



2024

Digital Delegate Package



October 9, 2024 | 10:00 A.M.

WELCOME!

Welcome from Meghan James , Chief Governing Officer of the OHTO Board of Directors

Welcome to our 2024 AGM!

We are looking forward to sharing our successes and challenges, our highs and lows, and our vision for the future at this year's AGM. Over the past year, the OHTO board of directors and operational team have been working hard to continue their work and education in assisting visitors to wander more sustainably in our region. Our focus has been on building community collaborations, maximizing funding and returning Travel Trade to the Ontario's Highlands' region, developing additional revenue sources (ie. Municipal Accommodation Tax) and making the most of a beautiful summer in spite of the financial climate of the region.

This has been an exciting time, as travel resumed post-pandemic around the world, but has brought with it new challenges which we have been happy to meet and overcome. The board of directors and OHTO team have been thinking creatively on how to leverage our impact to build a more sustainable future for all.

Sincerely,
Meghan James

Welcome from Nicole Whiting, Executive Director of Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization

We are excited once again to welcome our regional tourism family to our annual AGM. In response to previous attendee feedback, we are delivering this event virtually again this year; and promise to bring an informative and enjoyable experience to our attendees.

Since the launch of our responsible tourism approach in 2021, we are proud to say we have secured additional funding, strengthened relationships with key partners, expanded our industry communications approach, streamlined the delivery of our programming and successfully acquired credentials that demonstrate our commitment to strengthening our communities through responsible tourism.

We are looking forward to sharing with you the highlights of this journey and how this approach is attracting high-value guests now and into the future, while enhancing the quality of life within our communities.

Thank you for joining us today and for your curiosity and contributions towards making Ontario's Highlands a best-in-class responsible tourism destination.

Sincerely,
Nicole Whiting



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, October 9, 2024 | 10 AM to 12 PM

- 10:00 AM** Welcome Address from the Board of Directors and Land Acknowledgement
- 10:05 AM** Annual General Meeting
- 10:30 AM** GAME BREAK (5 minutes)
- 10:35 AM** Executive Director Report
- 11:00 AM** BREAK (5 minutes)
- 11:05 AM** Feature Presentation | Ben Vadasz, Destination Think - Collaboration: How We Can Turn the Global Spotlight on Local Initiatives
- 11:35 AM** Spark Session - Share ways to strengthen our communities through tourism
- 11:50 AM** Closing remarks and final message from OHTO
- 12:00 PM** Wrap-up for the 2024 OHTO AGM - Thank you!



EVENT INFORMATION & DETAILS

EVENT ACCESS INFORMATION

The OHTO AGM is hosted using Zoom. Below is the meeting access information and you can use a desktop or laptop, smart device or tablet to download the Zoom app to log in to this event.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81495661420?pwd=Uk0wNDFnbk45MHR5S0JYUGZMbjVLdz09>

Meeting ID: 882 2755 8230 // Passcode: 744245

Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81495661420?pwd=Uk0wNDFnbk45MHR5S0JYUGZMbjVLdz09>

Please note the event will open to participants starting at 9:55 a.m. on Wednesday, October 9 and the Annual General Meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. We kindly request that you log on early to ensure that your Zoom app is running correctly, that you can successfully log in and your audio/video connections are performing correctly. If you have any issues with logging in, please contact [Kasey Rogerson](mailto:kasey.rogerson@ohto.ca) at 613-629-6486 x203.

Important

If you will be joining the meeting by phone, please send us your name and phone number in an email to kasey.rogerson@ohto.ca **as soon as possible**, so we can expect to let you into the Zoom meeting.

Disclaimer

The event will be recorded using Zoom for future marketing and promotional purposes, if you do not give permission to be recorded, both for video and audio purposes, please ensure you keep your microphone muted and your camera turned off.

QUESTIONS DURING THE EVENT

During the event if you have questions, please submit them in the Chat within the Zoom app. Staff will be monitoring the Chat for questions and will notify the speaker at the appropriate time. If you are phoning into the event, please keep your phone muted until the appropriate time during the event when the speaker asks participants for questions.

AGENDA

- 10:00 AM** Call to Order, Land Acknowledgement and Welcoming Remarks
- 10:10 AM** Adoption of Agenda
- Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
- CGO's Report
- Presentation of 2023-24 Financial Statements & Appointment of Auditor
- OHTO General Bylaws Amendments
- Presentation of Slate of Nominees to Board of Directors
- 10:30 AM** Executive Director Report
- 11:00 AM** Adjournment

AGM Documents

Link to the Previous Meeting Minutes (downloadable PDF)

Link to the 2023-24 Financial Statements (downloadable PDF)

Link to the OHTO General Bylaws 2024 (downloadable PDF)

MOTIONS

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at XX a.m.

