

Cheri Kemp-Long, Ec.D.(F)
President's Dinner, Sept. 2013
Out-going President's speech

As mentioned at the opening, it is great to be back in St John's after 10 years, we have seen a good deal of change, lots of activity – and not just by our members here this week – great weather, a great conference I believe!

We had our AGM on Sunday morning and at that time we provided financial and activity reports for the past year – our fiscal year, which covers a period from January through December – a year which ended 9 months ago. The Presidency however goes from one Annual Conference to the next, so as an Executive and Board we straddle the fiscal years somewhat and our reporting may appear a bit disjointed because of it. You heard my official report on Sunday, I'd like to close my term with a few remarks from my year as President of your association.

Last year EDAC 2012 was held in my home town of Iqaluit, Nunavut – the first time in our 45 year history that we had held the National Conference north of 60. Canada's smallest Capital City and youngest Economic Developers Associations hosted our membership – Nunavut Economic Developers Association that was formed in 1999 when Nunavut was created, and the Council of Northern Economic Developers the newly (2012) formed Yukon association. Attendance, although smaller than in most other years, included member delegates from of all provinces and territories. Shortly after our conference the NWT invited NEDA and CNED to join EDAC in Yellowknife to talk about the value and importance of an association; we look forward to welcoming them into the family in the near future.

Over the last year other regions of Canada have not had such positive circumstances – Atlantic Canada and Saskatchewan have both suffered significant disruption for their economic developers and their associations through re-organization, budget cuts and job losses. Transition has not been easy and is still not complete – our members have been impacted.

At last year's AGM your board presented a Vision and Strategic Plan for EDAC's next 5 years – three specific themes were identified with objectives and actions - Partnership Development, Organizational Development and Professional Development. Since then we have begun the process of implementation.

A couple of key areas under the Organizational Development theme including bringing our by-laws in line with the new Not-for Profits Act which was completed and you passed those changes on Sunday, allowing us to continue to be in good standing meeting the required date in 2014. We've also ensured we are in-line with CRA requirements for Not-for-Profit organizations and acted on recommendations from our auditors. We've updated our website for your ease in accessing information and information sharing as well as developed communications materials.

We know how important relationships are in the world of economic development and so the Partnership Development theme did not go without activity. We have continued and renewed our relationship with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Development and found our annual meeting with them in April to be very productive. They were in the midst of major change last year as well and are beginning to implement their new structure. During our annual visit to Ottawa we also spent time with FCM and have renewed plans for working together on the value of the ec dev professionals that are our members. Industry Canada was added to our National Capital round of meetings as we jointly saw value in a relationship to support entrepreneurs and businesses in our communities. 2013, as the 20th Anniversary of the Canada Business Centres, with events planned across the country seemed an appropriate time to begin a working relationship.

Professional Development is our mandate so that theme was certainly not forgotten, with all the changes and disruptions to our members it is even more important as we move forward. Colleges and Universities are looking at ways to improve productivity in Canada and we have discussed ways to work together – new courses and programs are becoming accredited towards EDAC Certification to increase the options for our members to enhance their knowledge. We are updating EDACs Economic

Development Manual this year and are working at ways to deliver programming on line – Webinars have been an option for some time now.

An activity that cuts across our strategic plan themes is advocacy for our members, our organizations and our profession – key to success in advocacy is to know where we stand today. We have just completed a Perception Audit, gathering information from Government, NGOs, members and other stakeholders on the profession, the professionals, the organizations, and the economy to inform our specific planning and decision making in this key area. Your board will soon receive the report on the audit for review.

So what's next? We will continue implementing the plan, monitor, evaluate and adjust/amend as required – sound familiar?!

While it is your executive and board that consider the information and make decisions on the actions to be taken – we are provided with information, resources, guidance and recommendations by our CEO. Once decisions are taken, it is also her job to make the budget fit those decisions, or find additional resources (both human and financial) to put them into action for our members, implement and keep us advised of progress, issues and results, and seek direction for change if need be. Us – being both the board and the membership.

I had an interesting conversation with our auditor recently on the topic of NGO/NPOs and the critical nature of the role of CEO; the reality of success or failure of the organization often being tied to that one person! In our case, that person is our CEO, Penny Gardiner who has been the face of EDAC and our organization for over 20 years. Some years, this one in particular, I believe are more challenging than others for a range of reasons. We are a big country with 3 coasts, 10 provinces and 3 territories all with varied and different political and economic realities, and members from all facets of the profession and from rural areas to our largest cities. Penny's knowledge, experience and dedication to our membership and our organization is our rock and key to our success as we implement the vision we have for EDAC, and the strategic plan we have set out.

I would like to ask Penny to come up and receive this years' President's Award for her unwavering dedication and service to EDAC and our members.

Before I hand the reins over to the new President, I would like to make a few personal remarks on my term as your President, a year I found to be both rewarding and challenging. I've been involved in the profession of economic development for almost 40 years, 30 of those years in Canada's far north, a region of little more than 100K people, across a vast land, but really just a small town where we tend to know each other quite well.

The North is undergoing immense change, and as you've heard, we rely very much on our relationships with the south – especially in our key transportation corridors – BC with Yukon, AB with NWT, AB, MB, ON, QC and NL with Nunavut,. Relationships both personal, business and family often have bumps throughout their life, but we cannot continue without the relationship if we are to be fulfilled, happy and successful.

In the north we plan, manage and operate across many miles, across cultural lines and international/national boundaries. We have found that taking the time to listen to each other, consider what is asked and needed, and what is in the best interest of those we all 'serve' to be a successful approach to decision making. It is not fast and not always what each thought they wanted at the outset – but in the end the result is best for all concerned.

This year as your President I have had the opportunity to engage in old, renewed and new relationships across the county – an experience I thank you for, however I have also had challenges with some of our relationships that I hope can be resolved/re-shaped in the near future with a change in attitude. My years in the North and work with the elders who have experienced un-imaginable change in their lives provide guidance that I try to live by and hope we as an organization can too:

- Listen to each other
- Be clear about what is being asked

- Discuss quietly and calmly with understanding
- Consider the shared value of the solution(s)
- Make a decision together for the overall good

As a board we must be inclusive not self serving, respectful not spiteful, democratic not dictatorial, and compromising not rigid.

Sounds a bit like a guide for parents, or a marriage – or maybe someone in the economic development field working with residents, businesses, investors and municipal councillors; something we all do every day!

I look forward to continuing to work with the board over this next year to build our relationships to maximize the benefits for all of our members. Thank you.