

**Jim Richardson, Technical Director's Report to the Annual Meeting
Syracuse, New York, USA, October 19, 2010
POPLAR COUNCIL OF CANADA/CONSEIL DU PEUPLIER DU CANADA**

This is the 14th annual report to the Poplar Council membership from the Technical Director, a position created by the Executive Committee in April 1997. The general objectives of the Technical Director are to supply technical services and advice to the Council, to promote awareness and support for the Council and to increase membership. More specifically, the responsibilities of the technical director include maintaining and updating the Council's website; responding to technical enquiries using E-mail, phone, fax and mail; providing an international dimension to the Council through participation in the International Poplar Commission; contributing to the PCC Newsletter and supporting technical aspects of the organization of the PCC Annual meeting; and providing services to members and the Board of Directors of a technical rather than purely administrative nature. The specific responsibilities continue to change somewhat, reflecting the changing ways in which the Council operates and new directions and initiatives of the Council.

Recognizing the limited budget of the Council, the services of the technical director are provided for a minimal level of compensation. I work out of my home office in Ottawa, devoting on average about five days a month to Poplar Council business. However, the actual time commitment varies greatly depending on the tasks at hand.

Website

Management and maintenance of the Poplar Council website (www.poplar.ca) is perhaps the most significant on-going responsibility of the technical director. The 'What's New' pages and the 'Events' page are reviewed and updated regularly, as well as 'Links'. Information about individual and corporate members is updated once a year. The site is an important source for the electronic newsletter, which is normally uploaded to the site soon after each new issue is sent to members by the Executive Secretary by E-mail. The website is a key resource for information about the annual meeting. A significant addition to the website this year was the Canadian national report to the November 2008 Session of the International Poplar Commission, which is a very comprehensive resource of up-to-date information on the status of poplars and willows and related industry in Canada. Site usage in the past year has been running at about 35,000 hits and 2200 visits per month, with peaks of 37,000 hits and 2740 visits in May and March respectively. After visitors to the site from Canada and the US, visitors from the Netherlands, Spain and France have been most frequent. The average visit lasts about 1 minute. Almost 95% of our visitors are referred by Google.

The Strategic Planning workshop in Edmonton in May had a group that focused on communications and education, including the website, following a presentation I prepared to introduce the topics. The consensus from the workshop is that the website would benefit from refreshing and upgrading the design, perhaps including social networking features like Facebook, more use of online forms, and more photos. Subscribing to an online payment facility like PayPal was considered but felt to be not yet cost-effective for the volume of business PCC does. No final decisions have been made yet, but a professional web design company would need to be engaged to undertake and implement the redesign. With input from others, I am working towards finalizing a web redesign plan.

Technical Enquiries

The technical director responds to technical enquiries, most of which are received as a result of contact through the website to the Secretariat and are dealt with by E-mail. After a period of decline in the number of such enquiries, the past year has seen something of an increase. When I am unable to provide the information requested myself, I involve other Council members who are experts in the particular field of interest of the enquirer, or who are closer to the geographic location of the enquirer. Cees van Oosten has been particularly helpful in that regard. Whenever possible, advantage is taken of the opportunity to promote Council membership in responding to enquiries from non-members.

International Dimension

Together with my colleague, J.G. Isebrands of Wisconsin, I continue to coordinate the preparation and publication of a completely revised and updated edition of the FAO-IPC book on poplars and willows. This book, which is being published by FAO initially in electronic format, is entitled 'Poplars and Willows in the World: Meeting the needs of society and the environment'. An international team of 'lead chapter authors', supported by many individual contributing authors, including several Canadians, is preparing the content. Chapters are uploaded to the FAO/IPC website (www.fao.org/forestry/ipc/en/) as they are completed and 4 are available there now, with 2 more close to completion. Another 3 of a total of 12 chapters are expected to be completed in 2011.

The 5th International Poplar Symposium (IPS), organized by IUFRO Working Party 2.08.04 on Poplars and Willows, was held in Orvieto, Italy September 20-25, with technical sessions and field tours. A total of 15 Canadians (including 4 spouses) took part. Five members of the PCC Executive Committee and another two Board members participated. Eleven presentations, oral and poster, were given by Canadians. The Executive Committee of the International Poplar Commission, a Subsidiary Body of FAO, met in Orvieto September 19, with both John Doornbos and I in attendance. Rounding out the poplar and willow activities in Italy, the IPC Working Party on Environmental Applications of Poplar and Willow had a 2-day session immediately preceding the Orvieto events. A full report of September's events in Italy will be prepared for the PCC Newsletter.

Newsletters and Other Publications

The technical director makes regular contributions to the Council's newsletter, including reports from meetings and other events. The newsletter was revived last winter with an issue that included an article I contributed featuring the 2009 Annual Meeting in Saskatchewan.

Annual Meeting

I participated actively on the Organizing and Program Committees for the Short Rotation Woody Crops Operations Working Group conference held October 17-21 in Syracuse, NY. I also helped organize the Canadian segment of the post-conference field tour in eastern Ontario. Seven of the conference technical presentations were given by Canadians. The PCC is one of the conference partners, and is holding its annual meeting in conjunction with the event. I also participated actively in the 2009 PCC annual meeting in Saskatchewan.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Barb Thomas and the Executive Committee for their continued support and confidence throughout the year. Barb is only the second PCC Chair with whom I have worked and it is a pleasure to work under her leadership of the Executive. I also appreciate very much the efficiency and hard work of Deb Brenton, the Council's Executive Assistant who keeps me busy with forwarded technical enquiries.

Jim Richardson
5 October 2010