

**Annual General Meeting
National Association of Federal Retirees
Ottawa Branch
May 1, 2018**

PRESIDENT’S REPORT.....	p. 2
TREASURER’S REPORT	
Charter Branch 2017	p. 4
Charter Branch 2018 Forecast.....	p. 5
Corporation 2017	p. 6
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE (P&G) REPORT.....	p. 7
ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORT.....	p. 8
MEMBERSHIP AND SERVICES (M&S) COMMITTEE REPORT.....	p. 9
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION COMMITTEE (R&R) REPORT.....	p.11
BRANCH COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE (BCLC) REPORT.....	p.12
BEREAVEMENT ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT GROUP REPORT.....	p.13
BRANCH MANAGER’S REPORT.....	p.13

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2017 has been a year of many transitions for the Ottawa Branch. Last June, I succeeded Stephen Troy as President. I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Ottawa Branch and Board, to express our gratitude to Stephen for his service as President and for his leadership. The Ottawa Board of Directors has been fortunate to keep Stephen as a Senior Advisor and we all continue to benefit from his vast corporate memory and wise counsel.

Stephen is now the new Branch Service Coordinator (BSC) for the four branches in the Ottawa-St. Lawrence-Nunavut (OSLN) Region: Ottawa; Algonquin Valley; Ottawa Valley; and, Cornwall and District. Stephen is replacing Greville Price, who has retired. We will continue to benefit from Stephen's participation in this area.

Last May, Camille Guerin left our Branch and we recognized his contribution at the Volunteers' Luncheon on May 16 at the Rideau Tennis Club. For my part, I thank Camille for his support to me as Treasurer for the last five years, and I wish him the best of health and success in his future activities.

Last September 18, Linda Barber joined us as the new Branch Manager. Linda quickly involved herself in the activities of the Branch and has worked effectively with our volunteers and Board members. She also provides me with excellent support.

Through these changes, we had a steady hand at our office with Mary-Anne Zwicker, who provided essential continuity during the gap between Camille's departure and Linda's arrival. Many thanks, Mary-Anne, for your work all year.

And transition also took place at the Board level. In 2017, we saw the departure of five other Ottawa Branch Directors: Daniel Brunet, who joined the National Board, Clair Hardy, Diane Lacelle, Dave Bennett and Brian Brimble. During the year, to fill these positions, we recruited Terry Sing, Chris Ford, Patricia Walsh, Harry Ruthnum and Linda Saunders.

The Branch has been very active in several areas. Starting with the **Advocacy Committee**, Chair, Keith Fernandez presented his strategic plan to the Board, which was approved and implemented. In particular, Keith has been working with the National Office on advocacy against Bill C-27. I encourage you to read Keith's report and to note that Ottawa Branch will be gearing up its advocacy activities, particularly in 2019, in preparation for the next federal election.

We have also been active on member services under the leadership of Christine Desloges, Chair of the **Membership and Services Committee**. Christine and several volunteers organized our Fall General Meeting that is dedicated to financial issues. Please read Christine's report to see the extensive work her group has accomplished on organizing a financial literacy training program and curriculum for our members, and the results of brainstorming sessions to revitalize and update our Members' Discount Program, and other activities.

Our **Branch Community Liaison Committee**, under the leadership of Richard Wagner and now H el ene Nadeau, has also been very active on a number of seniors' issues and cultivates and maintains important linkages into the local community. Please look at H el ene's report. H el ene and her core team have organized this AGM, the INFOMART and the presentation on health and wellbeing that will be made by

guest speaker, Pamela Howell, Pharmacist at Bruyère Continuing Care, after the business part of the meeting. Many thanks to Hélène and her volunteers.

In the Spring of 2017, our **Policy and Governance Committee** reviewed the propositions to be presented to the National Annual Members Meeting (AMM) held in Ottawa last June. The Committee's advice guided the voting by your branch representatives at that meeting. Dave Bennett chaired the Committee last year and now Linda Saunders will be our Chair for 2018. Please look at Linda's report.

