

Annual General Meeting 2018 President's Report – Kathleen Young

It is my pleasure to tell you about the events of the past year and inform you of the direction your Board has been taking the BIA. My report will focus on things that have happened since our last annual general meeting, which was held in October 2017.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the Ontario BIA conference in Collingwood in mid-April. The three-day event was an opportunity to meet new people, and gather new ideas. It included seminars, meals, an awards dinner, keynote speakers and a tradeshow. The most notable parts of the conference were the keynote speakers, Doug Griffiths and Roger Brooks. What I learned is attitude is everything. We all need to strive to be part of the solution, not add to the problem. We need to cooperate with other businesses, organizations, and communities. Competition is actually a positive, not a negative, and we all can succeed together.

Interestingly, this year was a year of collaboration. Curtis, Chelsea, Dom and I began some monthly meetings with representatives from the Ingersoll Chamber of Commerce. It is great to see cooperation between the groups and find out how we can assist each other and all 'pull' in the same direction. One of the main ideas we have been focussing on is to have a speaker series and I am happy that the first Ingersoll Talks Small Business event follows our AGM tonight. Also, last month at the town council meeting there was an announcement that \$25,000 from Unifor Local 88 was being donated to put towards an LED sign for our downtown. This looks like it will be going up in Dewan Park and additional funding as needed, above the \$25,000, is proposed to be covered by the BIA and Chamber.

A new Social Market developed. Lisa Dube had insight into this concept, with a vision to reconnect the community to Downtown Ingersoll and develop a culture of creativity, unity and social engagement. The ultimate goal was to reestablish Ingersoll's downtown as a vibrant place to be proud of, build community spirit, and encourage growth and prosperity throughout our community. These events were held on the third Thursday, from July to October, in the park by the gazebo, now known as Heritage Square, and soon had a great following. Interest was kept up at the market with a different band, and a wide variety of vendors at each event.

Also, another collaborative Ingersoll event was the Family Bike Day, held in June. Many different service groups came together to raise funds for a local child's service dog. The BIA participated by sponsoring the family bike ride stop at the gazebo by supplying water, nutrition bars and handing out bags of coupons from BIA businesses.

Sidewalk Sales - this summer we planned three sidewalk sales to correspond to the three holiday weekends - The Red and White Sale, which we also held in 2017 to celebrate Canada Day; the Sunsational Sidewalk Sale which was held on the Civic Holiday weekend; and a Back to School sale that was held in conjunction with the Labour Day weekend and HarvestFest. A different band was booked for each, we had entertainment booked from Yoga to facepainting and balloon twisting.

The board of directors discussed the three sales and next year plan to return to two sales - the Red and White sale and a sale to be held the same day as the Kiwanis Hot dog Day.

The Oxford Street Parking lot was under construction for many weeks early this summer to redo the sewer line and repave. I know the timing wasn't the best time for some businesses, but thank you to all of the businesses for your cooperation. The project was completed on schedule. The weeds that were growing in the median area finally were dealt with and we are expecting some larger flower pots to be there next summer to further beautify the area. The gardens and flowers downtown were particularly beautiful this summer and we need to express our thanks to the Parks and Recreation Department.

Parking - always an interesting topic for the board to deal with. There was a new parking enforcement officer hired about a year ago. The board's ultimate goal has always been to free up parking spaces for shoppers and business clientele, and to encourage staff members, and business owners to park in the 8-hour lots. We asked for enforcement to continue through the month of December, and the parking bylaw was changed to accommodate that request. You may also have heard that parking infraction prices were raised. That was done by town council and was not a BIA request, but has worked to make violations more noticed by the recipients and more of a deterrent. Now, I rarely hear of shoppers complaining that they can't find a parking spot.

We sought to improve communication and updated our email list, a job that was very overdue. Over 70 new emails have recently been incorporated into our BIA list, so I hope you are all finding more communication coming through from the BIA Board and from the Town. If you are not regularly receiving emails from Lauryn, please let us know.

We purchased two accessible picnic tables which were installed in Heritage Square early this summer. They were very well used and a much appreciated addition for downtown shoppers.

Something new we tried, to recognize Family Day, was to sponsor a 2-hour skate at the arena - board members handed out hot chocolate and Bia cookies.

We purchased five inserts, for the new town entrance signs, which encourage people to shop downtown and rediscover downtown Ingersoll. There is also some investigation into town-wide directional signage...that will be beneficial to help visitors find not only downtown, but also other significant locations within our borders.

As the building has been sold, we did lose the Carr's Walkway, as the town could not warrant keeping it open, due to the cost. With that we also lost our main street public washrooms. Town council is considering a plan to build a stand alone unit in Heritage Square, hopefully in the next year. For now, we will need to ask shoppers to go to the library or town hall to access public washrooms.

In the new year we will find out if we will be getting approval for the funding request that was submitted for DownTown WiFi.

Also, I am excited to announce that we are doing something different to encourage Christmas shopping in Ingersoll this year. With the assistance of some prizes donated by the Ingersoll Chamber of Commerce, we are offering ballots for some fabulous draws. For every \$20 they spend at a Downtown BIA business, shoppers are eligible for a ballot from one of six of the board members' stores (Floral Occasions, Ingersoll Pharmasave, Lesser Brothers Jewellers, Nutrition Outlet, Olde Bakery Cafe, Young's Pharmacy). Additional prizes will be donated by participating businesses. So, this will be your chance to get the name of your business on the "Shop Ingersoll Pole" in Dewan Park. . To secure your spot on the "Shop Ingersoll Pole", the BIA requests the donation of an item, or gift certificate,

in the amount of at least \$40.00 to be used in this year's Shop Ingersoll Ballot Draws. The email asking for confirmation of participation will be sent out Wednesday morning and the deadline will be Friday, November 9th to get back to Lauryn. Businesses selected to participate will be chosen on a first come, first served basis and there are limited spaces available. So, watch your emails.

Always remember that the Board of Directors works, and function, on your behalf. Your input at any time during the year is encouraged. New thoughts and ideas are always welcome and please let us know if you would consider putting your name in as a director of our board.

I feel we have moved in some great new directions over the past year and I want to thank the board of directors for their ideas and support. Thank you to each of the BIA business owners and employees who all work together to make Ingersoll an amazing place to live and work. Remember that attitude is everything, we need to cooperate with other businesses, organizations and communities, and together we can all succeed.