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*CBAC's report is out!*

## **The Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee Releases its First Annual Report**

The Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee today released its first Annual Report. Covering the 12-month period beginning with CBAC's first meeting in October 1999, the report summarizes CBAC achievements in its first year of operation; identifies key issues in biotechnology in Canada and abroad; and set future agenda.

During its first year, while establishing its operating procedures and principles and recruiting staff, CBAC developed and began implementing a work plan which include five special projects: (1) the regulation of genetically modified foods, (2) the protection and exploitation of biotechnological intellectual property, (3) incorporating social and ethical considerations into biotechnology, (4) the use of novel genetically based interventions, and (5) genetic privacy.

"Our work plan is ambitious, relevant and timely" said CBAC Chair, Dr. Arnold Naimark. "We are committed to meeting the important public role we were assigned: providing objective advice to government that reflects the views of Canadians and serves to advance the public interest."

In its first year, CBAC concentrated on the first two projects identified in its work plan: the regulation of genetically modified foods and the area of biotechnological intellectual property, with a special focus on patenting of higher life forms such as plants and animals per se. Work accomplished on those two projects includes: commissioning more than 25 studies to address knowledge gaps; meeting with representatives from stakeholder communities; establishing a GM Foods reference group; creating an interactive web site; establishing a 1-800 toll-free number to support outreach activities; and initiating contacts with more than 50 stakeholder groups to leverage outreach capacity with partner networks.

In early 2001 CBAC will be undertaking public consultations on GM foods and patenting of higher life forms. Following these consultations, CBAC intends to submit its recommendations and options to the government by the summer.

CBAC does not make recommendations and options to the government solely on

issues identified in its Work Plan. In the period covered by the report, CBAC advised the government on three pressing issues:

a.. GM foods: the establishment in Canada of an Expert Scientific Panel on the Future of Food Biotechnology b.. GM foods: a proposal from the United Kingdom submitted at the G8 meeting in June and July 2000 recommending the establishment of an International Panel of Scientists to Assess GM Food and Crop Safety, and an OECD proposal suggesting that the organization hold an international conference to address the environmental impact of GM foods and continue to undertake analytical work and to play an effective role in international policy dialogue on food safety c.. Intellectual Property-Patent: the decision from the Federal Court of Appeal that a patent should be granted to the Harvard University for the creation of the Onco-mouse.

CBAC is an expert, arm's length advisory body created in 1999 to advise the federal government on policy issues related to biotechnology. It is composed of 21 members who serve on a part-time, volunteer basis. CBAC members have been drawn from such fields as science, business, nutrition, law, environment, philosophy, ethics and public advocacy. CBAC is committed to seeking the views of Canadians in developing the advice it provides to the government.

Copies of the CBAC Annual Report, background papers, work plan, the CBAC mandate and bibliographical information on CBAC members can be viewed on the CBAC web site at : [cbac-cccb.ca](http://cbac-cccb.ca), or can be ordered through CBAC's toll-free number (1 866 748-2222) or by writing: Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee 235 Queen Street, 7th Floor, Ottawa ON, K1A 0H5

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