

Canadian Farm Writers' Federation



2004 Annual Report



Reflecting on Agriculture's Future

50th Anniversary Message from ACRA

Chers amis,

Au nom de tous les membres de *l'Association des communicateurs et rédacteurs agricoles*, je tiens à vous féliciter et à vous transmettre nos vœux les plus sincères à l'occasion de ce congrès qui vient souligner les cinquante ans de votre association.

Le *Canadian Farm Writers' Federation* a été non seulement un témoin important de l'évolution de l'agriculture canadienne, mais il a aussi été ce lieu privilégié de rencontre pour ceux et celles qui en ont consigné les jalons. Quelle belle et trépidante tâche que celle d'immortaliser l'histoire de notre agriculture, particulièrement en ces années qui l'ont vu subir de profondes transformations!

L'agriculture a assurément une histoire à suivre, à rapporter, à raconter. Elle doit faire sa place dans les médias d'aujourd'hui et ce sont les associations comme la vôtre et la nôtre qui oeuvrent à lui tailler cette place -une place qui n'est pas facilement acquise mais qui, de toute évidence, est largement méritée compte tenu des impacts économiques, sociaux et environnementaux qui découlent de l'agriculture moderne. Voilà sans doute ce qui rend notre travail des plus stimulants.

Félicitations à votre association et continuez votre bon travail.

Longue vie au CFWF!

Dear Friends,

On behalf of all the members of *l'Association des communicateurs et rédacteurs agricoles*, I would like to offer our congratulations and sincere best wishes on the occasion of this annual conference celebrating 50 years in the life of your association.

The *Canadian Farm Writers' Federation* has not just been an important witness to the evolution of Canadian agriculture but also a privileged meeting place for those who have recorded the milestones along the way. One can think of no task more exhilarating than to immortalize the story of agriculture, particularly in those years in which the sector has undergone profound transformation!

Agriculture is certainly a story to be followed, to be recorded, and one that must be told. Agriculture should occupy an important place within today's media and it is association's such as yours . . . and ours . . . that must work to carve out that niche – one that is not easily gained but which, given all the evidence, deserves merit when one takes into account the economic, social and environmental impacts that result from modern agriculture. This will, no doubt, make our work that much more stimulating.

Congratulations to your association and keep up the good work.

Long live CFWF!

Collette Lebel, présidente
Association des communicateurs et rédacteurs de l'agroalimentaire

Canadian Farm Writers' Federation

Annual Meeting

8:30 am

**Saturday, September 24th, 2005
Best Western Wayside Inn, Lloydminster, AB**

Agenda

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Adoption of the agenda**
- 3. Adoption of the minutes of the 2004 annual meeting**
- 4. Business arising from the minutes**
- 5. President's Report**
- 6. Secretary-Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement**
- 7. Conference Report**
- 8. Awards Program Report**
- 9. IFAJ Report**
- 10. Regional Reports**
- 11. Senate Report**
- 12. Executive Elections**
- 13. New Business**
- 14. Adjournment**

Canadian Farm Writers' Federation

Minutes of the Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 2nd, 2004
Holiday Inn, Windsor, ON

1. **Welcome:**
Hugh Maynard called the meeting to order at 7:42 a.m.
2. **Adoption of the Agenda:**
Janet Kanters moved adoption of the agenda. Seconded by Clare Stanfield.
Carried
3. **Adoption of the minutes of the 2003 annual meeting:**
Allison Fynamore moved the minutes of the 2003 annual meeting be adopted as circulated. Seconded by Anne Thompson-Howden.
Carried
4. **Business arising from the minutes:**
None
5. **President's Report:**
Clare Stanfield thanked the organizing committee for a wonderful conference. She reported on the executive committee's activities in the past year and the issues that they had to deal with, in particular the endorsement policy and the change in conference location. Clare thanked Fran Bach for making sure a quality Farm Journalist was published each quarter, and to Jane Robinson for chairing the awards program.
6. **Secretary-Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement:**
Hugh Maynard presented a summary of items from the secretariat, including the rebound in membership numbers and proposed conference rotation. He presented the 2003 financial report with explanations on the split of conference surplus. He thanked BC for excellent job in managing the 2003 conference finances. He noted that IFAJ fees for 2003 were yet to be paid and these would come out of the 2004 budget. He also noted that the budget had remained balanced due to the lowering of costs, especially that the FJ editor had declined the honourarium.

