

## WINDS OF CHANGE OPENING ADDRESS

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It has been my pleasure to have worked in this fascinating business for some twelve years. From 1983 to 1991, I was Director of the Place Riel Campus Centre at the University of Saskatchewan, and since the end of 1991 I have been General Manager of the University of Alberta Students' Union. I was President of the GMs' professional association (AMICCUS-C) for four years, and I have been Chair of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Campus Business Consortium since its creation last November. Much of my life and much of my heart is wrapped up in this business.

I often reflect on those twelve wonderful years, and I am struck - or, more accurately, stricken - by two scary ironies. Firstly, after I had worked for a few weeks with my first students' union president at U of S, I would not have given a proverbial plugged nickel for my chances of lasting twelve months in this business, never mind twelve years; thankfully, that president was the only one with whom I have ever experienced such problems, and we were probably both at fault. Secondly, my son takes great delight in reminding me that he could be my boss at some point within the next three years; the thought obviously tickles him, but it scares the crap out of me.

Why, you might well ask, is a GM speaking at a student political event? Good question - very good question. I am here to offer you the dubious benefit of my hopefully apolitical advice as you face a huge and crucially important task. A long time ago, the Scottish poet, Robbie Burns (no relation to Michael, I'm sure) penned the immortal words "Oh would some power the gift to gie us - to see ourselves as others see us". Though far from a power, I am going to try to give you that gift tonight.

For much of my twelve years in this business, I have been propelled by the very firm belief that, as student-serving people and as student-focused organizations, we could and should - and can and will - be much better than we are - on the local level in our respective organizations, and at the national level as a collection of people and organizations with so very much in common.

On the local level, we are starting to understand how crucially relevant we are to the tasks of ensuring that our campuses and our students are caring, dynamic and safe, providing special places in which our students can feel comfortable and at-home, and promoting a campus family spirit under which we all work and care for each other and our school. We are not just a tangent of that process on our respective campuses, but the very core of it. So many of the services and facilities which we, the students' unions, provide are absolutely central to the creation of those very special feelings among the student body and the campus population as a whole, and absolutely central to the future well-being of our respective universities. That is quite a load to carry, and my feeling is that we are just starting to carry it effectively.

On the national level, we must understand how vitally important it is that we work together to make a very firm commitment to something that should be precious to all of us - our own professionalism and our own effectiveness as servers of student need. It is for that reason that I devoted a great deal of private time working to develop AMICCUS-C from a loose and highly-social meeting forum for the staff of some 10-12 schools into a professional association whose intense and very functional - though still sociable - annual conferences now attract 70+ staff from nearly fifty schools; only through the existence of an organization like that can we as GMs learn from each other, develop as professionals, and bring the benefits back to our respective campuses. It is also for that reason that I devoted another major chunk of time to the task of working to develop the concept of a student association business consortium which could deliver much-needed and major financial benefits to its members; only by successfully pursuing this goal can we acquire the financial and functional strength we will need if we are to face our future with confidence.

You will hear me say "WE" quite a lot, and I trust that you won't regard that as presumptuous. Please don't underestimate the GM role in these processes, even if all you want from us is warmth, encouragement, and occasional advice that can be ignored without offence being taken. We are committing our professional lives to student organizations, but we view our roles as being more "back room" than "front-of-house". Your successes and failures (both in and away from the office) are our successes and failures too; we share the joys of your accomplishments and we share the sadnesses of your failures. There are many easier places for us to work and there are more lucrative

occupations, but most of us work in these organizations because they have become special to us and because we believe in the skills and creativities and enthusiasm of you and people like you. Perhaps we draw some satisfaction from our involvement with your generation because we feel the guilt that our generation, and the ones that immediately preceded it, have left you such a lousy national financial legacy. But whatever it is, I know that many GMs have more faith in you than you sometimes appear to have in yourselves. And so I say this; keep pushing forward, have faith in your abilities and those of your peers, and don't be afraid to lean on your GM when you need to lean on someone.

But let me stress that when I speak of professionalism, I speak of something which applies just as much to you as student leaders as it does to us as your GMs.

