

FOLLOW-UP TO THE BIOTECHNOLOGY COUNCIL OF ONTARIO ROUNDTABLE

On behalf of the Founding Steering Committee of the Biotechnology Council of Ontario, I would like to thank you for your interest and support in the recent Roundtable discussion that was held at the University Club on November 3, 2003. The success of the Roundtable led to an agreement in principle of the Biotechnology Council of Ontario and represented a major milestone in the evolution of the biotechnology industry in the province. At last week's BioNorth 2003 Conference in Ottawa, Minister Cordiano made reference to the creation of the BCO and his remarks were followed by an announcement of the BCO's formation. I have attached a copy of a press release that has been distributed to the media, as well as the Memorandum of Understanding that was reviewed at the Roundtable.

The creation of the BCO is the first step in establishing a unified, province-wide voice to advise government on public policy issues facing the biotechnology industry and to advocate on behalf of the industry in Ontario. Following the Roundtable, the Working Group received valuable feedback, suggestions, and questions from the participants. We would like to take this opportunity to respond to your inquiries and also share some of the key next steps for the BCO.

What is the mandate of the BCO? Provincial or Federal?

The BCO's mandate is to represent the interests of all sectors and regions of the biotechnology industry in public policy development and implementation in a manner that supports and strengthens the responsible growth of the business and research community in Ontario. The primary audience will be the provincial government; however, the BCO will also have a smaller role at the federal level for policy initiatives of national interest.

How is the BCO different from previous initiatives?

As stated in the OnTRAC report circulated at the Roundtable, "part of the problem in Ontario has been a lack of a strong networking and advocacy organization to represent the biotech industry across the province". The BCO builds on the momentum of past initiatives in the province - including the BIOCouncil that reported to government in 2002 and the international BIO Conference hosted in Toronto a year ago - to address this gap and to help Ontario achieve its goal of creating the third largest biotechnology industry in North America. By providing the structure and resources for all sectors and regions of the biotechnology industry to work together, the BCO will be an inclusive and effective advisory organization.

Who is the BCO?

The Working Group of the BCO is a cross-section of interested individuals who initially gathered in early 2002 to develop and refine the BCO concept. This group is currently transitioning to a Founding Steering Committee that will be responsible for establishing a formal governance structure. The Founding Steering Committee will also be working to build consensus among those groups that were not fully represented at the Roundtable. Dale Patterson, EVP of the Canadian Medical Discoveries Fund will become Chair of the Founding Steering Committee, and MaRS Discovery District will serve as the Council's Secretariat.

Why is the envisioned governance structure so complex?

The BCO has been founded on two key guiding principles – inclusiveness and integration. Inclusiveness requires that the BCO remain open to the interests of all stakeholders in the Province's biotechnology industry, spanning across geographical and functional groups. Integration necessitates that the BCO operate under a non-hierarchical matrix structure whereby the interests of each group are valued equally. The complexity of the BCO will be managed by an Advisory Council that will facilitate collaboration between the geographic ('regional') and functional ('cross-regional') interests to develop and advise government on improvements in public policy related to the biotechnology industry. The Founding Steering Committee will be reviewing the envisioned structure and making further refinements in the coming weeks to ensure efficient, equitable operations.

What are the next steps?

The Founding Steering Committee has prioritized its two key next steps – creating a long-term operating plan and establishing the governance structure – and will be meeting regularly over the next few weeks to finalize these work items. In addition, the Founding Committee will be preparing for a formal launch event in early 2004, planning the first BCO Public Policy Forum for the late spring of 2004, and coordinating a presence at the May BioFinance 2004 Conference in Toronto and BIO 2004 in San Francisco in June.

We appreciate your continued support and involvement in the Biotechnology Council of Ontario and look forward to keeping you apprised of new developments. The BCO could not be possible without your representation and that of a diverse group from industry, academia, the regions, and government.

Sincerely,

Dale Patterson
EVP, Canadian Medical Discoveries Fund
Chair, Founding Steering Committee of the
Biotechnology Council of Ontario

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