



International Maple Syrup Institute
Report Following the IMSI Board of Directors Meeting
February 2018

Introduction:

The IMSI held its Board of Directors Meeting and Annual Meeting on Friday, February 2, 2018 at the Hampton Inn in Burlington, Vermont. The meeting was chaired by IMSI President Ray Bonenberg and was well attended by IMSI Directors and others from many of the different maple producing states and provinces. Several individuals joined the meeting by teleconference. Some highlights from the meetings in Burlington included achieving consensus on plans to review and refresh the IMSI's awareness and educational materials related to the nutritional and potential health benefits of maple syrup, completion of a review and follow-up plans for the IMSI's social media promotional campaign for maple, and development of a plan to take concerns regarding the FDA's nutritional facts panel / added sugar requirement to the political level.

Following the IMSI Board of Directors meeting, Jeff Goulet of Lapierre Equipment advised the IMSI's President and the IMSI's Executive Director that he would be resigning from his role as IMSI Vice President – Canada and IMSI Director representative from Lapierre. Lapierre equipment will be nominating a replacement for Jeff soon. Jeff was thanked for his dedication and contribution to IMSI and is wished the very best in his future career endeavours.

Report of the IMSI Financial Monitoring/Audit Committee for 2017 Calendar Year:

The IMSI Financial Review/Audit Committee reviewed the IMSI's 2017 Financial records with IMSI Treasurer David Campbell and his assistant Mary Jeanne Packer on Thursday, February 1 in advance of the IMSI Board meeting. Members of the Financial Review/Audit Committee are Jacques Couture, Daniel Lalanne, Gary Gaudette and Steve Selby. Gary and Steve were unavailable to participate in the review due to other commitments. Jacques reported that all aspects of the books were in order and complimented David and Mary Jeanne for the caliber of their work. On behalf of the IMSI Financial Review/Audit Committee, Jacques recommended that the IMSI Board of Directors consider paying annual fee of \$1200 to the IMSI Treasurer for services beginning in 2018. The IMSI Board of Directors voted unanimously to support this recommendation.

Proposed IMSI Work Program Plan Guideline for 2018:

IMSI Executive Director Dave Chapeskie reviewed planned and actual expenditures for 2017. There was discussion regarding whether or not there was a need for the current level of French language translation since the cost is very significant. After discussion, it was agreed that it was important to continue with the translation of IMSI quarterly reports and other items deemed appropriate by the IMSI Executive Director.

Dave presented a proposed IMSI Work Program Plan for 2018. The plan allows for payment of up to \$3000 (\$2000 approved to-date) to support the IMSI sponsored grading school as well as a \$2000 contribution to the American Maple Museum to offset costs associated with the planned Museum name change. After discussion, the work plan guideline was approved as presented to the IMSI Board of Directors. The \$1200 annual Fee for the IMSI Treasurer was not included in the proposed work plan specifically and will be taken out of contingency funding.

A copy of the IMSI work plan budget and actual expenditures for 2017 and the 2018 approved IMSI Work Program Plan may be obtained from the IMSI Executive Director upon request.

IMSI Membership Report:

David Campbell and Dave Chapeskie updated the IMSI Board regarding the status of IMSI membership renewals for the 2018 calendar year. Membership renewals were coming in nicely at the time of the Board meeting with an estimated 30 renewals at that time. IMSI members who have not yet renewed their memberships are strongly encouraged to do so by February 28.

All IMSI members are encouraged to assist the Executive Director with new IMSI member recruitment.

IMSI Liaison with NAMSC:

Dave Chapeskie reported that he and NAMSC Executive Director Mike Girard continue to exchange information on a regular basis between the two organizations. NAMSC President David Briggs has also outreached recently to both IMSI President Ray Bonenberg and Dave Chapeskie regarding aspects of NAMSC business.

NAMSC has initiated a survey seeking input from maple producers regarding options to renew the NAMSC Maple Syrup Producers Manual. IMSI members are encouraged to complete the NAMSC survey. The NAMSC letter including web link to the survey is appended to this information summary .

