

Notes on a review of the 2007 Scholars' International Conference

The following notes record delegates' comments and recommendations at the closing debrief of the 2007 Scholars' International Conference at the Greenwood Inn, Calgary on Friday 2nd March 2007.

- Whilst there were a number of recommendations that could be adopted to improve the conference in future years, delegates agreed that the event had been really successful and that any comments should be taken in a positive manner.
- Scholars were grateful they had been able to meet; they felt the greatest value had come from the networking opportunity rather than the visits themselves.
- There was general agreement that a professionally facilitated bonding exercise at the beginning would have assisted in getting to know each other.
- Delegates felt their programme had been totally focused on an agricultural view of the world. It would have been interesting to learn what other groups such as government, the oil industry and retailers think of us; the programme should have given us a wider view of agriculture.
- The strict timekeeping was essential and had been appreciated.
- Group size:
 - Two buses would be preferable, if only one was used the group should be subdivided to create smaller groups (following the UK tour of Calgary Farmers' Market on Saturday a sub-group size of 12-15 was suggested by delegates)
 - Groups should change daily, allowing all delegates to meet and mix
 - Some felt they should have been allowed to choose tours, an equal number felt it was more important to see things outside their comfort zone.
- More scene setting would have been desirable:
 - Local information was greatly appreciated; it depends on good, well-informed bus drivers and tour leaders.
 - A map would have been helpful
 - Summaries of the background to hosts, speakers & visits
 - More financial data to support presentations
 - Opportunity to see retail environment (supermarket visit)
 - Meet 'ordinary' farmers
 - The programme didn't permit delegates to look at the business aspects of many visits.
 - Avoid duplication of visits
 - Hosts needed better briefs on who they were meeting/addressing and the objectives of the group.
- Organisation:
 - Break up days more, possibly with speakers in the morning and an afternoon tour (or vice versa)
 - More time off in the day
 - "Less but more"
 - UK Scholars should have their Nuffield business cards available for sharing with hosts and fellow Scholars.

- Avoid duplicating visits.
- Important to be challenged, the visit to a Hutterite community had been a highlight.