

Canadian Farm Writers' Federation



2005 Annual Report

Presented to the CFWF 2006 Annual Meeting
Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, MB
Saturday, September 23rd, 2006



Canadian Farm Writers' Federation

Annual Meeting

**8:30 am
Saturday, September 23rd, 2006
Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, MB**

Agenda

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Adoption of the agenda**
- 3. Adoption of the minutes of the 2005 annual meeting**
- 4. Business arising from the minutes
- Constitution**
- 5. President's Report**
- 6. Secretary-Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement**
- 7. Conference Reports
- 2006
- 2007**
- 8. Awards Program Report**
- 9. IFAJ Report
- IFAJ Congress in 2011**
- 10. Regional Reports**
- 11. Senate Report**
- 12. Executive Elections**
- 13. New Business**
- 14. Adjournment**

Canadian Farm Writers' Federation

Minutes of the Annual Meeting

Saturday, September 16th, 2005
Best Western Wayside Inn & Suites, Lloydminster, Alberta

1. **Welcome:**
Allison Finnamore called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.
2. **Adoption of the Agenda:**
Reg Norby moved adoption of the agenda. Seconded by Lorne McClinton.
Carried
3. **Adoption of the minutes of the 2004 annual meeting:**
Owen Roberts moved the minutes of the 2004 annual meeting be adopted as circulated. Seconded by David Schmidt.
Carried
4. **Business arising from the minutes:**
None
5. **President's Report:**
Allison Finnamore presented the many discussions and changes that CFWF was involved in over the past year. An Administrative Coordinator, Jeannie Bryson, was hired to administer the awards program and support the Secretariat. There were a number of requests for partnerships with CFWF at the beginning of 2005, which the executive struggled with and eventually dealt with on an ad hoc basis. There was an increase in the frequency of the Farm Journalist, as Fran Bach produced one on a monthly basis. Allison thanked Fran for a job well done and note that she will be leaving her position this year and is seeking a replacement. There was also work done on the constitution and awards program to better suit the organization and member's needs. Allison noted that she would like to see members take on volunteer jobs within the CFWF and find out what an amazing organization it has become. Allison thanked Henry Heald for his work on the 50th Anniversary history book. She also thanked John Greig, Hugh Maynard and Janet Kanters for their efforts this year.
6. **Secretary-Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement:**
Allison Finnamore presented the summary of items from the secretariat, in Hugh Maynard's absence. A part-time administrative assistance was engaged, in December 2004, to handle the awards program and secretariat workload. The membership continues to rebound from 2002 low, in 2004 renewals were 305. Recommendations were made regarding the financing on the awards program. The conference schedule adopted at last years meeting was introduced. The constitution was reviewed for the first time since 1978.

Wendy Holm moved adoption of the 2004 CFWF financial statement, seconded by Lisa McLean.

Carried

Allison briefly reviewed the 2005 financial statement for information purposes.

7. 2005 Conference Report:

Conference treasurer, Tracy Feist gave the report for this year's conference. She reported \$35,000 in sponsorship for the conference. With an expected surplus of \$11,000 she thanked the great job that the fundraising team did. She also thanked conference co-chairs Karen Briere and Janet Kanters, and the organizing committee for their hard work.

8. Awards Program Report:

The new administrative coordinator for the awards program, Jeannie Bryson, gave the report for the 2005 awards program. This year there was a record 245 submissions. Jeannie thanked Jane Robinson for the hard work she has done over the years with the program and her support with the transfer this year. The growth and diversification of the program has shed light on the need for some reform to guarantee the sustainability of the program. There were a number of suggestions, by members and the secretariat, calling for changes to the awards program which will be noted in new business.

9. Senate Report:

Tabled to the evening banquet. To be presented by John Morriss.

10. Regional Reports:

Written reports contained in the handout. Correction to Saskatchewan report, Angela Hall is the secretary and Michael Raine is the treasurer.

