

# Margaret Munro

Personal growth and leadership development are the rewards of being a member of Women's Institutes in Ontario today and these two areas will be the key focus of newly elected FWIO President Margaret Munro in the next three years.

Although during her first year as president, Margaret will be concentrating on the smooth implementation of the updated constitution, she feels leadership, personal growth and keeping an open mind play an important role in WI. "I would like to see WI members have a chance to become better informed on current issues and, possibly through workshops, help communities to become better informed," said Margaret.

Margaret thinks WI members should take an interest in other organizations. "If we are aware of what they are doing, and learn about their aims and purposes, then we will become more outward looking and will be able to interact," said Margaret. She wonders if the lack of inter-action in the past is one of the reasons that Women's Institutes aren't given as much recognition as they should be.

Districts and areas will be encouraged to sponsor more local seminars and workshops to present current events, similar to the atomic waste disposal workshop and the free trade seminar, while the topics are still current. And workshops will still be held at the provincial level.

In three years time, Margaret expects Women's Institutes to be more autonomous and she feels that's a good step. From observing other organizations, who are already more autonomous, she is sure the move away from dependency on the Ministry of Agriculture and Food will not hurt Women's Institutes. "I think we still want to be connected, but more autonomy will give us a stronger voice on issues," Margaret explained. "It may take us a while, but we do have a good, enthusiastic and knowledgeable group of board directors to help move things along," she added.

The declining membership of Women's Institutes is certainly a con-



*Here is Margaret performing one of her first duties as FWIO President. She is thanking the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food at a luncheon hosted by the ministry at the FWIO Annual Board meeting in Toronto in November. (Photo by Ken Barton/OMAF)*

cern of the new president, but she said, it seems to be a concern of all organizations at the moment. Margaret referred to a quote of a past FWIO President, Florence Diamond, who said there are three reasons why there are fewer WI members. They are; too many other commitments, family, and working full-time. Margaret feels WI has done well to hold its own in terms of membership and suggests quality of members is just as important as quantity.

There are two reasons why Margaret wanted to become president of the 25,000 member organization. "Institute provided me with many opportunities for personal growth, such as working at the Central Canada Exhibition, interacting with other provincial units (of WI) as well as organizations such as the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Now I want to put back into the organization," Margaret said. In the past, she has observed a renewed interest in the

Women's Institute in the area where the provincial president lived. Margaret wanted to bring about that renewed interest in her area.

Margaret lives in Carp on a dairy and cash crop farm. She is married and has two sons and one daughter. She has been a member of WI for 29 years and has held many executive offices. As well as being involved in Women's Institute, Margaret was elected and served on the board of the Queensway/Carleton Hospital in Nepean for nine years and represented the hospital on the Continuing Care Board of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional District Health Council. Sunday school, the local fair board and Beta Sigma Phi Sorority have also been Margaret's interests.

"As an organization, we have strength and purpose with lots of talented, dedicated people to put these attributes to good use in our communities, for home and country," Margaret believes.