NAMSC is seeking input from NAMSC delegates regarding their annual meeting format. Any changes to the current NAMSC meeting format would need to be approved by NAMSC delegates. It is expected that any NAMSC annual meeting changes which may be approved by the NAMSC delegates will be coordinated with the IMSI.

Factors Affecting Supply, Demand and Pricing of Maple Syrup:

There are many factors which will shape the maple syrup industry in the future and their relative significance is largely unknown at this time. Factors discussed at the Board meeting included significant increases in production capacity which are either planned or underway in the United States and Canada, surplus maple syrup in some quarters, tight profit margins on bulk syrup and changing regulatory requirements, including quality assurance and labeling components in both countries. Other factors which are very important to monitor include the longer term affects of maple industry mergers, the Canada-U.S. exchange rate, the outcome of NAFTA negotiations and medium and longer term development of markets outside of North

America. The IMSI is committed to following these developments closely and engaging where appropriate in an attempt to reduce any potential negative impacts where these are possible.

There was discussion regarding the official NASS and Statistics Canada production statistics for maple syrup production in the U.S. and Canada respectively. The prevailing sentiment among those present was that the official statistics underestimate the actual number of taps by as much as 30%. However, differences are relative so regardless, the official statistics are a valuable source of information and provide important trend data. NASS data trend suggests a doubling of taps in the U.S. every 7 to 10 years. Very significant production increases are also planned in Quebec and New Brunswick over the next few years.

Production of maple syrup in 2017 was similar or higher than the 2016 level in many jurisdictions. It is expected that there will be an additional four million new taps installed and operational in the U.S. and Canada for the 2018 production season, when compared to 2017. At the same time the Federation of Quebec maple syrup producers currently has 98 million pounds of syrup in the strategic reserve (was 79 million in 2016).

Currently, prices for retail maple syrup remain stable but competition is strong, especially among packers/processors. The use of real maple syrup as an ingredient has been increasing significantly in recent years. Both Grade A and Processing Grade syrups are in demand for use as an ingredient in a wide variety of food products.

There is growing concern regarding whether or not increases in demand will be able to keep up with production increases over the next few years. This points out the importance of continuing to develop new markets for maple syrup both in North America and overseas and is supportive of the IMSI's efforts to enhance the very substantial promotional efforts carried out individually by maple producer organizations and packers /processors.

FDA Nutritional Facts Panel and Added Sugar Issue:

Continued outreach to the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) at the staff level has yielded little compromise on the proposed requirement for "added sugar" in the NFP. The potential for confusion for consumers and risk of adulteration is very great as there is no added sugar in pure maple syrup! It was agreed by the IMSI Board of Directors that it was time to organize a political lobby in the U.S. in an attempt to gain an exception for maple from the Added Sugar requirement for maple syrup. Follow-up actions to be implemented by the IMSI are as follows:

- 1) State-level Maple Associations will be strongly encouraged to appoint representatives to carry the Added Sugar issue forward to Congressional staffers and members of Congress in their respective jurisdictions;
- 2) Maple producer Associations will be asked to voluntarily participate in a new U.S. Task Group, which will operate under the umbrella of the IMSI. This group will be lead by the

Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association (VMSMA) with Emma Marvin continuing in her role as lead IMSI representative on the Added Sugar file;

- 3) A communication template will be developed outlining the IMSI's position and requested action in working to address the Added Sugar issue. This will be provided to State-level representatives to assist their follow-up communications with Congressional offices;
- 4) The IMSI may contact the new FDA Director to make him fully aware of our concerns.

The IMSI will also continue to maintain liaison with FDA at the staff level and the CEO of the National Honey Board (NHB). The NHB position regarding the Added Sugar requirement for honey is aligned with the IMSI position for maple syrup. However, since NHB has USDA oversight, they are not as free to engage on issues directly at the political level.

FDA Food Safety Modernization Act and Safe Food for Canadians Act:

The IMSI continues to monitor the roll out of the FDA's new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

The U.S. State governments are being assigned responsibility for implementation and interpretation of the new FSMA requirements. All maple syrup producers in the U.S. may be ultimately impacted by FSMA. Exporters of maple syrup to the United States will also be affected by the new FSMA requirements.

