

Oak Ridges Trail Association

ANNUAL REPORT

AGM April 2024

"Building Pathways to an Active Lifestyle"



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OAK RIDGES TRAIL ASSOCIATION -2024 ANNUAL REPORT

AGENDA

- 7:00 Welcome and call to order
- Adoption of the agenda
- Approval of the Minutes for ORTA AGM 2023
- Recognition of Chapter Chairs & Recognition of Directors, Key Committee Members & Office Staff
- Motion to adopt reports contained in this Annual Report*
- Treasurer's Report – Bob Alexander
- Motion to adopt Financial Statements*
- Updated By-Laws – Lissa Dwyer
- Motion to approve the updated March 2024 ByLaws*
- Past President's Report
- Nominating Committee
- Motion to adopt Board of Directors for 2024-2025*
- Awards and Presentations
- Adjournment of the Business Meeting
- 7:45 Break before presentation
- 8:00 Guest Speaker – Liz Calvin, Green Durham

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Thank you to the many photographers who share their talents with ORTA through our Facebook page. Pictures used on the front cover: Cita Wong, Kathy Hilts, Chris Abromonis, Anna Sunn, Janice Wainright, Molly Cheung and Karen Graham

Director's and Key Committee Member's Reports:

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Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

Meeting Chairperson was Wilma Millage and Minutes were recorded by Lissa Dwyer. Official notice of the AGM was issued in Winter 2023 Trail Talk on Jan 14, 2023 sent to the membership by email and hard copy as needed. Annual Reports were emailed to the Membership on April 11th with 9 by Canada Post April 16th.

In addition, the Annual Report is available at the registration desk which includes the minutes from last year's meeting together with reports from your Chapter Chairs, 2022 Financial Summary and we hope that you enjoy reviewing it. You may also have reviewed it online as it was shared that way earlier in the month in an email to all membership. Well over a dozen different reports are included which I'm sure you'll find interesting.

Each member (one person from each family membership) will have received a card when you registered. Please hold up that card to indicate your approval when called to vote.

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm with 54 members present.

The first order of business is to approve tonight's Agenda, having received no other additions before publication.

Motion to approve the AGM 2023 agenda as presented within the Annual Report.

Moved by Michele Donnelly and seconded by Weibo Cheng Carried

The second order of business is to approve the official Minutes from our 2022 Annual General Meeting which are also contained in your Annual Report. As there were no amendments brought to our attention,

Motion to approve the Minutes from the ORTA 2022 AGM as printed in the 2023 Annual Report distributed to the membership.

Moved by Bob Charlton and seconded by Noel Bain Carried

As you know, it takes a lot of dedicated people to have ORTA run as it does especially in light of the last few years. Finding a well of resilience and willingness to adapt during this ever-changing time illustrates how amazing our team is and how important they are to our membership.

Over the course of the past year, your Board of Directors and several Key Committee members have put in many hours in support of the organization so I will read their names in an effort to recognize their contribution to our organization; your Board of Directors..

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Treasurer Bob Alexander,

Member at Large Weibo Cheng,

Secretary Lissa Dwyer,

Regional Director Brian Millage,

Trail Director Garry Niece,

and myself, Past President & Discovery Night Coordinator, Wilma Millage.

Key volunteers to acknowledge include Trail Talk editor and Office Manager Michele Donnelly, Hike Coordinator Derek Cowbourne, Volunteer Coordinator Gaye Mas, Webmaster Bob Charlton, Membership coordinator Caroline Schweitzer, Bookkeeper Simonette Fellion and Greenbelt Representative Kevin Lowe. We remain very grateful to all the members who serve in other ways and I apologize if I overlooked anyone.

We thank them also for contributing to the Annual Report to share their stories for 2022.

Motion to receive reports from Directors, Chapter Chairs and Key Volunteers including Hike and Membership Reports as included in the 2023 Annual Report.

Moved by Garry Niece and seconded by George Gordon Carried

Bob Alexander, Treasurer shared financial updates for the association.

Using the new strategy of committee engagement review in lieu of external auditor's review. Big thanks to Anna Sunn, Mac Chu and Garry Niece. Revenues are reduced due to guidebook sales after a big year priore. No government assistance was received during this past year. Expenses were reduced in several ways.

2023 anticipated deficit of \$10k due to lower interest on invested funds. Assume no significant increase in memberships. Deficit has been run over last several years due to the absence of the Adventure Relay revenues and reliance on donations and membership fees.

Michele and Simonetta do all the work and deserve recognition.

Motion to adopt 2022 Financial Statements as reviewed by Committee included in the 2023 Annual Report beginning on page 15.

Moved by Russ Barton and seconded by Judy Carey Carried

Under Ontario's Not-for-Profit-Corporations Act (ONCA), ORTA falls under a new category of nonprofits called public benefit corporations. Nonprofits that are charities

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will always be a public benefit corporation (PBC). As a PBC, ORTA can waive having either an annual audit or a review engagement as long as gross revenue is less than \$100,000. In order to waive this requirement, an extraordinary resolution must be passed by a special vote, with at least 80% of members present voting in favour (or all members need to agree to it in writing). When a vote requires more than the usual amount of support from your members, it is called an extraordinary resolution and every extraordinary resolution must be voted on once a year.

Be it resolved that:

WHEREAS:

- a) ORTA is a public benefit corporation; and
- b) A minimum of 80% of the votes cast at the annual meeting of members are in favour;

The directors waive the requirement to appoint an auditor and to not have an audit or a review engagement in respect of the corporation's financial year ending December 31, 2023.

Motion to use a committee of review for the upcoming year.

