

1. Governing the profession of Agrology requires that Council members believe in the value of and the need for the profession. In your opinion what is the value of and need for the profession of Agrology?

I strongly believe that the profession of Agrology ensures that we have people who will act responsibly and transparently, with the training and experience to make competent decisions and/or recommendation based on current and appropriate science. We use science as the foundation for our decisions or recommendations – not whim or bias. This then increases public confidence in the value of those decisions or recommendations. The profession of agrology inspires confidence in the general public that those who practice agrology are certified, knowledgeable and competent to perform their duties as recognized by a governing body that evaluates them on these criteria. The profession of agrology also demands that we be held to a recognized standard of integrity, fairness and competence, which further assures the public that the work we do is of high value and not inherently biased in some hidden way. This then protects the agrologist while holding them to a high professional and ethical standard.

2. AIA Council recognizes that it is entrusted to act in the public interest. In doing so, Council considers not only the view of members but also the views of the public that AIA serves. Council as a whole must seek to understand and bring those views into their decisions at the Council table.
 - a. what do you see as the challenges of understanding the broad and diverse public perspective?

The public has a wide variety of experiences, differing expertise, values, biases and opinions. They may not have the detailed expertise and education of a Professional Agrologist. This does not mean that their perspective is wrong – just different. It is like looking at the same house from the front or the back – same house, different viewpoint. And an architect will see that house in an entirely different light than the average person would. The difference in our education and experience provides us with the opportunity to help the public understand things on a level that they may not have been exposed to before. The challenge we as professionals face is to look at things from *their* viewpoint, which is perhaps outside our technical viewpoint, and to look at the underlying values represented in that “public perspective”. There are always underlying values behind any viewpoint, and it is our challenge to pull those values/concerns out, not get lost in the rhetoric and verbiage and put forward the information that the public needs to make informed decisions.

- b. What do you see as the challenges of understanding the diverse views of the membership of AIA?

With the inclusion of “not specifically agricultural” professionals (eg: from the reclamation/environmental realm), we are challenged to broaden our views from a strictly agricultural perspective. This means we are challenged to learn more about subjects that we may know little about in order to fully understand the diverse viewpoints and why they are important to those who hold them. This can be uncomfortable, going back to the “student” again, or we can look at it as an excellent opportunity to broaden our horizons

by drawing on the great wealth of experience we are privileged to have in all our members. But this means we have to be willing to admit that we don't know everything about everything, and be willing to say "teach me".

- c. What are your thoughts and/or experiences with regard to understanding public perceptions?

My work as a rangeland agrologist deals directly with understanding public perceptions, as much of my work centres around working with the public and having them understand what I do and why I do that work in a certain way. What I have found is that often, perceptions are based on incomplete information. As I provide full and complete information and reasoning to explain the why, I often find that perception shifting and becoming less oppositional. As an agrologist, I have to be willing to understand where the person is coming from and be sensitive to that, while still explaining things in a manner that makes sense to the individual and fully conveys the details they may be lacking. As knowledge and understanding increase, disparity in viewpoints often eases, and relationships built on trust begin to emerge.

3. Council's job is to govern. As such it has chosen to use a system of governance that clearly delegates achievement of outcomes (Ends) to the CEO and authorizes him, within pre-stated limitation, to choose the means of achievement. This frees Council to be proactive rather than reactive; primarily focused on the future, rather than the past or present; and emphasizing strategic leadership, rather than administrative detail.

- a. What has been your experience in determining what future based outcomes should be for an organization?

In my work with the Alberta Government, I have had an opportunity to put ideas forward when asked how our Department should move forward in the next few years. I have also been invited to provide input to the Deputy Minister regarding strategies to address recruitment and retention of Northern employees.

Prior to coming to Alberta, I was Vice President of the Kamloops Chapter of the BCIA during a time when our membership was shifting from older, experienced agrologists to younger, newer agrologists or varying disciplines. I was involved in putting forward ideas locally and provincially to address how to actively engage with our shifting membership, and address issues such as types of professional development we felt we should offer. These experiences required an ability to focus on the bigger picture and a willingness to think "outside the box".

- b. what strengths would you bring to that process?

I am a forthright, outgoing person who is capable of focusing on the larger picture. I believe that when you involve several people in brainstorming for ideas or solutions, you end up with a far better product than what one person can envision on their own. I bring

a willingness to incorporate others in discussion, and build on their ideas so that the end result is much greater than the sum of its parts.

4. As noted above, Council's governance system does not prescribe means to the Ends. Consequently, assuring that AIA achieves what it should and avoids what is unacceptable, is neither about Council approving programs and activities nor about checking to see that such activities are done. Instead, Council applies a high level of rigour in monitoring the achievement of Ends and ensuring that the CEO has complied with Council stated limitations. Monitoring in this system compares the Council's written policies with the CEO's compliance.

- a. Have you had any comparable experience?

I have related experience working with this model, as I was involved in a working group tasked with providing direction to increase staff morale and satisfaction within the Department. Our group put forward some specific 'ends' that would suit to improve staff morale and satisfaction. We then tasked Executive with the mandate to implement actions from their level on how to best achieve the 'ends' derived from these sessions.

I have seen this type of model working within government, but more often I'm on the doing side rather than the ideas side which provides me with the opportunity to see the implications of overall decisions. This gives me the experience from the "other side", so I understand where the Council and the CEO positions are and the challenges faced by both parties. I have found that excellent communication skills and clear expectations are critical to successful outcomes.

- b. What would you bring to the process?

I bring flexibility, an open mind, an understanding of both roles, and a strong belief in facilitating solid, open communication.

5. Council speaks with one voice. Translated this means that Council makes decisions as a whole. In practice, this means that Council members are expected to deliberate openly and candidly, seeking to understand diverse viewpoints. Yet when a decision is made by majority rule, all Council members respect the decision when speaking externally.

- a. What has been your experience in deliberating in a diverse group?

I have worked on a large land use plan that saw a wide variety of interests represented, with diverse and varying levels of expertise. Each person had their viewpoint and position, and I have learned that listening to all points and trying to understand the underlying values represented has always helped me to find some common ground, no matter how different we may appear on the surface. It is also important to put forward the points that I have been tasked to represent, and to do so in such a way as to increase the group's understanding of the position I represent so that we are heard and understood. We have endorsed a common plan and we each represent that decision and present a united front when facing the public with this plan.

In my day to day work I make land use decisions jointly with other non-agrologist professionals, and I am challenged to see things from their viewpoint while still strongly representing my own. This ensures we arrive at well balanced, appropriate land use

decisions. It does not mean we agree during the entire process, but at the end, it is our decision, and we each support it, no matter what it took to get there.

- b. If others were to describe how you operate in groups, what would they say?

I am described by my peers as outgoing, forthright and not afraid to put forward ideas or opinions, while still being willing to accept new ones. I am not afraid to take on a leadership role but I also work to engage those who aren't comfortable speaking up, to get their ideas heard. I am also thought of as a team-player who strongly believes in understanding underlying values, and in building relationships. I am known to actively participate, appreciate open discussion while trying to avoid entrenched positions, and have an ability to defuse tension with humour.