



Association of the Chemical Profession
of British Columbia

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Dr. Paul Ronald West (1940 to 2023)

We are saddened to report the death of Dr. Paul R. West. His tireless efforts over many decades have remarkably transformed the profession of chemistry in BC.

Paul was a founding member of the Association of the Chemical Profession of BC and a key driving force in the development of the Association. He chaired an ad hoc implementation committee that oversaw the incorporation of the Association and was elected under our bylaws as our first President in 2007. His tireless efforts stimulated the rapid growth of the organization over our first decade. He was instrumental in establishing a framework for the recognition of Professional Chemists in BC through an emphasis on standards of education and experience required for professional membership and an ongoing program of professional development to ensure the continued competency of practicing professional chemists.

In parallel, Paul was the organizing force behind the BC Scientific Advisory Board on Contaminated Sites that the province established to provide expert scientific advice in support of the contaminated site assessment and remediation. He was respected as an “honest broker” by both industry and provincial regulators as he built the scientific and technical reputation of the Scientific Advisory Board in his two decades as President. Paul’s efforts incorporated the ACPBC as one of four core organizations that ensure the disciplinary competency of Contaminated Sites Approved Professionals.

Paul earned his doctorate in Physical Organic Chemistry at McMaster University and spent his chemistry career on the faculty of the University of Victoria. His chemical research utilized electron spin resonance to elucidate the structure and dynamics of free radicals and their roles in electron transfer chemistry. In the 1970’s he and others at UVic developed an interest in pathways for the degradation of persistent pollutants in the environment through both chemical and biochemical pathways. The expansion of his interests in environmental chemistry and policy lead to his appointment as the initial Director of the UVic School of Environmental Studies as a joint appointment with his ongoing position in the Chemistry Department. In the 1990’s he was deeply involved with major regional multidisciplinary environmental science initiatives in the Fraser Basin, and the Salish Sea, that focussed the efforts of scientists, policy experts, and regulators from UVic, UBC, SFU, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the US EPA Seattle.

He served on numerous advisory boards with a focus on the professional workforce in the environmental sector. On a national level he was a member of the Round Table on the Environment. Starting in the 1980’s he was active within the Chemical Institute of Canada both at the local level and on the national scene as he and others hammered out the basis for cooperation and coordination between individual provincial professional chemistry associations. He was proud to have been one of the founding signatories on behalf of the ACPBC of the incorporating documents for the national Federation of Canada’s Professional Chemists in 2013. The FCPC coordinates national standards of professional education and competency to ensure labour mobility for chemists across Canada.

Although we deeply regret the loss of Paul’s sage advice, we are very grateful for his many years of service. His lasting impact on professional chemistry and our role in serving the public interest of the citizens of BC lives on.