Membership in our national association (and by extension, Ottawa Branch) has been going down. The National Board of Directors has been dealing with strategic issues related to increasing membership. To do our part, the Ottawa Branch Board established its own **Recruitment and Renewal Committee**, with three new Board Directors, Chris Ford as Chair, Harry Ruthnum and Patricia Walsh. Terry Sing, Christine Desloges and I have attended a number of their meetings. A major focus has been to learn from the best practices of other branches. Please read Chris' report.

The agenda of the May 1 meeting, has been divided into two separate AGMs, one for our regular governance issues as the Ottawa Branch chapter of the association, and the other to finalize the repurposing of corporation 1596954 Ontario Inc. that will own and manage the office condominium and lease it back to the Branch. Harry Ruthnum, our new Treasurer will also report on our 2018 budget.

While we no longer maintain a formal **Communications Committee**, you will have noticed that we are stepping up our communications activities with you. We now send you a monthly electronic newsletter, providing you with information on Branch activities (new organizations in the Members' Discount Programs, advocacy updates and registration information for financial literacy training). I want to note the work that Linda Barber and the Board Directors have done to prepare the newsletter. Linda and Terry Sing have also worked together to prepare our Branch inserts in SAGE twice a year.

We continue to work closely with the other Branches in the OSLN Region, Ottawa Valley, Algonquin Valley and Cornwall and District, with the new BSC, Stephen Troy. We have two regional meetings annually combined with training programs presented by the National Office.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all our tremendous volunteers who have participated in our numerous activities. We will be honouring them at a special luncheon on May 28. Also, I extend my sincere thanks to our Board Directors for their constant support.

I would also like to thank the National Office staff and volunteers for their ongoing help and advice – in particular, Executive Director, Simon Coakeley and National President, Jean-Guy Soulière, both of whom are also members of the Ottawa Branch, and our District Directors, Daniel Brunet and Dyane Dufresne.

Finally, many, many thanks to Linda Barber and Mary-Anne Zwicker, who are essential to the smooth functioning of the Branch and its Board and its Committees.

Robert Giroux
President, Ottawa Branch

TREASURER'S REPORT Ottawa Charter Branch 2017

In 2017, the Branch had an excess of revenues over expenses on a cash basis of \$ 25,099 and after deducting depreciation for the new air conditioner, which is an expense not requiring cash, the net result was an excess of revenues over expenses of \$ 24,769. Against the budget set for 2017, Membership Fees increased by \$ 6,559 and Expenses increased by \$ 7,424. The main contributor to our excess of revenues over expenses is the contribution received from National Office for \$ 26,392, as agreed, to cover our legal fees associated with the process of repurposing the existing corporation to own and lease back the condo office to the Charter Branch.

A review of our expenses against budget shows:

- The single largest increase in spending over budget was for approx. \$13K to deal with one-time human resources costs related to transition
- The next largest increase in costs over budget was related to the legal fees mentioned above
- In the meantime, the Branch was able to trim costs and realize savings in the following areas:
 - Just under \$4K was trimmed from expenditures for the spring AGM, the fall General Members' Meeting and branch attendance at the Annual Members' Meeting;
 - Due to volunteer turnover, we trimmed close to \$3K in expenditures within the former Communications Committee and Branch Community Liaison Committee;
 - Approx. \$3K was saved on equipment rental, office supplies and office furniture; and,
 - Another \$2K was saved on volunteer travel costs.

Our Balance Sheet for the unincorporated charter Branch shows positive Net Assets unrestricted at \$ 77,589. Our cash flow shows a positive amount of \$ 46,081. In the current liability section, \$2,832 represents the National share of dues which will be remitted to the National Office during 2018. The receivables from National Office of \$ 81,192 are, in part, a deferred revenue of \$ 51,361 for the year 2018, and the remainder of \$ 29,831 applies to 2017.

The branch engaged Frouin Group LLP, Chartered Accountants to do the audit. We have a clean audit report and the auditors have advised us that, in their opinion, "the financial statements present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of the National Association of Federal Retirees, Ottawa Branch, as at December 31, 2017 and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for non-for-profit organizations".