Adoption of Agenda

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

THAT the agenda be adopted as presented.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

THAT the minutes of the October 17, 2023 AGM be approved as presented.

CGO's Report

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

THAT the members of Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization accept the CGO's report.

Presentation of Financial Statements

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

THAT the members of Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization accept the 2023-2024 Financial Statements as presented.

MOTIONS

Appointment of Auditor

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

THAT Baker Tilly be appointed as Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization's 2024-2025 auditors.

Amendments to the General Bylaws

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

THAT the members of Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization approve the amendments to the General Bylaws as presented to comply with the *Ontario Not-for-Profits Corporations Act, 2010*.

Presentation of the Slate of Nominees to the Board of Directors

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

TO acclaim the Slate of Nominees to fill the vacancies on the Board of Directors of Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization as presented.

Executive Director Report

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

THAT the members of Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization accept the Executive Director's report.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at the call of the CGO at XX a.m.

SLATE OF NOMINEES

Directors serve on the board for a period of three years on a staggered basis meaning a minimum of a third of the seats on the board becomes vacant each year. The members of OHTO entrust the nominating committee, through the bylaws, with the important task of recruiting and evaluating candidates based on the specific needs of the board. The goal of this process is to recommend to the membership a slate of nominees it considers the best fit to fill the vacancies at the AGM.

Heading into this AGM, four seats became available due to terms expiring. The nominating committee received nominations from directors wishing to renew their seat as well as from members who were applying to the board for the first time. The nominating committee concluded its evaluation of each candidate based on a matrix established by the board and is proud to present the following slate of nominees to the membership.

Melissa Marquardt - Returning Director

Vanessa Dow - Returning Director

Mike Hage - Returning Director

Jeff Jackson - Returning Director

MEET YOUR 2023-24 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEGHAN JAMES | Chief Governing Officer (Somewhere Inn Calabogie)

After nearly a decade spent working in tourism, including nine years at the Pembroke Best Western, Meghan James has taken on virtually every job on the books. From restaurant manager to sales, marketing, events, community outreach, and public relations, Meghan has literally learned the industry from the ground up and continues to enjoy working in tourism as General Manager at Somewhere Inn Calabogie.

Combining a love for the outdoors with a love for community, Meghan has been set for success in the Ontario's Highlands' tourism scene and sees collaboration as pivotal to tourism growth and sustainability across the region.



CINDY JAMIESON | Vice Chief Governing Officer (Whitewater Inn, Valley Cycle Tours, Jamieson Travel & Tours)

Cindy is an entrepreneur who has worked in travel and tourism her entire life. From Beachburg, Ontario, she became a raft guide/whitewater kayaker in her teens working for one of the local rafting companies. She has travelled to many countries chasing whitewater and cultural experiences. She has two degrees from Ottawa University in Women's Studies and Religious Studies. In 1999 she started organizing group travel and started Jamieson Travel and Tours.

In 2019 she purchased a small boutique Inn in Beachburg and is now focusing on inbound travel and experiences for her guests who stay at the Whitewater Inn. A cycling enthusiast, mother of two and proud promoter of the region, Cindy loves travel and unique experiences.



VANESSA DOW | Secretary (LANARK COUNTY TOURISM)

Vanessa Dow's enthusiasm for promoting the Lanark County region is not just professional, it's personal. After moving to Smiths Falls nearly two decades ago, she has always looked to this area with the energy and excitement of a visitor. Vanessa loves to travel locally, discovering hidden and new gems in the region.

Previously, Vanessa worked with the Smiths Falls & District Chamber of Commerce managing the Victoria Park Marina & Visitor Centre and then implementing a small business development grant. Now she brings that knowledge of visitor experience and business growth to her work as the Tourism Coordinator for Lanark County.



BARRIE MARTIN | (Experience Broker and Manager of Yours Outdoors)

Experience Broker, Barrie Martin, was the founder and manager of Yours Outdoors, an award-winning company, now a division of Haliburton Forest tourism. Specializing in experiential and responsible tourism, Yours Outdoors offers creative learning and recreation experiences and outdoor adventures that explore and celebrate the art, nature, and heritage of the Haliburton Highlands in all seasons.

Through his work, Barrie was awarded Tourism Champion of the Year (TIAO) in 2016 and received the Sustainable Tourism (TIAO) award in 2017. Although he is now retired from Yours Outdoors, Barrie continues to be active in tourism and community development.

Barrie was also founder and co-chair of the Haliburton Highlands Tourism Stakeholders Group, Past Chair of Adventure Haliburton, an active member of the OHTO Travel Trade Partnership, Vice-president of the Haliburton County Community Cooperative, Past President and current Marketing Coordinator of the Haliburton County Folk Society, past project manager for the Hike Haliburton Festival, and past founder and president of the Haliburton Highlands Trails and Tours Network.



SHANNON MCLAGGAN | (Anupaya Cabin Co.)