In my time in this business, and this is one reason why I have wanted to stay this long, much of the vision, creativity, dynamism and pragmatism concerning student and campus life has come not so much from the universities, but from the student organizations. I have been proud and happy to have been involved in that process, but there is one area in which I cannot feel the same pride. It is an area which characterizes our greatest and perhaps most unforgivable weakness.

I took some time recently to analyse the enrolment data in the CFS Handbook. Leaving aside the Francophone schools in Quebec, including the CEGEPs, some 143 associations are listed, and they account for a stunning 1.4 million students - or about 1 in every 19 Canadians - split almost evenly between full-time and part-time. That is a staggering number, and it doesn't even include our Francophone friends; with them included, about 1 in every 15 Canadians are engaged in either full-time or part-time study at Canadian post-secondary institutions. Just think about that for a moment.

The sadness for me is this. There are lobby groups on Parliament Hill and at the Provincial Legislatures which cannot claim anything like those numbers, but those lobby groups are exerting far more influence, enjoying far closer contact with political decision-makers, occupying a much higher position on the public and political agendas, and making far greater progress than we are. We can only view it as very sobering and distressing that lobby groups less than one-tenth our size are making ten times our progress. Our harshest critics would not just view that as sobering and distressing, but perhaps even as a damning indictment - of you, and of me, and of everyone associated with the student movement in Canada.

I am going to suggest that there are seven very good reasons why you should settle for nothing less than leaving Edmonton with a new organization, and strategies for publicity and immediate expansion in place OR all but in place. I will then suggest what I feel has obstructed this goal in the past, and I will close by offering you some tips from an old GM - no, an elder GM - on how to set about your task. As always, a students union GM's advice is there to be heard and followed, in part or in total, or considered and passed over.

So let's begin with the seven reasons why I believe that you should seek to set a new organization in place now or very soon in the future:

1. We all live in both a Country and a Province. The politicians at both levels wield a big stick, and both sets are taking aim at the head of post secondary education in general and students in particular. We are facing the prospect of the most transcendental change in the history of Canadian post-secondary education - change which could transform us into something that we would barely recognize if we were able to glimpse its consequences now. The prospect of that kind of change makes it vital that, as one of the largest sectors of Canadian society, we are effectively represented by our leaders. The need for this leadership has never been greater.
2. Is this kind of leadership in evidence? Some will say that we already have a national student organization, but another review of the CFS book of facts suggests otherwise, and helps us to understand why we have such a low national political profile that it is - to most intents and purpose - almost invisible.
  - Of the 143 student associations listed, some 54 (or 38%) are CFS Members.
  - But when we talk about the actual number of students as opposed to the number of institutional members, the ratios are rather different. Of the 1.4 million students in non-Francophone Canada, only some 372,000 (or 26%) are at CFS Member-associations, leaving over 1

million (or 74%) on the outside of what is supposed to be our national political organization.

- The disparity results from what we all know to be a fact - that CFS is small-school dominated. The average number of students at a CFS member-association is under 7,000, while the average number of students at a non-CFS association is almost 12,000. This gap will broaden when Dal leaves CFS, and it may well broaden even further, very soon, when CFS membership is put to the test at some other large member-schools.

There are many interesting figures like these, but they really all add up to one question:

Can you imagine how constructively influential we could be if we "got our act together"?

3. Would the politicians be considering some of the things they have raised as possibilities if we "had our act together" - if they felt we were well-organized, rational, pragmatic and in possession of sound, well-reasoned arguments for alternative courses of action? I think not.

That sounds rather militant and leftist, but it is neither, and most of us would probably not be here if it was. This is not about "big P" politics, but about your ability as student leaders to work within the system to protect and enhance the interests of Canadian students in general, especially your students. You have the capability to do that on a massive scale, but you are not doing it.

4. Contrary to popular belief, rather than work in their own sometimes-blind political vacuum, most politicians and governing parties would rather work with representative groups that are well-organized, rational, pragmatic and in possession of sound, well-reasoned arguments for alternative courses of action. They want to do what is right and fair, and they don't want to do what is wrong or unfair. But, being politicians, one of their most influential decision-making stimuli is itself political; they cannot afford to alienate and anger you because you are the voters of the future - all 1.5 million of you, and they cannot afford to alienate and anger your parents, because they are the voters of today.