Moved by Derek Cowbourne and seconded by Anna Sunn

Carried

Wilma shared some specific highlights of the year. Hikes are almost back to normal with the public being welcomed as before and covid restrictions have been removed. We have grown our membership during the pandemic and it's resulted in some new Chapter Chairs in both the Eastern and Western Regions – Steve Fisher in King and Mike Baker in Scugog with Scott Heaslip and Olivia Petrie are Co-Chairing in Stouffville. There are new volunteers in several positions, but just as many which remain vacant. She reminded everyone that she is hosting in the absence of a President and manages Discovery Night because she thinks it's a really important. We are honoured that Heather & John Cooper have agreed to take over ticket sales and Pam & Paul Robinson have recently assumed responsibility for refreshments. Thank you of course to Bob Comfort and Judy Pergau for all the time that they served selling the tickets and to Dianne and Bob Charlton for your time contributed to refreshments.. but we otherwise still would love to have a new coordinator to reach out to speakers and schedule their presentations. Michele has been managing Trail Talk by herself since Marilyn had to step down and you've likely noticed that the size of our Board is shrinking while not getting any younger. Please consider stepping into any of these roles to lighten the load for others – we're finding many applications for a shared ownership that minimize the amount of time needed to perform the role.

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Scott Heaslip, Co Chapter Chair for Stouffville, presented the candidates for your Board of Directors for the current year reminding the membership that new members are always welcome.

The following persons have consented to Nomination as Directors for the year 2023-2024:

Scott shared a brief bio for each of the Board Members to illustrate their contributions over the years including how many years served in various roles.

Bob Alexander	Weibo Cheng	Lissa Dwyer
Garry Niece	Brian Millage	Wilma Millage

We will continue to invite all of our Chapter Chairs to join the Board Meetings in the hope that they will want to step up to become a Board member in future. This would allow them to be more involved in the day to day working of the overall organization while engaging a broader perspective on decisions. Having their voices included during Covid discussions was tremendously helpful.

At the first meeting following the AGM, the Directors will appoint Officers in accordance with the applicable By-law#1.

Motion that the membership approve the slate of Directors for the year ahead as listed in the 2023 Annual Report.

Motion was moved by Carol Fraser and seconded by Tracey Calver. Carried

Finally, we can honour and celebrate our members who have risen above in their contributions to our organization. Over the course of a year, so much work gets done often without much fuss, so this is the time to draw some attention to the folks whose efforts allow ORTA to move forward with improved trails, stronger boardwalks, a lifetime of shared wisdom and experience. Thank you all!

The award categories are:

- **Commendation Awards:** a maximum of 6 are awarded each year to Members who have made specific contributions to the management and development of ORTA and its programs.

Gail Dutchak, Carol Fraser, Cornelius Sommer and Caiti MacLelland

- **Trail Builder Awards:** a maximum of 4 of these are awarded each year to individuals who have made significant contributions to the building and maintenance of the trail.

David Smith, Martin Earle, Noel & Judy Carey and Bob & Judy Comfort

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- **Outstanding Member or Member of the Year Award:** one award each year is presented to the Member who in recent years has done the most to advance the purposes of ORTA.

Josie Klostranec - Josie joined the Oak Ridges Trail Association in January of 2007. For over 15 years, she participated in several volunteer capacities. Josie volunteers as a Trail Captain, in Whitchurch Stouffville, our Porritt Pangman Tract keeping the area clear of debris including fallen trees, helps build bridges, repaints trail markers and keeps the trail well marked. In 2012, Josie became a Hike Leader and has led hikes throughout the moraine in all four seasons.

- **Lifetime Achievement Award:** one award each year is presented to the Member who over many years has done the most to advance the purposes of ORTA.

Kevin Lowe - Kevin's contributions to ORTA include: Board Director from 2013 until October 2022 · President April 2016 until April 2022 · Past president April 2022. He taught several Hike Ontario Hike Leader courses to our members, represented ORTA in an input session organized by Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) for partners of the park, of which we are one, providing commentary and direction to the Park's long-range plan. Won the 2020 ORTA Commendation Award for teaching Hike Ontario Hike Leader Course for four years. Thank you for your leadership and many years of distinguished service. Greenbelt Initiative— Kevin has represented ORTA with our involvement with a group of stakeholders such as conservation authorities, municipal governments and other agencies along the length of the moraine to plan and create a lasting moraine trail. The intent of this group is to improve the trail, move more of the trail off road and ensure that the trail will continue to be available to future generations. The group has created an action plan to be implemented over the next several years. Kevin was the only person recognized who was unable to attend but we wish him well.

Also handed out was the award for Michele Donnelly for Member of the Year 2022 who developed a program for online hike registrations when the challenges of Covid meant that we needed an online system to manage members and others. It couldn't be delivered last year.

Group of volunteers from Levi Strauss will be coming out May 11th to blaze trails, rebuild boardwalks and make a donation. They have done this 5 or 6 times in the past. What a great teambuilding effort.

Trans Canada Trail is the new name again of the trail that runs the length and width of Canada and gone is The Great Trail.

Chainsaw certification course is being offered – Bruce Cohen and Craig Barnes received their certification cards tonight. Trail maintenance teams will note that we are

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transitioning to battery powered equipment and moving away from gas powered devices.

Brian Westside talked about the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust – 400 acres acquired in the last year. Bought 200 acres on the Ganaraska Road for Kirkland’s warblers. Having a meeting Jun 17th, advised to check the website.

This concludes the formal portion of our meeting.