Hugh Maynard moved adoption of the 2003 CFWF financial statement, seconded by Owen Roberts.
Carried

Hugh briefly reviewed the 2004 financial statement for information purposes. He noted that if the 2004 conference provided a higher than budgeted surplus,

CFWF will be in a position in 2005 to invest some of the surplus dollars in professional development or program activities.

7. 2003 Conference Report:

Conference chair Adele Pelland thanked committee members for all their hard work, and noted that there were 88 registrants for the conference and \$44,500 in sponsorships. There was also a record 49 items in the conference registration bag.

8. Awards Program Report:

Jane Robinson reported there were 239 entries in 2004, up considerably from previous years. She noted that there is still a need for namesakes for the new categories, and she thanked the two new sponsors, Better Farming and Syngenta, for their support.

Jane mentioned that she would be stepping down as awards chair and a successor would have to be found. Hugh Maynard thanked Jane for all the hard work she had put in over the last few years and the great success of the program as a result.

9. Senate Report:

Tabled to the evening banquet.

10. Regional Reports:

Written reports contained in the handout.

11. IFAJ Report:

Owen Roberts gave a brief update on IFAJ matters, in particular the idea of bringing an IFAJ congress to Canada (last one was 1967.)

12. Executive Elections:

Owen Roberts chaired elections process.

BCFWA – Clare Stanfield nominated David Schmidt.

AFWA – Sally Stewart nominated Clare Stanfield.

SFWA – Karen Briere nominated Lorne McClinton.

MFWBA – Louise Waldman nominated John Morriss.

ECFWA – Carol Carson nominated John Greig. Janet Kanters nominated Allison Finnamore.

Members at Large - Suzanne Atkinson nominated Anne Howden Thompson for the east. Clare Stanfield nominated Janet Kanters as western representative.

FJ – Dave Schmidt nominated Fran Bach as newsletter editor.

Carried

13. New Business:

Leadership Renewal

Hugh Maynard mentioned that a number of long-time participants in CFWF affairs had indicated that they had done their bit and would like to find replacements, including himself, Owen Roberts and Jane Robinson. It was hoped that this could be done in a managed way so that CFWF operations would not be unduly affected. The regional associations need to seek out new participants, in particular there is a need for an awards chair to be in place by Christmas. He noted that he would continue as a volunteer for the secretarial responsibilities.

Conference Planning

Rotation Plan

Hugh Maynard presented the background to the proposal to institute a planned rotation for CFWF conferences, including a new two year west – one year east rotation. A number of questions were posed and responded to, and it was suggested that the rotation be adopted as a guideline so that the Executive can adapt to any irregular circumstances (i.e. IFAJ)

Moved by Frances Anderson, seconded by Janet Kanters, that CFWF implement the new two year west – one year east rotation for the annual conference starting in 2005 with AB-SK.

Carried

2005 Conference

Karen Briere and Janet Kanters provided information on the proposed Lloydminster location for the joint AB-SK meeting (the town being on the border of both provinces.) A number of questions were posed regarding transportation arrangements related to the location.

Janet Kanters moved, seconded by Myrna Stark Leader, that the 2005 conference be held in Lloydminster.

Carried

IFAJ

John Greig noted that ECFWA had favourably discussed the idea of hosting a IFAJ congress in the near future. Owen Roberts provided background on what an IFAJ congress would involve, and that the schedule is already set for the next few years so that hosting a congress in Canada wouldn't be until 2011 or beyond. A number of questions were posed on sponsorships and developing nation journalists.

Moved by Allison Fynamore, seconded by David Schmidt, that CFWF support ECFWA efforts to look at the possibilities of hosting an IFAJ congress at a date to be determined.

Carried

Endorsement Policy

David Schmidt spoke to his belief that CFWF should only provide generic endorsements for specific initiatives (as per his resolution at last years' annual meeting. He read, in the interests of open discussion, the e-mail letter from Art Stirling requesting that CFWF reconsider the generic endorsement of an agricultural communicators program and specifically endorse the proposed program being developed at the University of Guelph.

