

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2018

When I first sat down to write this report and asked myself the question “what exciting new things can I talk about”, I came up blank, but I very quickly realized why; this past year has been one of maintenance and continuity. Over the past number of years, we have worked diligently to create reproducible processes in our office and much of our day-to-day activity reflects this. Our fundraising season in June saw a dramatic increase in participation: walkers for the Toronto Challenge increased from 9 to 23 this year, and this event, along with CanadaHelps’ Great Canadian Giving Challenge, has now become well-integrated into PAL’s summer event calendar.

Volunteering at PAL is often a highlight of the week for our volunteers, and they tend to stick around for a long time. As a result, our volunteer reader pool has remained steady for the most part, however this past year we did say goodbye to volunteers Sue, Michelle, David, Ruth, Clarissa and Christina, all of whom have moved onto other exciting adventures. I’d like to say a special “in absentia” thank you to our friend, volunteer and board member Lucy Inkster.

Lucy, a native of the UK, moved from Germany to Canada in 2017 and joined the PAL family last year at this time, immediately offering her talents and abilities as a valued member of our board of directors and then picking up a weekly shift as a volunteer reader. She studied law at Cambridge and brought with her an extensive background in the not-for-profit sector, having specialized in areas that include fundraising, recruitment and marketing. Family has recently drawn her back to the UK, which is why she is not able to join us tonight, however she has offered to continue working with us remotely from her home “across the pond” to further the PAL cause, and we hope to stay in contact for years to come.

Marie Bountrogianni is a former MPP and Cabinet Minister who introduced and stewarded the passage of the AODA in 2004. In a September 7 Globe and Mail article she said, “approximately one in seven Canadians report living with a disability that affects their mobility, cognition, sight, hearing, learning or mental well-being. Whether we know it or not, all of us love someone who lives with a disability. It is our responsibility to help ensure these individuals feel like valued members of society.” She also said, “Nearly every Canadian will face a challenge to their accessibility at some point in their lifetime. Adults at the age of 65 and older outnumbered children in Canada for the first time in 2016”, and she noted that “by the year 2031, one in every four Canadians will fall into the 65-plus demographic”. The Canadian culture is changing around accessibility issues, and PAL is well positioned to be a part of the solution; this past year our client base increased by 22% over the previous year, and most of these individuals are seniors. It’s great to know that the work we’ve been doing for over 40 years continues to make a difference, and is becoming even more relevant today than ever before.

Thank you to everyone who makes PAL happen; with your continued support, we’re helping to make the dream of a completely inclusive Canada a reality!