Shannon MacLaggan is Co-Founder and Creative Director of Anupaya Cabin Co, a boutique beachfront wilderness resort in Deep River, designed to help guests slow down and settle into nature's pace. Along with her husband Pete, Shan is also Co-Founder of Anupaya Quality Goods, a lifestyle and home decor company that cleans up a pound of waste for every product sold through their 'One Pound Promise' initiative.

She also co-directs Anupaya Adventure, a thoughtful, off-the-beaten-path travel company offering authentic, culturally diverse experiences, while giving back to the communities they visit and hosting cleanups along the way. As an avid paddler, gardener and nature lover, with deep affection and affinity for this community, Shan is wholeheartedly committed to preserving these wild landscapes and passionate about helping more folks get outside to experience the rest and respite these pristine places offer us.



JEFF JACKSON | (Algonquin Fly Fishing Premium Guide Service, Professor & Coordinator at Algonquin College)

Jeff Jackson is a Professor and Coordinator of Algonquin College's Outdoor Adventure guide training diploma program at the Pembroke Waterfront Campus. He has a Ph.D. in organizational behaviour and safety management, and is considered Canada's leading expert on outdoor and adventure tourism risk management. As a consultant he has worked with the New Brunswick Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to establish their outdoor tourism accreditation standards and the Indigenous Tourism Association's operator risk management planning criteria.

He has also worked with the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario on their trail tourism policy development, and sat on the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnerships outdoor committee.

In the summer, Jeff is the owner/operator of Algonquin Fly Fishing Premium Guide Service, hosting Canadian and international fly anglers in Algonquin Park and the Ottawa Valley. Jeff was raised on a farm in the Ottawa Valley, and after a decade of adventure guiding around the world resettled here with his family for the outdoor lifestyle, tourism opportunity, and quality of living.



GREG RODGERS | (Rockhill B&B)

Greg Rodgers is a newcomer to tourism but has already jumped into the industry feet first, taking over a bed and breakfast in Sharbot Lake, bolstering the local tourism community and joining OHTO's board of directors in 2020. Greg and his wife are living examples of how tourism works hand in hand with economic development to grow communities. The couple travelled throughout the Frontenac region before they decided to buy a bed and breakfast that is beautifully perched on a cliff overlooking Sharbot Lake.

When they went looking for a property to purchase, they looked at Sharbot Lake with new eyes and saw the potential there. Over the years, Greg has become immersed in the community life of Central Frontenac. He currently serves as director in the Sharbot Lake Business Group and has organized several collaborative ventures among the local tourism business community, including a local tourism business conference in 2019, sponsored by OHTO.



CHRIS HINSPERGER | (Bonnechere Caves)

It is an understatement to say that Chris Hinsperger is passionate about tourism. For Chris, tourism is not only something that involves his business and professional life, it's a key component to sharing cultural stories and histories, to bring people together. It's that passion that Chris brings to his business, Bonnechere Caves, and what he brings to the volunteer work he does within the community.

Chris was one of the original founding Board members of OHTO and stepped away when he became chair of the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association (OVTA). A desire to be part of growing tourism in Ontario is a big part of the attraction for Chris, but in his own words, he enjoys being around like-minded people and being on the board gives him inspiration and a source of energy that he really enjoys – which drew him back to the OHTO Board two years back.



BARBARA KRAUS | (TAMARACK LODGE COTTAGE RESORT)

After 25 years of living in Europe and another 20 years in Toronto, Barbara Kraus decided it was time to reconnect with her love of nature and the outdoors. She and her husband, Reiner Arnold, bought Tamarack Lodge, a cottage resort located on motorless Tamarack Lake in the Haliburton Highlands and have transformed the Lodge into a small-group retreat space that is a haven for nature lovers looking for a peaceful place to enjoy nature.

Barbara believes connecting with the outdoors is a quintessential part of our general health and wellbeing. Living in the Haliburton Highlands has allowed her to do this on a daily basis and to share it with others by working in tourism. Barbara continues to be fascinated by the seemingly endless splendour and beauty of the Ontario Highlands, of which the Haliburton Highlands are a part.

Her past professional endeavours have taught her that collaboration and communication are the cornerstones of successful businesses. Barbara has been a member of OHTO since joining this community and is proud to be taking it one step further by joining OHTO's board.



MIKE HAGE | (MYERS CAVE RESORT)

Mike Hage is a professional Civil Engineer who worked in Lebanon, UAE and BC. In November 2020 Mike found himself in Cloyne, ON when he purchased Myers Cave Resort under Nordic Resorts Inc., in which he is the President and CEO and part of a group of investors. Together with his wife, they reside permanently at the resort and take care of management.

