



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dec 9, 2021 QGM

The Annapolis Board of Trade, has continued to adapt and do our best to serve our membership and the community through the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the summer, as government health restrictions eased and the Atlantic bubble opened, we began to see improvements to local business activity--especially in the tourism sector. We saw a lot more cars with out-of-Town licence plates. And with the recent real estate boom, quite a few new people and businesses have moved to our area.

VIC Operations

Our Visitor Information Centre opened on June 2nd this year, a little late, due to the Covid-19 lockdown. We lost our space at the Tidal Power Plant last year and moved to temporary quarters at the King's theatre. This year, the VIC relocated to the front part of the Town's Comfort Station building, near the Annapolis Farmer's Market.

I'm pleased to let you know that we have successfully negotiated a new 3-year lease for the VIC space with the Town of Annapolis Royal. We're very grateful for their in-kind and cash donation. Thanks go out to our Vice-President, Wayne Smith for handling the negotiations and VIC Liaison duties, and to our Secretary Sharon Hall for helping him with VIC HR.

We hired Tara Rose Irwin as our VIC Manager this year. Tara brought a wealth of customer service and supervision experience and local knowledge to the position. Her social media skills were put to good use promoting our VIC Facebook and Instagram pages and helping with other tourism marketing. We received funding to hire 3 student travel counsellors and Lori-Ann Edwards returned to close the season after the students returned to school.

ABOT Administration / Social Media Support

Theresa Brown, our very part-time admin staff resigned a month ago to focus on her family and full-time work. She did a great job for us over the last 2 years, and we extend our sincere thanks to her for her efforts. We are very pleased that Tara Irwin, with her great skills, has recently stepped into the position. Having staff with good social media skills is helping us do a better job of promoting ABoT, local business and area tourism.

ABOT - AIRO Collaborative Marketing Strategy

Our partnership with Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunities – AIRO, on the “Stay Another Day” social media marketing campaign has gone really well. It's offers some free marketing support to local tourism businesses who are ABOT members.

AIRO contributed \$2000 and ABoT put in \$1000 from membership fees for the project, which will run again next year. It's helping to attracting more visitors to our area and encouraging them to stay longer by showcasing all there is to do and see in the area served by ABOT. When visitors stay longer, it benefits both tourism operators and all the other businesses that serve them.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

As the pandemic escalated, the ABOT Council recognized the need to provide up to date information to our Members on Covid-related safety and business support initiatives. We continue to collect and send out a variety of business, educational and Covid-safety updates from government, Annapolis Investment in Rural Opportunities (AIRO), the Atlantic Chamber, and business education and tourism organizations.

Business Expo and other events

We delayed our annual Business Expo and Awards this Fall and are now working on plans to hold the event next Spring, if Covid restrictions allow. We'll be keeping our members up to date as plans develop. Along with the Business Awards, we will be working on a plan to acknowledge local businesses who stood out in their leadership and community contributions as they survived, and even thrived, despite Covid restrictions.

The Natal Days Parade was cancelled. However, our Parade of Lights, held on the last Friday in November, was bigger than ever this year. Over 400 people came out for the tree lighting and the visit by Santa, followed by hot chocolate and cookies and then fireworks near Market Square.

It was wonderful to see all the children who gathered around Santa and his sleigh. And the fireworks were spectacular. We'd like to have them again and will be looking for funding to help do that.

We have so many people to thank for their help to make the Parade of Lights such a success:

1. Laura Robinson who helped get even more businesses involved this year and donated all the hot chocolate from the Whiskey Teller.
2. Melody Tolson of the Red Onion Market who organized getting the mason jar lanterns made. She's volunteered to help make even more next year.
3. Ken Knox, and the Town of Annapolis Royal for the fireworks display at the end of the event.
4. Our Police Chief and the police officers who kept the parade route organized.
5. The Tap Room Growlers sang Christmas carols along the parade route and our local brass band played in Market Square.

6. The Cookie Team donated their time and made over 400 holiday cookies: They included Tammy Stewart, Janice Seaven, Heather Fox-Perry, and ABOT Council members Julia Redgrave, Wayne Smith, and Sharon Hall.
7. Home Hardware provided Santa and his elves with a wonderful sleigh.
8. And finally, Santa and his elves who, once again brought joy and delight to all the kids—both large and small.

Thank you to everyone who stepped up this year. Let's plan to make it even better next year and encourage visitors to come and share in our fun.

In conclusion, although some things have slowed down because of Covid-19, your area Board of Trade has continued to move forward, little by little. Our Council and its Project Teams continued to meet by Zoom and in socially distanced small project teams.

We look forward to continuing our work in the coming year. And we hope that 2022 will see steadily improving business conditions for everyone.

We continue to want to hear from our Members about how you're doing and what you need from ABOT. If you want to take part in one of our projects, or if you have project ideas of your own—just let us know. We're only as strong as the people who contribute their time and energy to get involved and make things happen.

I wish you and your families all the best for the coming Holiday Season and for 2022 to be an even better year for everyone.



**Charles Stewart,
President**