



## THIRD AGE LEARNING YORK REGION

### Seventh Annual General Meeting (AGM) October 25th, 2021 – 12:00 pm Via Zoom Meeting

#### President's Report

It is my great privilege to give my first-ever report as President of TALYR. I took over the post after our last AGM and, as we all know and appreciate, this past year has not been a normal one by any stretch. That said, I am very proud of our organization and our ability to be flexible in the face of uncertain times. We found some new ways to innovate and to achieve some interesting “firsts” for TALYR, many of course brought on by the continuing pandemic and the restrictions we and others are taking to ensure the health and safety of all our members.

#### Speaker Programs

Since there was no opportunity to return safely to any in-person lectures, the entire year's offering was done virtually, via Zoom, for the first time ever. We did our usual Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 (7 and 6 lectures, respectively) via Zoom. As before, these were not “themed” per se, but rather we strove to present varied and wide-ranging sets of lectures over a broad range of topics that our Members told us were of interest.

Also, for the first time, we added a new Winter Series. In the past we had been reluctant to offer in-person lectures in the winter because of the higher likelihood of inclement weather but also because many of our members took the opportunity to travel in winter to warmer climes. However, once we were using Zoom for virtual webinars, it seemed a timely experiment to see how our Members would like an additional series in the Winter that they could enjoy from the warmth of their living room (wherever that was!). We presented 4 speakers in January and February and not only were the webinars well attended, but the series was also our highest rated in 2020-2021. Based on that success, we plan to offer a Winter Series in 2022 as well!

A brief summary of some of the more pertinent “success metrics” of our 2020-2021 Series of Zoom Webinars can be found below.

	Number of Webinars Presented	Number of Unique Viewers (Series Average)	Ratings of Either “Excellent” or “Good” (Series Average)
Fall 2020	7	149	91%
Winter 2021	4	177	96%
Spring 2021	6	199	89%

As you can see from the table above, we expanded our viewership from 149 (avg) last Fall to almost 200 (avg) this past Spring. Of special note is our overall participant satisfaction (as measured by your ratings of each webinar/lecturer as either “Excellent” or “Good”) which is enviable for any organization. We are justifiably proud of the quality of the program we have been presenting, and the level of engagement and appreciation of our Members.

### The Future of Using Zoom

Using Zoom also gave us the opportunity to try out some other new ideas for the first time. No longer constrained by geography, we recruited some speakers from outside our usual “catchment” area, and saw lectures originating from Kitchener-Waterloo, from Ottawa, and even from the US (Virginia). In the fall series currently underway, we are expanding that trend, having already had our very first Trans-Atlantic talk, all the way from Dublin, Ireland.

I can tell you that back in February when we put a detailed survey out in the field and specifically asked: “When COVID is NO LONGER an issue in the future, and we have NO attendance restrictions, and taking fully into account the pros and cons of each of the following options, which would you actually PREFER going forward: ONLY in person, ONLY Virtual via Zoom, or some Mixture of the two, fully 20% said ONLY Zoom, and 50% said some sort of mixture (to be determined) so clearly it seems like Zoom has a future in our organization. Going forward, we may therefore see other firsts, such as a mixture of in-person lectures (once we can all safely do so again) perhaps augmented by Zoom webinars. This is an area of active discussion at our Board table, and we will, as we always do, solicit input from our members as to what you prefer.

## Venue Update

Those members who have been with us for more than the last year will know that our former home at the Aurora Cultural Center is not available to us for some time due to some massive renovations and construction to build the now officially named “Aurora Town Square”, a \$60M project of which a new and improved ACC will be an integral part. Current “official” estimates for completion of the Square suggest Fall of 2022, but my own view is we will be lucky to see this done by 2023 given the understandable delays and the current pace.

As such, even though we do not know when Covid restrictions will allow us to meet in person again, on the assumption that it will be in the somewhat foreseeable future, it seems clear that we will not be going back to the ACC any time soon. We are following the construction developments and will keep all apprised as we get more clarity. We assume that once the ACC is ready to reopen, that we will be able to negotiate a deal for TALYR to be “homed” there again, but it is too soon to have any details.