They most certainly do want to work with you if you have those qualities - a rational approach, a pragmatism that recognizes the realities with which they must deal, and a range of sound, well-reasoned arguments for refined or alternative courses of action. You have the capability of offering all of those qualities very quickly - I know that because I have seen and heard you doing it on many occasions. But if you are not well-organized, on a national scale and with a credible voice, those skills and attributes - at least federally - will count for nothing.

5. If you can create a credible national organization now, even one initially composed of a limited number of highly-regarded schools, you have a very good chance of helping to shape the future of Canadian post-secondary education, and minimizing the impact of the difficult times ahead. Without it you have precious little chance of doing so. At times like this, governments tend to set out a figure which portrays a worst-case scenario, and then they reduce and refine it based on the credible input they receive; groups represented by credible organizations benefit, groups represented by less-than-credible organizations tend not to benefit, and un-represented groups not only cannot benefit from the process but will probably suffer even more than they feared.

6. If we have nothing nationally, I would argue that we would have very much less provincially. For two main reasons, I believe that our endeavours at the Provincial level will only benefit from the existence of a strong organization at the national level.

Firstly, only an effective national organization can provide us with the kind of credible national publicity on Post-Secondary Education issues that will reach every Provincial legislature and every Provincial politician; it is that kind of priceless publicity which conveys the notion of true political power, and helps to shape policy at Provincial level. Provincial politicians maintain

federal awareness, and they are very much influenced by federal developments. This can work for you or against you, but ignore it at your peril.

Secondly, some things can only be done Provincially, but a national organization with its roots at the provincial level will help us to do these things better - by providing us with a vehicle through which we can share our experiences and build more-successful rationales.

7. Most people know that a large number of schools, especially larger schools, are what can loosely but somewhat simplistically be termed "anti-CFS". But the question is this: We know what those schools are AGAINST at the national level, but what are they FOR? If those schools are to retain and build upon their credibility among their peers, there is no better time than now for them to respond to that highly-valid question.

So there, to me, are seven very good reasons for brave, decisive, and highly-necessary action.

CCBC, the business consortium, is an attempt to work more closely together on the commercial level, and we have certainly seen and heard enough during CCBC's opening months of life to be confident that we can all do far, far better by working together than we each can by working alone.

There is no doubt that exactly the same situation applies in the political environment. So why haven't we managed to create something that can fulfill that role?

I am going to suggest to you that there are at least five reasons behind our inability to create a suitable national political organization; they are based on the assumption that CFS cannot or will not change sufficiently to represent an option for a number of schools. After I have suggested those five reasons, I would like to suggest how you could overcome them, and offer you some tactical suggestions for making your quest a success.

Please understand that my intent in offering these reasons for failing to create a national student organization is not to criticize you or your predecessors, because these are generic failings - failings that tend to apply whenever a group like ours attempts something this difficult. I offer these reasons because I believe that we must exhibit total self-honesty in our attempts to understand what has prevented us from achieving the goal in the past if we are to be successful in achieving it now.

- 1) We have allowed our differences to overpower our similarities. That is quite a stunning feat - akin to snatching defeat from the jaws of victory - because scarcely more than a moment of reflection will convince us all that, as student-serving organizations, we have far more in common than we ever have in conflict. The number one challenge facing us in the student movement in Canada is to build on our many similarities, and we can only do that by resisting the temptation to be deflected, deliberately or inadvertently, by our relatively few differences.
- 2) We have, in many ways, pursued perfection. That, of itself, is a laudable failing unless we simply don't have the time to pursue perfection. We don't have the time to pursue it, because that makes us totally vulnerable to one of our greatest organizational weaknesses - the one-year time frame. Each year, if we have not created something that will work by January or February, the chances are very strong that we will not do so by the end of the year's terms of office; if that is the case, it is almost certain in our business that next year's group will "start from scratch" and fall victim to the same problem. It is a debilitating vicious circle.
- 3) We have contaminated our agenda with provincial, local or even personal "hobby horses" - issues which are certainly important in and of themselves, but nevertheless issues which create stress in the group, swallow tons of discussion time, and deflect the group from the fundamental issues that must be resolved if a new organization is to come into existence.
- 4) Forgive me but, every so often, our egos have made it very difficult for us to concede points or leave lesser issues for later determination. This is quite understandable, because every person in this room is a leader; your special leadership qualities have been recognized by students at your schools, and you may well be unaccustomed to being challenged by people with leadership skills of a similar standard. That is a price of progress in life, and it's the same for you as it is for, say, a budding professional hockey player; when you

