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CAP ACTIVITIES & INITIATIVES

CAP is the body through which Canadian physicists raise awareness of contributions from our community, talk with and influence governments and funding agencies, and address issues affecting our work, our students, our institutions and our employment.

LIAISON WITH GOVERNMENT. Alone, and with partners in other disciplines, CAP ensures that its officers, members, and staff reach parliamentarians, their senior advisers, and journalists to raise awareness of how university, government, and industrial science benefits Canada.

CAP has, for many years, played a leading role on the steering committee of the Canadian Consortium for Research (CCR), and was a founding member of the Partnership Group for Science and Engineering (PAGSE). CAP contributes to the CCR annual brief to the House of Commons Finance Committee and, for the past three years, has also submitted a brief of its own. Several times these efforts have resulted in face-to-face meetings with parliamentarians or cabinet ministers.

It is no exaggeration to say that CAP's efforts, alone and with the groups mentioned above, were amongst the key influencers in securing a substantially increased global support of science since the late 1990's.

Yet our efforts must continue and be strengthened if the many remaining problems are to be addressed, in a policy environment that now appears less enthusiastic about fundamental research. Key issues being pushed presently include:

- Increased funding for the Granting Councils, directed to their programs that support basis research
- Redirecting proposed savings from the reduction in the Canada Graduate Scholarships program to fund doctoral scholarships and postdoctoral fellowships in universities and industry
- Recognizing the unique importance of government science and ensuring that all essential government research programs are funded appropriately to meet their mandates.

LIAISON WITH NSERC. The CAP/NSERC Liaison Committee, chaired by the Director of Academic Affairs, was instituted in the 1990s after a disastrous NSERC Reallocation. This pioneering initiative provides a channel for two-way communication between NSERC and the physics community.

The Liaison Committee has worked to help our community demonstrate the importance of physics to Canada's future. The CAP and its divisions have provided support and leadership for Reallocation Steering Committees as they pursued critically important work prior to subsequent Reallocation Exercises. These efforts played a most significant role in ensuring that the outcomes of the 1998 and 2002 Reallocations were remarkably positive.

In 2007 CAP presented Position Papers on two important reviews that NSERC conducted on the Discovery Grants Program and the Grants Selection Committee Structure. CAP has been closely monitoring the impact of the new structure on the physics community, as well as providing channels for making the views of the community known.

EDUCATIONAL TRUST FUND. Through its tax exempt arm, CAP supports a number of key activities in education and outreach:

- The Undergraduate Lecture Tour, now reaching essentially all physics departments in Canadian universities as well as some Cegeps
- The High School and University Prize Exams
- The Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference, the Canada-Wide Science Fair, and the biennial Graduate Student Conference
- The awards for Excellence in Teaching High School/Cegep Physics.

Expected in 2012 is the first award of the CAP-OSAF Stoicheff Scholarship to an outstanding graduate student. A long-term goal of the ETF Trustees is to build a substantial endowment, so that more and more of the ETF activities are funded through stable income.

PROTECTION OF THE PROFESSION. The CAP Director of Professional Affairs leads a vigorous effort to protect the practice of physics from constraints pursued, usually inadvertently, by Engineers via the broad legal definition of their profession. Without exemptions from this definition, the practice of most types of physics would quite literally become illegal.

CAP leads the scientific community in protecting the practice of science from these problems, although other societies have provided very valuable support for specific issues. We have been successful in getting agreements for natural science exemptions in several Provinces and Territories. Recent discussions with the Professional Engineers of Ontario led to their recognizing that they have no jurisdiction over the practice of natural science.

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION (PPhys). To raise students' and employers' awareness of the profession of Physicist, the CAP launched its Professional Physicist / physicien(ne) designation at the 1999 CAP Congress. As of November 2011, over 240 licenses have been issued. Fourth-year undergraduates as well as graduate students, postdocs, and other physicists can take the PPhys exam at their local university.

THE EMPLOYMENT AND CAREERS PAGES. Located on the CAP's web site, these are effective ways for employers to reach highly-qualified personnel, and for students and prospective students to plan their career.

THE ANNUAL CAP CONGRESS. The success of recent Congresses exemplifies the vitality of Canadian physics. The Annual Congress provides excellent opportunities to meet and learn from colleagues, friends, and distinguished invitees in your own and other areas of physics. Highlights are the Herzberg Memorial Public Lecture, plenary talks by forefront researchers and CAP Medal recipients, the student oral and poster presentation competitions, the High-School physics teachers' workshop, and the Science Policy sessions. The CAP Congress facilitates meetings between physics departments Chairs and with NSERC officials.

PHYSICS IN CANADA. With a new look, CAP's membership journal provides a window on developments in physics and the physics community, in Canada and beyond. Regular theme issues provide valuable snapshots of Canadian contributions in particular areas. More and more PiC content is now available on line.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES. CAP facilitates Canadian participation in the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics, and cooperates with the American Physical Society through the CAP president's attendance at two APS council meetings each year. CAP coordinates Canadian involvement in events such as the International Year of Physics (2005), LaserFest (2010), and the biennial Canadian-American-Mexican conferences for graduate students (the next one to be held in Canada in 2013).

WHAT ABOUT THE APS? CAP maintains good relations with the American Physical Society, which provides excellent services to its members. However, the bulk of CAP's efforts involve influencing Canadian governments and other organizations, and addressing specifically Canadian issues. No foreign organization can or should do this. Like other Canadian professions, Canadian physics must have its own strong voice!

FURTHER DETAILS: Full details on CAP activities and initiatives can be found on the CAP web site at www.cap.ca/. For specific information please contact Francine Ford, CAP Executive Director, at cap@uottawa.ca or (613) 562-5614.