



## 2023 Canadian Phytopathological Society-Canadian Society of Agronomy-Canadian Society for Horticultural Science (CPS-CSA-CSHS) Tri-Society Meeting

### Panel Discussion:

#### Communicating our science to the general public and policymakers

[June 20, 2023, Tuesday, 11 AM – 12:30 PM; Ballroom A&B]

**Introduction:** Agriculture and forestry intensification, global trade, and climate change increase the incidence and spreading of existing, emergent, and invasive diseases, threatening agricultural production and natural ecosystems. The general public and stakeholders expect the scientists, regulators, and policymakers to speak up on timely and long-standing issues that have profound impacts on the health, economy, environment, and their daily lives. Scientists are expected to provide independent advice to policy and decision makers with the best-available evidence and are being asked to make statements on science-related issues through their scientific publications but also through mainstream media (e.g., magazine, radio and TV interviews, documentary broadcasting, etc.), online forums and social media, citizen science, as well as teaching activities.

To ensure food safety and security, protect the forests, the biodiversity, and the environment, and maintain ecological goods and services, plant pathologists need to engage the public, stakeholders, and policymakers and raise awareness about the damages caused by plant pests and pathogens, the control measures and strategies, and risk forecasting and management schemes for plant protection. There is an increasing need for effective science communication targeted to decision-makers but also to make key science findings more readily identified and accessible to the general public.

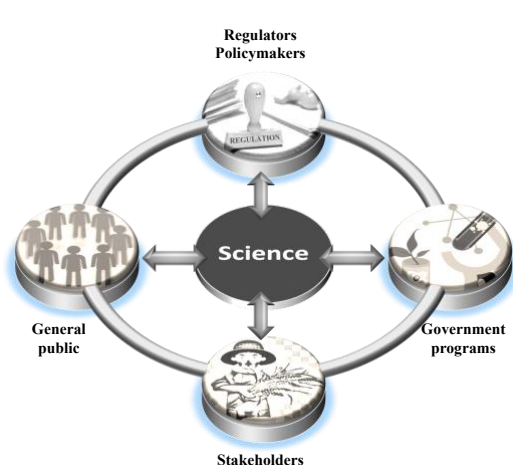


Figure 1. Feedback loops involving science

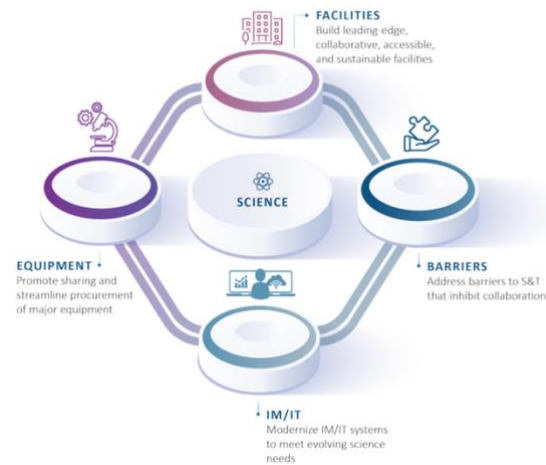


Figure 2. Four pillars of Laboratories Canada

## Panelists

### Moderator:

- C. André Lévesque – Former research scientist, CPS President, and science executive in the public service, with leaderships in developing programs and policies for large R&D centers and Canada-wide R&D initiatives.

### Panelists:

- Bill (William) Anderson - Executive Director, Plant Health Science Directorate of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Bill was previously the Executive Director of the Plant Health and Biosecurity Directorate in the CFIA's Policy and Programs Branch.
- Gilles Saindon – Assistant Deputy Minister, Science and Technology Branch, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Kelly Turkington – Plant Pathologist with the Lacombe Research and Development Centre, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, in Lacombe, Alberta

### Agenda:

- Opening – welcome remarks (André)  
Brief introduction of each speaker
- André starts a round of more in depth introduction by each speaker.  
Each speaker takes about 5 min to introduce himself.
- André starts a round of questions to the panelists:
  - With its Canadian Plant Disease Survey, the Canadian Phytopathological Society has been involved in reporting plant diseases and plant pathogens for over 100 years. Nowadays, with metagenomics, many researchers are generating large amounts of DNA sequence data from a broad range of samples and geographic locations. Would you have some words of wisdoms when communicating this kind of data with stakeholders or even in scientific publications?
  - Instruments are increasingly sensitive. Are there pitfalls to avoid in reporting very low amounts of regulated substances.
  - In communicating to the public, how important is it to really think about the choice of words?
  - The world is more polarized than ever and there are many vocal individuals with black and white opinions, with alternative facts and with conspiracy theories about science. Do you see a change in the role scientists under this rather new communication environment.
  - What are the benefits of communicating better the science to the general public and to policy makers?
- QA session (open to audience)
- Closing remarks (André)