lift yourself above the pack and become a leader, you are soon required to perform in higher company and face stronger challenges to your thinking and your skill. The key in a process like this rests in your ability to intuitively know when your viewpoint is unreflective of the group and when an issue can be dropped because it is peripheral rather than fundamental, and your maturity and magnanimity in letting a point go every now and then in the interests of overall progress. I can offer this criticism with some precision because I have been guilty of failing to do all of these things.

5) I have left the toughest one until last.

We have always been caught on the horns of an agonizing dilemma. I have faced this dilemma twice - with the upgrading of AMICCUS-C and with the creation of CCBC, and I can testify how sharp those horns are. Very sharp.

Here is the dilemma. In this critical formative stage for a new national student organization, do we attempt to involve every school - all 150 of them - in designing the change, or do we opt for a more selective route? If we take the more selective route, what are the selection criteria? Where do we draw the line?

Let us ponder on the consequences of each of those course of action.

If we opt for the Inclusive approach, by attempting to involve everyone:

- We would not get everyone, but everyone would have had the chance to be involved and nobody could therefore claim to have been excluded by the arbitrary judgments (which they view as the arrogance and elitism) of others; those outside of this group would have what they were asking for - the opportunity to inject their input on a critical issue. Moreover, we may well hear some things that might help us to avoid mistakes and build an even better organization, and an organization that might (at least initially) be larger and more representative than one constructed solely by this group.

However, and there are four however:

- Although we would not get everyone, we would certainly get enough people to make the task of debating some of the core issues very, very difficult and time-consuming, and perhaps even impossible.
- In harsh but honest terms, for which I apologize in advance, we would not just get people who have something to offer to the debate, but also some who have little to offer to it. All must be heard if the commitment to the all-inclusive approach is to be sincere and, more to the point, seen to be sincere.
- We would not just get people who are favourably disposed to the concept of a new national student organization, but also those who are downright hostile and would probably convert this hostility into obstructionism. It would be pretty damn difficult to find a Chair capable of handling that political hornets' nest, especially as Mother Theresa is fully-booked for the next few years.
- We would create a formation group that would inevitably be skewed towards smaller schools, and which, as a result, may wish to perpetuate some of the very organizational characteristics that most of the larger schools find wholly unacceptable in CFS.

If we opt for the Selective approach:

- We would progress more rapidly, because the selective approach would be aimed at bringing together organizations which tend to see things in similar ways. The resultant 'national' organization would directly reflect the wishes of that group, and consciously avoid the problems that they feel have undermined the effectiveness of CFS.

However, and there are two however:

- We would be attempting to create something in our own vacuum, and we would be running the risk of under-considering the views, needs and feelings of un-represented schools. We all know what can happen to corporations that do not properly define their market before starting to manufacture products to serve it.
- We would piss a lot of people off. Understandably, people do not like being excluded unless they are given plausible and acceptable reasons for their exclusion. If an acceptable rationale does not exist or has not been properly articulated to them, their exclusion may well be perpetuated - but this time by their choice, not yours. It might be years, perhaps many years, before that lost ground could be recovered, and we don't have those years.

There is not an easy answer to this question, and it may well not be an answer of "how to be right" so much as "how to be least wrong".

So there, from my perspective as a twelve-year General Manager, are five reasons why we have failed to create a new national student organization. Until we have addressed all of those issues, we will find it very difficult to turn our minds successfully to the task of creating such an organization. But how do we address them? Let's move on to some tips for accomplishing the goal.