11. IFAJ Report:

Wil Verboven gave a report on his trip to IFAJ in Switzerland. He and Owen Roberts were the only Canadians. Owen, IFAJ vice-president of professional development and education, discussed the international resource centre to be based at the University of Illinois. He discussed how they are looking to expand professional development, IFAJ is offering more on-line. There will be a needs assessment survey available in November, check it out. They are also looking at a way to fund journalists and communicatinos professionals to do exchanges. IFAJ boot camp for young journalists being discussed

IFAJ could be coming to Canada 2011. The last time Canada hosted the conference was 1967. ECFWA expressed interest in hosting the event and president John Greig coordinated a committee to discuss and plan, they have decided to pick a location close to Niagara Falls/Toronto area. In July Owen Roberts and Janet Kanters met with IFAJ President, David Markey and senior

vice-president, Mike Wilson, at the Ag Summit in Milwaukee. The proposal was favourably received and IFAJ is working towards slotting Canada in sometime around 2011. The executive should have an answer by early 2006.

David Schmidt moved that the CFWF support the proposal to host IFAJ in the next available year. Bern Tobin seconded

Carried

12. Executive Elections:

Owen Roberts chaired elections process.

BCFWA – Janet Kanters nominated David Schmidt, seconded by Wendy Holm.

AFWA – Reg Norby nominated Tracey Feist, seconded by Jodi Hesse.

SFWA – Rod Parker nominated Lorne McClinton, seconded by Wendy Holm.

MFWBA – Trish Jordan nominated John Morriss seconded by Janet Kanters.

ECFWA – Karen Lewis nominated John Greig, seconded by Lillian Schaer.

Karen Briere nominated Allison Finnamore, seconded by Sally Stewart.

Members at Large –

Davis Schmidt nominated Janet Kanters for the eastern representative, Helen McMenamin seconded.

John Greig nominated Hugh Maynard as western representative, seconded by David Townsend.

FJ – Dave Schmidt nominated Connie D as newsletter editor, seconded by Allison Finnamore

Carried

13. New Business:

Awards Program

Jeannie Bryson noted that with the success of the awards program over the past decade has come an annual deficit of \$2000. This deficit has been covered in the past by the surplus of conference funsraising. This year there was also the hiring of part-time help to administer the program. If the current activity levels continue, CFWF will have depleted its stock by 2008. There were suggestions by the secretariat to increase the fee for entries to \$15 for 2006 and then to \$20 for 2008, noting that the fee hasn't been changed since the late 1970s. There was also a suggestion to increase the sponsorship fees by \$200, to a total of \$800 for 2006. Assuming the entry levels continue to rise then these increases will support future growth of the program. Detailed suggestions may be found in the annual report, however the following questions were asked to the members: Should a statement of audience/editorial mandate be included as part of each entry form? Should the evaluation criteria used by judges be amended to better suit individual categories (i.e. non-standardized criteria for different categories)?

Should the criteria be amended to allow electronically produced materials (i.e. web newsletters)? Should the definition be amended to include bio-products?

There were no objections to the suggestion of raising the sponsorship fee. There were no objections to including bio-products to the definition.

Wendy Johnson suggested that there be a tick-list for the target audience instead of a statement on the entry form.

Wendy Johnson stated that web publications should have their own category. She suggested maybe approaching Telus or Rogers for sponsorship. Bernard Tobin stated that the program should not get too broad, and the web newsletters could be included in the existing category.

Reg Norby moved that the entry fees for the awards program be increased to \$20 for 2006. Seconded by David Townsend.

Carried.

Constitution

Davis Schmidt carefully examined the constitution recently and made some suggestions for amendments which will be discussed with the executive in the coming months. There are some practices which CFWF has been doing for years that are illegal by constitutional rule. He gave suggestions to correct these technicalities. He also suggested changes to the proportional representation and regional representation. There is a required 80 day notice to the membership for changes to the constitution to be passed at the AGM. In March 2006 the changes will be circulated to the membership. The changes will be voted on at next year's AGM.

14. Adjournment:

Jodi Currie moved adjournment at 9:32 am.

Annual Reports

President's Report

By Janet Kanters, CFWF President

On the whole, CFWF business has been relatively quiet this past year, with the organization running like a well-oiled machine. This is due mainly to our highly organized Secretary/Treasurer, Hugh Maynard, and our efficient Coordinator, Jeannie Bryson.

But your CFWF executive hasn't been idle: this year, we focused on reviewing and rewriting the organization's Constitution. After an initial draft by David Schmidt, and subsequent re-writes by CFWF executive and input from CFWF membership, we're happy to present the finished product here today. Hugh will talk more about that later during the meeting.

