

President's Report 1998

This year has been a tumultuous one for CAPE. We have maintained a busy profile of activities, in several different areas, but at the same time have undergone a period of structural uncertainty that has, at times, been quite daunting.

In January of 1998, we were a loose organization of physicians scattered across the country, with several projects and processes on the go, most of it related to the activities of a small group of core members. We had a borrowed office in Edmonton, \$12,000 in the bank, charitable status (we thought), 50-60 members, an active connection to ISDE, burgeoning plans for a web page, and three successful AGMs under our belts, the most recent organized by David Rosen in Mississauga.

In January, 1999, we now have a real home office. But we also have an entirely uncertain membership, an AGM taking place after the maximum allowable delay, no charitable status, a \$17,500 grant (our first sizeable funding), similar ongoing activities by the same core of active members, with some additions, and some promising new avenues for development. And Tee Guidotti, founding chair of CAPE, has now departed for a new position in Washington, DC. It's been dizzying at times.

Despite all these major changes, CAPE is beginning a new phase of consolidation and forward movement.

On the consolidation front, we finally have a real office, with a real office manager (Andrea Levy). We are making a start at coordinating our membership list and establishing some standard office procedures for followup of new, current and former members. We have been working on developing a concrete policy for fundraising and attracting new members, which you will hear more about later. We are going to address the issue of our lack of charitable status, and plan to obtain the advantages of this attribute expeditiously and appropriately. We are looking into revising our somewhat disorganized and overwhelming listserv, probably by dividing it into 2 separate listservs, one for information, and one for CAPE business.

In the programming end of things, we continue our active involvement in the HPB 'Transition' process, with the help of our first major grant, a \$17,500 sum from the Laidlaw Foundation. Kelly Martin is in place as CAPE representative on the new HPB Pesticide Management Advisory Council. We are maintaining active links with other organizations, coalitions and liaison groups. Later today, we will hold a meeting with representatives of a range of other organizations concerned about children's health and the environment, to try to work out top priorities and action plans in this area. We intend to produce briefing papers on pesticides, hormone disrupters and breast cancer.

CAPE, and we its members, remain focussed on our principal intent: to educate ourselves, other physicians, and the general public about environmental issues, and pursue appropriate and effective initiatives to effect positive change in this area.

But we must also address another matter. To achieve our external goals, we must also have internal stability. We must establish a smoothly functioning organization, with good internal communications, reliable and consistent internal practices and procedures, and

trust among our members. We cannot achieve an outward consistency, or establish a reputation for solid reliability and trustworthiness, if we do not have internal consistency and solidarity. We have discovered in the past year that, in general, physicians make poor managers. But we have also begun to harness our very real potential to significantly influence Canadian society, and beyond it the global community, by our presence and by our actions.

If we build a solid internal organization, which I think our move to Ottawa and establishment of a dedicated office can help to bring about, then our future is bright. The world is looking for leadership in these unpredictable times, and I believe we can offer leadership. But CAPE's effectiveness as a leadership organization will only grow in proportion to how well we conduct ourselves as a group. I have faith in CAPE and in the individuals who compose it. And like you, I know there is a critical need for creative, humane and ecologically sustainable solutions for our world.

Together, let us seek those solutions.

Some major CAPE activities during the past year.

- CAPE completed a chapter in a Health Canada text on Environmental Health Risk Assessment, to appear in print some time this year.
- The translation and revision of the popular Quebec 'Ma Santé, Mon Environnement' was completed; the English version will be on sale soon.
- As an affiliate of International Society of Doctors for the Environment, CAPE is involved, through our representative Dr. Pierre Gosselin (replacing Tee Guidotti), in planning and representation for the WHO-EU London conference to be held in June, and with other ISDE activities.
- CAPE is a Level I affiliate of IPEN (International POPs Elimination Network) and was represented at the POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants) Treaty conference in Montreal last spring.
- CAPE prepared and presented a written submission to the federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development regarding the revised Canadian Environmental Protection Act, Bill C-32. CAPE is building on this last effort through continued input to Environment Canada on Bill C-32.
- CAPE is engaging in active interaction with the HPB on health and environment issues and policy. Through a grant of \$17,500 from the Laidlaw Foundation, received in December, 1998, CAPE is now able to hire a coordinator for this process and seek expert advisors to draft documents on aspects of the HPB of importance to CAPE, including risk assessment, children's environmental health effects and other matters.
- CAPE was invited in October to be a charter member of the Pesticide Management Advisory Council, an oversight body (but without real powers!) created to monitor the activities of the Federal Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency. Kelly Martin has been named as the CAPE representative.
- CAPE submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on Health's Study of Natural Health Products in Vancouver, April 1998, on the inclusion of endangered species in the formulation of traditional medicines.

- With other Canadian health organizations, CAPE has worked on the issue of 'greening' health care practices. This has involved: participating in the establishment, by the Canadian Council on Pollution Prevention, of an Envirohealth webpage; facilitating the use of Laidlaw Foundation grant money for the determination of a hospital 'ecological footprint'; and linking up with the 'Health Care Without Harm' federation of North American ENGOS.
- In September CAPE had an editorial published in the Canadian Family Physician dealing with the adverse environmental and human health consequences of the use of jetskis and two stroke engines.
- CAPE sent a written and verbal submission to the BC government's hearings on the MAI in October.
- CAPE has contributed to the planning of the Canadian Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN) and the International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety. CAPE hopes to be able to be more involved in the work of these networks.
- CAPE has actively supported the development of Agenda 2000, a planned conference to educate Canadian parliamentarians in the realities of ecological change and destruction.
- CAPE has been building a range of links with other similar organizations, including the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Physicians for Global Survival, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy, Greenpeace, Pollution Probe, Pesticide Action Network (North America), the Sierra Club, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Canadian Organic Growers, and the B.C. Environment Network.
- CAPE participated in a successful press conference in Ottawa in November, coordinated by Greenpeace and involving three other respected health-related NGOs, addressing the issue of lead, cadmium and phthalate content of children's toys.
- CAPE has established formal links with major medical organizations in the country, including the Canadian Medical Association, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the Canadian Public Health Association, and the College of Family Physicians of Canada (and its Ontario division).
- CAPE has established contacts within the Cuban medical community concerning organic agriculture and greening health care, and participated in a panel presentation focussed on these matters, along with Cuban representatives, at the Canadian Society for International Health Conference in Ottawa in November.
- CAPE now has a well-organized web page, with an ongoing coordinator, Jeff Johnston, who has a strong background in both Internet activities and organic agriculture. The address is www.cape.ca.

Warren Bell, President