Clare Stanfield presented the recommendations of the committee struck by the Executive last year to prepare an endorsement policy. The report contained three main recommendations:

- That CFWF not provide financial sponsorship as it is a non-profit organization;
- That CFWF only consider requests for generic endorsements (rather than specific requests such as the University of Guelph);
- That this policy only apply to the national organization (regional organizations being free to take action as they see fit.)

Moved by Frances Anderson, seconded by Glenn Powell, that the recommendations from the endorsement policy committee be adopted by CFWF.

Laura Rance proposed an amendment to create a standing committee to handle all requests for endorsement. Since the amendment was acceptable to the mover of the original, and no second was received for the proposed amendment, the amendment was not accepted. Michael Van Dusen raised the issues of liability related to any endorsement action, and suggested that this be looked into.

Defeated (by majority vote)

David Schmidt proposed that CFWF not provide any financial support to outside initiatives. It was agreed to defer the issue for discussion at the executive committee.

Moved by Jim Rohman, seconded by Wendy Holm, that CFWF endorse and encourage the establishment of a Canadian Agricultural Communications program at the University of Guelph.

Carried (by majority vote)

14. Adjournment:

Barry MacCormick moved adjournment at 9:10 am.

Annual Reports

President's Report

Prepared by Allison Finnamore

When I look back on the past year, it seems like the CFWF executive had a crush of matters to deal with prior to Christmas, tapered off for a few months then had a renewed round of issues in the spring. Many of the projects and issues we dealt with mean significant changes to CFWF, or impending changes, both in terms of what we do, who we serve and what the purpose is of our organization.

Certainly, the major project of CFWF is our awards program. For many members, the competition and possible recognition of winning is the main reason they belong to our organization. Last year at this time, we were seeking a new awards administrator for a program that had exploded with a record number of entries. It was more work than any volunteer could possibly take on, or for us to expect someone to take on. At the same time, our secretary/treasurer Hugh Maynard was facing an increased workload in his volunteer capacity and reduced administrative support in his office. Brainstorming, networking and forward thinking led by Hugh gave us the opportunity to offer the position of administrative assistant to a university student in Hugh's neighbourhood, Jeannie Bryson and we were happy when she accepted. She is a half-time employee of CFWF and Qu'Anglo Communications and Consulting, Hugh's business. Jeannie's efficiency has been reflected in many ways with CFWF, not only in the awards program, but with many other administrative tasks. Thank you, Jeannie.

Now, I'm sure as much as Jeannie loves her job, she's not about to work for free. CFWF currently has an agreement with Qu'Anglo to employ Jeannie one quarter time until December 1, 2005. Our budget allows us to renew this agreement for a further year, presuming everything is working satisfactorily. Now, I'll ask that you keep this point in mind and I'll return to it soon.

In the spring, the CFWF executive received several requests at almost the same time from organizations interesting in forming partnerships with us or asking us to lend our support, in name only, to specific programs or projects they were undertaking. Some of these have been in support of young farm journalists and one was to help promote on-farm safety.

You may recall that at last year's annual meeting, the issue of sponsorship came up and the executive presented a recommendation to establish a protocol within CFWF on how to deal with these matters. The recommendation was defeated, however, and although the agreement was to continue discussions at the executive, it is an issue we continue to struggle with and we have reached no resolve. The requests made during the last year have been dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

In 2004-2005, the CFWF membership saw a significant increase in communications. Francis Kay-Bach took over the job of editor of the Farm Journalist and in a musing at last year's first executive meeting that maybe we could send out information bulletins to keep members informed of the executive's activities, Fran took the idea and ran with it, usually managing to produce a copy of the FJ once a month. Her system was simple: put out a call for submissions and publish what she receives.

The increase in communications was met with varying degrees of satisfaction. Some members felt they were being hit with too much information about CFWF. Others, especially those who don't have the opportunity to attend regular regional meetings, enjoyed more frequent contact with the national organization.