1. Start off with a fundamental attitudinal principle. I ask you to remember some words that have become precious and poignant to me because they formed the motto of a volunteer organization for which my dear Mother worked. As she and her friends faced their voluntary duties, which embraced some of the saddest cases you could ever see, they were propelled and fortified by the organization's motto - "It's not why we can't, but how we can". That sentiment is highly relevant to your task, and I would urge you to remember it.
2. Identify the core needs, nature and principles of an effective and properly-focused national student organization - not the peripheral elements, which can be addressed later, but the core elements. This concept is well-encased in the well-known saying "Don't worry about the colour of the swamp water when you are up to your butts in crocodiles". The crocodiles are the Critical Success Factors - the issues which MUST be resolved correctly if the resultant organization is to be a success; the jaws and teeth of the crocodiles are composed, at least in part, of the problems which have prevented CFS from achieving the status of an effective national organization, and the things which could stop you doing so now. The vital importance of getting this right is well-encased in another well-known saying - "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it".

Based on our CCBC experience, I would suggest that there are several key elements, but I will not presume to tell you what they are. I will suggest, however, that one of the most important is whether to formally create the organization this week, and entrench all of its principles and documentation, or to write all the documentation and leave it for final discussion and formalization at a subsequent meeting attended by more (though perhaps not all) schools. More about his later.

3. When you have identified the core needs, nature and principles, start at the bottom of the mountain and work your way up. The mountaineering analogy is useful, especially as you have already reached some lofty heights with the work that has been carried out in the months and years leading up to this meeting. But despite that work, some issues may still be unresolved, or may need further consideration, clarification and resolution. Back to that mountain. As you progress with your discussions, hammer in a peg in the form of a commitment - a motion or a signed agreement; it's like saving your work on the computer. This will ensure that you never fall back farther than the last thing you agreed, and it will allow you to move onto other issues safe in the knowledge that you are not endangering those that you have already resolved.
4. Remember to avoid the problems that have delayed our progress towards a national organization. We talked about them earlier:
  - Do not allow your differences to overpower your similarities, because that will strip you of the best thing you have going.

- Do not pursue perfection, because that will create delays for which you just don't have time; perfection can come a little later. Show faith in your successors to build upon the foundation that you have created; knowing student leaders, they are going to do that anyway, regardless of how well you do your job in November of 1994.
  - Do not contaminate your agenda with "hobby horses" - issues which can deflect the group from the fundamental topics.
  - Do not allow your egos to make it difficult for you to concede points; be able to say "my idea is good, but - dammit - yours is better".
  - Work hard to recognize when your viewpoint is unreflective of the group, or when an issue can be dropped because it is peripheral rather than fundamental.
  - Show your maturity and magnanimity by conceding a point every now and then, or by leaving lesser issues for later determination, in the interests of overall progress. If you are reluctant to concede on an issue which is very important to you but not to the majority of the group, decide in your own mind whether it is so important that you are prepared to delay or even prevent the creation of a new national organization, or forego membership in one.
  - Do not be reluctant to lead on behalf of absent peers. If you are right, and if you consider their needs and natures as you build, most of them will be with you in the end - sooner or later.
5. Do not revisit resolved issues unless you have absolutely no alternative. Once you have hammered in the peg or saved your work or whatever analogy works for you, don't go back in an attempt to change it unless that is genuinely necessitated by subsequent developments and agreed-to by the majority.
  6. Do not try to determine everything in the big group, because your standard and extent of debate will likely mean that you will not have the time. Identify the key sub-areas, and let the big group discuss and set the key principles for each of those sub-areas; then delegate the detail, along with the principles, to various sub-groups. On the individual level, make sure that you are a member of the sub-group covering the area or areas that most concern you.
  7. When the sub-groups report back, respect their effort and do not challenge their output unless you have a real problem with it. If you are in a challenged sub-group, remember that the challenge isn't personal, so don't take it personally.
  8. Co-ordinate things at the close by entrusting to a specially-selected group the vitally important task of making your documentation read well and sound and look good without losing any of its fundamental intent; this documentation must be good enough to convince others to join, but there is nothing more unimpressive and unconvincing for potential-joiners than shoddy word-smithing and disjointed structure in key documentation.

By now, you have developed a solid concept which effectively covers all of the core areas, you have converted this into well-worded documentation including a draft Constitution, and (finally but perhaps most importantly) you have developed a strong, well-considered rationale for having designed things this way. All of these things you must do anyway - for your own satisfaction as much as anything else.

