

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2018

Good evening everyone! Before I jump into the report, I just want to say that I know how busy everyone can get, so thank you all for making the time to come out tonight. It is an honour and privilege to present a brief look at the past year of PAL's comings and goings.

This was my first year as president and it has been illuminating to learn a few more of the ins and outs of this fantastic organization. I will say that this year was, as it has been in recent years, a challenge. However, I like to think that we have overcome it because here we are, at another AGM, discussing the happenings of 2018 and the plans for 2019.

Over the past few years, we have made a shift in thinking about how to operate and keep the lights on while still providing our services to those in need. This past year, it is my belief, that this shift in thinking was put into practice.

In past years, a great deal of responsibility in regards to things such as fund-raising, grant-writing, and many, many other things ultimately fell entirely on the shoulders of then-president (now secretary) Susan Loubé. As she is just one (albeit amazing) person, this was one heck of a task and a little unfair to expect her to do it all.

This year saw the formation of a few committees that have been meeting, or at the very least communicating fairly regularly to (among other things) find and apply for grants and compile a history of PAL. Additionally, individually the directors have been stepping up to volunteer for things more and more. So, while Susan is still a very integral part of the organization and is on a committee or two, the load has been shared a little more. I hope to see even more of this in the coming year. Thank you for your work, directors.

This year we took part in a few major events to fundraise and to increase awareness and visibility in the community; the Balance Fair, the Toronto Challenge, the Great Canadian Giving Challenge, Word on the Street (twice since we last met, in fact) and the White Cane Week Expo, to name a few. In particular, for the Great Canadian Giving Challenge, we ended up raising our goal of \$20,000, which would not have been possible without the help of all of you and anyone else who spread the word or donated.

We will in all likelihood be participating in most if not all of these again next year. I know we will certainly be present at the Toronto Challenge in June 2019 (date TBD) and will without doubt participate in the Great Canadian Giving Challenge.

Other things to look forward to this year are our website being fully accessible again (FINALLY!), our Holiday Party in December because we love pressuring Derek and Mark to sing (date TBD) and possibly a few governance issues being ironed out.

We are looking to update the bylaws to bring them up to date (methods of communication and nominations/elections process being the bylaws in question). Of course, any potential changes will be sent ahead of time and then presented at a meeting of the members. I just wanted you all to be aware that this is on the docket for the coming year so that it is not a total surprise.

With all the changes that have taken place over the past years, there was a slight crisis of identity, where who we are and what we do came into question. Though, through conversations with volunteers and clients, the core values do not seem to have changed after all. We are an organization that provides a vital service to the individuals that need it.

The note I'd like to finish on is a note of great appreciation for our staff, volunteers, and clients (I've already expressed my thanks to the directors).

To our patrons (who are a wide cross section of volunteers, staff, directors, community members and clients), thank you for keeping our lights on. We will continue to try to live up to the high standards expected of us.

Mark and Derek work tirelessly on making the best finished product possible and sometimes thanklessly on a lot of the little things that really add up when you look at the big picture. They are effectively our pre- and post-production technicians, accounting, administration, human resources and customer service representatives all rolled into two people. So, on behalf of anyone who has ever dealt with you from client to director, thank you Derek and Mark.

The volunteers, of course, come in week after week and read everything from cookbooks to engineering journals. Some have come with us to the outreach events. Not once have they asked for any thanks and are always quite pleasant to work with. So, even though you never asked, thank you volunteers for all your hard work and dedication.

Finally, a massive thank you to all of our clients. Without you and your support, there is no reason for PAL to exist. Keep bringing in those books. Keep calling and asking questions. Tell a friend about us! Most of all, thank you for being an amazing community and friends to PAL.

With that, here is a quote for you to take home.

"When everything goes to hell, the people who stand by you without flinching – they are your family." - Jim Butcher.

Thank you all for being our family.