

There is increasing recognition across the country that establishment of provincial professional chemists' associations is imperative. At the Canadian Society for Chemistry (CSC) Board meeting on June 1, 2005, the following motion was passed:

"The CSC will raise the status of the chemist as a professional in Canada."

The new Vice President of the CSC, Dave Schwass, and two new CSC Directors, Ray Clement and Yves Ducharme, have responsibilities to move this issue forward, along with the Chemical Institute of Canada staff in Ottawa.

We in the Nova Scotia Chemists' Society (NSCS) can therefore expect support directly from the CSC in moving our initiatives forward.

The CSC will be undertaking communications and lobbying across the country. Initially they will be focusing on increasing awareness and understanding of what it means to be a professional chemist. Then they will take this message more broadly to the regulators and other professions. They will be preparing an article for fall publication in ACCN, introducing the issue of raising the recognition of the profession of chemistry. Other related articles will follow.

In particular, Dave Schwass has indicated that concern was expressed at the CSC Board meeting about the following issues:

- Do chemists have a clear understanding of what it means to be a professional chemist in Canada? Do they even appreciate that it is an important issue or what the ramifications of inaction may mean to chemists working in a broad range of fields?
- There appears to be a widely held misconception that an undergraduate chemist has a limited future in the practice of chemistry, with few employment options. This is very different from the perception of, say, engineers with an undergraduate degree. Engineers are regarded as accomplished scientists; society and government turn to them for advice on science policy issues; they are successful entrepreneurs; they often hold senior non-elected positions in government or are leaders of multinational corporations.
- There has been some "predatory" action by provincial engineering associations in the past, which could limit the professional abilities of chemists and other scientists. Several times during the last two decades engineering associations have tried, via proposed changes in legislation, to expand their scope of practice to include, among other things, "the professional application of the principles of mathematics, chemistry and physics". This would mean that practicing in these areas in a professional manner would be illegal unless one received a license to practice as an engineer, obtained a limited license to practice through an engineering association, or practiced under the supervision of a professional engineer. Chemists for example have been challenged in their ability to take professional responsibility for their work; and it has been suggested that a P.Eng. would have to sign off on their behalf for certain types of work. Fortunately, due to the efforts of the provincial associations and CSC members in Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia and British Columbia, in concert with physicists and biologists, the various legislations did not pass.
- Academic chemists are exempt from being required to be members of the OCQ, the provincial professional organization in Quebec, and from many other professional organizations. But this does not mean that academics should not be concerned about professionalism issues. The impact on our ability to attract the brightest and best students into chemistry could be at risk if the students are told that they won't be able to find gainful employment unless they are engineers; this is a potentially serious issue that alone justifies attention to professionalism. Further, instilling in students a sense of what it means to be a professional begins while in university.
- If chemists do not stand up for themselves, no one else will. Until chemists consistently think of themselves as professionals, how can we convince others?

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Boyd