

Board Chair part of Deputation to Council, May 7<sup>th</sup> 2018

If you have been looking across the park at your new neighbours the last little while, you may have noticed quite a bit of activity. This is probably the most noticeable BVO has been to the most people since 2002, when BVO's Board purchased "the old Firehall" and completely renovated it.

BVO's mandate is to make good things happen in our community, so we have to keep up with the developments and needs that affect the community. For example, you know that when the local preschool disbanded in 2011, BVO, recognizing the plight of parents who counted on daycare, opened the BVO Preschool. Our Preschool is an important part of this community, given the current short fall of available day care parents everywhere are experiencing. What you may not know is that since 2011, in order to keep up with community needs, we have gone from employing 8 staff, to our current payroll of 23 staff.

You may be aware that when Seniors started to become the most populous group in our community, BVO hired a Seniors' Coordinator and introduced New Territory for Seniors, a lecture series giving information on topics specifically geared towards Seniors' concerns. You may not know that now we also run Answers 4 Seniors which, among other things, provides assistance to individuals having difficulty navigating the complex world of government regulations. This program has helped approximately 350 people since it started.

In your strategic plan, you specifically recognize the importance of taking care of the youth in our community. BVO is also concerned with providing positive experiences for youth, and no doubt you have heard of C4YC which then became Youth Roots, a group of representatives from the library, BVO, the churches, the Town and young community members. After the position of Youth and Events Coordinator in the Town was terminated, you may not know that BVO decided to hire a Youth Engagement Coordinator to help enable young people identify and pursue their interests both in our community and beyond.

I suspect that like most people in our community some of you may have dropped things off at the Treasure Shop. Since the collections in our bins provide the stock for our store, I am sure you know that we are extremely grateful for these donations. I also know that the landfill site is an important budget item for this Town. You may not know that two years ago BVO entered into a contract with Diabetes Canada to collect our send-on material. Besides receiving payment for all textile items, we can now report on how much material was diverted from the landfill site through the efforts of our many Treasure Shop volunteers.

For more than 30 years, BVO has been delivering essential services to The Blue Mountains and its extended community. It is the first place people think of when someone they know needs help and they don't know where else to turn. Did you know that about one in every three households in the Town is connected to BVO in some way?

During its history, BVO has moved many times, in order to keep up with the needs of the community. Necessity has been the driving force for these moves, as it is now. Seventeen years ago when BVO purchased and renovated 64 Bruce Street, it was quite a big step. It could not have been done without community support.

The building has been good for us, and we have since renovated it three more times, on our own, to improve our ability to serve the community. However, populations change, government regulations change and community needs change; eventually renovations can no longer meet the needs. This reality was recognized by the Board three years ago when we created a Space Committee of Board members and volunteers to study our situation, namely: we have staff with no work space; we deal with many confidential situations, but we have little private meeting space; the upstairs offices and the basement space are not accessible to anyone who has difficulty with stairs; there is little on site storage space; parking is an issue.

After researching many possible solutions to these problems, and having reached the conclusion that we had to move, 54 King Street was the answer to our needs. With careful planning, we have been able to design the new space to meet our specific requirements. In particular, having BVO offices and the Treasure Shop retail and sorting areas on one floor gives us the accessibility we are lacking in our current building. The addition for the freight lift will provide us with accessible access to a multi-use, very large basement. Everyone is excited about the parking lot; if you have been to BVO recently, I am sure you understand why.

The relocation is something we could not have considered without the foresight of a previous Board which provided us with equity in the form of our current building. But renovations are separate, costly and necessary. So, once again BVO is taking an exciting, big step. For the second time in two decades, we are asking for community support as we position ourselves to make good things happen in our community, well into the future.

Cathy Innes, Chair  
BVO Board of Directors