This year, the CFWF – with the generosity of Monsanto – ushered in the new CFWF International Bursary. Open to any member of the federation, the goal of the Bursary is to encourage international exposure for Canadian agriculture writers and broadcasters by supplying them with financial means to attend the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ) Annual Congress. Bursary applicants must complete an application form and write a 200-word essay, which is then evaluated by a three-judge panel of two CFWF former presidents and one member at large.

In this initial year, three applications were received and evaluated, and I'm happy to say I was the lucky recipient of the Bursary. As a result, I attended the IFAJ Congress in Norway from Aug 12-16 (I'll have a short presentation during the annual meeting). Thanks to the judges, and to Bursary sponsor Monsanto.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the CFWF executive for their input and ideas this past year, via conference calls and e-mails. All of your executive are volunteers, and thus must find time out of their busy schedules to attend to CFWF matters when the need arises.

I'd also like to thank the organizing committee of CFWF 2006 for putting on a great program this year. They, too, work hard – on their own time – to ensure delegates to this conference get the most out of it as they can.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Prepared by Hugh Maynard

Administration

The 2006 year was (thankfully) less eventful than the previous one for the CFWF Secretariat as the past administrative back-log was masterfully reduced in scope by the CFWF's administrative coordinator, Jeannie Bryson. The arrangement with Qu'anglo Communications to provide part-time administrative assistance was renewed and, combined with the increase in financial resources to operate the awards program, has allowed the Secretariat to be better positioned to support the Executive rather than just chasing pieces of paper.

Membership

Membership numbers appear to have maintained themselves at around 300, although it is a little difficult to be certain as there are still 3 associations that have not yet . . . paid up. They should be sure to read the revised constitution and the consequences that await them in the case of continued default.

Finances

After investing last year in administrative re-organization and the 50th anniversary through a planned deficit, the Federation's finances are back on track due to the increase in fees and sponsorships for the awards program. It must be noted, however, that the small anticipated deficit is largely the result of the generosity of the Farm Journalist editor who has declined to take any honorarium. Once the results of the increase in award's revenues has been monitored, there will likely have to be an increase in membership fees in order to maintain a break-even budget and reasonable level of program activity; the last membership fee increase was decades ago.

Conference Planning

As per the conference schedule adopted in 2004, there will have to be a change to accommodate the IFAJ congress in 2011 (otherwise ECFWA will be hosting 3 conferences in four years.) The Executive is currently analysing options for change to the rotation which will be presented at next year's annual meeting. The current rotation is:

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

Constitution

The CFWF Executive's revisions to the constitution, the first since 1978, were wildly popular with the membership, eliciting comments from three individuals during the consultation phase prior to submission for approval at the annual meeting.

CFWF Financial Statement - 2005

		2004	2005 Budget	2005 Final
<u>INCOME</u>				
Awards	Fees	\$ 2,500	\$2,000	\$ 2,695
	Sponsors	\$ 8,200	\$8,800	\$ 8,800
Conference	Registrations	\$ 250	\$ 0	\$ 0
	Sponsors	\$14,445	\$ 0	\$ 0
	Other	\$ 4,381	\$3,000	\$ 3,817
Memberships		\$ 5,230	\$5,500	\$ 6,760
Interest		\$ 7	\$ 5	\$ 3
Other		\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
TOTAL INCOME		\$35,013	\$19,305	\$22,075
 <u>EXPENSES</u>				
Administration	Sec.-Tres.	\$ 592	\$ 5,500	\$ 366
	Admin-Coordinate	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,590
	Conf. calls	\$ 543	\$ 500	\$ 532
	Other	\$ 324	\$ 600	\$ 2,651
Awards	Administration	\$ 2,139	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,949
	Certificates	\$ 589	\$ 1,000	\$ 775
	Judging	\$ 1,575	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,525
	Prizes	\$ 8,400	\$ 8,400	\$ 7,900
	Refunds	\$ 30	\$ 0	\$ 150
Conference	Expenses	\$ 14,695	\$ 0	\$ 254
	Refunds	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Farm Journalist	Honourarium	\$ 0	\$ 1,000	\$ 0
	Newsletter	\$ 0	\$ 500	\$ 386
	Travel	\$ 0	\$ 1,000	\$ 0
Membership		\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
IFAJ	Fees	\$ 5,058	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,505
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$33,945	\$25,500	\$26,583
TOTAL INCOME/EXPENSE		\$ 1,068	\$ (6,195)	\$ (4,508)
 Surplus/Deficit		 \$15,060	 \$ 16,128	 \$ 16,128
Retained earnings		\$16,128	\$ 9,933	\$ 11,620

