

NCF members, partners and supporters,

Please find below my report as Chair of the Board of Directors for the year ending December 31, 2024.

## **Introduction**

I think a fitting metaphor for my report this year is my time on the roof of 251 Donald Street for a tour of NCF's new CommuniFi network's core infrastructure.

First of all, I was wearing a hard hat and watching where I was going: 22 floors up is a long way to fall! I was joined by our community partners in the project, CIRA, Ottawa Community Housing and Hiboo Networks. I could see what NCF had already built and with the view of Vanier and beyond stretching before us, I could also see the potential of all the community locations and people we could connect.

Similarly, this past year the Board, staff and volunteers of NCF have been working to ensure we can continue our core work, engage with community partners to grow through new projects and services, ensure NCF's continued sustainability, and dream big.

Shelley's Executive Director report covers many of the operational aspects of the past year. Here is my report on NCF's governance, management and strategic direction.

## **Governance**

For the last two Annual General Meetings we have been making changes to some of the ways NCF conducts our business to better comply with the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporation Act (CNCA) and best practices. This is part of the Board's commitment to ensuring NCF is well managed on behalf of all NCF members.

One of those changes was that last year was NCF's first-ever Annual General Meeting that members could attend together, over Zoom. Thanks to all those who attended.

This year we have made the [AGM hybrid](#) so members can participate in-person or virtually, depending on their preference. The [elections to the Board of Directors](#) continues to happen online to enable as many members as possible to participate.

The Board is also recommending [updates to NCF's original purpose](#) to better reflect the world we live in now and NCF's current work and recommending [new bylaws](#) that better reflect the CNCA and that enable greater member participation moving forward.

Thanks to Chris Tacit and Catherine Cliff from Tacit Law for their help throughout this process.

## **Financial sustainability**

As you can see in the [audited financial statements](#), NCF is posting a substantial deficit for 2024 despite an increase in member donations, grants and increased sale of cable internet services.

This loss largely reflects the erosion of NCF's DSL member base and reflects the broader challenges we face as a small wholesale-based competitor. This is an industry-wide problem that started in 2020 and clearly isn't sustainable in the long-term.

The Board's role in guiding NCF through this challenge requires solid financial reporting, analysis and planning, directly and through the Finance Committee; asking the right questions; making tough choices about where to focus NCF's resources; and supporting staff in rolling out new services that can add to both our mission and our bottom line.

## **2025-28 Strategic Plan**

One of the main ways the Board can help ensure NCF has a future that lives up to our past successes is in crafting solid strategic plans. In 2024 the Board evaluated the progress we made towards the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan and developed a new [Strategic Plan for 2025-2028](#).

This is the second strategic planning process I've been through with NCF and I'm pleased with how it is evolving over time. Guided by member input through the survey and developed by the Board and Management Team, I think we have landed on objectives and strategies that are lofty but achievable, specific enough to drive activities and measure performance but flexible enough to adapt to changing conditions.

## **Appreciation**

I'd like to thank the NCF staff for their work, as usual, but with the understanding that 2024 meant juggling more work than usual with fewer staff. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the amazing work our executive director Shelley Robinson did facing multiple priorities, Andrew Martey-Asare leading the CommuniFi build, Andre Dalle's amazing work throughout the Data Centre transition, and the rest of the team for keeping NCF's core services afloat.

I'd also like to welcome all the new HelpDesk volunteers and thank them and all our continuing volunteers for their support. Having committed community members on the HelpDesk ensures that members who need additional support can take the time they need.

I'd like to thank the Board for helping Shelley and the rest of the staff navigate a lot of tricky situations this past year. And I'd particularly like to acknowledge our two outgoing Board members, Majd Karam, who coordinated a lot of the Strategic Planning process, and longtime NCF Board Member, former Chair (and former Executive Director) Chris Cope, who can continue in an advisory role to the board as a Past Chair if the proposed new bylaws are approved. It has been a pleasure working with you both.

Thanks to all NCF's partners, new and longstanding, and of course thanks to all NCF's members for your continued support.