Fran will be leaving her post as editor of the FJ and we would love to have a volunteer step forward and take on this job. The frequency of distribution is flexible, so if that's something you would like to see changed and have a personal hand in making it happen, we would most certainly welcome your contribution.

We also had to begin discussing proposed changes to our constitution and our awards program, which the executive has discussed extensively in the last few weeks. Please know that for the constitutional changes, no final decision will be made today. The document is for discussion – we want your input – and we want the participation of members who aren't here. We'll start our discussion today, follow it up with some electronic discussion and pass the proposed new constitution on to provincial organizations in a few months.

Also, we're asking for your input on the fee structure of the awards program and the membership dues. In order to sustain who we are right at this moment, we need to have more money. Hugh's excellent money management has made it possible to reach this point without increased funding, but we need to examine the future and prepare. This certainly ties in with the future of keeping the position of an administrative assistant.

As for the changes to the awards program, we are again tweaking and adjusting the content and categories to reflect the changes in technology and changes in agriculture. The definition of agriculture has always been clearly defined in the CFWF awards, but as communicators, we're producing more and more material outside of that definition – the agricultural tie-in to ethanol, for example, is something many of us may have touched on in our day jobs. So the changes to the awards program reflect the changes in the agriculture industry.

Looking further down the line, CFWF has put its support behind ECFWA to consider hosting the International Federation of Agriculture Journalists, IFAJ, annual congress sometime in the future. The process to bring the congress to Canada is in its early stages. Hosting this event will mean nation-wide co-operation and planning, but it's a wonderful opportunity to showcase each of our regions and make valuable international contacts in the agriculture media world.

In case you haven't noticed, this is an amazing organization. I speak to CFWF members daily, as I'm sure most of you do too. Having that connection and knowing the resource of agriculture experts who are fellow members is a key component to my daily work. But it's essential that you understand that everyone needs to take an active role in this organization for us to continue to be so amazing. Taking on a volunteer job is not a life sentence either. The executive is often looking for ad hoc committee members or someone to take on a special, short-term task. Please talk to your regional representatives and let them know you would be willing to make a contribution to the ongoing success of CFWF.

A perfect example of a valuable contribution to CFWF is the work Henry Heald has done compiling the 50th anniversary memoirs of past presidents. He willingly took on this task when I approached him and has given this group a precious look at our history. Henry's work is certainly appreciated, as are the efforts of Francis Kay-Bach for her help with the project, as well as John Greig, Hugh Maynard and Janet Kanters.

Finally, I want to thank the CFWF membership and the executive for the opportunity to serve as CFWF president. Juggling this position along with being a mom to two young kids, operating my freelance writing business and writing a murder book was challenging, but a great experience. Thank you.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Prepared by Hugh Maynard

Administration

The 2004 year was eventful for the CFWF secretariat as the operations were re-structured and part-time administrative assistance was engaged to handle the combined secretariat/awards program workload. Jeannie Bryson was hired in December as administrative coordinator to work an average of one day per week throughout the year, much of that time being consecrated to the awards program between May and September 2005. The arrangement (through Qu'anglo communications) will be reviewed in December 2005 before a decision will be taken to continue the arrangement; this is also predicated on the outcome of proposals at to increase financial resources for the awards program.

Membership

Membership numbers have continued to re-bounce from the 2002 low of 250 thanks to the recruiting and renewal efforts by regional associations. Renewals for 2004 (not including 13 life members) were 305 and 2005 is expected to be similar once the renewal paperwork is completed.

Finances

The Federation has been able to maintain a reasonable operational surplus due mainly to positive results from conference sponsorships and keeping costs as low as possible through greater use of electronic media and volunteer contributions. Given the limits of these measures, and the expanded activity within the awards program, a financial analysis of CFWF operations was undertaken during the year covering the last 11 years with aim of making recommendations for CFWF financing over the next five years (see awards program report for details.)

Conference Planning

As per the conference schedule adopted at last years annual meeting, the following list indicates the intended site for future CFWF conferences based on the new one east/two west rotation:

2006	MB	2012	MB
2007	EC	2013	EC
2008	BC	2014	BC
2009	AB	2015	AB
2010	EC	2016	EC
2011	SK		

Given the submission to host the IFAJ congress in the east in 2011, a re-ordering of the rotation may be necessary in the near future.