The Canadian government is working on new Safe Food for Canadians Act.

Maple syrup producers in both the United States and Canada are encouraged to stay abreast of these regulatory developments and take every opportunity to learn about any new or proposed requirements related to food safety.

Front-of-Package Labelling Proposal-Health Canada:

Health Canada (HC) is proposing to put warning labels on the front-of-package (FOP) for all products that have above the daily value (DV) of sugar that humans should consume for a healthy diet. The IMSI, the Maple Industry Council (CIE) and the Canadian Industry Advisory Group (CDN Round Table), have been active in attempts to convince the Canadian government to grant an exemption from this front-of-package labeling requirement for maple syrup.

Following the IMSI Board meeting, mid-February Health Canada announced a proposal which would exempt both maple syrup and honey from the front-of-package labeling requirement. One can only assume that our collective voices were heard. The final Health Canada proposal will go to Gazette II in December 2018. This example points out the importance of active engagement and perseverance by the maple industry to affect the content of new government regulations in both Canada and the United States.

Codex Application for Maple Syrup:

Codex is an international program to define foods in the world. It allows the use of a common language of what maple syrup is when import and export activities occur. The IMSI is supporting an application to the international body (based in Rome) with the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers providing the professional and technical lead for development of the application. A number of drafts of the Codex application have been completed and it is hoped that the application will be ready in time for submission to international government body for Codex in mid- 2018, or possibly sooner.

The IMSI has been facilitating input from USDA on the draft Codex application. Also, in parallel with the Codex Application the IMSI will be petitioning FDA to update their regulatory definition for maple syrup. At present, their outdated definition allows for certain additives including salt to maple syrup.

Maple Misrepresentation in the Marketplace:

The IMSI continues to discuss the best ways of addressing concerns regarding maple misrepresentation in the marketplace. It is believed that a preferred approach to help address maple misrepresentation, in the short term, is for all who are involved in consumer awareness and education to raise awareness regarding the differences between real maple products and artificial or fake maple products. With this in mind, it is expected that the IMSI will include maple misrepresentation as a component of their social media messaging 2018. We have learned that trying to make changes through the government regulatory process, while important as an overall strategy, is a long term and very painful process.

Development of New IMSI Maple Promotion Materials:

Now that the IMSI slogan has been adopted "*Real Maple Syrup, a Natural and Nutritious Choice*", the IMSI is encouraging all agencies and associations to begin using it on material, websites and their communications.

In order to re-invigorate the nutrition and health benefit messaging launched by the IMSI 4 to 5 years ago, which is a key platform in our communications, IMSI is exploring developing refreshed and updated communications materials that shares 3 or 4 salient facts.... emphasizing "real" & "natural" & "nutritious". We are also seeking a nutrition "expert" or major sports trainer who could give an official testimonial on utilizing maple as a nutrition or energy supplement for athletes or even workers. A professionally developed brand design or "look and feel" is also being explored. The messages developed will be vetted by a scientific advisory committee on health and nutrition facts that IMSI is in the process of setting up.

Once the updated nutritional and potential health benefits materials are finalized, the information will be transferred to IMSI members using a variety of methods, including a

rackcard, the IMSI website and others. Materials will be made available in both English and French languages.

IMSI High Level Social Media Activities:

The IMSI launched a formal social media campaign in late September, 2017. The intent is to provide strategic maple related information through various social media portals in concert with the time of year and holidays, etc. The main focus is for state and provincial organizations, packers and distributors, which may have social media platforms, to utilize the graphics and messaging through their own platforms. To-date there have been over 100,000 hits and over 600 followers; this is in 4 months. This does not include the followers and likes from other individual platforms that IMSI can't track. It could easily be double what we have recorded. This SM initiative has been a huge success and the task team lead by Brad Gillilan is working towards new messages for 2018 and a separate Francophone social media platform.

You are encouraged to like and follow the IMSI's ongoing social media postings on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalMapleSyrupInstitute/>. You can also utilize the IMSI's posting in helping develop your own social media postings.

