



Progressive Action for Community Empowerment

Active Citizens' Thread (ACT) Seminar Series "Non-Profit Board and the Non-Profit Sector"

Saturday 14th March 2015

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Draft Report

The community seminar titled, "Non-profit board and the non-profit sector", was organized by PACE, under its innovative program 'Active Citizens thread (ACT)', on 14th March 2015, at the Access Point (Danforth).

Objective: By bringing forward the experiences of the professionals working in the field of non-profit sectors, the goal of this seminar was to empower the community members – members who are keen and are involved in diverse community/non-profit organizations and initiatives.

Panel Speakers:

1. Heather Laird, Co-Chair - Connect the Sector, Policy Lead - Ontario Non Profit Network and, Fellow, Social Innovation Graduate Program - University of Waterloo.
2. Jason Marin, Board Director of Access Alliance and Wellesley Institute.
3. Cathy Winter, DiverseCity onBoard, Ryerson University.
4. Anthony Fernando, Public Affairs Consultant and Policy Entrepreneur.

The speakers shared their professional experiences from different non-profit initiatives and best practices. The seminar provided an opportunity to the general members and executive board members of various organizations to learn various aspects of non-profit management.

Core Message of the Seminar:

Diversity, proactive board, and innovative programs are crucial for any non-profit organization. Developing and implementing programs that address the needs of the community is of great importance. More importantly, one of the ways to maximize the impact of the organization is to constantly design innovative programs.

Panelists recommended that non-profit organizations should focus more on internal governance, functional board and innovative programs to become an effective organization. They can do this by continuously reviewing their programs and capturing the needs of the community and accordingly develop/adjust their programs to serve the community better. *Emamul Haque, President of PACE, setting the tone of the seminar.*



Participants: Over fifty participants representing eight community organizations attended the seminar.

Panel Discussant 1: Heather Laird, Co-Chair - Connect the Sector, Policy Lead - Ontario Non Profit Network and, Fellow, Social Innovation Graduate Program - University of Waterloo

Topic: State of the NFP Sector in Ontario

Heather Laird said, “thenon-profit professionals should be well aware of the external environment and appreciate the contribution of their supporters and volunteerin order to create a greater social impact”. She mentioned that almost one million Ontarians were employed in the non-profit sector. It is surprising that Ontario has the largest number of volunteers in Canada. The number of volunteers in Ontario is five million, which is close to the total population of five

largest municipalities (Toronto, Ottawa, Mississauga, Brampton and Hamilton) in Ontario.



She also provided the statistics that the overall non-profit sector’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was \$100,696 while motor vehicle manufacturing and agriculture sector had the GDP as \$5,967 and \$13,591 respectively (source: Ontario Non Profit Network, 2006).

Panelist Heather Laird, deliberating her presentation on non-profit sector in Ontario.

Moreover, a total of 811 million hours were spent by volunteers in Ontario in 2007. The total volunteers’ hours are equivalent to 422,000 full time jobs (assuming 40 work hours/week and 48 weeks/year).She also mentioned that the roles of the non-profit sector are practically defined by the need and interest, which end up with advocacy. Citizen’s engagement has been represented broadly by the non-profit sectors, and that leads to advocacy for effective service delivery.

Panel Discussant 2: Jason Marin, Board Director of Access Alliance and Wellesley Institute

Topic: Reflecting on non-profit governance

"Everybody on the board should understand and believe in the organization's mission. A well functioning board need to be effective, if not to be perfect, to meet the need and expectations of the community," said Jason Marin.

In his delivery, he asked four generic questions:

1. What is the role of a non-profit board?
2. What qualities will help you in being an effective Board member?
3. What does a well-functioning Board look like?
4. What lessons have I learned?

In response to those questions, he mentioned that the role of a non-profit board is: to hire (and fire) the Executive Director or CEO, work on strategic planning, generate discussions and, oversee risk management. Listening, contributing, reading and asking questions would help to be an effective Board member.

A well-functioning board has strong culture, helpful governance, intentional recruitment, and trust-based relationships. Strong culture represents having team agreements, providing robust orientation for new members, good meeting management, self-evaluation survey and having board retreat. The recruitment of board members should be

done based on previously prepared skills matrix and ensuring that the best candidate subscribe to organization's mission and vision.