Constitution

With nothing else important to do, the CFWF Executive reviewed the constitution for the first time 1978, the results of which are presented later in the report.

CFWF Financial Statement - 2004

		2003	2004 Budget	2004 Final
<u>INCOME</u>				
Awards	Fees	\$1,870	\$2,000	\$ 2,500
	Sponsors	\$7,600	\$6,800	\$ 8,200
Conference	Registrations	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 250
	Sponsors	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$14,445
	Other	\$3,435	\$3,000	\$ 4,381
Memberships		\$5,020	\$5,500	\$ 5,230
Interest		\$ 3	\$ 1	\$ 7
Other		\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
TOTAL INCOME		\$17,928	\$17,301	\$35,013
<u>EXPENSES</u>				
Administration	Sec.-Tres.	\$ 471	\$ 500	\$ 592
	Conf. calls	\$ 622	\$ 1,200	\$ 543
	Other	\$ 730	\$ 400	\$ 324
Awards	Administration	\$ 2,014	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,139
	Certificates	\$ 491	\$ 600	\$ 589
	Judging	\$ 1,125	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,575
	Prizes	\$ 6,800	\$ 7,200	\$ 8,400
	Refunds	\$ 60	\$ 0	\$ 30
Conference	Expenses	\$ 1,557	\$ 0	\$14,695
	Refunds	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Farm Journalist	Honourarium	\$ 0	\$ 1,000	\$ 0
	Newsletter	\$ 506	\$ 500	\$ 0
	Travel	\$ 0	\$ 1,000	\$ 0
Membership		\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
IFAJ	Fees	\$ 0	\$ 2,250	\$ 5,058
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$14,376	\$19,150	\$33,945
<hr/>				
TOTAL INCOME/EXPENSE		\$ 3,552	\$ (1,849)	\$ 1,068
Surplus/Deficit		\$11,508	\$ 15,060	\$ 15,060
Retained earnings		\$15,060	\$ 13,211	\$ 16,128

Awards Program Report

Prepared by Hugh Maynard

The awards program underwent a significant change in 2004 with the transfer of responsibility back to the CFWF Secretariat after being administered for a number of years by Jane Robinson at Adfarm in Guelph. Once again, many thanks to Jane for not only having administered the awards program but for also supervising the introduction of three new categories and other update initiatives to the awards program. The awards program was administered in 2005 by Jeannie Bryson, administrative coordinator at the CFWF Secretariat, along with the support from Hugh Maynard, CFWF Secretary-Treasurer, and continued advice and support from Jane Robinson.

Entries for 2005 were slightly higher than 2004, with 245 submissions, continuing the record-setting trend that has seen the program almost double the number of entries over the last decade. The general quality of entries continued to be high in most categories, although the electronic broadcast media still do not attract comparably high numbers as with other categories. Press Feature continues to be the most popular category with 35 entries, although this is down from some past years where there were over 50 entries, which reflects the diversification of categories since Technical Feature and General Periodical were added. Names are still required for the two photography categories.

Given the addition of numerous new categories in the last few years, along with a blind judging process, it was time to review the changes based on comments that had been received from members. A number of possible changes were reviewed by the Executive, and these are included in the following pages for the purposes of consultation at the annual meeting.

With the increased growth of the awards program, the administrative load has also gone up along with the costs of running the program. A financial analysis of CFWF operations was undertaken during the year covering the last 11 years with aim of making recommendations for CFWF financing over the next five years, and this particularly with regard to the awards program given that it has always operated at deficit. A summary outline and list of recommendations follows.

Executive Proposals for Changes CFWF Awards Program

Financial

During the past decade, the number of entries in the CFWF Awards Competition has almost doubled, going from an average of 130 to 240 per year. This has largely been due to the addition of six new categories which reflect the broader range and types of writing and publishing that now make up Canadian agricultural communications.

