

1996 Annual FWIO Board Directors' Meeting

The November, 1996, annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO), held at the Four Points Hotel in Kitchener, provided a combination of new ideas, challenges, plus normal agenda items for all participants. This was the first time that all FWIO committee chairs and representatives to other organizations were invited to address the Board at the same time. Next year's plans are to hold an annual meeting open to all members.

Recommendations were made over the summer to return to a three-year Board term. As a result, five Directors returned for their third year. Seventeen began their second year on Board, and nine attended their first provincial meeting.

The meeting began with a workshop "Roles and Responsibilities of Board Directors." Cathie Lowry and Jim Brown, co-founders of STRIVE, facilitated the workshop. Their company specializes in leadership development, strategic and business planning and Board Director development. They pointed out how important communication is for everyone to work together. They noted that "ineffective organizations may have lots of activity, but they are not getting anywhere."

The main point to consider is that a Board of Directors needs to deal with the "big picture," not the details. A Board of Directors of any organization has four main functions - corporate ends, board operations, board/staff relations and staff operations. This means that the Board sets goals and policies for the organization and develops a strategic plan. The Board plans and promotes strategies which broaden the vision of the organization.

Board Directors are responsible to the members of the organization and need to be well-prepared for effective meetings. They also need to communicate with members.

In the category of Board/staff relations, the Board develops job descriptions for all groups, as well as reporting requirements. The Board of Directors monitors progress towards the organization's goals.

"Staff operations" means that the Board sets parameters or limits for committees and representatives. The Board then delegates authority to these committees so that they may achieve their goals without breaking the limits. The challenge for the Board is to carry out its responsibilities only, and entrust the details to committees.

During business sessions, Board Directors scrutinized the costs, the makeup and the necessity of all elected committees. Some committees were considered redundant; others were combined; still others were formed. Education and health issues will now be under the umbrella of the Program Committee. The Agriculture Committee will report on Ontario Federation of Agriculture activities, as well as other agricultural groups, such as AGCare and Environmental Farm Plans.

Two new committees were formed. The Tartan Committee will organize the production, sale and distribution of the new FWIO Tartan. The Constitution Committee will be examining any changes that need to be made in the *FWIO Handbook*. This is to be done every four years.

Several guests were welcomed to the Annual meeting. Jane Armstrong, FWIO lawyer, and Linda Bailey, FWIO accountant, attended to address members' concerns about restructuring and constitutional issues, as well as the organization's financial status.

Mary Kneebone, Curator of the Erland Lee (Museum) Home, was introduced to Board Directors. She brought an interesting display from the museum and visited with members while they purchased supplies and gift items from members of the Lee committee.



The Third Year Board Directors, from left to right, in the back row are Aleta Campbell, Peggy Roger and Mary Nicklas. Seated in the front row, from left to right, are Ann McDougall, Phyllis Laughton and Joe Ann Lane.

Photo courtesy of Donna Russett, Past President.



The First Year Board Directors, from left to right, in the back row are Billie Power, Rosemary Moran, Margaret Wilton, Shirley Gleadall and Margaret Crawford. Seated in the front row, from left to right, are Vera Miner, Betty Veitch, Willa Johnston and Shirley Woodburn.

Photo courtesy of Donna Russett, Past President.

A special guest was Linda Ambrose, author of *For Home and Country: The Centennial History of the Women's Institutes in Ontario*. Linda called the writing of the history of the Women's Institutes "the little project that grew." She explained the three main purposes for writing the history book:

- to entertain - by producing a beautiful book of stories;
- to educate - everyone who reads the history will learn at least one thing s/he did not know about Women's Institutes; and,