

Probus Toronto - The First Year - Some History

This note was prepared at the end of our first year as a Probus club.

1. Starting the Club

In early summer of 2014, John Agnew (a former Rotarian and also a Senior) was looking for a Probus club to join. He knew about Probus from a number of friends and their enthusiasm for the clubs they had joined. But, he found that while there were many clubs in the Toronto suburbs and in the surrounding areas, there were none where he lived, in central Toronto.

On July 7th, 2014 he wrote to Richard Furlong, the Probus, District 2 Director, to ask about any plans for a Toronto club, only to find that although a couple of attempts had been made in the past there had been no success to date.

So, he asked the obvious question - "How do I go about starting one?"

Fortunately, Probus Canada has a web-site containing all the information needed to get going. And by visiting a club in Scarborough and Richard's Newmarket Men's club, it was possible to see Probus in action and get some very useful advice.

2. Find an Affordable, Accessible Meeting Location

Probus clubs try to keep member costs (and therefore, revenues) quite low. So, meeting in a "High Rent" location was out of the question. Finding a location for a large group (up to 200 people) at an affordable monthly cost proved to be quite a challenge. And, we needed a site with a kitchen so we could have coffee and cookies at the meetings.

The search was focussed primarily on locations in the Midtown Toronto area that were readily accessible via the TTC. We looked at Libraries, Retirement Homes, Restaurants, Grocery Stores, Sports Clubs, Churches and more - at least 15 different locations.

We settled on using the Holy Rosary Church, Parish Hall, as it best met all our criteria. It had a large Gymnasium for club meetings - with an adjoining kitchen - and it was right beside the TTC St Clair West subway station.

3. *Finding a Sponsor to Help With Start-Up*

Most clubs, ours included, need some financial and organizational help getting started.

Richard Furlong's home club, Newmarket Men's, agreed to be our sponsor. This meant giving us access to their members to ask how things were done and the best way to get the club organized.

They also agreed to provide the funding to apply for a Charter (register) our club with PROBUS CENTRE - CANADA, INC. and pay the first meeting expenses.

When the club was being formed, they helped with our initial banking arrangements and the running of our first meeting. And, they provided the Guest Speaker (their Past President, Doug Wrigglesworth) for our second meeting.

4. *Finding Potential Members*

Now that we had a place to meet and a sponsor to help out, we needed to see what level of interest there was in forming a new club. That meant getting the word out to as broad a base as possible. And, it meant that a point of contact was needed to allow enquiries and send responses. Hence, the e-mail address "probus.toronto@gmail.com" was created.

As District Director, Richard put out a broadcast message to all his clubs, letting them know about the new Toronto club being formed. A Flyer was developed and all the local Churches were asked to include a notice in their bulletin. The same Flyer was posted in some condominiums and on public notice boards where possible. Everyone responding was encouraged to also contact friends and neighbours to "get the word out" and let them know of the new club.

Lynda Ferreira, Robert Horwitz, and Nuala MacDonald "got the word" early and volunteered to help even before the club was started in November.

Finally, a major effort was made to gain a broader exposure and publicity through the local press. Before our first meeting, we were fortunate to have a half page article and photograph published in the October 15, 2014 edition of **The Town Crier**, a local newspaper. This got the word to a much larger group of potential members. It really helped.

5. *The First Meetings - November 12th, and December 10th, 2014*

On November 12th, 2014, we held the first meeting. Twenty one people joined.. At the second meeting, on December 10th, 2014, we added another 28 members, for a total of 49 Charter Members (people that joined up in 2014).

In these initial meetings we elected our first set of club Officers, (**President, John Agnew, Secretary, Bev Mahler and Treasurer, Lynda Ferreira**). Members also approved the club's **Constitution and Bylaw** documents as well as selecting **September 30** as the club's year end.

And, at the December 10th meeting, **Marylyn O'Connell** (of Lunch Bunch fame) arranged our very first club activity, a lunch on January 8th, 2015.

6. *Accreditation as Club #244 - on January 20, 2015*

In a letter dated January 20, 2015, Mr. R. J. (Reg) Wrynott, Managing Director & President Emeritus, PROBUS Centre-Canada, Inc., wrote to provide us with our Certificate of Accreditation (Charter) and recognize our formation as the "PROBUS CLUB OF TORONTO, (Charter # 244)".

Newmarket Men's President, Graham Christopher, Past President, Doug Wrigglesworth and Probus Regional Director, Richard Furlong were invited to, and attended, our "**Charter Party Cake Cutting Ceremony**" in celebration of the event.

We were now a real Probus club.

7. *Membership and Activity Growth continued in 2015*

Throughout 2015, the club added new members and increased the number of activity groups available to members. At the club's year end (September, 2015) we had a total of 89 members and about a dozen activities to serve the needs of members.

