

AMO AIC REPORT 2003

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AIC Board Member**

I was elected to the board of the Agricultural Institute of Canada (AIC) in January 2003, representing the Associate Member Organisations (AMO), which are primarily the Scientific Societies (SS). Being a little out of touch with what was happening in AIC, I did not realise the hornets nest I was getting into.

Essentially, the AIC was ultimately facing financial disaster because a member organisation had elected to withdraw from the institute, which might have meant the end of AIC.

My initial objective upon becoming a board member was to try and get a feel for what the SS-s wanted, and how I might best represent them. This turned out to be a challenge because the opinions varied from one extreme to the other. In some instances, individual society members felt that membership in AIC should be compulsory. In many instances they saw no merit of membership in AIC as an individual or as a society. So I ended up getting no consensus of opinion and going with my own gut feeling developed from over 25 years of involvement in AIC, OIA and CSAS. I came to the personal opinion that membership should be direct and voluntary. This is because many other options have been tried, apparently unsuccessfully, with previous and existing organisational structures, but not that option.

The AIC board held an emergency meeting in Winnipeg in late January, 2003, to see if there was support for a national organisation, and, if there was, what this organisation should accomplish. There was support for a national organisation, and the role established was not that different from the role established within previous organisational structures. There was, however, some differences in roles identified for a national organisation between Provincial Institutes and SS-s.

The board was charged with fleshing out three alternative organisational structure models. These were shared with all member organisations and feedback sought. At the May 2003 board meeting in Simcoe, Ontario, a task force chaired by Sandy Todd was formed. This task force led to a concept document released in May 2003. It has examined the three alternative organisational options, and proposes a transition from the existing member organisation model to a ATwo Tower@model to a ADirect Member@model over a 4-year period. This concept document will be discussed with member organisations from now until September, 2003, and, if accepted, an implementation plan will be initiated in 2004. Membership status would remain much as it is now under the ATwo Tower@model for 2004 and 2005, and the transition to ADirect Member@ would occur in 2006.

I would ask for your support of this plan. I support it because it ultimately gives members freedom of choice. It may mean fewer members initially, but those members will be positive and lead the organisation forward to bigger and better things.