The Ottawa Branch Board is recommending that Frouin Group LLP, Chartered Accountants, be reappointed by the members as auditors of the Branch for fiscal year 2018.

With Harry Ruthnum, our new Treasurer in place for 2018, we will continue to keep a careful eye on the budget to ensure that it remains balanced and that we do not exceed our allocations. While the Branch is vigorously pursuing new initiatives, particularly in member services and recruitment, all our volunteers and staff are aware of the need to be careful and prudent with the limited funds available and to stay within the amounts that we have budgeted.

Robert Giroux
Treasurer

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FEDERAL RETIREES
OTTAWA CHARTER BRANCH
2018 BUDGET FORECAST**

		Actual 2017	Budget 2018
Income			
	Membership Dues – Branch Share		
	• Dues paid by cheques and credit cards	70,000	70,000
	• Dues paid by DDS	178,500	178,000
	Total Dues Income	248,500	248,000
	Interest and Other Income		
	• Interest – Bank	-	-
	• Donations	-	-
	• Sundry income	-	-
	• Legal Fee Reimbursement	26,400	-
TOTAL INCOME		274,900	248,000
Operating Expenses	Association Activities		
	• Communications	3,400	3,750
	• Information Technology	11,750	13,700
	• Membership & Services	2,300	3,750
	• Policy & Governance	11,800	5,000
	• Branch Community Liaison	500	1,950
	• Advocacy		
	• Other (incl. Recruitment & Retention)	300	1,500
		38,600	42,650
	Total Association Activities	68,650	72,300
	Services to Members	162,200	153,675
	Rent	19,000	20,750
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES		249,850	246,725
Amortization		350	800
NET: INCOME LESS CASH EXPENSES		24,700	475

TREASURER'S REPORT 1596954 ONTARIO INC. 2017

The corporation engaged Frouin Group LLP, Chartered Accountants to do the 2017 audit. We have a clean audit report for the office condominium. We also note that the Auditors have stated in their report: “In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of 1596954 Ontario Inc. as at December 31, 2017 and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations”.

The corporation registered revenues of \$ 19,048 in 2017 which represent the amount paid by the Charter Branch for its use of the condo owned by the corporation. The 2017 expenses of \$ 19,048 represent what the corporation disbursed in condominium fees, property taxes and utilities and others to operate the condo.

The balance sheet shows that the depreciated value of the condo at the end of 2017 is \$ 86,402.

Robert Giroux
Treasurer

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 2017 Annual Report

The purpose of the Policy and Governance Committee (the Committee) is to ensure that the Board fulfills its legal, ethical, and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, monitoring of Board activities, and evaluation of Board and members' performance. The Committee also examines issues that are identified by its members, referred to it by other Committees, or by the Executive Committee or the Board of Directors, and responds, as appropriate, with documentation.

The Committee is composed of at least two Ottawa Branch Board members and may include at least two other volunteers who must be members of the Ottawa Branch. Members are appointed annually. During 2017 the Committee members included Dave Bennett, (Chair), Christine Desloges (Board Director), Ranjeet Nanner (Volunteer) and Harry Ruthnum (Volunteer). At the time of this report, two of these members of the Committee have moved on, with Christine and Harry assuming other positions at the Board level.

The Committee met in May 2017 to review the motions proposed for the June 2017 Annual Members Meeting and the proposed responses from the National Office to prepare our President and delegates who would be attending. After that, the Committee became dormant as the Branch became heavily focused on the policy priority of setting up Ottawa Branch as a charter branch and repurposing the existing corporation to own the condo building and rent it to the charter branch.

Looking forward to 2018, Linda Saunders has been appointed to the Board and will serve as Chair of the Policy and Governance Committee with a focus on canvassing for members and setting up priorities for 2018-19.