\$80 raised in 50/50 draw – winning # is 1996180 – Rob

Motion to adjourn the 2023 Annual General Meeting:

Moved by Bob Alexander at 8:00pm.



Photo credit: Cheryl Dawn Fisher

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CHAPTER CHAIR AND REGIONAL REPORTS 2024

WESTERN REGION REPORT

Brian Millage, Regional Director

King, Ed Millar, Steve Fisher co-Chapter Chairs

King did not experience any major weather events impacting the amount of time required for trail maintenance in 2023. Generally, it was warmer and drier than normal with just enough rain to keep the grass and weeds growing. King section averaged one tree fall to clean up each month which included three requests from the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) in the Happy Valley Forest. On the other hand, the lawn mower was used a total of fourteen times. In addition, the trimmer was used on a number of occasions to keep the vegetation from encroaching on the trail especially in areas not accessible by the lawnmower. Repairs to boardwalks and upgrades to blazes were carried out. Appreciation is extended to Bill Fines and Craig Barnes as willing volunteers whenever called upon to help. Co-chair Steve Fisher adds his appreciation to volunteer Rodney Harrison for monitoring and maintaining the trails in King.

Caledon, Neil McGeachy, Chapter Chair & Brian Millage, Regional Chair

Scroll ahead to the Uxbridge report for a collective summary by Regional Chair Brian Millage.

CENTRAL REGION REPORT

Brian Millage, Regional Director

Aurora, Bruce Corbett, Chapter Chair

The Aurora trails section runs from Bathurst Street on the west to Woodbine Avenue on the east. The hiker, through this 14K section of the Oak Ridges Trail, strolls through forest, town roads, several parks and more forest and more road. In forests and parks, our trail is marked by the usual white blazes. However, on town streets, the trail is marked by white signs with arrows that show the route through town. The Aurora section is designed to give hikers an interesting route through our town that includes all the variety of trail noted here.

An exciting future prospect should be mentioned. The Highland Gate development has already created lovely trails through the western part of the area from Bathurst Street to Yonge Street. As the building progresses, there will be new trail opening flowing



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eastward. This presents the prospect of an eventual extension of ORTA trail options which would include more off-road routes through the town.

From Aurora Town Park, a one-block diversion west from the official route now offers hikers a first-hand view of the new Aurora Town Square which is nearing completion. The new theatre attached to the Cultural Centre is linked to the library by the Treasure Hill Bridge which overlooks a uniquely created town gathering space with a water/ice feature and amphitheatre. It's worth a look.

Another Aurora reality is the rail line that runs through town. Since there are only two rail crossings in town, the ORTA trail planners chose the Wellington Street crossing to show hikers where the Aurora citizenry boards the trains for Toronto or Barrie. The ORT will then take you south through 2K of the lovely Sheppard's Bush and Vandorf Woodlot to emerge onto Vandorf Sideroad where the trail heads east all the way to Woodbine Ave and beyond.

For those interested in trail networks, it should be noted that Aurora is a trails crossroads. The ORTA trail runs east-west along the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Nokiidaa Trail runs north-south right through our town. The Nokiidaa Trail is part of the (as yet incomplete) "Lake-to-Lake Trail" which will run from Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe.

In Aurora, we now look forward to Spring Trail Inspections and the annual giant Street Festival in June where ORTA will again be represented by Lissa Dwyer and volunteers at the ORTA Booth. They will talk all day to inform many more people about the healthy diversion that our trails offer anyone and everyone.



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Whitchurch-Stouffville, Scott Heaslip & Olivia Petrie, Co-Chapter Chairs, Deputy Co-Chairs Tracy McNaught and Ryan Zylstra

TRAIL INSPECTIONS

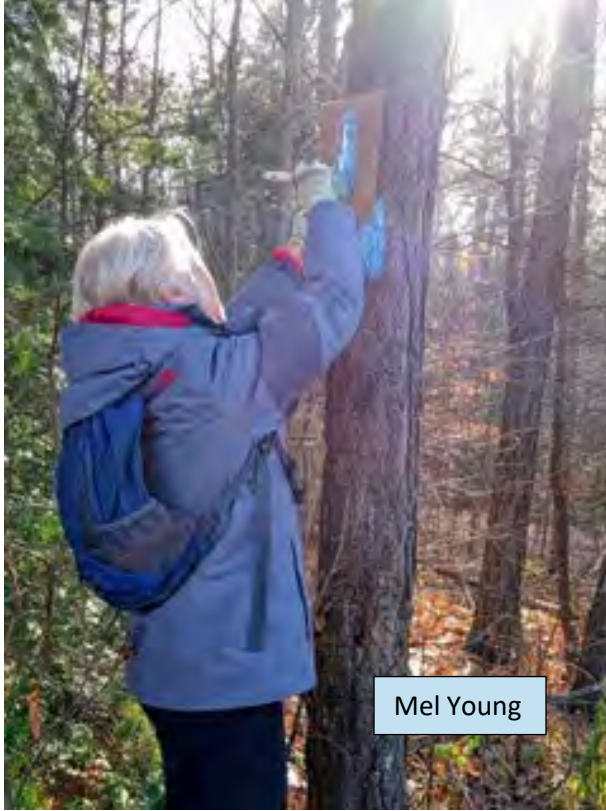
The Whitchurch-Stouffville Chapter of ORTA looks after eleven trail sections in the Stouffville area of the Oak Ridges Moraine, nine trails are part of the York Region Forest and two are part of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. Our twenty volunteer trail captains and co-captains take great care of the eleven trail sections – conducting inspections twice annually, keeping the trails clear of branches and undergrowth, and maintaining the blazes and signage throughout the trails. ORTA is forever grateful to these volunteers for their dedication to this work:

1. Christine Ugarenko and Daniel Braganza, Clarke Tract, Main and Side Trails
2. Mel Young and Rob Young, Dainty Tract, including Jesse Thompson Road
3. Ryan Zylstra and Halina Przybyszewska, Eldred King Tract, Main Trail
4. Rob Robotham and Daniel Robotham, Eldred King Tract, Side Trail
5. Tracy McNaught and Lorna Talaska, Hall Tract, Main Trail
6. Caroline Schweitzer and Vicky Edgell, Hall Tract, Side Trail
7. Noel Bain and Rob Lawrence, Hollidge Tract including Ninth Line, Hillsdale Road and Tenth Line
8. Ruth Patterson and Scott Heaslip, Patterson Tract
9. David Smith and Josie Klostranec, Porritt Tract and Pangman Springs Side Trail
10. Evan Ryness and Jim Ryness, Robinson Tract, Main Trail including Warden Road, Slaters Road and Whitchurch Museum Grounds
11. Cornelius Sommer and Janet Billard, Robinson Tract, Side Trail and Whitchurch Conservation Area



Noel Bain and hiking pup Ginny

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Mel Young

Through their inspection work this year, the captains/co-captains note that all trails continue to be in very good condition and their work mainly involved trimming branches and cutting off fallen limbs that were blocking the trails, moving smaller fallen trees off the trails, touching up painted blazes, replacing plastic blazes and noting places where additional ORTA signage may be needed. Happily, several teams noted that the litter on the trails and in parking lots appear to be considerably less than in previous years and we hope that this trend continues.

The Chapter also works closely with colleagues at the Region and Conservation Authority, and the larger issues noted through the inspections are reported to the York Region Forestry team for follow up. In 2023, these issues included areas that have overgrown and are difficult to keep clear, erosion issues, downed trees and hanging

branch hazards, garbage in the parking lots and invasive species that may be spreading near the trails.

OF NOTE

Congratulations Scott! – Kudos to Co-Chair Scott Heaslip for becoming a newly qualified hike leader – watch for an increased number of weekly hikes in 2024.

Thank You Rob, Lorna and Halina! – Rob Lawrence will be stepping down from his role as Trail Co-Captain looking after the Hollidge Tract following the Spring Inspections. Lorna Talaska and Halina Przybyszewska also stepped down from their Co-Captain roles looking after the Hall Main and Eldred King Main tracts respectively. Our deepest thanks to Rob, Lorna and Halina for their continuous dedication to ORTA over the years.

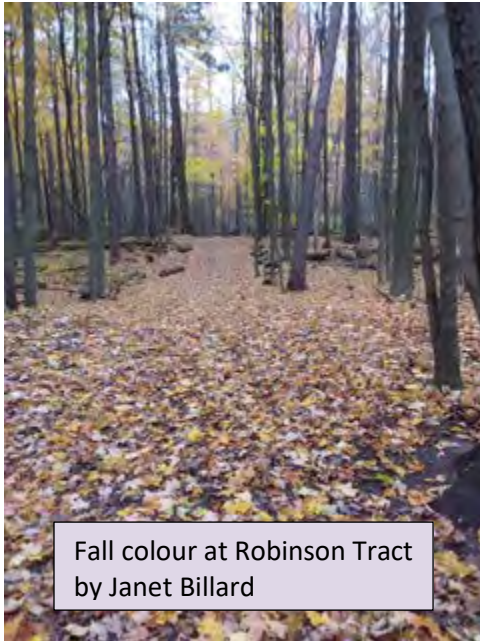


Rob Young trimming

Stouffville Strawberry Festival – On July 1, 2023 the W-S Chapter set up a booth at Stouffville's Strawberry Festival to promote ORTA. Eight volunteers spent the day answering questions about the trails and the hikes and helping to inspire new members

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and volunteers to get involved with the organization. We are grateful to the following volunteers for their generous giving of their time and making the day a success: Rob Young, Mel Young, Daniel Brazanga, Anne Jones, Molly Cheung, Victor Szabos, Scott Heaslip and Olivia Petrie.



Fall colour at Robinson Tract
by Janet Billard

Green Up Clean Up, York Region Forest – On May 13, 2023, W-S Co-Chair Scott Heaslip was one of the many volunteers who participated in the York Forestry team's Green Up Clean Up event. After a short hiatus, this annual event was restarted in 2023 to devote one day to cleaning up the litter along the Regional Forest road frontages. Watch for information about the 2024 Green Up Clean Up event coming soon.

York Region Forest Turns 100! – 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the York Region Forest and a several events are being organized to celebrate the occasion and learn about its history, including community tree-planting events, museum exhibits and contest, and forest walks, some led by ORTA hike leaders. The celebrations started in January with the naming of the new Centennial Tract in East

Gwillimbury. Further information can be found on the [York Region Website](#).

EASTERN REGION REPORT

Brian Millage, Regional Director

Uxbridge, Co-Chairs Jon McPhee & Brian Millage

Uxbridge and Caledon Chapters- the year 2023 was a busy year on the ORTA trails, but with a cool spring, our maintenance crews were mainly involved with clearing fallen branches and minor litter discoveries until June. Then they swung into motion as trailside saplings started to sprout and meadow grass needed attention. Both in Uxbridge and Caledon, trail volunteers started the annual trimming back making sure blazes were visible and grasses were well off trail to help keep ticks at bay. In Caledon and part of King, Uxbridge chapter volunteers provided the usual "flying squad" to transport our self-propelled mowers, battery powered chain saws and extra hands to do several trail visits a year in an area where there are few volunteers.