Last year, before Covid closed us all down, we had negotiated a space at the Cineplex Odeon Theatre complex in Aurora but of course we never managed to actually make that happen when we had to cancel our Spring 2020 series outright. Assuming that Covid restrictions allow in-person gatherings again before we have access to the ACC, the Cineplex theatres will be on our list to re-negotiate as a temporary home. They have already indicated their enthusiasm for us to consider the theatre again if need be.

## Financial Considerations

In another set of firsts, unlike every other Third Age Network group in Ontario that I am aware of, our Webinar series have been completely free of charge to our members. In the short term, we felt we were able to use reserves and our modest annual Membership fees of \$10/person to offset the costs of the Zoom webinars and provide them to our members at no additional charge. It was our way of giving back to our Members for their continued loyalty and support though the pandemic.

Looking ahead, however, we will clearly NOT be able to sustain that in the future. At some point in the very near future, our reserves will be depleted, and we will need to start charging again for our lectures, whether in person or via Zoom.

## Thank You to Our Volunteers (Board; Program Committee)

This AGM marks the very first time since TALYR’s inception, that one of our most familiar members – specifically Mr. Barrie Braiden – is no longer on the Board of Directors. Barrie was one of TALYR’s Founding Members in 2014, has served as Director, Registrar, President and Past President of our organization so it seems very odd to many of us to not see him around every table anymore.

Barrie's term as Past-President has now come to an end and while thankfully, he is still available to mentor me, he is no longer formally a member of the Board. I would be remiss if I did not take this public opportunity to thank Barrie most sincerely on behalf of all of us for his tireless efforts over the past many years. Thank you, Barrie!

During the past year we also said goodbye to another of our Board members, Ms. Marylou Miner. Marylou stepped down because she was moving out of Ontario – making a commute to our Board meetings just a tad difficult. Marylou brought both wit and flair to our Board and on behalf of all of us I thank her for the year she served on our Board.

In all of that “leaving” we were very fortunate, however, to also attract a new Board member this past year. Mr. Blair Day, a former teacher, and retired High School Principal here in York Region agreed to throw his hat in the ring this past year and has joined us on both the Board and Program Committee. Welcome to Blair and his very understated brand of wit and charm that I am getting to appreciate more and more as I get a chance to work alongside him as a colleague.

As you can see in the following table, we have 2 formal bodies - the Board of Directors and a Program Committee - both of course comprised 100% of volunteers. We will be undertaking a bit of a push in the coming weeks to see if we can persuade any of our Members to step forward to be considered for a volunteer position. I am, especially anxious to see the ranks of our Board members expand a bit beyond the 5 current members. If you have any interest in being considered, please contact me directly – we would be delighted to see some new leadership and some fresh eyes and perspectives around the Board table.

Carole Langford continues her stewardship of the Program Committee, much to our benefit and with our profound thanks. We have added some new members to the Program Committee this past year (thank you Patricia Montgomery-Rundle, Mary Baxter, and Ann Evans for stepping up!). This expanded Committee will ensure that we have a lot of input and a diversity of perspectives around the Committee table. Our Lecture/Webinar program is after all, the heart and soul of what we do and who we are, so the more fulsome the input, the better.

<u>Board of Directors 2021-2022</u>	<u>Program Committee 2021-2022</u>
Michael Wosnick, President	Carole Langford, Chair
Heather MacKay, Secretary	Mary Baxter
Carole Langford, Treasurer	Blair Day
Blair Day	Ann Evans
Kathy Wosnick	Heather MacKay
	Patricia Montgomery-Rundle
	Kathy Wosnick
	Michael Wosnick (ex officio)

All in all, this has been both a challenging and a rewarding year. I have personally learned more about Zoom than I thought I ever needed to know! I am very glad we had this opportunity to make “lemonade” from the lemons we were handed, as the saying goes, but I also know that we are all missing that social interaction that was a big part of our weekly programs.

Looking forward to another successful year for TALYR as we try to present an engaging program for our appreciative community of enthusiastic Lifelong Learners.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Michael A. Wosnick, PhD**  
 President, Third Age Learning - York Region (TALYR)



*Thank you for supporting Third Age Learning - York Region.  
 A Federally Incorporated Non-Profit Corporation - # 878579-1*