

## LONG ROADS ALWAYS START TODAY

*Bill Major, Chair of the Board of Directors,  
Georgina Arts Centre and Gallery*

I always like this time of year; in later spring, we begin to see the beginnings of new growth from our spring planting. This year baby robins are just beginning to break out of their egg shells in their nest at the end of our deck. Plants we have put in a few days ago are just beginning to take root in the soil. Our Georgina Arts Centre and Gallery is just beginning to show some growth after almost a year of hard work by our board and staff. I want to celebrate our new beginnings and share some of them with you.

On a warm evening in early August last year, I and three others were elected to a new board of directors. Other board members were elected later in November at our Annual meeting. Early on, we developed a five year strategic plan with these goals: **Increase community awareness of the Art Centre; develop financial viability; increase education programs; continue diverse exhibitions and events; improve our venue, and strengthen the governance of the centre.**



We have spent the last ten months working towards these goals. Some of our efforts have shown good results; others have been learning experiences that have sent us back to the drawing board. As in our gardens, not all our planting shows immediate results. Some early growth comes and some plants seem to stay dormant for a long while. And some really end up going nowhere. Growth is never a straight line. It takes its own path as we keep nurturing what we hope is happening.

Early on, we signed the four major agreements we have with our Town Council, covering the use of our building, the programs we develop, and our loan with the Town. This was a very significant step, bringing us into a close working relationship with all the people of Georgina. I met with most of councilors on a one to one basis before budget time and we were very happy to receive an additional \$20,000 in our annual budget allocation from Town Council. This year, we are receiving \$110,000 from the Town of Georgina.

We have begun the long process of developing a new marketing program to reach out to our community in many new ways. Attractive marketing material is almost ready to be used to contact potential donors for support. Two of our members have volunteered to form the nucleus of a fundraising committee and they are beginning to contact companies in our town to ask them to sponsor various parts of our



program such as the monthly luncheons. Our fundraising group needs more people to help in their work.

Our board is introducing new technology to make our administrative work more efficient. Online registration, simplifying financial recording and reporting, developing an easily accessible data base of members and supporters, and online membership are some of our current efforts to update our procedures. We are increasingly using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to raise our profile in the community. Shortly, we will have a new and revamped website, developed by a local company.

We have tried to be part of as many local events as possible. I am co-ordinating volunteers to provide a weekly presence at the Georgina Farmers' Market; students at Sutton High School have painted two attractive signs to help us raise our profile in our community. I stood many hours in the cold at our Town's Winter Snowfest proudly displaying one of our signs. We will have an art display and a chance for you to express yourself artistically at the Canada 150 Celebrations at the ROC on Canada Day.

Since January, our staff have held 81 classes, involving nearly 2000 people. Our art exhibitions, changing every five or six weeks, have all been well attended. We are now getting more requests to develop art programs for schools in our area and more students from local schools are coming to our Gallery for art classes. Our summer camps are getting good registrations and we are busy developing programs for next year. We thank our staff for their hard work in all our new beginnings.

We plan to apply for a Trillium Capital Grant by this October; if we are successful, we could receive up to \$150,000 for ongoing renovation and the upgrading of our building.

For all of this to continue, we want to involve more of you in our projects. We want to invite you to a members' meeting on **Thursday, September 21, at 7:30 p.m.** to discuss our work and to get your ideas and support for our way ahead. We need each of you to become active, however you can, in our movement assisting fellow citizens to develop their creative spirits.

Our board members realize that we have a very long road ahead; we have met some of our goals, and are a long way off in meeting some others. Above all else, we need to be thankful for what we have accomplished. It is helpful also to realize that a long road always starts with today. Today is really the only day we have any power to make a real difference. Have a good summer everyone!

**Bill Major, GACAG Chair**