

## AGM Chairperson's Report – July 16, 2022

I would like to begin by saying that I am thankful to have the opportunity to serve as the chairperson of this wonderful organization.

This has been a busy year at PUFF / PCC. I'm going to do a quick recap and status report. I apologize in advance if I miss anything, and for the length of this report, but there is a lot to cover.

Last fall we completed the installation of our new water system. We now have the capacity to store 1000 gallons of water, which is delivered by CJ Edwards as we need it. We have safe potable water throughout the facility.

Also last fall we installed retractable overhead electrical cords in the fire hall to address a potential trip hazard endangering our fire fighters and medical crew.

Late last summer we began to plan for the replacement of the roof of the firehall / community centre. We applied for a number of grants, and began the Raise The Roof campaign. Thanks to the generosity of the community we were very successful in our fundraising. We eventually secured a grant from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation which will allow us to complete projects worth \$288,000. Our share, \$72,000, will be covered by Raise The Roof, and remaining funds will be used to supplement the kitchen / mezzanine renovation.

The renovation of the stage in the community centre to create a full size pickle ball court was completed in January, and we have seen a substantial increase in use, which generates revenue to support the running of the facility. This project was spearheaded by Jocelyn Mauthe and Wanda Desroches, and their fundraising covered a good portion of the cost of the renovation.

The new roof was completed in June, and we've had lots of compliments on how great it looks!

The parking lot has been reshaped so that water is draining away from the building. A new entrance pad will be installed within the next 4 to 6 weeks, and the parking area will be surface sealed to prevent erosion. After that the Local Roads Board will take care of further surface sealing and maintenance, as Fire Hall Road falls under their jurisdiction.

A 150 gallon per minute high volume pump has been ordered for rapid filling of the tanker truck in the firehall.

In the fall a metal or wooden ramp will be installed to allow the fire crew to easily access water that is deep enough for a high volume pump. A shallow earthen ramp to the edge of the swamp will allow easy access to the lake during winter events.

LSB Engineering Group is designing a ventilation system for the firehall, and this will be installed as soon as we can secure the services of a mechanical contractor.

The renovation of the kitchen and mezzanine areas is in the early planning stage. Planning will intensify in the fall, and the work will be completed over the coming winter and spring.

Due to the good financial stewardship of former chairperson Nick Van der Zande and the board over many years, PUFF had substantial reserves for vehicle replacement. We are in the process of acquiring a new to us fire truck to replace our aging Pumper #93. The new truck is classed as a rapid attack vehicle. It is equipped with four wheel drive, and will be able to access small bush roads that are now beyond the capability of our vehicles. This will increase our firefighting capacity for both structural and bush fires. The necessary documentation for importation of this truck finally arrived on Thursday, and we hope to have it within four to six weeks.

Fortunately we have been able to resume normal activities in the community centre as the Covid pandemic has abated. Pickle Ball and Cribbage are held regularly, as is stretching class. The hall is being used for private events on a regular and increasing basis.

Last fall we were able to host the Mennonite Youth Choir, and hold our annual appreciation dinner for our firefighters and emergency responders and their families.

In March we held the family oriented fishing tournament, which was a great success. We have Kerry Livingstone to thank for being lead organizer of this fun event.

In May we held the first pancake breakfast in a couple of years, and it went really well, with substantial funds raised to support PUFF / PCC.

The fundraising committee has several new members with all kinds of ideas for activities and events at the community centre. We believe that once we complete our renovations and upgrades the community centre will be an even more attractive venue for many occasions, and we look forward to a bright future. So stay tuned!

I would like to say a number of thank you's.

Firstly, to the whole community for your ongoing support over so many years. This wonderful facility and all the great services we are able to offer and would not be possible without your generosity.

The team of volunteer fire fighters and emergency medical responders who keep our properties safe and get us to hospital in a timely and life-saving fashion deserve our undying gratitude. The hours that this crew put in keeping us safe and alive and our insurance premiums much lower than they would otherwise be, frankly boggles the mind. They train rigorously and often, and respond to emergencies at all hours of the day and night. Especially to the Mayor of Laclu, our Fire Chief Barry Bennett, and Deputy Chief Todd Burkart, and to the whole team, thank you thank you from all of us.

When I first came to the PUFF board I was shocked at how much work there is to do, and the dedication of the board members and other volunteers who have done this work for years. We have no paid staff. It is only us. Fortunately it is all of us. In the world we live in, with all its woes, the spirit in this community warms the heart.

Ron Mauthe, vice-chair of the board is not only the master of ceremonies of this meeting and of all our board meetings, but of pretty much everything to do with the community centre. He does the bookings, changes the signs, does the recycling, and countless other things.

Rob Hrabec, our treasurer, is a partner at MNP. I can't even begin to express our gratitude to Rob. Having a CPA on your team who is willing to put in countless hours keeping the finances in order – I can't find words to describe what that means to us, and how fortunate we are.

Bonnie Baltessen, who is retiring from the board, had almost a full-time job this year dealing with communications and all the Raise The Roof donations. She did so much work that we are actually splitting her job between two or more people.

Gil Desroches, who has also retired, has done amazing work on the insurance portfolio for years. He is one of the main reasons your tax levy is not considerably higher.

Ray Howard is also leaving us. I have always appreciated his advice on the building, and board affairs in general.

Maurice Carriere comes to us with a huge skill set in vehicle maintenance, health and safety, and construction. He is working hard at making sure we conform to licensing requirements, and is instrumental in the fire truck importation.

Cheryl Siran is a partner at Hook Seller Lundin. She is taking over the insurance portfolio from Gil. Her clear-thinking legal mind is a priceless asset to the board.

Don Mathieson, who is a member of the fire team and is joining the board, has made the fire hall and the vehicles as well-organized and safe as could possibly be. He is here many, many hours each week. When the batteries on the defibrillator work as expected you can thank Don.

To Fred Moeller, Randy Hill, and Bobbie Robinson, we are grateful for your time and wise and considered counsel.

We are very happy that Kerry Livingstone, Randy Moran, and George Goossen are bringing their diverse skill sets to the board.

I would also like to thank Barry Baltessen, and his group at the Local Services Board, who provide PUFF with its operational funding through the tax levy. You may not know that Barry is also the chair of the Kenora District Services Board. The whole region owes Barry a debt of gratitude for the work he does.

There are so many other volunteers who have done amazing service work here for many, many years. Jocelyn Mauthe is the force of nature behind so many events like the pancake breakfast. She has a whole dedicated crew who keep the whole show running.

Thanks to Gil and Wanda Desroches for their work with fundraising events, including the Symphony and the concession at the August Long Weekend Regatta.

Amanda Brabant of Pink Toad Studio does an amazing job managing our website, produces our newsletter, and is reshaping our email communications.

Thanks to Ralph Webb for his work for decades in the acquisition of emergency vehicles, including our newest one.

I also want to briefly mention some of our contractors and suppliers. Stephen Janzen of Timber Wolf Construction did the roof and the stage renovation, and will be doing most of the remaining projects. He is a great craftsman, and wonderful to deal with. Amos Unruh of Sunshine Earthworks is doing the earth moving, and he really has been Mr Sunshine. J&M plumbing have been great with waterworks, and Lake of the Woods Electric with electrical work. CJ Edwards dependably supplies us with water. Verlin Penner and Countryside Kenora gave great customer service supplying the materials for the roof. Jennifer Findlay of NOHFC has been consistently supportive.

Again, apologies to anyone I've missed. Thanks to everyone.

It's been an exciting year. Hopefully the coming year will be even better.

Mark Simkin  
PUFF / PCC Chairperson