “Grandfather Clause” proceeded apace. By the time of the First annual Meeting of the College during the Conjoint Meeting on Infectious Disease at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal on November 30, 1979, there were over 250 members accredited.

The appointed Executive Committee met for the last time on October 27, 1979 in Toronto to arrange for College business at this First Annual Meeting and the most important order of business was the first elected slate of officers for the Executive Committee.

The First Annual Meeting of the College was notable in many respects. The Executive Committee appointed by the CSM Founding Committee had finished their mandate and resigned.

They were replaced by an Executive Committee elected by the College membership. Elected by acclamation were the slate proposed by the retiring Executive:

M. Beaulieu, Ottawa	R.S. Martin, Halifax
J.D. Cunningham, Guelph	R.G. Marusyk, Edmonton
P. Entis, Toronto	H.D. McCurdy, Windsor
K.D. Gupta, Toronto	U. Purvis, Toronto
N.M. Joshi, Toronto	G.D. Riedel, Toronto
R. Korngold, Ottawa	T.J. Trust, Victoria
M.S. Mahdy, Toronto	

The new Executive Committee was charged with electing its own Chairman and conducting the business of the College until the next Annual Meeting. The assembled members also instructed the incoming Executive by motion and resolution to extend the “grandfather clause” to 31 May 1980, to continue to hold admission examinations and to appoint a permanent, paid Registrar. A budget was approved and the Executive was directed to continue reciprocity discussion with the American Society. As can be imagined, the plate of this new Executive Committee was made full indeed!

4. The College 1980 – 1985

The first elected Executive Committee met in Ottawa, 11 April 1980, with a large agenda, the most important item of which was the election of officers. Dr. McCurdy had resigned on 7 March 1980 (Letter to Dr. R. Korngold: CCM Archives) and the choice of a new chairman was attended with some degree of tension. Two nominees, D. Cunningham and M. Mahdy declined citing pressure of work, and the Executive was at an impasse until the duties of the Chairman were thoroughly discussed and defined. Finally on a motion by Dr. R. Korngold, seconded by Dr. T. Trust, Dr. Ray Marusyk was nominated and elected. Dr. Korngold was asked

to remain as Temporary Registrar until the Executive Council and Annual General Meeting met in June at the upcoming CSM meeting. In the interim, the new Chairman was charged with recruiting a permanent, paid Registrar. The Executive, having settled those housekeeping details, proceeded to appoint Chairmen for the Examination and Credential Committee, prepared their first budget, established a By-Laws Committee and established the agenda for the June meeting. At that time, they proposed to debate a Code of Ethics, Laboratory Practices, Continuing Education and Manpower Placement; each topic was placed in the care of an Executive Committee member to develop.

By the time of the CSM Annual Meeting at the University of Guelph, more problems demanded their attention. During the previous year many Members of the College became concerned about high fees, (then set at \$100 per year), the deteriorating relationship with the parent CSM, poor membership communication, examination policies and lack of an educational or workshop agenda. Many outspoken letters attest to the dissatisfaction of some members (Letters: CCM Archives). All of these issues intruded themselves into the agenda of the second Executive meeting. Dr. Marusyk, as Chairman of the CCM Executive Committee, attended the CSM Council meeting, the Science Policy meeting and the Conferences and Workshops meeting, and at all of these he attempted to build bridges of understanding and insisted that the CCM was not a CSM rival, but wanted to do undertake legitimate College work in cooperation with their CSM parent. There was at the time a general agreement on the most contentious issues but, as time would prove, the organization slowly drifted apart and the College found a more congenial bedfellow in CACMID (LS-CPHA), the grandparent.

During the 1980's, the College matured and weathered various storms. A permanent Registrar, Dr. John Polley, was appointed by the Executive Board on 27 November 1980 at the CACMID-CSM meeting in Hamilton, Ontario. Dr. Polley assumed control of our relations with Commercial Secretariat (Corporation House Ltd., Ottawa) employed by the Board to conduct CCM business.

In spite of vocal protest by a small minority of members over the \$100 annual fee, the membership of the College continued to increase and no change was made in the fees. The CCM succeeded in reaching an agreement with the National Registry of Microbiologists of the American Academy of Microbiology for the mutual recognition of members (Agreement signed 18 January 1982: Document in CCM Archives). The increasing tension between the CCM and the College over responsibilities and seemingly endless miscommunications was partially addressed by reciprocally seating members on each other's Executive. This was only partially successful, although one fear of the CSM quickly appeared unfounded: their membership actually *increased* after the founding of the College.

The second President of the College, Dr. Doug Cunningham (1981-83) continued the work of the previous administrator and a Code of Ethics was approved (chairman Dr. M.S. Mahdy) and the By-Laws were completed and approved (Chairman Dr. H.D. McCurdy, U. Purvis and others). It was during this time that the system of committees and the structure of the examination process were consolidated.

The third President, Ms. Phyllis Entis (1983-85) was confronted again by the recurring problems of the relationship of the College to the Canadian Society of Microbiologists. She and Dr. Max Chernesky, the President of the CSM, and his successor, Dr. Jo-Anne Dillon, sought by

various means to close the gap between the two institutions, indeed between all of the developing Canadian microbiological societies, but it was not to be. Most coordination proposals of this nature collapsed due to fears of loss of autonomy and the insistence that each institution offered something unique to their members and these issues paled beside the problem of finances and fees and their distribution.

By 1985, the College had grown to 312 Members and was the second largest microbiological institution in Canada, exceeded only by its parent CSM with 764 members.

I will end on a personal note. As a founding member of the College, I have confidence that the many challenges of the future will be overcome as they have in the past. I leave it to the next recorder to tell us how it happened.

K.R. Rozee, RMCCM
Professor Emeritus

Dalhousie University
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