

## Digby J. McLaren, O.C., FRSC

Past President



Dr. Digby McLaren, distinguished scientist and former federal assistant deputy minister, was elected the 101<sup>st</sup> President of the Royal Society of Canada.

A professor in the Department of Geology of the University of Ottawa, he succeeded Dr. Alexander G. McKay of McMaster University for a term of three years from June 1987 to June 1990.

Dr. McLaren has brought great experience and enthusiasm to this office at a time when the Society, as Canada's national academy of arts and sciences, is assuming a larger role in steering major projects involving humanists, social scientists and natural scientists from universities, government and private research organizations. Projects now active include comprehensive studies of change to the environment due to both natural causes and human activities and how society may respond to and manage such global changes; studies of social and health issues of diet and nutrition, changes to the population and the growing menace of AIDS; a review of the safety of CANDU reactors for the Ontario Government; and broad policy issues concerning the future of research and scholarship in Canada and its place in the international community.

Born at Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland, in 1919, Dr. McLaren studied before and after the war at Cambridge University from where he received B.A. and M.A. degrees. He obtained a Ph.D. in geology at the University of Michigan in 1951.

He spent six war years in the Royal Artillery of the British Army serving overseas for three and a half years in thirteen countries. He then joined the Geological Survey of Canada in 1948 for which he did field work in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta and British Columbia and in the District of MacKenzie, the Yukon and the Arctic Islands, specializing in Devonian stratigraphy and palaeontology. He took part in "Operation Franklin" led by Y.O. Fortier, a major reconnaissance mapping project in the Queen Elizabeth Islands, and contributed largely to the final report. He became Head of the Paleontology Section of the Geological Survey in 1959 and moved to Calgary in 1967 to become the first Director of the Survey's Institute of Sedimentary and Petroleum Geology. He returned to Ottawa in 1973 to become Director of the Geological Survey, and, in 1981, Assistant Deputy Minister, Science and Technology, in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

In international science he was acclaimed for his work for the International Union of Geological Sciences between 1968 and 1981. During this period of rapid expansion of the Union's activities he headed groups of specialists from many countries examining the subdivision and correlation of sedimentary rocks in all parts of the world. From 1971 to 1981 he served on the Board of the International Geological Correlation Program which was supported by the Union and UNESCO, being its chairman from 1977 to 1981.

In August 1981 he joined the University of Ottawa as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Geology, while retaining responsibilities to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources as Senior Science Advisor until 1984. He proposed, convened and co-ordinated two Dahlem Conferences in Berlin in 1986 on Resources and World Development, and edited the final volume, published in 1987.

He has published over eighty scientific reports and maps in various international journals and those of the Geological Survey of Canada in the fields of paleontology, biostratigraphy, and regional geology. Currently he continues to pursue his interests and publish on problems of time correlation and major extinction events in the past, as well as resources and world development.

He is an active member of professional societies in Canada, the U.S. and Great Britain. He was President of the Palaeontological Society of America (1969), the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists (1971) and the Geological Society of America (1982). He was awarded the Gold Medal of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada for Pure and Applied Science in 1979; the Leopold von Buch award and Honorary Membership of the Geological Society of Germany in 1982; the Edward Fitzgerald Coke Medal of the Geological Society of London in 1985; and the Logan Medal of the Geological Association of Canada in 1987. *He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1968*, a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1979, a Foreign Associate of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences in 1979 and an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1987.

He married Phyllis Matkin in 1942. They have a daughter, Alison, two sons, Ian and Patrick, and two grandchildren.