The Activity Committees included:

- **Book Club:- Sandra Hill** The Probus Book Club meets once a month, year round, to discuss one book each time, previously selected by one of the members. We meet at the residence of a member on a rotational basis for about 2 hours each meeting. To date, we've had from 4-8 persons attending.

- **Book Exchange:** - **Bev Mahler** Members bring in books that they are finished with, and are welcome to take a book that someone else has brought in. This takes place at our monthly General Meeting.
- **Bridge Group:** - **Mike Busse** We have a group to play social bridge, rotating in members homes, with up to 12 people.
- **Dining Out:** - **Robert Horwitz** This group is enjoying dining out in the evening once a month at different restaurants in the city, averaging 16-18 per evening.
- **Excursions:** - **Judy McMunn** This committee is in the early stages, but it is hoped that interested members will plan excursions in and around the city. i.e. Special dinners, bus trips, weekends away etc.
- **Golf:** - **Patricia Elfer** Trips to the driving range, and rounds of golf at local courses, have been organized by this committee.
- **Jazz:** - **Robert Horwitz** A group of Jazz enthusiasts have attended various performances in the city.
- **Lunch Bunch:** - **Marylyn O'Connell** The "Lunch Bunch" meets once a month at local restaurants for fellowship and a meal. At this time it averages 8 members per lunch.
- **Newsletter:** - **Andrea Ferrier** Responsible for publishing a monthly Newsletter to members.
- **Speakers:** - **Robert Horwitz** Responsible for obtaining a guest speaker each month to speak at our General Meetings.
- **Theatre:** - **Nuala MacDonald** This group has yet to go to the theatre, but it is hoped that in the coming year they will be enjoying outings to local live theatre productions.
- **Walking:** - **John Kittredge** Our walks will take place only in Greater Toronto but anywhere therein, including both road (sidewalk), park and shore walks.

A number of members stepped forward to help with club related activities. These included:

- The Fifty / Fifty Draw
Kelly Vollering & Patricia Elfer
- The Coffee & Cookie Team
Lynda Ferreira & her many other helpers
- Our Club Photographer
Gerry McMunn

Other folks came forward to help out "behind the scenes" - and still more are coming forward all the time.

8. The Management Team and Activity Leaders for 2014 - 2015 were:

CLUB OFFICERS, 2014 - 2015

President	John Agnew	Secretary	Bev Mahler
Treasurer	Lynda Ferreira		

CLUB MANAGEMENT TEAM, 2014 - 2015

President	John Agnew	Secretary	Bev Mahler
Treasurer	Lynda Ferreira	Speakers:	Robert Horwitz
Membership	Jan Forstner	Membership	Hilary Bartlett
Newsletter	Andrea Ferrier	Theatre	Nuala MacDonald

ACTIVITIES' CO-ORDINATORS , 2014 - 2015

Book Club	Sandra Hill	Bridge Group	Mike Busse
Book Exchange	Bev Mahler	Dining Out	Robert Horwitz
Excursions	Judy McMunn	Golf:	Patricia Elfer
Jazz:	Robert Horwitz	Lunch Bunch	Marylyn O'Connell
Theatre	Nuala MacDonald	Walking	John Kittredge

9. The Election of Officers for 2015 - 2016

The club's first year officially ended in September, 2015, and required the election of a new set of officers for the year 2015 - 2016.

The first year's Management Team wanted to ensure that a strong team of Officers was found to help lead the club into its second year of operation. As a result, it struck a Nominating Committee with chair **Colin Smith** and members **John Agnew, Andrea Ferrier, Carolyn Lombard, Adele Ryan** and **Jan Forstner** (as an alternate member).

The Team also approved a set of "Duty And Responsibility Descriptions" for each Officer position, as prepared by **Hilary Bartlett**. These were circulated to all club members who were encouraged to run for any position they found of interest.

Finally, the Nominating Committee canvassed all members to prepare a slate of willing and able candidates for election at the club's September meeting.

As a result of these efforts, a full set of officers was nominated, presented and elected at the September 9th club meeting. They were:

CLUB OFFICERS, 2015 - 2016

President	Tim Stuart	Secretary	Betty Glave
1st Vice Pres.	Hilary Bartlett	2nd Vice Pres.	Colin Smith
Treasurer	Dave Winlo	Past President	John Agnew

Following the elections, transfer of information and responsibilities took place in an organized, orderly manner.

The new team was then fully in charge and the club remained in good hands.

10. The Appendix Contains Copies of Other Relevant Documents

The files are quite large and include copies of:

Our Club (# 244)

Club Constitution and Bylaws
Club Charter and covering Letter
Officers Duties and Responsibilities - Approved June 14, 2015

Articles Published About The Club

The Town Crier - October, 2014
The Town Crier - November, 2014 - Front Page
The Town Crier - November, 2014 - Inside Page
Snapd North Toronto - December, 2014
The City Center Mirror - January 2015
Snapd North Toronto - March, 2015, and
The Town Crier - June, 2015
Snapd North Toronto - October, 2015