

President's Annual Report

In 2023, MBNLA made significant moves forward with the priorities established in 2022's Strategic Plan. We are currently doing an annual update of the plan. These are MBNLA's most current goals:

Public Awareness – Elevate the public's perception of the green profession.

Advocacy – Have a seat at the table with government officials.

Professionalism - Promote and create educational opportunities.

Member Benefits – Provide the services that MBNLA members want.

Effectiveness - Ensure continued growth and improvement of MBNLA.

Industry Awareness - Communicate MBNLA's value to potential members.

Environmental Stewardship – Protect the future of our planet.

The purchase of 2 large MBNLA backdrops and 3 small pop-up banners allowed us to participate in more events to improve overall **awareness** of MBNLA. We reached our three main target audiences (potential members/clients/workers) by setting up at National Skilled Trade and Technology Week, the National Skills Competition, the SiteOne OneStop Partners event, and the Winnipeg Home + Garden Show. The H+G Show was especially successful since we were able to promote MBNLA to all three audiences by transforming the MBNLA booth into the Ask A Landscaper booth. More about that later.

We made good progress with **advocacy** as well. We worked to bring clarity to Bill 22, The Environment Amendment Act with the Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks. We attended the announcement and continued to build connections that began with the work that was done in 2022 regarding pesticide restrictions. MBNLA representatives also attended the launch of the federal-provincial 2 Billion Tree campaign. We sparked up a relationship with (former) Manitoba Environment and Climate Minister Kevin Klein who ended up joining us for the National Awards of Landscape Excellence dinner. With new provincial ministers now in place, we have sent out introductory letters to build these bridges again. Results were less positive when attempting to build a rapport with the City of Winnipeg regarding the new tipping fees for commercial yard waste. No responses were given from Wpg Water & Waste or the Mayor's office. We will continue to work towards making MBNLA a main contact for government on issues that affect your business. To help us move in the right direction we welcomed Guy Dowhy as our new Government Relations Rep for CNLA.

The goal of promoting **professionalism** through educational opportunities made further headway. MBNLA introduced thousands of young people to the green profession at the Try-A-Trade booths. We also lent a hand with other aspects of the Provincial and National Skills Competitions. With member feedback that MBNLA should create our own micro-courses, we launched a very successful Train The Trainer event at RRC. The training section of our website was updated; making it a little easier to navigate the Apprenticeship process. Thanks to the Professional Development Committee for their guidance. We continued to hand out Apprentice Scholarships to the highest achieving Landscape Horticulturists. Unfortunately, the two newest awards were cancelled by RRC due to "fund re-allocation."

Regarding **member benefits**, the biggest new bonus is the opportunity for members to get free access to a booth at the Home + Garden Show. Buying your own booth for the weekend is thousands of dollars! Several MBNLA members took shifts at our Ask A Landscaper booth and made sales and connections for their own business. For 2024 we've also teamed up with the Home Renovation Show so there will be many opportunities for you to sell your brand to the 20,000+ potential clients.

All that stuff and I didn't even mention the two main challenges we faced in 2023! The first was the departure of Rob Officer as Executive Director. He gave us a ton of notice but the search to find a worthy replacement required time. We contracted the hiring process to FH Black and after an exhaustive search they brought us the very talented Marcel Hacault. Marcel walked right into the biggest challenge of the year: The dissolution of MBNLA as a corporation. Proper paperwork was not filed due to oversights of the MBNLA board and our former lawyers. What resulted was the hiring of a new law firm and a ton of back-and-forth to update bylaws, annual returns, corporate minutes, etc. Thank you, Marcel, for spearheading the process while our busy season was just getting started.

Members must work together to make the whole profession better.

It's a great catchphrase - Together We Grow - but it puts a spotlight on the elephant in the room: member engagement. MBNLA has historically struggled to grow its membership. We fluctuate between 90 and 100 members. I urge you to tell colleagues about MBNLA, to attend events, to get involved with committees, to make use of the benefits your membership provides, and to tell us what you want to get out of MBNLA.

I look forward to my 2nd term as MBNLA President and thank all the board members and committee chairs that made 2023's achievements possible. We will continue to work on all the goals that benefit members and ensure the resources available to us are used efficiently and effectively.

Casey Norman