

HOWARD ALPER

Howard Alper is currently spearheading the Global Excellence Initiative (GEI) by the former Governor General of Canada David Johnston, to enhance global recognition for Canadian research excellence. He is Chair of the Canvassing Committee for the initiative. He is also Distinguished University Professor at the University of Ottawa. The basic research Alper has been pursuing spans organic and inorganic chemistry, with potential applications in the pharmaceutical, petrochemical, and commodity chemical industries. He discovered new reactions using homogeneous, phase transfer, and heterogeneous catalysis (e.g. clays, dendrimers, magnetic nanoparticles). He created new highly chemoselective alkoxy-carbonylation or aminocarbonylation processes of importance in drug and natural product synthesis [e.g. avenanthramide A]. Alper was a pioneer in the application of phase-transfer catalysis to transition-metal catalysed organic reactions. He has published 552 papers, has thirty-seven patents, and has edited several books.

In 2000, the Governor General of Canada presented him with the inaugural Gerhard Herzberg Canada Gold Medal in Science and Engineering, the most prestigious award for science and engineering in the country. The following year, he was given the National Merit Award for contributions to the Life Sciences. Alper was appointed in 1996 as a Titular Member of the European Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Humanities, and in 2003 as a member of TWAS-the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World. In 2002, he received the LeSueur Memorial Award of the Society of Chemical Industry. In 2004, he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Chemical Research Society of India, in 2006, an Honorary Fellow of the Chemical Institute of Canada, and in March 2013, was made an Honorary Foreign Member of the Chemical Society of Japan (CSJ), the first Canadian ever to be so honoured by the CSJ since its establishment in 1878. In 2020, he was recognized as an American Chemical Society Catalysis Pioneer.

He has served as Chair of Boards and Committees including, amongst others, the Partnership Group for Science and Engineering (PAGSE), and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network. He was President of the Royal Society of Canada for a two-year term commencing November 2001, and was its Foreign Secretary from 2004-2010. During 2006-2013 he was Co-Chair of the Inter-Academy Partnership [IAP: The Global Network of Science Academies]. On June 13, 2007, he was appointed inaugural Chair of the Government of Canada's Science, Technology and Innovation Council (STIC) which provided advice to Cabinet and the Prime Minister on science, technology and innovation issues. He served three terms, until May, 2015.

In 1999, Alper was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada. and in 2002 he was awarded the title of Officer, National Order of Merit, by the President of the Republic of France. In 2014, President Napolitano of the Republic of Italy, bestowed the significant recognition of Alper as Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. In 2022, Alper was designated as "Companion of the Order of Canada", the highest award presented to a Canadian citizen," for his significant contributions to organometallic chemistry, and for his internationally recognized leadership in science research and policy."

He is passionate about Canada, research, and chocolate.