Maple Month –March 2018:

The IMSI continues to support March as international maple Month. IMSI members are encouraged to provide input to the Maple Month website posting which is being administered by Karl Zander. They are also asked to do what they can to help promote maple month in their local/regional areas.

The IMSI will feature Maple Month in their social media Facebook site postings during the month of March.

Maple Quality Assurance Update (including Lead Elimination):

Centre Acer, UVM Proctor Extension and the University of Maine Cooperative extension are very active in offering quality assurance related training to maple syrup producers.

While great strides have been made in eliminating lead-containing equipment from maple operations since 1995, work continues towards complete elimination of avoidable lead contamination.. For example, continued progress is being made towards eliminating all lead-containing equipment from maple production and packing operations in accordance with the terms of the California Proposition 65 Maple Agreement which was signed by major packers and processors in 2016. Maple producers and packers/processors who are not directly affected by the agreement are strongly encouraged to voluntarily work towards elimination of any lead-containing equipment from their operations. We must ensure that the excellent reputation of

pure maple products continues and every effort is made to eliminate any potential contaminants, including lead from operations.

As the maple industry moves to raise awareness regarding the need to remove lead-containing equipment from operations, there has been some recent media coverage, especially in Quebec regarding lead. The IMSI has assigned four individuals as spokespeople to address related media inquiries in the future – Simon Trepanier, Ray Bonenberg, Dave Chapeskie and David Marvin. Any lead-related media inquiries should be referred to one of these individuals to help ensure consistent messaging and follow-up.

Maple producers are also encouraged to follow best practices to avoid the introduction of off-flavors in maple syrup. Off-flavored syrups should not be sold into retail markets and should be classified as processing grade syrup.

IMSI Sponsored Grading School:

Two successful grading schools were held in 2017, both in Canada. The first school was held in Nova Scotia and the second in Fredericton, NB. The school in New Brunswick was held with a translation service thanks to the NB Maple Producers Association and the provincial government. Much of the printed material was translated into French by Monique Sénéchal with some limited assistance by Kathy Hopkins. Both groups had involved discussions about industry topics and challenges

The 2018 schools will be held in West Virginia in May and in Keene, NH in October in association with the IMSI/NAMSC annual meetings. The online registration is being set up for both schools

Kathy Hopkins is working with others involved in the delivery of the maple school to explore ways of extending its reach and impact to more maple producers. She will be working on a budget to accompany the Grading School Program format and delivery once plans for the future of the School are finalized.

Maple Water – Sap & Permeate:

Dr. Mike Farrell has been following developments in the maple water/sap industry and provided an update of his observations. The maple water industry appears to be growing and seeking other venues to capitalize on the product(s). Some companies have failed (usually due to insufficient capital) but some have flourished. Some strong movement by one company in RO permeate has led the exploration of ways of storing and shipping the products to key bottling facilities. We predict this industry will continue to grow but there will continue to be challenges.

Recently, the University of Rhode Island (URI) received approval of a grant in the amount of \$150,000 to begin work on the development of a standard of identity for maple sap water. This research work is fundamental to the development of a sap water industry.

IMSI Annual Awards:

The IMSI continues to administer several awards to recognize outstanding service and innovation at the North American or international level:

Lynn Reynolds Memorial Leadership Award - Recognizes outstanding achievement and contributions to the maple industry by individuals.

Golden Maple Leaf Award –Recognizes achievement and/or innovations in any specialized area of the maple syrup industry by individuals, groups or organizations.

President’s Award- Recognizes periodic and ongoing contributions of individuals to advancing the objectives and initiatives of the IMSI.

All IMSI award nominations should be forwarded to the IMSI Executive Director by August 31, 2018.

IMSI Board of Directors And Annual Meetings (2018):

IMSI Spring Board of Directors Meeting – Friday, May 11, 2018, American Maple Museum, Croghan, NY

IMSI Summer Board of Directors Meeting – Wednesday, July 18, 2018, Saratoga, NY (In Conjunction with New York State Maple Producers Summer Meeting)

IMSI Fall Board of Directors Meeting – Friday, October 26, 2018, Concord, NH

IMSI Annual Meeting – Saturday, October 27, 2018, Concord, NH

For further information, contact:

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