

End of Year Address by outgoing President Brian Martin



June 27, 2025

Fellow Rotarians and honoured guests.

It is truly shocking how fast a year in the life of Rotary goes by, but I can say with absolute sincerity that having the honour of being your President this past year has been one of the best experiences of my life. You, the members of the club, made the time fulfilling and rewarding through your engagement, conversations, participation and service.

There are many people to thank after a year as President of a Rotary club, and first among those is my wonderful wife Diana, whose belief in me and in the ideals of Rotary apparently lent her endless patience with my zoom meetings, random phone calls and last minute, 'Oh by the way I have a Rotary thing tonight'. I love you and appreciate all your support over the last year. I truly couldn't have done this without you.

Any club President is only as good as the team supporting them and I have been fortunate to have an exceptional team helping me throughout the year. I want to start by saying how wonderful it was to work with Marva and Crista as first and second vice-president. I am deeply appreciative that when I called on you to serve, you stepped up. Your support, counsel and guidance throughout the year was of immeasurable value to me. I know the Presidency passes on to strong hands in the coming years with the depth of skill that these two Rotarians possess. Considering that within the span of memory of Rotarians within this room, women could not serve as Rotarians, let alone Presidents, it is a stark reminder of the tremendous value that diversity brings, and we as a club, and Rotary in general, should continue to seek out participation and engagement from groups within our community that have been under-represented within Rotary.

My thanks also go out to the rest of the Board. Marty, Nanita, Ian Smith, Lawrie, Matt, and Dianne. We had some vibrant discussions at the Board level. They were occasionally

contentious, but we always navigated to a common understanding and your wise counsel helped ensure that we did what was for the collective good of Rotary.

No mention of the work of the Board would be complete without acknowledging the tremendous debt of gratitude that the club owes to the remarkable Kerry Johnson. Your encyclopedic knowledge of the club keeps things running smoothly and your unending patience in sending and resending Board agendas due to, mostly my, tardiness in sending items to discuss, was certainly appreciated.

It takes an entire club's participation to make a year successful. Honestly, I feel like there at least a dozen people in the club who likely did more work than I as President. In particular, I want to thank the team of people that keep our meetings running smoothly. Matt (honestly you could cut your work in half by just getting in line to be President), Rick, Helmuth, Louisa and the whole program team, and of course Terrie Jarvis who in consummate Rotary fashion, just works tirelessly in the background. My job was made very simple. Just stand up here and talk for a few minutes every week while the rest just happened seemingly by magic.

To the Chairs and committee members. This is where much of the real work of Rotary takes place. Thank you for continuing to do the work that lets The Rotary Club of Guelph have impact in the community.

When I stood up here a year ago, I laid out a set of goals for the club in the coming year. I feel confident in saying that nearly every President gets to the end of the year and thinks that they haven't managed to accomplish half of what they set out to. A year after all, is a pretty short slice of time. Nevertheless, I'd like to walk through my goals for the club and assess how I feel we did.

1) Develop a fresh 5-year vision for the club

We conducted the district facilitated visioning exercise on March 22, 2025 with 18 club members participating. This was much later in the year than I had anticipated, and this affected the ability to make as much progress on some of the downstream strategic initiatives as I had wanted. However, the exercise generated a lot of good data for the club on where we want to be in 5 years. Now that we have the 'what', we will continue to develop the 'how'. To do this, we are building five strategic planning teams to develop the path forward. These teams will provide the bridge between the committees and the board and ensure that our strategic execution aligns with our vision. The five teams are: Membership Experience and Engagement (Noma Vales); External Outreach; Funding and Granting; Club Operations (Crista Renner); and Governance and Policy (Brian). So I'd say we are about three quarters of the way to achieving this goal.

2) Build the brand of Rotary within Guelph, across all clubs

We have made some progress here with engagement with the other clubs in the cluster and this will remain a focus and a part of the strategic planning team for club operations. It's hard to put a number on this, because it will really be an ongoing effort. I know that those of us who attended the Rotary International Convention this year have come back armed with many new ideas and strategies to implement.

3) Strengthen and streamline governance within the club

We successfully carried out the important work of reviewing and revising the club bylaws to become ONCA compliant (the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act), however much of the policy and procedure work remains and will be carried out by the Governance and Policy strategic planning team led by me as I transition into my past-president year. I can't really say that we got this done but I am taking the responsibility of seeing it through in the coming year.

4) Continue to strengthen our grants process

The granting process remains one of the trickiest and most contentious portfolios. At the Board level this year, we had many discussions and we maintained continuity in granting through extensive discussions to achieve consensus while we anticipate developing clearer guidelines through the funding and granting strategic planning committee. We really barely started on this goal, due mostly to not wanting to front-run the vision and strategic planning process.

5) Revive our international service

This was the one goal which I would describe as completely fulfilled. We once again have a World Service Committee with co-chairs, thanks to Jules and Anne-Marie, and we are growing the pipeline of projects. The Board worked with the treasurer to clean up the balance sheet by eliminating stranded, earmarked funds for projects that would not take place, returning the funds to the general account, so that they could be dedicated to current and upcoming projects. In addition, the club participated in the Guatemalan children's hospital global grant project with one of the Burlington clubs, using some of those available funds to kickstart the World Service efforts. We will obviously continue to develop projects through the committee and I feel confident that we have successfully revived this avenue of service within our club.

6) Grow the membership of this club back over 100 in the next three years

Growing the club remains challenging despite having welcomed some outstanding new members to the club in the last year. Jessica Hill, Rita Marinetti-Braga,

Francesco Braga and Jim Green ... welcome. Those of us who attended this year's RI Convention will put together a short presentation on what we learned, so without going into a lot of detail here, I'll just say that there is much work to do on energizing and revitalizing the club and meeting members where they are in life to ensure a vibrant growing club. The visioning exercise set an even more challenging goal than mine, seeking to grow the club to 150 members in 5 years. The club operations strategic planning team, through its branding work, and the membership experience and engagement team through its retention and member experience work, will have a big hill to climb over the next five years. I cheated a bit on this one because I made it a 3 year goal, so perhaps I score no points here.

Overall, I believe that we made progress and I believe that this progress will continue as Marva leads us into the next year.

I'd like to conclude by thanking you all for the support and encouragement that I have received over the past year. One of the things that was said at the Convention that stuck with me is that we need to stop using the term 'my year' when referring to being President. If we live the motto of Service Above Self, it is not anyone's year. It has been another Rotary year, filled with fun, projects, setbacks and recoveries, as we collectively delivered on the Magic of Rotary. It has simply been my honour to serve you as your President this Rotary year. For this trust you placed in me, I will be eternally grateful. Thank you all.