Linda Saunders

Chair, Policy and Governance Committee

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE 2017 Annual Report

The Ottawa Branch (OB) of the National Association of Federal Retirees (NAFR) has an Advocacy Committee with a Terms of Reference (approved in the summer of 2017) that, consistent with NAFR's existing objectives and mandate, give priority to:

- Protecting our members pension, health and dental benefits;
- Building better retirement security for more Canadians;
- Working towards a national seniors' strategy within a new Health accord; and
- Ensuring Canada's veterans have the support and dignity they deserve.

The primary focus of our Advocacy efforts, as always, remains on preserving our pensions and health care benefits. A federal general election will be held on or before October 21, 2019. Your Ottawa Branch is gearing up to begin a round of meetings with current sitting federal MPs in the Ottawa area. The objective is to reacquaint MPs with NAFR, its objectives and our members' concerns. We will also begin monitoring the local riding nomination processes for the major electoral parties to ensure that successful candidates are aware of NAFR's priorities. Party platforms and the issues they generate, or the absence of positions on NAFR priorities, will help guide the scope of NAFR-OB advocacy activities.

During the past year (2017-18) the Branch has taken its cue from the National Office. We continued our efforts to counter or mitigate the provisions of the proposed Bill C-27, which would push employees of Federal Crown Corporations and federally regulated corporations to give up pensions based on defined benefit plans, in favour of target benefit plans. We supported the national campaign by attending town-hall meetings organized by some local MPs, and we asked questions that earned commitments from MPs to raise our concerns and objections in caucus. Your Ottawa Branch President (Mr. Robert Giroux) and the President of the Outaouais Branch (M. Donald Déry) had a successful meeting with the Honourable Greg Fergus, M.P. for Hull-Aylmer on these points. For a variety of reasons, including the concerns raised by NAFR members, the momentum and attention surrounding the passage of Bill C27 seems to have decreased. This may just be a momentary pause and so we remain vigilant.

Among other advocacy activities undertaken or supported by the Branch this year:

- Attended City of Ottawa celebration to mark National Seniors Day;
- Assisted the National Office in organizing and undertaking a consultation initiative with Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and RCMP veterans living in Ottawa;
- Meetings with other like-minded organizations (CARP and unions) to develop links that could be useful in raising awareness of NAFR and its positions;
- Participated in two rounds of consultations undertaken by the Canadian Deprescribing Network (Canden) in Ottawa and Montreal. The Network supports efforts to ensure that patients with chronic conditions, especially seniors, get the "right" medications in the "right" dosage to manage their chronic situation; and,
- Participated in the National Office's development of an Advocacy training program for branch volunteers across the Province. Ottawa Branch Advocacy volunteers received an initial session in April of this year.

If you would like to take an active role in the Branch's Advocacy activities, either on a regular or event-by-event basis, please provide your email and contact information to the Ottawa Branch office by email:

info@nafrottawa.com or by telephone at: (613) 737-2199.

Keith Fernandez
Chair, Advocacy Committee

MEMBERSHIP AND SERVICES (M&S) TEAM 2017 Annual Report

As you will see below, we have had some amazing successes this year in Membership and Services. These achievements have all been made possible by wonderful volunteers who stepped forward, identified projects that interested them, and then made the projects their own. They tell us that they had a good time working with us and we had a great time working with them, and we thank them sincerely.

But we need more volunteers to keep moving forward. Anyone interested in volunteering their time working to enhance the range and value of products and services that we make available to our members, should contact me or our branch office at 613-737-2199.

This past year, we strove to identify products and services that are of value to members at prices far below what individual members could expect to find on their own. As always, Ottawa Branch simply makes information about these offers available to our members for them to consider and make up their own minds. At the same time, we have also sought to strengthen the financial literacy of our members and we have tried to enhance the visibility of our organization to encourage recruitment of new members and volunteers.

You may have heard recently that, following up on the extensive evaluation work undertaken by **Daniel Brunet** and **Michael Fine**, we finalized an exclusive offer from BMO SMARTFOLIO portfolio management services. Ottawa Branch members can save 20% on their advisory fees when they invest with BMO Nesbitt Burns' online investing service, BMO SmartFolio. Knowing that our members like to deal face-to-face, we encouraged the people at BMO SmartFolio to find a way to interact with our members and they are holding free 'lunch and learn' sessions in April and May 2018.

