

# Horticultural Producers from across Canada meet in Calgary

Report by Bruce Hill

March 2 to 7 horticulturalists from across Canada met in Calgary at the Canadian Horticulture Council's annual AGM. March in Calgary was a lot less wintery than Ottawa's huge blizzard last year. Saskatchewan sent four delegates this year. Two of them, President Mel Annand and Director Bruce Hill were sponsored by the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association and were accompanied by Imogene and Charlene respectively. Forrest Scharf, Provincial Fruit Specialist, and Connie Achtymichuk, Provincial Vegetable Specialist, also attended.

Bruce spent Tuesday at a special session of the Science and Technology committee that examined and discussed the federal government's Growing Forward program. There was considerable debate how the regions of the country could be assisted by this program. Horticulture is but one of many facets of agriculture that this program could encompass. In discussions with Prairie region representatives I feel the region needs to advance horticultural research in cold tolerate crops. The rest of the week was packed full of committee meetings and presentations.

Tuesday evening provincial caucus meetings were held with attendees from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta meeting to confer on the upcoming resolutions and their potential impact on the prairies. They included such things as:

- COOL (Country of Origin Labeling) and other "Product of Canada"-type labeling issues,
- Infrastructure Grants,
- Pesticide pricing and minor use registration,
- the On-farm Food Safety Program (now called CanadaGap) and its recognition internationally and by large retailers,
- potato and onion issues,
- government institution purchasing policies,
- safety nets (AgrilInvest),
- harvesting reports and surveys,
- promotional campaign co-funding,
- CHC membership fees,
- foreign workers.

These resolutions were referred to various committees to be amended or forwarded to the Friday committee of the whole.

Wednesday opened with the Board of Directors meeting and election of CHC officers. Steve Levasseur from Quebec is the new president. Bruce Hill was appointed as the prairie representative to CHC's Executive and Finance Committee. The afternoon plenary focused on information from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in relation to the Canadian Horticulture Industry.

Thursday opened with committee meetings. It is during the committee meetings that the resolutions are reviewed in depth for Friday's committee of the whole. The following were convened:

- Trade and Industry Standards
- Finance and Marketing
- Crop, Plant Protection and Environment
- Research and Technology

Friday morning saw more committees:

- Vegetable
- Human Resources
- Potato
- Apple & Fruit
- Greenhouse
- Food Safety

Friday afternoon was set for the committee of the whole in which all resolutions from the committees and new resolutions were approved, amended, or defeated. 33 resolutions were addressed; 3 were withdrawn, 1 was tabled back to the executive, 13 amended and approved, and the balance approved. Guest speakers included Dr. Frank Atkins, Andrew Coyne, and Sid Marty. Quebec City had a presentation at Friday's luncheon inviting everyone to the CHC AGM in Quebec City.

Dr. Frank Atkins is an Assoc Professor of Economics at the University of Calgary. He supervised the PM Stephen Harper's Masters of Economics thesis. He spoke on the monetary policies and current economic situation. A point from his address was that many times government interventions come too late to have an impact of current situations. If the intervention is too great it could have serious future inflationary and interest rate implications. Government stimulus's often are not felt for 18 months. Dr. Atkins pointed out, supported by data, that this recession is not as severe as many in the past decades in spite of its vast media coverage.

Andrew Coyne is the national editor of Maclean's magazine. He spoke of the current economic and political situation. "We need massive government intervention"...for them to do nothing.

Sid Marty presented relief with "Humour on the Rocks" in an address he gave on natural history and western life from his experiences as a Park Warden in Banff and Jasper. Sid's reminisces and his current life in southwestern Alberta is captured in his many books. His real life face to face encounters with bears lightened the seriousness of the convention. In his words there was some hesitation from a person with a broken leg being rescued by a rescuer hanging upside down by a rope under a helicopter.

The 87<sup>th</sup> CHC annual convention concluded with a formal banquet on Friday night. Bruce invites any questions on the CHC, its convention, or its resolutions and be contacted at [b.hill@sasktel.net](mailto:b.hill@sasktel.net) CHC's web site is [www.hortcouncil.ca](http://www.hortcouncil.ca)

*[Bruce Hill is currently the President of Canadian Cherry Producers Inc, a Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association Director, an Executive and Finance Committee member for the Canadian Horticulture Council and sits on the Local Bounty, Sask InDemand, Organics Connections organizing committees. Bruce and Charlene grow raspberries and cherries at Imperial, SK.]*