

CHRISTOPHER MARK
The President's Desk



As we complete yet another busy athletic field management season, another busy time—the Christmas season—will soon be here. I hope everyone had a successful fall and will enjoy everything the festive season brings to us with family and friends.

Thoughts of Christmas also turn to thoughts of the upcoming Ontario Turfgrass Symposium from January 4-6 at the Regal Constellation Hotel in Toronto. Please remember the Industry Sector and Association Discount box on the registration form where you check the STA as your affiliated association. It is critically important for us to receive funding from the OTS. At this year's event, come out and attend the Municipal Challenge and root for your favourite team. It's organized in a Jeopardy-style game format and is sure to be a lot of fun! Please plan to attend our Annual General Meeting on January 4 at 7:00 p.m. If you would like to join us for dinner, see the details enclosed with the newsletter or call Lee at the STA office.

As I prepared to write this President's Message, it was done with mixed emotions since it is my last dialogue to you, the members. I cannot begin to express how fulfilling it has been to work with such fine Boards of Directors over the years and how committed everyone has been to the Association and our mission of better, safer sports

turf. I have received unbelievable support from so many people and I would be remiss without mentioning individuals like Bob Sheard and Mike Bladon who have been wonderful friends, colleagues, and supporters during my terms as President.

When I think back to the early days when we all marveled at achieving 50 members and had our office in Bob Sheard's basement, I don't think anyone in their wildest dreams ever anticipated we would now be over 200 members, have an Executive Manager to run the Association, an office at the Guelph Turfgrass Institute, a fabulous newsletter which is the best in the industry, sold hundreds and hundreds of educational tapes and books, as well as being a full participant at the OTS. Times have certainly changed.

The Boards of Directors over the years have done some tremendous work and it has been a team effort. The incoming President and new Board will face continuing challenges in the future—primarily the financial position of the Association. Over the last few years, we have operated very close to budget, with no real surplus to invest in future initiatives. A combination of declining revenue from the OTS, maintaining status quo in membership rates though the mid to late 90s due to an economic downturn, and higher costs for the Association, have translated into the present difficult financial position. Unfortunately, it may mean higher rates for members since membership dues and the

OTS are our prime sources of revenue. Bob Sheard is finalizing a new book which we know will be an outstanding educational text and will also provide a much needed revenue injection for the Association. We are hopeful a Trillium grant will offset the initial binding and publishing costs of the book.

Another challenge for the Association will be continuing to attract a dedicated team of Directors who have the time to contribute. Everyone is so busy in their daily work and with family responsibilities and activities, that maintaining a Board of Directors who can dedicate the time to the STA will be a continuing challenge. I have asked numerous people over the years who are dedicated professionals in the turf industry, but they just do not have enough free time to sit on the Board. That is not an excuse, it is reality. We must strive to continue to attract a core group of Directors to lead the STA.

I wish the Sports Turf Association and its members every success in the future and I fully intend to stick around and contribute to that success in other capacities. It has been a pleasure working with and leading such a fine group of individuals over the years.

Best wishes to everyone for a happy, healthy holiday season and may the goodness and spirit of the season remain with everyone in 2000 and beyond. Wishing you better, safer sports turf. ♦

— Chris Mark

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