This success has come at a price: over this period, the program has operated with an annual deficit of about \$2,000, which has been covered by other fundraising sources, notably the surplus generated each year by the annual conference. In addition, the sheer size of the work involved in processing the entries and finding 28 judges has required the engagement of part-time help. The possibility of more entries from other sources such as electronic publishing (see discussion items below), mean that the program is likely to continue to grow.

In this context, the CFWF executive recently discussed options for changes to the awards program given that the CFWF surplus will be depleted by 2007 or 2008 if current activity and expense levels continue. In short, it's time for a fee increase.

Given that the awards entry fee, at \$10 per entry, and the founding patron and individual category sponsorships, have not changed since the late 1980s, the CFWF executive is proposing the following:

Increase in the awards entry fee to \$15 for 2006

This will provide a moderate increase in revenue without deterring the number of entries from 'price shock'.

Increase in sponsorship fees for 2006

The sponsors of the awards program will be approached with a proposition to increase each individual category by \$200, as well as an increased contribution from the founding patron.

Increase in the awards entry fee to \$20 for 2008

This will provide for further coverage of operational costs and additional funds to increase prize money and/or judging honoraria.

Assuming that entry levels will continue to be over 200 per year, these increases will allow the awards program to become self-financing and provide sufficient funds to support future growth.

Awards Program Revisions

The CFWF Secretariat annually receives suggestions from members on how to ‘improve’ the awards program. While these suggestions have varying degrees of merit, it is always a challenge to maintain a balance between making improvements and adding to entry requirements (more forms to fill out) and the ensuing administrative burden (processing all that paper.)

The CFWF executive recently reviewed the accumulated suggestions and has decided to put forward a number of them for input from the membership. These are not the final changes that will be incorporated into the awards program and criteria, but are general areas that could be improved and the executive committee would like to receive reaction and comments before proceeding to final text and implementation for 2006.

Judging

There have been a number of suggestions to help judges better understand what type of content they are judging (‘who is the reader’), which is more difficult now that blind judging has been instituted. One specific suggestion to help judges understand the material they are reading is to add to the entry form the requirement to complete a 20-40 word statement or ‘explanation’ so that the judge has a better idea of audience, intent, etc.; this is done in some other writing competitions.

Should a statement of audience/editorial mandate be included as part of each entry form?

Evaluations

Several comments have been passed along that the evaluation criteria “objectivity/balance” is redundant in a number of the categories, as is “originality” in the reporting categories.

Should the evaluation criteria used by judges be amended to better suit individual categories (i.e. non-standardized criteria for different categories)?

“My story doesn’t fit . . . “

Despite the fact that the number of categories has been expanded, we still receive comments that the material of a prospective entrant doesn’t fit in any specific category. This is particularly true of material published electronically, of which there is an increasing amount.

Should the criteria be amended to allow electronically produced materials (i.e. web newsletters)?

Definition

The definition of “agriculture” for the competition was recently changed to include “food and fibre”; a subsequent suggestion was submitted to add “bio-products” to the definition as well (i.e. food, fibre and bio-products).

Should the definition be amended to include bio-products?

International Federation of Agricultural Journalists

Prepared by Owen Roberts

New global resource base being developed

A new initiative designed to enhance the resource base for agriculture communicators and journalists around the globe is being developed by the IFAJ and the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center (ACDC) at the University of Illinois. IFAJ and ACDC officials are starting to lay the groundwork for a project that would see the center become an internationally focused resource for agricultural communicators, journalists, researchers, teachers and students. Mainly, this would involve expanding the center's already significant 28,000-document collection to include more material from other countries, and enhance the access to global information.

The project began as a discussion between CFWF member and IFAJ vice-president of professional development and education, Owen Roberts, and ACDC founder Jim Evans, professor emeritus at the University of Illinois and one of the pioneers of agricultural journalism in the US. All IFAJ members can take part in this initiative by drawing decision-guiding information from it...and likewise, contributing material to it. The center's existing and ever-growing collection of current information and literature can be vital for agricultural journalists engaged in research, looking for stories, seeking trends, etc. It already has documents on agriculture-related communications in more than 100 countries. But founder Evans says most of the collection is North American based. He wants to expand its reach to make itself more relevant to international agricultural journalists and communicators, and make more material from abroad available to those in North America. For more about the center, check <http://web.aces.uiuc.edu/agcomdb/news.html>.

