

Subject: Message from the President of CAEAL

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From: Webmaster <webmaster@caeal.ca>

To: CAEAL

Cc: CAEAL Board, CAEAL Accreditation Council

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF CAEAL

CHRIS PHARO, Ph.D

NOVEMBER 26, 2004

It is with considerable pleasure, and some relief, that I can announce that as of last week CAEAL and the SCC reached agreement on the wording of the documents relating to the continuation of work under the Ontario Safe Drinking Water Act, and how the two Parties will continue to interact upon the termination of the current partnership agreement at the end of December 2004. I am not so pleased, however, with the outcome of the discussions about joint audits of labs that have both environmental and other programs such as food. While CAEAL stated its interest in seeking solutions that would minimize costs and disruptions to laboratories, the SCC was adamant that it would lead all joint assessments, under its own fee structure, and that CAEAL could join with the SCC if it wants to. In other words, any attempt by CAEAL to keep costs minimal to jointly assessed laboratories comes at a cost to CAEAL members. CAEAL will continue to monitor the situation, and when assessments are due at joint labs it will attempt to schedule the CAEAL part at the same time so that disruptions to the laboratory are kept to a minimum.

CAEAL underwent its four-year evaluation by the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) last week and passed with flying colours. There were no non-conformances, and no concerns expressed by the APLAC evaluators. There were a half dozen suggestions, or non-critical observations, such as amending the internal audit checklist so that it reflects the new features of ISO/IEC 17011 (which is to be implemented by the end of December 2005). The APLAC evaluators remarked on the rigour and automation of the CAEAL PT program, the excellent integration between the PT and assessment parts of the system, and indicated that the PT program would be considered "top-notch" within the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) accrediting bodies. It was also confirmed that CAEAL was satisfactorily providing ISO/IEC 17025 services to the labs. This means that CAEAL's process has been audited up to the point of final accreditation decision-making. That will occur after January 1, 2005, when CAEAL starts accrediting laboratories. Once CAEAL has conferred some accreditations, we can apply to APLAC for a full review of CAEAL's procedures against ISO/IEC 17011,

and they will then decide upon granting CAEAL full recognition as an accreditation body. I believe that, because of the dedication of the CAEAL staff and the volunteer assessors, and the rigour of the CAEAL assessment and PT programs, CAEAL will be successful.

Further, as part of its audit, APLAC observes CAEAL auditors in action during the assessment of a laboratory. The report back to CAEAL of the assessment of RPC Laboratories in New Brunswick was highly complimentary of the technical and assessment skills of the CAEAL auditors. My thanks, on behalf of the Board, to the assessors involved as your performance reflects well the strength and integrity of the program as a whole. And thanks also to the lab for accommodating the extra stress.

You will by now be aware of the appointment of the CAEAL Accreditation Council (the press release is available on the CAEAL website). This is the body that CAEAL will use to evaluate the recommendations from the Advisory Panel, and all documents relating to a lab's performance, and make the final decision about accreditation. At present there are six members appointed, and another two are about to be appointed subject to final approval by the CAEAL Board of Directors. A training session for the Council members has been scheduled for December 17 in Ottawa, at which time the Council will also undertake the evaluations of all labs that have elected to stay with the CAEAL program. Current council members include representatives from Health Canada, the National Research Council, National Defence, a retired environmental health expert from the Pan American Health Organization, and the provinces of British Columbia and Quebec. Others are actively under consideration and we should have an announcement soon.

On November 22, 2004, CAEAL, SCC, and MoE began discussing some options for a renewed, but different, relationship between CAEAL and the SCC. Of the options tabled for discussion the most appealing from my perspective was that CAEAL would grant accreditations to environmental labs while the SCC would undertake annual Guide 58 audits of CAEAL – as is being done under the tripartite agreement with Ontario. Other options are variations of the existing situation. Dr John Lynch of Ontario MoE has circulated a summary of the discussion to the participants, with the expectation that further debate would be held in the near future. From CAEAL's perspective, the Board will be brought into the discussion before the next meeting, and will provide Rick Wilson and I with direction. The option described above was proposed by CAEAL to the SCC some time ago, and will be the subject of further

discussion with the SCC in early December.

Two other points of interest: at the October 2004 meeting of the CAEAL Board of Directors, the representative from the Pan American Health Organization issued CAEAL an invitation to discuss a new arrangement for assessment and training that would take effect next year; and the State of Washington has advised that it will recognize Canadian laboratories accredited by CAEAL.

Finally, a reminder that November 30 is approaching, the date by which you should decide whether to have CAEAL as your accrediting body or whether to stay with the SCC. For those laboratories that have already indicated their desire to be accredited by CAEAL – thank you. It is a bit of a leap of faith that you are taking, that CAEAL will obtain recognition by APLAC and other accreditation organizations, but given the success CAEAL has had with its last two APLAC evaluations I think it is a small and a safe one.

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