Awards Program Report

Prepared by Jeannie Bryson

The 2006 CFWF Awards Program was a relatively tranquil affair compared with the previous year, which was, as they say, a transition year – and things ran pretty smoothly overall. Now into my second year co-ordinating the event it was much easier to anticipate and head off – well, diminish – problems. The program brought in 239 entries, which is slightly down from last year's 245 entries, but still on par with the last few years. The Press Feature category remained the largest category having 51 submissions and Radio News Reporting remained the smallest category with 4 entries. It seems the increase in the entry fee (to \$20) had no effect on the program.

The sponsorship amount per category was increased to \$800 which was graciously accepted by 13 of our 14 sponsors, and Monsanto continued as Founding Patron, which was greatly appreciated. We are currently looking for a sponsor for the Feature Photograph category, as well as appropriate names to honour the photography categories.

This year most of the judges were new at the task of judging for CFWF, so we invited them to attend conference calls to get everyone on the same page. 26 judges devoted their time in August and they did an excellent job. One of this year's guest speakers, Nancy McGuire, even judged the Press Feature category from Grenada. Thank you once again to Jane Robinson for occasional advice and production of the awards brochure.

A few small changes were made in the rules and regulations department: evaluation criteria for the judges were adapted to each category instead of having one set of criteria for all categories (i.e. objectivity was removed from the website category); electronic formats for publications were accepted in some categories; and bio-products was added to the definition of agriculture.

The results have been tabulated, the frames have been stuffed, the envelopes are sealed, and the brochure awaits . . . See you at the banquet!

International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ)

By Janet Kanters

As reported earlier this year, Canada's bid to host the IFAJ Annual Congress in 2011 was accepted by IFAJ executive. In Norway, I spoke with IFAJ executive and world delegates about our tentative plans for IFAJ 2011, which is to be hosted in southwestern Ontario, in the Guelph/Niagara Falls area, with its dairy, hog, beef, cash crop, fruit, vegetable and vineyards. In addition, we would in all likelihood arrange alternative tour locations to other parts of Canada for delegates, which they could take before or after the Congress itself.

For those who would like to attend future IFAJ Congresses, I encourage you all to apply for the Bursary next year. Details will be forthcoming before the end of this year. Future Congresses are Japan 2007, Austria & Solvenia 2008, United States 2009 and Belgium 2010. The IFAJ Congress in the US (Texas) in 2009 provides an excellent opportunity for CFWF members to get an up close and personal look at how the annual IFAJ Congress is run, and a great chance to meet ag journalists from around the world. Don't forget, your membership with CFWF gives you automatic membership in the IFAJ. More information about the IFAJ and its Congresses can be found at www.ifaj.org.

Now that I've got you interested and excited about hosting the world's ag journalists in 2011, I'd like to take this opportunity to solicit your help in making it all come together. If you are interested in helping out in any way, please let myself or John Greig (ECFWA) know.

The IFAJ itself has undergone a number of new initiatives to enhance member benefits:

- IFAJ executive committee retooled itself into five key committees: membership, professional improvement, finance and sponsorships, communications, and host country liaison.
- Annual January Berlin meeting format now includes more interview opportunities for working journalists.
- Formed a relationship with the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center (ACDC), an online global research facility that focuses on ag communications documents. This member service helps journalists retrieve published documents from around the world.
- Expanded sponsorship agreements.
- Established a travel scholarship that recognizes the leadership potential of young members from countries belonging to the IFAJ.
- Produced a DVD to commemorate the IFAJ's 50th year anniversary in 2006.
- Updated the IFAJ website (www.ifaj.org).
- Developed a new brochure in four languages.
- Revamped the newsletter.

If you have any questions about the IFAJ, please talk to myself or Owen Roberts.

Regional Reports

Alberta Farm Writers' Association *Prepared by Tracey Feist, AFWA Director*

The Alberta Farm Writers' Association ended the year on a high note, after co-organizing the 2005 Canadian Farm Writer's Federation annual conference with its neighbouring provincial counterpart, the SFWA. The event was held September 15-17th in Lloydminster and was truly a great success, with over 125 CFWF members enjoying the warm prairie sunshine, and cooler autumn nights.

