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Sixty years of science: Canada's National Research Council

In early December 1916, 11 men representing the scientific, technical and industrial interests of Canada met in Ottawa for the first time. On June 6 of that year, a sub-committee of the Privy Council had formed the Honorary Committee for Scientific and Industrial Research, the earliest ancestor in the genealogy of the National Research Council of Canada.

Today, 60 years later, NRC continues as a major force in Canada's scientific development. The modern-day Council functions as a national science laboratory, a patron of Canadian scientific research and a vital link between the scientific interests of government, industry and universities in Canada.

Ten main areas

Laboratory activities are now concentrated into ten major research divisions spanning various aspects of the life sciences, physical sciences and engineering. The newest of these, the Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics, has been named in honour of Dr. Gerhard Herzberg, distinguished NRC scientist and Canada's first Nobel Prize winner in the natural sciences. Other scientific and technical facilities, which are unique or too specialized for individual Canadian industries or scientific organizations to support on their own, are maintained all across Canada.

In its research programs, NRC acts in response to Canada's changing needs and scientific priorities. Currently, applied research is focused on certain areas related to long-term problems of national concern — energy, food, building and construction, and transportation. The Council also provides research support towards social objectives — public safety and security, protection of property, health and environmental quality. A significant part of present-day laboratory work centres on basic or exploratory research aimed at the creation and application of new knowledge. The results of such fundamental studies ultimately fulfil some practical need in society.

NRC's extensive research facilities

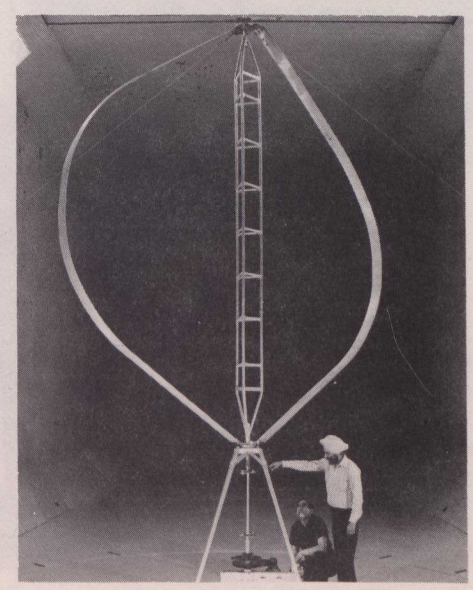
complement its role as custodian of Canada's primary physical standards which include measurements of such quantities as length, mass, heat, electricity and time. Because of this involvement, the Council acts for Canada in international agreements concerning weights and measures.

In addition to its "in-house" research activity, the Council is closely allied with Canadian industry through cooperative programs of research and development and through programs of direct financial assistance. Similarly, an extensive program of grants and scholarships is the main source of direct aid to scientific research in the universities.

Although space does not permit coverage of the many research projects engaged in by the National Research Council, following are some of the highlights as published in the President's Report for 1975-1976:

Wind turbine

With the successful development of its vertical-axis wind turbine, NRC's National Aeronautical Establishment is now carrying out a detailed examination of all aspects of wind power (especially in conjunction with conventional diesel-electric supply systems).



NRC's wind turbine.

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