Over the past two years, Neal Stein and Rodney Harrison were the main trail monitors in Caledon. Our thanks to Neal who provided valuable input during that period as he worked mostly solo to maintain the ORTA trails and blazed one main trail reroute from Mount Hope to Mount Wolfe Rd, then added a side trail at the Palgrave pond along the Humber River. His presence will be missed as he has had to withdraw from the role. Currently, Rodney Harrison and Paul Glaab, a Caledon landowner adjacent to our trail, are the regular trail monitors. They call in extra help as needed. A few more self-motivated volunteer monitors would be welcome along this very scenic section of the

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Oak Ridges Moraine Trail. Extra help is always available when requested. Steve and Cheryl Fisher often assist in this area in addition to their King Chapter activities.

For many years, the Levi Strauss Company has provided ORTA with an eager group of volunteers for a project on trail. This past year a group of twenty plus arrived to assist with two projects in Uxbridge. Anna Sunn led one group in trail trimming and rebranding the former Great Trail- yes, it is once again officially the Trans Canada Trail. A second group was directed by Martin Earle in the construction of several boardwalks in the Secord Forest south of Goodwood. The lumber for the project was purchased and pre-cut by Martin, Bruce and I and transported to the build site by Len May. The volunteers all became experts with the screw guns after a little instruction by the ORTA trail captains. Our sincere thanks to Levi Strauss for the volunteers and the subsequent financial donation to ORTA- this has been a longstanding partnership.

Elsewhere in busy Uxbridge, Jon McPhee and Noel and Judy Carey and Bob Comfort addressed fallen trees and several trail sections. After consultation among Lake Simcoe CA, DMBA and ORTA, a new route was established between Durham Forest and Skyloft to avoid possible incidents with cyclists going on a steep downhill route- the new route is better for all. Noel and Judy, and Wilma and I reblazed the route.

2024 will be a year of renewing blazes and keeping trails safe for the many ORTA hikers and others who use the ORTA trails. Our newly certified hike leaders are doing a great job of providing a wide variety of hikes in many locations across the Moraine and elsewhere- we hope you can join us.

Uxbridge Paid Parking Pilot

In response to the overcrowding experienced with parking on local roads during Covid, the Town of Uxbridge initiated a Pilot Paid Parking Project. Town of Uxbridge residents can register and park for free in the designated areas. All others can purchase a day permit or a seasonal permit for parking from the Town. The intention is that monies collected will be put back into the trails for maintenance and not be folded into general revenue of the Town of Uxbridge. To date, some of the money received from the program has been put back into maintenance of the trails in the Uxbridge area in the form of grass cutting (formerly paid for by Green Durham), and reconstruction of a bridge on the Uxbridge-Pickering Town Line, east of Concession 6.

Northumberland, Chapter Chair George Gordon

The Northumberland Chapter has had a quiet trail maintenance year. This is a result of two significant factors. The first is a storm that forced Ganaraska Conservation to close the trail in their jurisdiction for the summer and the second is a shortage of volunteers to form work parties. Over the past winter, I have had two volunteers come forward offering to join in trail maintenance. I am hopeful that this will allow us to do some work during the coming season. More volunteers are needed to make this effort successful. If you are able, please offer to help.

Scugog, Chapter Chairs Mike & Joanne Baker

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2023 was another great year out on the trails of Scugog Chapter of the Oak Ridges Trail. With the immeasurable help of Bob Comfort and the other maintenance volunteers, we continued to attend to required maintenance, both regular as well as ongoing residual effects of the 2022 storm. Looking ahead, we will be focussing on refreshing and re-painting of trail blazes, fill in where some are missing, and add additional signage to the trails (e.g. safety approaching major roads). We also look forward to engaging with new Scugog maintenance volunteers on a group hike to generate some great energy within our membership. It was also nice to see the completion of the minor route adjustment at Purple Woods which has always been a fan favourite. In October 2023, we represented ORTA at the annual Brooklin Harvest Festival which has an enormous attendance-base year after year. It was a great opportunity to connect with local Durham residents and let them know about the wonderful trail system in their own backyard. What we learned from speaking to the public at the fair, was a significant overall interest in local natural places to hike and many still not aware of all that ORTA has to offer. Therefore, public outreach will continue to be important within Scugog Chapter.

We would also like to extend a big thank you to Karen Graham (hike leader out on the east section of ORTA) who is one of ORTA's amazing hike leaders. Karen has consistently led hikes within Scugog, including her personal favourite along the Lakeridge to Ashburn section.

This sign has been posted at Hwy 12 and Regional Road 2 where the main trail crosses to reassure hikers that the trail continues on the other side and that their safety is a priority.



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HIKE PROGRAM

Derek Cowbourne, ORTA Hike Coordinator

I am pleased to report that the 2023 hike program was busy and very popular. There were:

- 213 hikes led by 28 hike leaders.
- 2339 hike participants by 275 individual hikers.
- 2241 km covered on the hikes, or 24,115 km if you sum the individual hikers.

Comparing these numbers to the year before, 2023 had a 6% increase in the number of hikes and a 33% increase in the number of individual hikers, the latter almost entirely due to the participation of public hikers: 59 of the 68 increase. My thanks to ORTA's hike leaders, your time and efforts are very much appreciated by all our hikers. It is especially pleasing to see the increased number of hikes being offered in the more easterly and westerly sections of the Trail.