Professional development and education needs being assessed

IFAJ is quantitatively assessing its members' professional development and education needs through a comprehensive survey that will soon be posted on the IFAJ website. . The results, along with the results of the survey conducted by membership chair Hans Siemes of The Netherlands, will help IFAJ determine where to put its resources, which is becoming an increasingly pertinent question. Sponsors have come forward asking for programs and initiatives they can help IFAJ deliver. Some of the ideas that have been raised so far include formalizing the fledgling IFAJ exchange program by having IFAJ sponsor visiting journalists to other countries (i.e. paying for flights and accommodations); holding an agricultural economics summit for journalists and addressing agricultural economic issues that are important globally; holding professional improvement seminars (better writing, better photography) in new member countries, especially; and presenting an IFAJ writing/photography/electronic communication "boot camp" for young journalists nominated by their country's IFAJ executive.

Increased professional development and education presence in IFAJ News and website (www.ifaj.org)

IFAJ News editor Liz Kellaway (LizK@porternovellisa.com.au) has set aside at least one page per issue for professional development tips and discussion. Members are welcome to contribute to this by offering anything they have encountered that they think would be helpful to other agricultural journalists and professional communicators. Forward the information to either Liz or Owen Roberts (owen@uoguelph.ca) with a contact name and coordinates for the information source, and we'll look after clearance issues. IFAJ has also opened up the website for greater professional development activity by creating a dedicated professional development page. It can be access from the home page menu, via a button that says professional development.

IFAJ Congress could come to Canada

CFWF is inching closer to bringing the world's agriculture journalists to Canada in 2011. CFWF has been told that the International Federation of Agriculture Journalists Congress in 2011 is open and it would be happy to come to Canada. The IFAJ moves its Congress around the world each year and 2011 is open. In 2004, at the Eastern Canadian Farm Writers Association annual meeting there was interest expressed in Canada hosting an IFAJ Congress. Then ECFWA president John Greig brought that interested to CFWF's annual meeting in Windsor last fall, where members there also said they were eager to host the world's agriculture journalists. CFWF's executive then sent the idea back to ECFWA where a small committee was formed to investigate and bring more information back to this year's CFWF annual meeting. After discussion by email, it was suggested that somewhere near Toronto would be a good place to host the congress, with its access to a major international airport and major attractions, both agriculture and non-agriculture. Guelph, central to much of eastern Canada's agriculture, and as eastern Canada's base for agriculture research was chosen as a likely location for the conference. Owen Roberts, IFAJ vice-president, and Janet Kanters, CFWF vice-president, met in late July with IFAJ president David Markey from Ireland and senior vice-president Mike Wilson, of the U.S. at the Ag Media Summit in Milwaukee. A letter of intent from CFWF to host a congress was received at the Swiss congress, and now the congress host country chair, James Campbell of Ireland, is working towards slotting Canada into the most appropriate year in the schedule (it won't be before 2011). The major influencing factor in his decision is that IFAJ has yet to nail down a locale for 2010, and with the 2009 congress in the US, IFAJ doesn't want to have back-to-back congresses that are too far outside Europe (where most participants originate) and jeopardize attendance. We can say with confidence that our proposal has been favourably received by the IFAJ executive, and we will likely know by the New Year which year we'll be offered.

The next step is for a motion of support from the CFWF annual meeting coming up in Lloydminster, where Owen Roberts and Janet Kanters will talk about their meeting with IFAJ officials.

Regional Reports

British Columbia Farm Writers' Association

Prepared by David Schmidt, President

It was another quiet year for perhaps the smallest farm writers organization in the country.

We have about 15 members, about half of whom show up at one or both of the two meetings we hold each year. The first is held in conjunction with the Pacific Agriculture Show in February while the second is held in the summer or fall and moves from venue to venue depending on what happens to be going on at the time.

Our first meeting of the year was another chance to meet with our popular agriculture minister of the time, John van Dongen, and learn more about the role of local agricultural advisory councils from BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries agrologist Chris Zabek.