But now you have a choice - and a mighty big choice it is! It relates to that very thorny issue - inclusivity or selectivity?

For what they are worth, I will offer you my views. I might end up sitting on that magical thing - the GM's fence, but I would at least like to give you a perspective from the top of that fence:

- The first choice is to take this as the basis and simply create the new organization. Just like that. You will be the Founding Members and you will then set out to attract other schools into the organization. This is pretty much how things happened with CCBC.

Let's ponder on this one.

Certainly, many schools have not been represented at Winds of Change Conferences since their inception, and many were not represented (including some of the Winds of Change schools) at the recent Ottawa conference. However, even if we were to add together the Winds of Change schools and the Ottawa schools, we have still barely scratched the surface of all-inclusive representation. If that is a mistake, it has already been made, but many would argue that it is neither a mistake nor an irrevocability, but an approach which, at least so far, was right and has served its purpose.

It is very difficult to successfully negotiate stages like this in our evolution with twenty or so people around a table - all offering their own viewpoints and raising their own controversies. It is far more difficult, perhaps even impossible, to do it with somewhere between 100 and 200 people at that table.

Moreover, many people are quite content to pin their faith on a dedicated and committed working group, because they are "not that interested" or because they are preoccupied with other issues. A truth of life is that there are leaders and there are followers. We don't necessarily want it to be that way because it would be a great deal easier if everyone could see the same "big picture" at the same time and make the same commitment to the task of bringing it to life. But that's not how things work, even in a real democracy, and I would urge you to reflect on one thing:

*Even though idealistic instincts may tell you otherwise, you do not have to apologize for being a leader. The thing for which you should apologize is the failure to lead, if you have the ability, in a situation which cries out for leadership.*

There are some 54 non-Francophone associations in CFS, but that leaves 90 or more who are not in CFS and who may well be looking for the kind of leadership that you can provide and have been providing.

But what about those who are not content to pin their faith on a working group?

Some of them, granted, would like to be involved in the process because they genuinely want to offer something to it, and their kind of input is always welcome. But there always have been, and always will be, some who just sneer at those who try to make things better. They will lament their lack of involvement in the design, the implementation, the launch, the name, the choice of logo, and just about anything else to which they can lay their lips.

Leadership is all about taking a hit every so often - just as each of you has no doubt done occasionally back at your own campuses. When Columbus set sail to find a new world, he did not take with him everyone who would end up in that world; in fact, most of those people thought he was anything from a seriously misguided egomaniac to a total nutcase. As Canadians, our heritage is deeply characterized by the pioneering spirit - the belief that something better is up the road a ways if we have the courage and determination to go and find it. Sure, some will tell us that the world is flat, and that our lack of self-satisfaction and our quest for progress will cause us to sail over the edge and into the dark abyss. Others will say "Go and find it then - give us a whistle if it's better than what we have here". Leaders are not deflected by negative and often ignorant scepticism. They go out and they do what they feel needs to be done - and then they whistle!

With regard to those who don't want to respond to the sound of the whistle, because they're mad at the blower, it can be argued that one of our greatest organizational vulnerabilities - the one-year time frame and consequent lack of continuity - becomes our ally; any ill feelings carried by some current leaders in non-represented schools will probably dissipate next Spring, and disappear altogether the following year.

You cannot let the resentment or cynicism of others deflect you, and you cannot be reluctant, as a group, to lead on behalf of absent peers. A great deal has already been invested in this process - not just by you, although you have certainly given a tremendous amount - but also by some of your predecessors.

Against this kind of background, there are certainly many good reasons for this group to forge ahead and actually create the organization, but you can't be blind to the ways in which a continuation of the selective approach might affect the outlook of other schools - schools that you hope will join the organization you are endeavouring to create. I sense a mounting suspicion that some of those excluded

schools - possibly even most of them - would feel so aggrieved that they would opt not to join the new organization, no matter how well created it was. If that is the case, it may not be prudent for you to forge ahead until you have seriously considered other options, and I would suggest that there is at least one.

- The second choice is to take the documentation you have prepared, circulate it to all Canadian schools, and notify them of a Formal Initiation Meeting to which all those who are genuinely interested and supportive are invited.