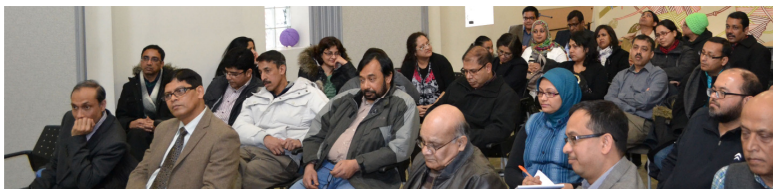
For effective governance, a thorough strategic planning process should be in place and practice. Organization's governance should form and align with the organization's function and, the policies need to be reviewed and updated regularly. Having regular board meetings, record keeping or preparing meeting minutes including performance measurement of the Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer are important for good governance.



Panelist Jason Marin, talking about the roles and responsibilities of non-profit boards.

The organization should establish a trust-based relationship culture, specifically board member to board member, board member to Executive Director/CEO, board member to staff, board member to clients/users and board member to external stakeholders. There are seven disciplines of governance excellence:

1. DIRECT organizational performance
2. PROTECT organizational performance
3. RESPECT expectations
4. REFLECT on organizational results
5. SELECT prominent leadership
6. EXPECT board-management interaction
7. CONNECT for healthy board relations.



A section of audience at the seminar hall.

Panel Discussant 3: Cathy Winter, DiverseCity onBoard, Ryerson University

Topic: Effective Leadership for Modern Governance

"Immigration is a huge driver for diversity and diversity in board matters for leadership. Because, diversity is strength and it brings more knowledge which ultimately contributes to innovation," said Cathy Winter.

Cathy shared some findings from a study, regarding board diversity and good governance, which reveals that, when diversity is ensured, the board becomes more effective.

- 75% improvement in quality of board/committee discussions,
- 71.4% positive impact on group dynamics of board,
- 74% expertise good or very good,
- 77% fit between appointee and board very good or good.

She also provided the results from their study that individuals in board are:

- 81% very good or good fit between appointee and board
- 72% made an impact on functioning of board
- 75% acquired a sense of satisfaction from giving back
- 62% developed personal and business networks



Panelist Cathy Winter, speaking about the importance of diversity and leadership in the non-profit sector.

Cathy said, *“Diverse people should be in board to connect people and using multiple skills.”* She also mentioned that it was important to be active in community to take the opportunity. Board members should get involved in citizens' discussion in the municipality to influence the decision.”

Panel Discussant 4: Anthony Fernando, Lobbyist

Topic: Government Advocacy – One to One

Anthony presented a scenario to initiate the discussion among the participants about advocacy. He mentioned that four Ps are important for Public Policy Advocacy: **Politics, Policy, People and Process**. The non-profits professionals may fail to achieve their advocacy goals and effectively represent the organizations if they are unable to connect the advocacy issue in the current context and the macro agenda of the government. While fighting for the cause they must put aside their personal political agenda. He emphasised to understand the difference between politics and policy for advocacy.



Panelist Anthony Fernando, responding to participants' questions

Anthony said that systemic change often requires change in public policy and non-profits contribute greatly to government's goals and public good. Anthony Fernando emphasized on the successful communication among the community, community organizations and public representatives for mobilizing people and arguments to bring in positive changes or resolve issues in the community.

Wrap up:

The participants had an opportunity to exchange opinions and learn about the best practices in the area of non-profit management, roles of functional board, advocacy and non-profit environment in Ontario.

Anthony Fernando acknowledged the importance of the event and said that the successful communication with the community, community organizations and public representatives along with mobilizing people and arguments are crucial in bringing a positive change or resolve any issue in the community.

While moderating the seminar Emamul Haque, President of PACE commented that, "We all have tremendously benefited from the insights of the panelists. Today our passion has been reinforced further, the shared information will help us to review our management style and see whether our programs are based on community needs to serve the community better."



Panelists, PACE's board members and volunteers pose for a group photo after the seminar.