All ORTA hike leaders are required to be Hike Ontario certified and, in 2023, 15 members completed the two courses run by Brian Millage and me. In April: Andy Patterson, Karen Graham, Laura Lind, Nancy Hogue, Peter Chan, Peter Fausten, Scott Cecchin, and Victor Szabo. In November: Cita Wong, Diane Smith, John Weston, Linda Weston, Martin Roy, Scott Heaslip, and Virginia Lee.

With the increasing number of hikers, we can always benefit from more hikes and more active hike leaders, and I would like to see another training course put on this Spring. Please let me know if you are interested in becoming an ORTA hike leader.

Completing the End-to-End of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is a major accomplishment, whether it takes a year or more to complete it or it's done within a few weeks. So many congratulations to the following 19 new E2Eers in 2023: Chris Johnston, Erica Lise Philips, Uriah Pond, Susan & Jeff Willar, Janice & Fred Higgins, Scott Cecchin, Geoffrey Temple, Ward Porritt, Golda & Sam Wiseman, Lilla Fodor, Joan Richard, Anna Sunn, Christine Zarebski, Cita Wong, Mary Stratas and Nancy Hogue.

My continuing thanks to Michele in the office and on her own time, and to Bob Comfort for managing the post-hike database.

I look forward to a continued growth in ORTA hikes in 2024, enjoyed by an increasing number of members, led by an increasing number of leaders, from end to end of the Oak Ridges Trail.

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Bob Alexander, Treasurer

Statement of Operations:

This is the second year of the ORTA completing an internal review of the financials rather than utilizing an outside resource. And again, a successful one. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Anna Sunn in saving us another \$3.5K.

2023 was a pretty good year and was an improvement of \$9K against the prior year. On the revenue side donations and grants, Discovery nights income and interest on our GICs were all significantly higher. Of particular note, was a donation from Levi Strauss who once again came through with over \$4K. Think of them fondly when buying jeans! On the expense side, increased costs from our Wild Apricot system was our major variance.

Compared to budget, we came in \$5K better than planned. Again, the Levi Strauss was the major contributor.

Statement of Financial Position:

Of particular note was that we ended the year with our cash and investment position unchanged from 2022.

2024 Budget:

Our 2024 budget calls for a shortfall of \$22K! Major reasons for this are our digital map project, website redesign and an increased focus on publicity. Our cash and investment position also indicates a reduction of \$21K. Against this backdrop came the realization that we as an organization need to come to grips with our expenses. The Board has made the very difficult decision that we need to reduce Michele's workload to one day a week. We anticipate that this will begin after next years AGM. For too many years we have relied on Michele picking up the slack when volunteer help wasn't available. We have started a project to accomplish this, and more detail will be available at this year's AGM. One thing is clear, we will need volunteers to step up.

While the news came as a shock, Michele has already made a number of suggestions to accomplish this, and it is very much appreciated. She is a true professional!

In closing I would again like to acknowledge the help and support of Simonetta Felin and Michele who do most of accounting work and deserve all the credit.

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Oak Ridges Trail Association

Statement of Financial Position

As at December 31	Actual 2022	Actual 2023	Budget 2023	Budget 2024
Assets				
Cash and short term investments	\$ 60,324	\$ 59,959	\$ 51,524	\$ 38,959
Accounts receivable	1,568	-	1,568	-
Guidebook inventory	16,516	14,473	15,066	13,073
Prepaid expenses	-	-	-	-
HST receivable	1,009	692	1,009	692
Total assets	\$ 79,417	\$ 75,124	\$ 69,167	\$ 52,724
Liabilities				
Accounts payable and accruals	\$ 350	\$ 1,173	\$ 350	\$ 1,173
Payroll taxes payable	1,459	1,443	1,459	1,443
Total liabilities	1,809	2,616	1,809	2,616
Net assets beginning of year	92,128	77,608	77,608	72,508
Operations shortfall for year	(14,520)	(5,100)	(10,250)	(22,400)
Net assets end of year	77,608	72,508	67,358	50,108
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 79,417	\$ 75,124	\$ 69,167	\$ 52,724

Approved on behalf of the Board:



Lissa Dwyer, Secretary



Bob Alexander, Treasurer.

March 23, 2024

OAK RIDGES TRAIL ASSOCIATION –2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Oak Ridges Trail Association						
Statement of Operations						
For the year ending December 31						
		Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget	
		2022	2023	2023	2024	
Operations Revenue						
Membership dues		\$ 17,260	\$ 16,740	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000	
Guidebook sales		3,385	3,607	1,800	2,000	
Donations and grants		12,164	17,239	13,000	12,000	
Discovery nights income		-	2,926	1,200	3,000	
Misc. income		922	3,920	2,000	2,500	
Total operations revenue		\$ 33,731	\$ 44,432	\$ 36,000	\$ 37,500	
Operating expenses						
Administration costs		\$ 27,814	\$ 27,041	\$ 28,000	\$ 30,000	
Guidebook costs		2,565	2,515	1,450	\$ 1,400	
Membership data base and support		4,074	5,371	5,000	\$ 5,500	
Rent		4,460	2,400	2,400	\$ 2,400	
Communication costs		2,234	1,827	2,000	\$ 1,500	
Insurance		2,178	2,117	2,300	\$ 2,300	
Association membership costs		1,559	2,187	1,600	\$ 1,600	
Trail maintenance		1,850	2,320	1,500	\$ 2,500	
Discovery nights expense		-	1,578		\$ 1,600	
All other		1,517	2,176	2,000	\$ 3,100	
Public Relations					500	
Digital map project					4,500	
Web site redesign					3,000	
Total operating costs		\$ 48,251	\$ 49,532	\$ 46,250	\$ 59,900	
Operations surplus (shortfall)		\$ (14,520)	\$ (5,100)	\$ (10,250)	\$ (22,400)	

OAK RIDGES TRAIL ASSOCIATION -2024 ANNUAL REPORT

PUBLICITY

Karen Graham, Publicity Coordinator

I'm an active hike leader and recently volunteered as our Publicity Coordinator.