Last October, **Daniel Brunet**, **Terry Sing**, **Ginette Morin** and **Joanne Calvé** worked with our staff to present the Fall Annual General Meeting that focused on *Investing and Financial Planning in Retirement*. Grant Vingoe, the Vice-Chair of the Ontario Securities Commission (OSC) spoke about the work OSC is doing to protect consumer interests and Todd Schlanger, CFA and Senior Strategist, Vanguard Investment Strategy Group, gave a presentation on "Low Cost Passive Investment Strategies". Over 320 members attended, but if you missed it, you can view the presentations on our website at <https://nafrottawa.com/archives-eng/>. We also had seventeen exhibitors at our INFOMART providing information on an array of products and services of financial and general interest to our members.

We began a close collaboration with the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) and Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) Canada and focused on the financial literacy of our members. Based on the results of a financial literacy quiz that we offered to members and based on the sold-out pilot workshop we offered with CPA last October on *Managing your Finances in Retirement*, **Kathy Hewlett-Jobes** helped us further explore areas of interest for our members.

Alain Corriveau, a CPA himself, attended the pilot and decided, practically on the spot, to volunteer with us. He embraced the challenge to develop and deliver a financial literacy program for our members, working with CPA Canada and other suppliers of financial education. By the end of May 2018, almost 400 members will have benefitted from sessions on *Tax Strategies*; *Managing Your Finances in Retirement*; and *Fraud Prevention for Seniors*. **Michael Fine**, a former Ottawa Branch board member and past M&S chair, developed and delivered discussion seminars for our members to help them consider a diversified, low cost investment portfolio designed to produce income.

We continue to brainstorm on how to better understand the needs of our members and enhance the value of membership for present and future members. This year, **Mary Lynn Gallant, Diane Larocque** and **Barbara Colley** focused on our Members' Discount Program (MDP) and worked as a relay team, carrying out a "Mystery Shopping" exercise on the current organizations in our MDP and reviewing existing program admission criteria to ensure best value for members.

Cathy Patton and **Cathy Enright** developed a preliminary cross-marketing strategy with complementary organizations offering services of interest to our members. **Hélène Buteau** stage-managed the Federal Retirees booth we had at the NAC on concert nights with the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra. **Linda Barber, Cathy Enright, Marta Khan, Hélène Nadeau, Georges Nadon**, and I all joined Hélène on different nights to talk to prospective members in the lobby and encourage them to get involved.

We also explored the creation of a program of seminars and other activities aimed at enhancing members' wellbeing, related to both Health and Finances. **Patricia Walsh** contributed a thought-provoking paper on "*Healthy Aging in Canada Health Promotion and Disease Prevention*". On the health benefits side, **Jean Aslin, Antoinette Martin, and Maria Monette** have continued to provide advice and assistance over the phone to answer our members' questions on the Public Service Health Care Plan and the Pensioners' Dental Services Plan.

And continuing the tradition that started in 2005, our volunteers have been very active at Second Career Assistance Network (SCAN) seminars where they introduce and explain the Association to retirees from the Canadian Armed Forces. We are indebted to **Wayne MacWhirter, Georges Nadon, Marta Khan** and **Gordon Duncan** for their work on the SCAN seminars. This year we have heard that the February SCAN seminar was attended by 346 people.

We appreciated the insights of **Daniel Brunet, Dyane Dufresne, Keith Fernandez, Michael Fine, Hélène Nadeau, Terry Sing, Stephen Troy** and, our chair, **Robert Giroux**, the **office staff** and many others, over the course of the year. Un grand merci à tous!

Christine Desloges,
Chair, Membership and Services Committee
on behalf of the Membership and Services Team

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION COMMITTEE 2017 Annual Report

In December 2017, the three newest members (at that time) of the Board of Directors were invited by the President to form a new committee to address the challenges of Recruitment and Retention (R&R) and to develop a strategy. Patricia Walsh, Harry Ruthnum and Chris Ford all said “yes”. Since January 2018, the committee has met four times to:

- assess the current situation
- understand the assigned mission and implied tasks
- research available documentation
- conduct a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results (SOAR) Analysis
- determine constraints and limitations
- initiate communication with two other branches
- present a proposed way ahead to the President.