Since moving to the area, Mike has become heavily involved in the community by engaging in several Township and County initiatives, participating in focus groups and attending business events. He also serves as an Executive Board member of the Land O'Lakes Lions Club in Northbrook, and has been involved in many service and community organizations worldwide over the years.

Recently, Mike was selected to serve a four-year term as a Board member of the Frontenac County Planning and Economic Development Committee.



MELISSA MARQUARDT | (Ottawa Valley Tourist Association)

Melissa has almost 30 years of private/public tourism and economic development experience. As the Manager of Economic Development with the County of Renfrew, she is responsible for management of the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association - the destination marketing organization for Renfrew County and the Upper Ottawa Valley.

She is a current director and past Chief Governing Officer for the Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization's (RTO-11) Board of Directors. Melissa is passionate about connecting people and places and uncovering the hidden gems that make a community tick. When not on the job, she can usually be found wandering the backcountry of Ontario or Québec, on water or land, with her husband and dog.



MEET THE STAFF AT OHTO

NICOLE WHITING | Executive Director

Serving for 15 years as Executive Director for Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO), Nicole has had the privilege of working with a fantastic team of staff, board members and tourism champions to develop partnerships and innovative tourism strategies that seek to inspire visitors to enjoy the many uniquely rural tourism experiences available in the region.

Nicole has always had a deep appreciation for the value travel experiences bring to people's lives and communities. Her diverse background as a competitive whitewater kayaker, event manager and entrepreneur, afforded her opportunities to visit, live and work in popular tourism destinations all over the world before settling down in the Ottawa Valley over 20 years ago.

NICOLE.WHITING@OHTO.CA // 613-629-6486 X 201



LUISA SORRENTINO | Marketing Director

Luisa's passion for tourism, paired with a natural talent for connecting people and organizations, makes her a perfect fit for the role of Marketing Director with OHTO.

Luisa excels in promoting, mobilizing and strengthening communities, serving as a resource and advocate for positive change. Her innovative leadership focuses on creating a strong sense of place. Luisa is the key contact for consumer and industry marketing at OHTO, working with tourism operators, stakeholders, and community partners to strengthen the region from within on the Come Wander brand.

Having come to Canada from Italy 15 years ago, Luisa has a Masters' degree in international politics, and also speaks four languages (in case you're wondering, they are Italian, French, Spanish and English).

LUISA.SORRENTINO@OHTO.CA // 613-629-6486 X 202



KASEY ROGERSON | Director of Industry Development

If there is one thing Kasey Rogerson is passionate about, it's tourism. As the Director of Industry Development, Kasey works directly with communities and businesses to foster communications between OHTO and the industry, developing partnerships and programming, and building capacity for tourism success. In her role with OHTO, Kasey is the first point of contact between stakeholders and OHTO, and provides support for the industry to Wander Sustainably with responsible tourism.

Born and raised in the Ottawa Valley, Kasey has a strong connection to the region and is big on outdoor and edible travel experiences (and not necessarily in that order). When she's not helping operators and communities, Kasey is often still immersed in tourism while staycating in Ontario's Highlands and travelling afar with her family.

KASEY.ROGERSON@OHTO.CA // 613-629-6486 X 203



GUEST SPEAKER: BEN VADASZ, CO-FOUNDER & PARTNER OF DESTINATION THINK

HOW WE CAN TURN THE GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL INITIATIVES

There are world-class solutions in our local backyards and around the world. How do we go faster, further, together? Ben will take us on a global snapshot of best practice examples, solutions and impact that we can apply to our local communities and businesses tomorrow to thrive in the visitor economy.



Ben Vadasz is a seasoned tourism industry expert with over a decade of experience, and is a co-founder and Partner of Destination Think, a globally recognized tourism consultancy firm.

Ben's expertise lies in his ability to decode complex situations and use his EQ to understand client expectations.

He leverages his unique skillset to communicate in a friendly, approachable way that helps him develop long-term relationships with his clients.

Throughout his career, Ben has worked with clients from all over the world, including destinations, governments, and private sector businesses. He has helped develop and implement marketing strategies, create sustainable tourism plans, and facilitate stakeholder engagement processes.

As a co-founder of Destination Think, Ben has been instrumental in growing the firm into a global leader in the tourism industry. He is constantly seeking new opportunities to innovate and evolve the firm's offerings to meet the ever-changing needs of the industry.

Ben's philosophy is that good people meet with good people, and he lives by this belief both professionally and personally. He is committed to working with clients who share his values of integrity, transparency, and social responsibility.

One of Ben's favourite quotes is Albert Einstein's: **"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough."**

He believes that this quote perfectly encapsulates his approach to his work. Ben is passionate about helping clients navigate complex challenges and providing simple, effective solutions that drive success.

Overall, Ben Vadasz is a respected leader in the tourism industry with a proven track record of success. His commitment to simplicity, transparency, and building strong relationships has made him a trusted advisor to clients around the world.