An impromptu group of 10 hardy members gathered in Edmonton for AFWA's first meeting of the year, during FarmTech 2006 held in January. It was at this meeting where an Alberta farm radio broadcaster, Kendall Olsen, was coerced into the AFWA presidential duties for 2006, which consists primarily of organizing our annual tour. Kendall is currently the farm news director for CFCW Radio in Edmonton, taking over from Caitlynn Reesor. Caitlynn took over the reins at Alberta Agriculture's Call of the Land for the recently retired and CFWF senator Jack Howell.

On that note, Jack took his official retirement on May 31, 2006, after 36 years of dedicated service to the Alberta government. Jack is a regular at AFWA functions, and has been a quiet, steady promoter for our group. I know from personal experience that he influenced my membership and participation in the AFWA over the past 17 years. CFWF should be proud to have such a dedicated member in its ranks—he his most worthy of his CFWF senator designation.

The AFWA annual tour was held on two rainy spring days, June 8-9th in the Ardrossan and Edmonton area. Over 30 farm writers toured local agri-businesses, from Superior Mushrooms to Kulhmann's Market Gardens. Other stops included the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Centre, Alberta Agriculture's Crop Development Centre and the University of Alberta farm.



Thanks to Cynthia Strawson-Fawcett, Communications and Media Relations Director for the U of A's Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics Faculty, we got a sneak peek and tour of the new \$25 million Agri-Food Discovery Place before it's official opening on June 23, 2006.

Looking forward to 2007, Dawn Ius – communications manager for the Alberta Livestock Industry Development Fund – has graciously come forward as our new president. She, along with Lee Hart, Lisa Guenther and Janet Kanters, will pull together

our 2007 annual tour, set for the Medicine Hat/Cypress Hills area in the southeast area of the province.

And of course Janet continues to be a solid foundation for the AFWA. As well as serving as CFWF president for the past year, she continues as secretary-treasurer of the AFWA, as well as our newsletter editor and publisher. Our association currently boasts 87 members.

Manitoba Farm Writers & Broadcasters' Association *Prepared by Lenore Smaldon*

This year has been extremely busy for the Manitoba Farm Writers & Broadcasters Association (MFWBA), due to the dedicated effort needed to organize this year's national event in Winnipeg. On behalf of all of us here in the "keystone province," welcome to Manitoba!

Membership sits at 63 individual members and 2 lifetime memberships. It continues to be a challenge to recruit new farm writers & broadcasters, but the executive will be focusing on this important task for the 2007 membership year.

The MFWBA recently launched its web site at www.mfwba.ca, and we are finding this to be an excellent resource for the organization & our members. We also send out a newsletter, the MFWBA Wire, to help keep members informed of our activities.

We have held four great events for our members this year:

- MFWBA Annual Meeting. This was held in early February at the Lux Solé Restaurant in Winnipeg's Osborne Village. The restaurant is owned by the Warwaruk brothers, whose roots firmly extend from a Manitoba farm. Lux Solé puts an emphasis on locally-sourced food that is always delicious! Larry MacIntosh, CEO of Peak of the Market (www.peakmarket.com) spoke about the company's recent foray into the soup market. Peak of the Market is Manitoba's major vegetable supplier, and is owned by its growers. At the meeting, Val Ominski (Manitoba Agriculture, Food & Rural Initiatives) was named MFWBA President, and new executive members Helena Marak (Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council) and Bonnie Baltessen (Manitoba Co-operator) were welcomed. Other executive members that continued in their roles are Crystal Jorgenson (University of Manitoba, Faculty of Agricultural & Food Sciences), Ed White (Western Producer), and Lenore Smaldon (Keystone Agricultural Producers).

- Exporting Manitoba to the World. In March, we heard from two agricultural entrepreneurs on the thrills, chills and spills of trying to export their products into the international marketplace. Erosion Control Blanket is a rurally-based company that sells a biodegradable blanket made of straw and hemp fibre to protect construction sites from erosion until grass root systems develop. Much of this product is exported to the United States. Prairie Lane Saskatoons encountered a number of unexpected marketing and understanding challenges when beginning to export to the European Union.