Available data shows the demographic that NAFR serves is growing, and our membership is shrinking. Clearly there are two distinct yet inter-related challenges: stop the bleeding, find new blood. These challenges are common across the organization, and therefore a holistic approach is in order.

In essence, the R&R committee proposes to pursue strategic opportunities and collaborative relationships which will lay the foundation for organization-wide innovation concerning R&R. The committee also proposes a new service delivery model, while concurrently enabling local level initiatives and activities.

Chris Ford

Chair, Recruitment and Retention Committee

BRANCH COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE 2017 Annual Report

The role of the Ottawa Branch Community Liaison Committee (BCLC) of the National Association of Federal Retirees is to establish liaison and association with select, local senior-oriented organizations that address seniors' pension, health and well-being issues, which are congruent with Association priorities, goals and strategic objectives, and which offer benefit to seniors, including Ottawa Branch members.

Members of the BCLC include: **Hélène Nadeau** (Chair), **Richard Wagner** (past Chair), **Christine Desloges**, **Diane Law**, **Mary March**, **Patricia Marsden-Dole**, **Vaughn Munroe**, **Terry Sing**, and **Shelagh Tuddenham**. Our members are actively involved in several key projects within our community and their contributions are being recognized by the organizations with which they work. Sheila Tuddenham recently received the *Celebrating Seniors Award* from the Ottawa Council on Aging for her exceptional contributions towards making Ottawa a more age-friendly city.

The Ottawa Branch continued to offer *Neighbours Helping Neighbours* workshops to our members and to other seniors' organisations. Four workshops were offered in the past twelve months. The program focusses on providing respite care for primary caregivers and, as a result, contributes to the reduction of social isolation of our senior population. The program continues to grow in the broader seniors' community. On behalf of the BCLC, Shelagh Tuddenham coordinates and co-facilitates the workshops. In addition, she has represented the Ottawa Branch on the *Health Issues Committee* at the Ottawa Council on Aging for the past four years. Diane Law will be replacing her.

The Ottawa Branch this year continued its participation in the City of Ottawa's *Seniors' Round Table*, which plans and monitors the *Older Adult Plan* for the City for the period 2016 – 2019. Terry Sing, who is also an Ottawa Branch board director, is the branch representative for this initiative. Terry also liaises with the City of Ottawa on our behalf and co-ordinates our participation in the *UN International Day of Older Persons*, which falls on the 1st of October of every year. Its aim is to take a stand against ageism by drawing attention to and challenging negative stereotypes and misconceptions about older persons and aging. Patricia Marsden-Dole and Hélène Nadeau represent the Ottawa Branch on the *Ottawa Seniors' Housing Alliance*.

Hélène Nadeau and **Robert Katz** also organized this Spring's 2018 AGM with its theme of taking charge of your health. They identified our guest speaker and the related exhibitors for the accompanying and newly diversified INFOMART. Robert Katz, who recently joined our group of volunteers, is leading the INFOMART project on behalf of the Branch.

If you are a member of a community group or would like to organize an education workshop which might be of benefit to our membership, please consider joining our committee or at least contacting myself. We are always looking for good ideas and volunteers!

Hélène Nadeau
Chair, Branch Community Liaison Committee

BEREAVEMENT ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT GROUP 2017 Annual Report

Ottawa Branch volunteers offer bereavement administrative support to recently widowed members seeking assistance. This administrative support consists of reviewing important tasks such as notifying Superannuation, CPP, OAS, GIS, banks, insurance companies, income tax, etc. When calls come into the Ottawa Branch Office, we put a volunteer from the Support Group in touch with the bereaved spouse to offer assistance. We sincerely thank these dedicated Branch volunteers who, during the past year, gave their time to help our members in their ‘hour of need’: **Lee Louch** (Support Group Chair), **Sara Camblin Breault**, **Mary Hawthorne**, **Margaret Hope**, **Annette Lawrie**, and **Julie Kisch**.