Volunteering for our Association is very important and I would encourage others to consider volunteering as well. The time commitment does not need to be huge and we can help you find something that works for you.

The Publicity Coordinator promotes the Association, the Trail and the Moraine to members and the community. Here are a few updates for January-March 2024.

Website redesign:

- The Publicity Coordinator was requested to initiate an update to the ORTA website. The criteria for the new website included modern, user-friendly, informative, easy to navigate, and user engagement. The tentative launch for the website is April
- Volunteers will be trained to assist with ongoing updates to the website
- WildApricot calendar will be available on the website to view upcoming and previous hikes

Social media:

- An Instagram account and official Facebook Page have been created for ORTA
- Initiated regular posts on all social media channels
- Investigating how to untangle Facebook accounts to ensure a streamlined process for volunteers posting and monitoring accounts
- Occasionally utilize low-cost advertising via Facebook


Exhibits and promotion:

- Develop a list of 2024 events for ORTA to consider having a booth and volunteers at to promote the association, trail and hikes
- Review promotional materials and update them as needed

Ongoing initiatives:

- Weekly Trekker News is a brief email distributed every Monday morning
- Assist with the quarterly newsletter content
- Assist with member engagement, promoting non-member hikes to encourage membership, promoting volunteer opportunities
- Seek out free community websites and publication opportunities to promote ORTA

What can you do to help?

- Follow us on social media and give us a 'thumbs up' or 'heart' (show us the love ) and share or forward posts
- Continue to post those wonderful post-hike photos on Facebook

OAK RIDGES TRAIL ASSOCIATION -2024 ANNUAL REPORT

- Tag us on Facebook at Oak Ridges Trail Association; Instagram @ortatrail; X Twitter @ortahikes
- Weekly Trekker News. If you would like to receive this weekly email, go into your WildApricot profile on the website (not the app), edit your profile and click the box under Email Subscriptions. Non-members are welcome to sign up for emails from ORTA at <http://eepurl.com/iIMfiE>

Questions or suggestions? Please contact me at publicity@oakridgestrail.org

MEMBERSHIP

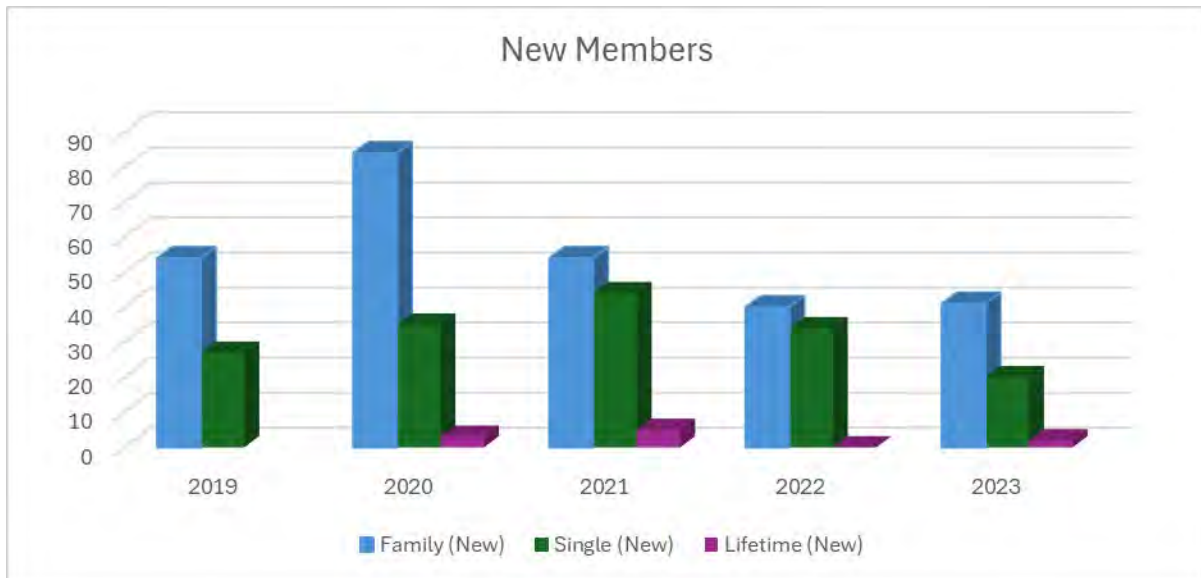
Michele Donnelly / Caroline Schweitzer, Membership Coordinator

ORTA membership totalled 573 in 2023 (single, family x 1.25*, lifetime and student members) compared to 618 in 2022.

Family 259 (41 new) Single 161 (20 new)

Lifetime 87 (2 new) Student 1

As the graph (below) illustrates, we have seen a steady decline in new members from our pandemic lockdown high in 2020. Unfortunately, the 2023 public hiker experiment did not significantly help with membership numbers. Michele reports that we had approximately 225 people register as public hikers over the past year with only 11 converting to paid members.