The second meeting introduced us to our new agriculture minister - now called the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Pat Bell, and learn more about farmers' markets from Abbotsford Farm & Country Market manager Larry Bailey. Bell brought along former minister van Dongen and new parliamentary secretary of agricultural planning Val Roddick. The fact we are able to attract the politicians suggests that despite our small size, the BCFWA is well regarded in the province.

One reason could be that everyone is familiar with who we are. Our small membership has fluctuated very little in the past decade, and our executive has also remained constant. The only change has been in the secretary's position, which has traditionally been filled by the BC public relations officer of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Whoever happens to hold that position at the time "inherits" the secretary's position of the BCFWA. Otherwise, there has been no change in the executive in at least a decade.

Despite our small size, we are not silent on the national scene. Currently about 15 percent of our members are on the CFWF executive (BCFWA president David Schmidt is our national director and BCFWA vice-president Fran Kay-Bach is our current CFWF newsletter editor). Small IS beautiful!

Alberta Farm Writers' Association
Prepared by Clare Stanfield, AFWA Director

The AFWA continues to enjoy very healthy membership numbers – we currently have 84 signed, sealed and delivered farm communicators on our books.

Our usual annual tour was postponed this year. That's because many of our members, along with members from the Saskatchewan Farm Writers' Association, turned their attentions to the CFWF annual meeting and tour in Lloydminster.

Regular AFWA tour duties will resume in 2006 under the guiding hand of president Tamara Stecyk, Editor of the Edson Leader. Our hope is to make up for our missed business meeting in 2005 (usually held during the tour) and schedule a couple of face-to-face meetings with members in the coming year.

AFWA secretary-treasurer Janet Kanters continues to keep us all up-to-date, preparing and distributing four issues of *Scoops*, the association's newsletter. She does an excellent job tending to the needs and membership of the AFWA...we'd be lost without her!

Saskatchewan Farm Writers' Association
Prepared by Lorne McClinton, President

It was another business as usual year for the Saskatchewan Farm Writers Association. We met several times during the year beginning with our annual general meeting in Regina last November. At the meeting Lorne McClinton was elected President, Bonnie Warnyca vice president and Michael Raine secretary/treasurer.

During the Canadian Western Farm Progress Show about 16 members got together for dinner as well. For much of the year our group's energy has been focused on preparations for the CFWF Annual conference, Sept. 23-24th, that we are co-hosting with the Alberta Farm Writers. Our membership has risen slightly to 33 members.

Eastern Canadian Farm Writers' Association
Prepared by Lilian Schaer, President

ECFWA has completed another active year, pulling off a national CFWF conference, two well attended professional development seminars, an annual meeting and a bus tour.

ECFWA hosted the CFWF conference in Windsor last fall. We were blessed with excellent attendance, generous sponsors, and an organizing committee that worked tirelessly to ensure everything went off without a hitch. The great weather helped us showcase our “sunny south” to our colleagues from across the country.

As has become an ECFWA tradition, two professional development workshops were held during the winter months. Canadian Press and Community Newspapers Reciprocal Insurance Exchange media lawyer Stuart Robertson was the key note speaker for a seminar on media law dealing with privacy issues, defamation, slander and other things that have the potential to land writers in hot water. Mark Ellwood, president of Toronto-based Pace Productivity Inc., helped us come to terms with managing the glut of information, and provided practical tips for getting more done and making better use of our time.

The ECFWA annual meeting sparked some fierce debate and heated responses as Toronto author Gina Mallet shared her sometimes controversial views on cooking, food and farming in the modern era at the day long event held in Ingersoll. The afternoon session featured a panel with the title “Whose Land is it anyway?” with speakers Randy Hillier, founder of the Lanark Landowners' Association, Stew Hilts, a land use planning professor, and Rick Smith, an activist from Environmental Defense Canada.

Farming on the Urban Fringe was the theme of the ECFWA bus tour to York, Halton & Peel regions this summer. The two day tour focused on farmers and agri-businesses who are operating in the shadows of the Greater Toronto Area, and how that provides both challenges and opportunities. Stops included the Toronto Food Terminal, the University of Guelph Muck Crops research station, and a fruit and vegetable operation.