Lee Louch
Support Group Chair

BRANCH MANAGER’S 2017 Annual Report

Ottawa Branch has over 60 tremendous volunteers who offer their time to help us operate the branch and deliver services to members. Well over a dozen new volunteers have joined us since our General Meeting last fall, including four new board members: **Chris Ford**, **Harry Ruthnum**, **Linda Saunders**, and **Patricia Walsh**, and eleven new committee and/or project volunteers: **Hélène Buteau**, **Denise Charlebois**, **Ann Cooper**, **Alain Corriveau**, **Barbara Colley**, **Cathy Enright**, **Mary Lynn Gallant**, **Kathy Hewlett-Jobes**, **Diane Larocque**, **Robert Katz**, and **Cathy Patton**.

We also rely on volunteers to staff our Help Desk and Phone Line and provide a vital two-way link with our members. These volunteers are dedicated to getting accurate answers for our members and they also listen and share valuable member feedback with us. And they pitch in and help with any and everything else we have on the go. This year at the branch office we have been very grateful to work with: **Debbie Arcand**, **Robert Atchison**, **Linda Balke**, **Bill Balke**, **Jacqueline Bérubé**, **Joanne Calvé**, **Percy Campbell**, **Dale Coburn**, **Mahnaz FarhangMehr**, **Ron Lachance**, **Karen Kirby**, **Wally Kozar**, **Donna Major**, **Wayne MacWhirter**, **Georges Nadon**, **Gus Nelson**, **Doreen Sarazin**, **Peter Sloan**, **George Steeves**, **Rick Stolarik**, and **Jim Turner**.

Every year, we try to say thank you and express our appreciation to these wonderful people. Last year, we held a small reception at the office in December and a large luncheon for our volunteers will take place on May 28, 2018. We also annually recognize our *Volunteer of the Year*. At the 2017 AGM, there were two recipients for this award: **Marguerite Duclos** and **Rick Stolarik**.

Our need for volunteers is growing. As you may have noticed, we have been trying out new ideas (like recruiting new members at National Arts Centre concerts) and offering new services (like workshops on fraud prevention for seniors). We are keen to reinforce the value proposition of membership both to retain our current members and to recruit new ones. Last year we saw a 1% decrease in membership (34,290 members as of Dec. 31/17) and our Board, Committees and Working Groups are all looking at ways to reverse this and grow our association.

However, we can't launch these new initiatives without your help. We encourage you to contact **Mary-Anne Zwicker** at 613-737-2199 particularly if you are interested in working with us on: project management; website development (using Sitecore); database management/emails; research and writing; marketing and social media; and/or being ambassadors for the association to help us recruit new members. Whatever your skills, please do not shy. We can use help in so many areas. Just let us know if you are interested in helping.

Recruiting new volunteers and helping them make a meaningful contribution while they enjoy a satisfying experience is a key priority for me and a critical element in supporting our Board and its Committees so that they can better serve our members and association. Volunteer recruitment and volunteer satisfaction are key goals for me that will continue into 2018.

I am also dedicated to adopting best practices in communicating with our members, and that is why you have started to see branch news and updates bundled into a monthly electronic newsletter. We sincerely hope that, as we progress into 2018, the e-newsletter will become a 'go-to' source of great information for you.

You have also probably noticed that we now use Eventbrite so that you can self-register for branch events from your own computer and receive updates by email, like instructions on how to get to and park at our office. We also now use Survey Monkey, so you can share your feedback with us electronically. For 2018, another key priority for me is to upgrade our branch information on the internet and migrate it to a more accessible space that will make it easier for you to get relevant and up-to-date information.

It's lots of work but it is also lots of fun. I started as your Branch Manager last September and I have to say that it is a joy to work alongside **Mary-Anne Zwicker** and with your dedicated Board of Directors and all these terrific volunteers, including **Ginette Morin** who has been an administrative powerhouse for the Branch Office for many years.

Linda Barber
Ottawa Branch Manager