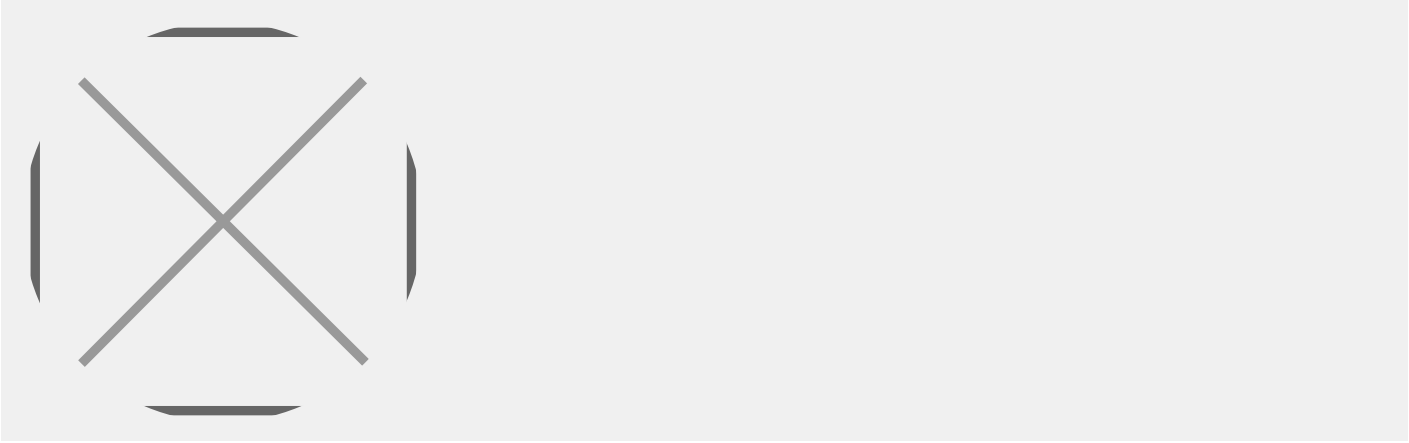
Interview: Mario Lebrun, General Manager, BIOQuébec



18.11.2013

Tags: BIOQuébec, government relations, management, Biotech

Mr. Lebrun discusses the role that BIOQuébec plays in the industry, its aims in representing several sectors and their plans for the coming years.

Could you introduce *BIOQuébec* and its main priorities to our readers?

BIOQuébec is a voluntary trade association representing Québec-based life sciences organizations. Its membership includes biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies, as well as research, economic development, financial and service organizations. The association has been in business for nearly twenty years and its mission is to promote the economic interest of its company members. *BIOQuebec*'s focus is on lobbying for members' issues, mainly at the provincial level. Access to financing remains a key issue for the vast majority of biotechnology companies. *BIOQuébec* also works in partnership with other organizations at the national level, namely *Rx&D* and *BIOTECanada*, on issues like international trade and intellectual property.

BIOQuébec's area of intervention is mainly on human health, unlike other biotech associations that may be diversified in other bio industries, such as industrial or environmental applications of biotechnology. Though *BIOQuébec'*s focus is on lobbying, the association also organizes a few networking events during the year, and

offers its members business solutions, in areas such as human resources or laboratory equipment.

Companies within *BIOQuébec*'s membership represent different sectors (biotech, pharma, finance, etc.). How do you manage to represent the varied and potentially conflicting interests of all members?

It is important to keep in mind that *BIOQuébec* is not an economic development cluster which by definition integrates all stakeholders of the ecosystem i.e. industry, academia, service providers, and government. *BIOQuébec* remains an industry association that focuses on the economic needs of its core company membership. The association relies on its members for existence and receives no subsidies from governments. *BIOQuébec*'s membership mix is divided half and half between industry-related companies and organizations (biotech, pharmaceutical, CROs) and service providers (consultants, finance, technology transfer, etc).

The association's priority focus is on representing small entrepreneurial companies. Its representation of the pharmaceutical segment is based on its impact on biotech companies. It is well agreed that the proximity of pharma and biotech is very important in order to ensure growth and sustainability for both segments of the industry. This is why *BIOQuébec* tags along with *Rx&D* on issues that are common to both segments. For example, the pharma companies and the smaller biotech companies share a common agenda in ensuring that the business environment is as prosperous as possible, thus attracting more investment, and creating more quality jobs and business opportunities. Though *BIOQuébec'*s primary objectives are to represent small biotech companies, the association also advocates on issues that have universal impact.

What is in store for *BIOQuébec* in the next few years? What is on your agenda?

BIOQuébec's main priority will continue to be on public policies. At the provincial level, we will continue our work with regards to governmental initiatives that impact our

members. For example, the Québec government will be introducing a new research and innovation strategy called the *Politique nationale de la recherché et de l'innovation (PNRI). BIOQuébec* has been part of its development and intends to continue its involvement as far as the implementation of this policy is concerned. At the federal level, we will continue monitoring the developments regarding international trade negotiations and IP protection with Europe, and support our partner *Rx&D* when needed.

Essentially, there are four elements at work: pharmaceutical and biotech companies, finance, and the government. Those four have to work together in a different model. Recent initiatives and announcements made over the last two years provide us with examples of this new model. The pharma industry has changed its approach with regards to research. You see pharmaceutical companies investing and becoming venture capitalists themselves with the creation of special investment funds. In Québec, the government has fuelled that with the creation of *Teralys Capital*, the biggest venture fund in Canada to attract investment. Those four components will articulate a new model for Canada. *BIOQuébec* intends to put itself in the middle of this model with other associations in order to foster collaboration.

What would be your final message?

Quebec is at a turning point as far as its capacity to attract investment is concerned. It has an excellent network of good researchers, public institutions and industrial prevalence. Its ecosystem is very collaborative and works well. We all recognize that the competition is global. Ultimately, determining how Québec can be more attractive is a key issue. The association intends to continue its work towards ensuring a prosperous life sciences industry in Québec.

See more interviews