

Minutes of the General Business Meeting of CSEE/SCEE

May 12, 2008, University of Toronto

Convened by 2008 Council members:

Douglas Morris (Lakehead University) – President
Sarah Otto (University of British Columbia) – Secretary
Louis Bernatchez (Université Laval) – Treasurer
Kathy Martin (UBC) – Councillor (2008 – 2011)
Marco Festa-Bianchet (Université de Sherbrooke) – Councillor (2006 – 2009)

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1. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved. 42 members in attendance.

2. Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2007 General Business meeting (circulated on web) was unanimously passed (First: Graham Bell, Seconder: Susan Bertram).

3. President's report (see attached)

Council – Following the May 2007 election, the Council composition is:

Douglas Morris (Lakehead University) – President (2008 – 2009)
Spencer Barrett (University of Toronto) – Vice-president (2008 – 2009)
Sarah Otto (University of British Columbia) – Secretary (2006 – 2011)
Louis Bernatchez (Université Laval) – Treasurer (2006 – 2009)
Beatrix Beisner (Université du Québec à Montréal) – Councillor (2006 – 2009)
Marco Festa-Bianchet (Université de Sherbrooke) – Councillor (2006 – 2009)
Mark Forbes (Carleton University) – Councillor (2006 – 2009)
Nathalie Brodeur (Université Laval) – Student/Post-doctoral Councillor (2008 – 2009)
Andrew Hendry (McGill University) – Councillor (2008 – 2011)
Kathy Martin (University of British Columbia) – Councillor (2008 – 2011)
Sean Rogers (UBC/University of Calgary) – Councillor (2008 – 2011)

Major Activities

- Liaisoning with NSERC. November meeting of Council occurs at NSERC, where we are meet with Ms. Isabelle Blain (Vice President, Research Grants and Scholarships) and Dr. Suzanne Fortier (President), when available. We also meet with the staff and Chairs of GSC-18 to foster communication between the society and NSERC.
- Canadian Institute for Ecology and Evolution (CIEE): Two proposals were received. One from the Koffler Scientific Reserve/University of Toronto and one from UQAM/McGill (see below).
- PAGSE: Graham Bell continues to be our representative in the Partnership Group for Science and Engineering (PAGSE). The group submits a budget proposal to parliament, and CSEE can have budgetary input via these proposals. PAGSE has had a large influence on science funding and policy in the past, and Graham is an effective advocate for CSEE at these meetings. For the most recent submission see: http://www.pagse.org/en/briefs/senate_brief2008e.htm [FRENCH = http://www.pagse.org/fr/briefs/senate_brief2008f.htm]
- BRIEFS: CSEE submitted a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology (<http://www.ecoevo.ca/common/BriefStandingCommittee2008.pdf>).

International Activities

- Member of the Federation of Ecological Societies of the Americas
- Representative on the International Affairs Committee, SSE (Spencer Barrett)
- Representative on the International Advisory Board, INTECOL 2009 (Marco Festa-Bianchet)

Society Activities

- CSEE 2009 Meeting at Halifax (May 13-17). This will be held jointly with the Genetics Society of Canada (upon their request).
- CSEE 2010 Meeting at Québec (May 9-12).

- Investigating the possibility of a meeting in Alberta in 2011.
- Investigating the possibility of joining the Ottawa 2012 evolution meeting of the SSE/ASN/SSB/ESEB, which is the first joint meeting of these North American and European societies.

Correspondence

- Prime Minister Harper regarding science funding
- Deputy Minister Horgan regarding media reports of constrained scientific freedoms of Environment Canada's research scientists.
- Science, Technology and Innovation Council (STIC) regarding the removal of the Science Advisor position and the lack of expertise in ecology, evolution, and the environment.
- Preliminary discussions with the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) about representation from CSEE.

4. Secretary's report

Meeting statistics were presented (see attached). The CSEE/SCEE website is active and highly visited (www.ecoevo.ca). Announcements may be submitted to Sally Otto (info@ecoevo.ca) for posting on the web. If anybody has expertise in membership databasing via the web, please let her know.

5. Treasurer's report

Louis Bernatchez summarized the membership and financial statistics (see attached). Excess income from 2007 was \$22,156. A motion was proposed and unanimously approved to accept the financial report from 2007.

The financial report projects a nearly balanced budget for 2008 (\$227 net revenue). This includes \$7500 in travel grants and \$2000 in talk/poster awards that were allocated based on the healthy revenue received in 2007.

Membership currently at 494, which is very similar to this time last year (490). At the end of 2007, the final membership tally was 598, which we hope to match or exceed by year end.

6. Comments from Members on Reports

Suggestion: The Council should work with other societies when submitting Briefs, as this might increase their impact. Response: Doug agreed but noted that sometimes we have very short notice (e.g., with the brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology).