Let's ponder on this one.

You are essentially saying to them:

*We've worked hard on this for a long time, and we feel we have the basis for a strong, new, national organization - one to which we would like to belong. However, we also want to hear what you think before we actually launch it.*

You are demonstrating your feeling that, while you have taken the highly creative and responsible leadership role thus far, the point may have arrived at which this thing has become too important for a sub-set group to handle.

At the meeting, you can be receptive to change, and you might even have developed some bargaining chips in the form of things you are prepared to concede or dilute. However, you should also know the changes to which you are not receptive - changes which would alter the fundamental basis of the organization in such a way that it became unacceptable to the schools which have so far done all the work. You can build on the fact that, while you need their involvement in order for the organization to be truly national and representative, they most certainly need your involvement as major and leading schools, and would not want to jeopardize it by pursuing things that are unacceptable to you.

At the end of the meeting, you could well have a larger block of Founding Schools (even though it might still exclude some CFS "hawks"), and you should be launching a larger and more representative national organization. However, the organization might have changed somewhat - and perhaps significantly - from the one you wanted to see.

While the first approach is quicker, easier and cheaper, it still leaves the vast majority of student leaders and student associations on the outside of the process, and that will inevitably create ill feelings and delay immediate (and possibly even long term) growth.

The second approach is slower, more difficult and more costly, and it does create certain dangers, including that of change at the second meeting causing a change in your fundamental concept, or even creating rifts between the founding schools; you could lose in just one meeting what it has taken months and even years of leadership effort to create. However, the second approach does "tread a line" between the inclusive and selective approaches in such a way that more schools might be prepared to join at the outset, so giving it more political power and more news worthiness. It asks of you not the ability to move aside, but the ability to shuffle closer together so that other can join you.

You have a major decision to make, and that decision will be based on how - and how well - you can resolve this apparent conflicts:

- Do you create the organization now - exactly as you want it - and hope other schools will join?

OR:

Are you prepared to risk challenge and change to your foundation - possibly even change that you might not like - for the chance that this approach will result in better feelings and broader initial membership?

It is at times like this that I am happy as hell just to be a GM!

You face a formidable task, but I know that you can do it.

If I say that there is no doubt in my mind that you not only can do it but will do it, some may accuse me of being a rampant optimist. Well, maybe I am, but I am not going to apologize for it. According to McLandburgh Wilson's poem "Optimist and Pessimist":

*Twixt optimist and pessimist  
The difference is droll:  
The optimist sees the doughnut  
The pessimist, the hole.*

A few very, very lucky people have a chance, perhaps once in a lifetime, to be in on the ground floor of history - to be part of a process that makes others stop and think and maybe change their approach to life. You have that chance.

The delegates at Winds of Change '94 have the capability of touching almost 250,000 student lives as soon as you return to your campuses, because that is the total number of students enrolled at the schools from which you come. If just the schools represented here by you, their leaders, were to form a new national organization, it would instantly - INSTANTLY - be over two-thirds the size of CFS. And it would be growing while CFS is contracting.

If you succeed this week in creating the basis for something that the Canadian student movement has needed for many years, the word of what you have done will soon be out, and it will quickly reach the additional 1 million or so students (and their leaders) who are not represented here. Pretty soon, this stone could be rolling, gathering believers and gathering members with each revolution.

But if you fail, the chances are that nobody will really know that you failed. After all, there has not been a truly effective student organization in Canada for many years, so why should anyone lament the absence of such an organization now? No - nobody will really know that you failed to put one together here in Edmonton in November of 1994. Nobody, that is, except you yourselves.

And the fact that you would know that you could have done it but didn't is perhaps the most powerful motivator you have. There is no feeling quite that tough to shake, especially when you leave a finite term office such as the one each of you holds. A great deal of progress was made last year, and some people invested a large amount of their emotion in the pursuit of this goal. Some of those people are here again now. That's not because Edmonton in November with the NHL shut down is a hell of a nice place to spend time. It's because they feel you're "that close" to a major, major success which will reverberate far beyond these walls and far beyond this Province for many year to come.

I do too. Good luck, my friends.