- **Planning an Unforgettable Meeting.** How do you get away with taking a chance on moving a big conference to an unusual and expensive place, dumping all the usual agenda items, putting on a bunch of way-off-the-wall events, and still manage to turn it into a big success? The Canola Council of Canada shared their experiences on this in May. The CCC's meeting was held in New York City and featured a cooking demonstration with a famous chef, an evening reception high above Times Square, and a wrapup dance set against the Manhattan skyline. And it all worked! Winnipeg's leading meeting organizer, Dallas Ballance, gave her thoughts on the growing trend of having meetings and conventions with non-traditional subjects and oddball locations, and offered some advice about how to do it right. In keeping with the non-traditional feel, this event was hosted in an English-style pub in the heart of Winnipeg's Exchange District.

- **"So Long, Summer!" Family BBQ.** The MFWBA said farewell to summer at the end of August with a BBQ at Kelburn Farms, which is located just south of Winnipeg. The 500 acre farm is run by James Richardson International (JRI), and is the company's research and demonstration site. At Kelburn, JRI puts the newest technologies to the test to identify the best production methods for the many crops grown in Western Canada. Using a practical approach and field scale equipment, the results can then be more easily interpreted and implemented by farmers.

Eastern Canadian Farm Writers' Association

Prepared by Lilian Schaer, President

Bus Tour

Farming on the Urban Fringe was the theme of the 2005 summer ECFWA bus tour to York, Halton and Peel regions. The two-day tour focused on farmers and agri-businesses 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. Thanks to organizers Alicia Roberts and Hilary Edmondson for a well-planned event, and to the following tour sponsors: the Agricultural Adaptation Council, Bayer Crop Science, CropLife, FS Growmark, Pioneer Hi-Bred and Syngenta Crop Protection.

Survey Says...

ECFWA events have always been well attended, leading us to assume that we are providing interesting and relevant programming. But last fall we wanted to hear feedback and input directly from the membership, so we launched an online survey last fall asking everyone for their input on the benefits of membership in the Eastern Canadian Farm Writers Association. The response was excellent, with broad ranging thoughts and ideas expressed. Overall, members were pleased with the benefits they receive from their membership. Key findings included:

- Location of events – most are centered around the Guelph area that members in other parts of Eastern Canada aren't able to participate in

- **Timing** – events are traditionally held January – April, which is a busy time that doesn't allow members to participate as they would like
- **Resources** – resources from presentations or seminars should be available for those who can't attend
- **Support for new members** – what can you expect when you become a member and how can you become more involved?

Professional Development Seminars

The seminars are one area where feedback from the survey has been very useful, and where we have begun to make changes. Our 2005-06 seminars were spread out between February and June, instead of being crammed into the three short winter months, and experimenting with different formats, locations and ways to reach more members with the information has begun.

The first seminar, held in March, featured well known photographers Jeff Carroll and Terry Scott White sharing the tricks of their trade with approximately 40 participants in Guelph. Members who attended the seminar had the opportunity to sign up for the chance to participate in a photo shoot with Terry or Jeff later on in the year for some hands on practice. An article summarizing the most relevant hints and tips was published in *The Nib* for those who couldn't attend.

The second seminar was held in Ottawa on June 14 and featured science writer Jacob Berkowitz. Jacob discussed the art of writing about scientific topics for the mainstream media. This seminar was unique in that it was held before a live audience in Ottawa and video-conferenced to Guelph, where an audience of farm writers gathered in the new media centre. It was also available as a webinar, and several members logged in from remote sites. It was an interesting experiment, and although there were some snags, we are looking to trying the technology again in upcoming seminars.

Mentoring & Welcome Package

A welcome package was developed and is distributed to new members, including the benefits of membership, a membership list and how to become involved in the organization. We have also launched a mentoring program where we match up existing members with ones who are new to farm writing and/or the farm writers' organization.

Looking to the year ahead

The survey also identified the website as a key to communicating more effectively with members and as a way to help add value. This will be something that we will be working on in the year ahead.

ECFWA will be hosting the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation annual conference in 2007 in Belleville, east of Toronto. An organizing committee has been struck and work has begun on putting together an exciting event for next fall.

Reports from British Columbia and Saskatchewan were inadvertently mailed by steamship post (well, if Saskatchewan can have a navy, it must have some steamships – somewhere) and so did not arrive in time; they will be presented verbally at the annual meeting.