

# Treasurer & Finance Committee Report

**T**HE COLLEGE OF Applied Biology experienced a challenging fiscal year in 2015. Going into the year, the Council, in conjunction with the Finance Committee, recognized the need to increase revenues if the College was to keep pace with rising operating costs and also maintain its existing level of service and commitments to the public and its members.

The College's public interest mandate is paramount—we are required by our enabling legislation (the **College of Applied Biology Act**) to uphold and protect the public interest by preserving and protecting the scientific methods and principles that serve as the foundation of applied biology and to ensure the integrity, objectivity, and expertise of our members. As the College continued to grow, along with the demand for accountable biology professionals, it was apparent that the College had to take further steps to protect the public interest. In response, the College has: improved our member accountability mechanisms (i.e., increased audits, development of a practice review program, increased guidance for members); increased engagement with our members and peer associations; expanded visibility throughout the province; reached out to the provincial government for legislative changes; and identified the long-term financial needs of the College.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the Council approached the membership for a dues increase. The dues referendum was defeated, in my opinion, to the detriment of the financial

and long-term health of the College. However, the Finance Committee took the results of the referendum to heart and with the support of the Council, staff, and committees, we cut our remaining budget and balanced our books for the 2015 fiscal year. Revenue from external funding received in late 2015 (for the Natural Resources Canada-funded climate change adaptation project) resulted in a small surplus. Many programs and initiatives that are important to the success of the College were scaled back—primarily communications and outreach to members, industry, and governments—or delayed, such as the work on a national conference and organization, as well as some legislative initiatives.

While it is true the College did manage to reduce spending in 2015, this was accomplished through reduced services and curtailing projects from the **Strategic Plan**, compromising the College's long-term vision of success. In my opinion, the financial risk to the College is increasing due to the inability to finance initiatives that would raise the College's profile with the public and governments, and thereby assist the College in meeting our mandate to protect the integrity of the practice of professional biology. Our ability to withstand a legal challenge is also at risk because we will be unable to increase our legal reserve for years to come in the absence of a dues increase. Legal challenges occur from time to time with all public-interest organizations; the College of Veterinarians of BC recently went through a legal challenge that resulted in their organization facing a severe financial crisis that required them

to implement multiple special levies on their members.

In 2016, Council will again consider whether to recommend a dues increase to members. Given that the last dues increase to College members was eight years ago, the time has come for members to step forward to protect the College and the public-interest mandate it stands for by supporting a dues increase, should the Council decide to revisit a dues referendum. **CMF**

Respectfully submitted,  
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Chair, Finance Committee  
Vice-President