Part of our Membership is driven when people see and learn about ORTA at fairs, street festivals, schools, libraries, company and community volunteer events, our AGM and

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Discovery Night meetings, and of course, out on the trails participating in a hike or passing by one. In 2023, we saw a few more in person events such as:

- 2023 Restoration Program in Case Woodlot Aurora
- Green Up Clean Up Richmond Hill
- Milliken Mills HS Environmental Day
- Climate Action Newmarket/Aurora
- Levi Strauss Annual Employee Volunteer Day
- Strawberry Festival WS
- Aurora Street Festival
- Sidewalkable Saturday Event Schomberg
- Brooklin Fall Fair
- Tree of Giving King Township.

And in each of the above, it was our ORTA volunteers, who made these events successful. You helped plant the seed about ORTA, the trails, the environment and the community activism. Thank you to each of the volunteers that helped in these and other events over the past year.

I (Michele) would especially like to thank Denise Chong who continues to volunteer with ORTA as part of the membership team. Denise is responsible for those lovely notes and cards you receive when a donation has been made either in memory, in honour or in recognition of significant donations. Thank you Denise.

As your membership coordinator, I (Caroline) encourage you to share any thoughts, concerns or ideas with me. I can be reached at membership@oakridgestrail.org.

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GREENBELT INITIATIVE

Garry Niece

Over the course of 2023, there was very little activity from the Greenbelt Foundation with particular reference to their plans regarding our trail. We will continue with our plans for 2024 and rejoin their initiatives when advised.

BY-LAW UPDATE 2024

Lissa Dwyer, Scott Heaslip, Olivia Petrie

In October 2023, Ontario's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA) updated the rules that govern organizations such as ours. We have responded by modifying our ByLaws to reflect these changes. It also allowed us to make some improvements at the same time. It is our obligation to have our updated ByLaws affirmed by October 18, 2024 which is why we are presenting them to you for approval at this AGM. All changes will appear in the presented draft underlined. Highlights of the changes are:

ONCA required: Current By-Laws have been amended to strengthen overall governance and accountability and enhance the rights of members. Proposed changes include:

- Clarifying membership categories and setting out a process for suspending or terminating a membership
- Identifying a process whereby the membership is able to remove a Director who may not be acting in the best interest of the Association
- Setting out notice requirements for meetings of members and opportunities for members to participate
- Better specify the business to be conducted at the Annual General Meeting, including a review of the financial statements
- Including a process for distributing the Association's assets in the event that it was to be dissolved.

ORTA inspired: Amendments are designed to provide greater clarity and consistency, and include:

- Reference to "Constitution" now reads "By-Laws"
- Gender neutral language
- Introduction of definitions and use of defined terms through the document (e.g. Board)
- Cross-referencing between articles within the document

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PAST-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Wilma Millage, Past-President

Nice to have just completed a full year of ORTA activities after the downtime we had during COVID.

We have enjoyed seeing so many of our members out on hikes and having so many new hike leaders to take our folks on hikes across the Moraine and elsewhere. The hikes that Brian and I lead have once again increased to the numbers we were used to in the past, as have many others, and we have enjoyed meeting everyone and sharing experiences.

Discovery Night is once again on schedule and we have had good turnouts to the various speakers. I am once again organizing the evening but would appreciate someone to take on the task of booking speakers who have interesting things to say to our attendees. If you would like to know more about what is involved, just give me a call. We have speakers already set into the fall session.

Several folks have asked us if we are going to re-start our Adventure Relay event and the Board has discussed this at some length and thinks it is not feasible at this time. Unfortunately, it takes a great deal of work and over 100 volunteers to accomplish it in its final format. However, if someone wants to come forward with a plan and take on the task of doing the organizing we could consider it or a smaller event once more. Let us know if you have any interesting ideas that you would like to be involved in.

I hope you have noticed the increase in information going out about our hikes and other activities. This is because we now have a new Publicity Coordinator, Karen Graham. She is also launching a new website for ORTA so that it reaches more folks. There are also new info cards for distribution. She has lots of plans for the coming year so keep watching for what is happening.

We have several vacant positions in our volunteer area. If you think you might be interested in any of the following positions, please let me know.

President – Lead the activities of the Board in future efforts to achieve our motto “Building Pathways to an Active Lifestyle”

Discovery Night refreshments – organize drinks and cookies for our 8 Discovery Night meetings

Discovery Night Chair - find speakers and organize the evening events.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We are currently without anyone in this role. The rest of the Board are filling in as needed.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Wilma Millage, Reza Farmand & Karen Graham

New voices are always welcome, so please let us know if you would like to join the Board in the future. All the current members have generously agreed to remain on the board for the year ahead along with two new members.

The following persons have consented to Nomination as Directors-at-Large for the year 2024-2025

Robert Alexander	Newmarket
Weibo Cheng	Richmond Hill
Lissa Dwyer	Aurora
Brian Millage	Newmarket
Wilma Millage	Newmarket
Garry Niece	Brooklin
Jeremy Reesor	Uxbridge
Anna Sunn	Uxbridge

We will continue to invite all of our Chapter Chairs and Key Volunteers to participate in the meetings of the ORTA Board. This will enable them to be more involved in the day to day working of the overall organization and create more resources for future Board positions.

At their first meeting, the Directors will appoint Officers in accordance with the applicable By-Law.

We move the acceptance of the above persons as Directors of the Association.

Wilma Millage and Bob Alexander

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RECOGNITION AWARDS

Wilma Millage, Karen Graham, Reza Farmand

Thank you to everyone who took the time to submit nominations for the 2023 awards. We hope that you'll be with us to learn about this year's honourees. If not, they'll be published in Trail Talk and on our website.

Commendations

Trail Builders

Member of the Year

Lifetime Achievement

Happy Trails!

Hope to see you out on the Oak Ridges Trail!