Suggestion: CSEE might wish to establish an endowment for student scholarships. Response: CSEE is investigating the possibility of developing an education/out-reach sister organization, which would be eligible for charity status. At present, CSEE is a non-profit organization, not a charity, and so we cannot issue tax receipts. Once charity status is obtained, fund-raising for such endowments would be a great idea.

Suggestion: Council should consider reducing conference fees for all rather than giving student travel grants for a lucky few. Response: Council will consider this.

7. Canadian Institute of Ecology and Evolution

Two proposals were received following our call for proposals for an institute in ecology and evolution. One from the Koffler Scientific Reserve/University of Toronto and one from McGill University/Université du Québec à Montréal. The committee charged by the Council decided to support the application from Koffler. Both proposals had strengths, and it is hoped that the groups can work together to build an even stronger application.

Art Weis made a presentation about the Koffler bid for an institute to be called the Institute for Canadian Ecology and Evolution/Institut Canadien de l'Écologie et l'Évolution (ICEE in English and French). The Institute will be run from the Koffler Scientific Reserve, which is a 1000 acre property donated to the University of Toronto. It will house a field station and a number of facilities that can be used to host workshops and graduate short courses (meeting rooms for 15, 10, and 80). Some housing will be available on site (rooms in the main house and a dormitory-style facility). The proposal is for ICEE to be organized as a corporation owned by member universities, hopefully in proportion to tri-council funding.

Proposed ICEE activities:

- Thematic Programs
- Synergy Workshops
- Graduate mini-courses
- Post-doctoral fellowships
- Outreach to decision makers

A proof of principle workshop has funding and will be held this summer (budget ~\$8000). This will help establish the plausibility of Koffler as a host of the Institute before submitting a Major Resources Support grant in the fall.

8. General Business

NSERC GSC-18 REPORT (Marco Festa-Bianchet) – Marco reported on the recent round of Discovery Grant funding (see attached report). There was again a cut of 1% for returning applicants, with an average grant size of \$26.5k. 15 applicants were allowed to be put forth for Discovery Accelerator Supplements. Although this is a great opportunity, GSC-18 had to ensure that each of these applicants received at least \$5k increase in their Discovery Grant to be eligible for an Accelerator Supplement. This caused an additional funding limitation on the remaining applicants. Overall, this year brought another decline in spending power per grant for the average grant holder.

A new program at NSERC was unveiled, known as CREATE (http://www.nserc.gc.ca/professors_e.asp?nav=profnav&lbi=create). This program funds collaborative approaches to training undergraduates, graduates, and post-doctoral fellows. 80% of funds must be used for trainee stipends.

The Report of the International Review Committee was very strongly in support of the Discovery Grant Program (DGP). It was noted that Universities have not been lobbying in favour of the Discovery Grant Program. CSEE members and Councillors should make it clear to their University representatives that the DGP provides essential support for basic research and request increased lobbying efforts for the DGP.

Question: Several first time applicants did not receive a grant, is this typical? Response: Yes, first time applicants have a much lower success rate, and this year's success rate is similar to previous years (53% in 2007).

9. COSEWIC

COSEWIC (Jeff Hutchings) – COSEWIC (http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/eng/sct5/index_e.cfm) is the scientific body that provides advice and information to policy makers about threatened and endangered species under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). There are ~20 positions for academic scientists, and currently several CSEE members serve on COSEWIC. All interested persons with relevant expertise are strongly encouraged to apply for a position (e.g., on the Species Specialist Subcommittees).

Sometime this year, a review of SARA will take place. It is not yet known which government arm will carry out this review. CSEE should take the opportunity to make a brief and/or act as a witness.

10. GENERAL BUSINESS

Suggestion: Graham Bell should be nominated for Order of Canada. This would be a good way to promote and advertise our strengths and get good press.

Suggestion: CSEE should aim to expand our outreach efforts. Response: We hope to build a sister organization whose purpose is education and outreach.

Suggestion: A request was made not to have the annual General Business Meeting conflict with any other session. Response: The schedule for the Vancouver meeting was more packed than planned, but this will be noted for future meetings.

Comment: One of the benefits of this meeting is that it is small and intimate, and so there was a concern voiced that we have too many large joint meetings.

Suggestion: The annual General Business Meeting could meet over lunch.

Suggestion: CSEE should consider a travel grant program for post-docs too, because it is often difficult to get travel money.

Suggestion: It was asked whether the balance of ecology/evolution would be maintained as we consider joint meetings. Response: The Council strongly wishes to strike such a balance and is investigating the possibility of meeting jointly with ecological societies.

Suggestion: "Data blitzes" should be considered for future meetings. These are 3-5 minute short presentations (often in conjunction with posters), which are often an easy way to discuss preliminary results and advertise work under way.

Suggestion: A joint meeting with ASN might be valuable.

Thanks: Thanks were expressed to the Local Organizing Committee for the Vancouver CSEE 2008 meetings.

Motion for adjournment, passed unanimously.

11. Next General Business Meeting

The next GBM will be held at the meetings in Halifax (May 13-17, 2009).