



Interim CEO Maureen Cassidy's AGM 2023 Remarks

Once again, good afternoon everyone, and to those who haven't been here for some time, welcome back to Innovation Works.

The AGM is an opportunity to report on the past year and to celebrate moments of positive impact in the community. It's also an opportunity to strengthen relationships with and amongst our members and to recommit to our common mission. As you know, 2022 was a uniquely challenging year for Pillar, marked by change, uncertainty, and yes grief. In my remarks today I want to acknowledge the concerns that some of you have expressed and to reaffirm our commitments to all of you.

When I entered this role about six months ago, I immediately recognized that my Pillar colleagues remained steadfast and responsive to the needs of the network, while going through significant and sustained disruption. This team persisted because of - not in spite of - this disruption. They persisted in their efforts to listen openly and to advance the equity work that was begun two years ago at the beginning of this strategic planning cycle.

A few weeks ago, I circulated an update to the network that listed much of the incredible work this team has done over the past year, from advocating for the sector to all levels of government, to participating in the City's Health and Housing Whole of Community Response, and partnering with the London Food Bank to encourage conversations and draw attention to the food security crisis in London and to realigning our internal organizational structure so we can respond more effectively to the emerging issues facing our membership.

Most recently, through a partnership with the London Economic Development Corporation, we are driving home the connection between economic recovery and social recovery. One cannot happen without the other. The LEDC and Pillar have partnered to create the Forest City Landing Pad, a place here at Innovation Works for those who wish to invest in London to collaborate and to build a community around their growing businesses and organizations. The FC Landing Pad will be housed on our 4th floor and officially launches in May. We are thrilled to be partnering with the LEDC on this important initiative.

I continue to be impressed by how this team collaborates and holds relationships with you, our network. The team is made up of community builders, seekers of justice and equity. They are intentional in the way they connect with people, and they aim to design program responses that are inclusive, accessible, and human-centered.

I've also seen how this team leans on each other, and I've been humbled by the way they have on-boarded me into their shared leadership approach. The dimensions of shared purpose, mutual support, and creating space for the voices of others, including the communities we serve, are foundational to this process. My leadership has been strengthened by working together with them in this way and I wish to thank the leaders who came before me for setting the groundwork which allows us all to flourish together.

I join this team, in demonstrating to you that we are committed to living the lessons learned in the past nine months.

We have a ways to go, but we know that in order to go far, we need to go slowly. Given the recent past that Pillar has experienced, we must resist the urge to find quick fixes. Instead, we must be methodical and purposeful as we strive to seek healing for what has been broken all while we honour the important work started by those who came before me and carry that work forward.

We also know and acknowledge that the roots of colonial structures and systems run deep. We remain committed to actions that help shift that paradigm -- through policy and advocacy work, through conversations in our EDI work, and by naming this knowledge in all our operations, from program design to funding requests.

And today, on behalf of this team, I make one final commitment to you. We will strive to embark on this work from a place of humility. For us, that means, hearing what is being said, and finding ways to address issues and concerns while still delivering on the work and the mission of this amazing organization. We remain committed to strengthening our regional social impact sector, encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration, and making sure the network is well tended to. And we remain honoured to do this work with you, our members, and our communities.