

2023 AGM Chair of the Board of Directors' Report

Silent Running....

This is the first full year that I have been the Chair of the Board of Directors, and I can vouch that ANKORS is truly an amazing organization. It seems like the same observation can be made every year – how amazing the staff are with developing new approaches to perennial (and increasingly intense) challenges; the skillful and heart-filled guidance provided by ANKORS' Executive Director, Cheryl Dowden; the delight of seeing funders stepping forward to increase the number of programs addressing the challenges that vulnerable people who use drugs and are at risk of blood borne pathogens face.

The role of the Board of Directors may seem pale in comparison to the activities of the staff, yet each person on the Board has a significant role to play with supporting, reviewing, and ensuring that the work of ANKORS can go forward in the best manner. This year, there have been some changes – with longtime members stepping away and new faces joining.

At the beginning of the 2022-2023 year, several long-term board members stepped down – Heather Fenner and Thomas McLeod to pursue other commitments, and Ron Khadikin, due to failing health. Sadly, Ron passed away this past winter. He had been on the Board since 2002 until his resignation in 2022. Ron was very supportive of ANKORS' purpose and goals. Notably, he and former director Thomas McLeod wrote a letter to the Interior Health Authority advocating for the funding for safer inhalation supplies. That funding did get provided and is now a staple component of Harm Reduction. Ron also always ensured that ANKORS provided a great spread for the buffet table at AGMs when they were held in-person in Nelson. A Celebration of Life is being organized for him.

Delightfully, Heather Cameron, who had indicated it was time for her to take a break from the position of Secretary, reconsidered and decided to step back up to being the celebrated Secretary for the Board. Her minute-taking is consistently accurate and captures the essence of each meeting. Bernice Shewell has remained the Board Treasurer, contributing insights into the mechanics of program funding.

Jacque Waterstreet Huser came onto the Board, bringing a wealth of experience after being a city counsellor in Salmo and a member of Moms Stop the Harm. Kris Dickenson from the EK was also interested in joining the board, and has attended several board meetings to gain familiarity with ANKORS purposes and activities.

Last year, the Board of Directors participated in the convoluted and time consuming effort required to actualize the necessary changes to ANKORS' Constitution and Bylaws to enable the Society to purchase the West Houston House. The process has shifted to one of support throughout the past year as expected timelines for the take-out mortgage have yet to manifest with BC Housing facing its own understaffing challenges.

This coming year will see the opportunity to revisit and renew the focus of ANKORS policies and purpose as the organization is being asked continually being asked to cover more bases to meet the needs of the vulnerable populations it serves.

Warm regards, Michelle Shewell, Board Chair, 2022 - 2023