

ICI REAL ESTATE

Waud up to the task of reforming BBOT

BY RICK DRENNAN

A lousy economic forecast.
A lousy business decision?
A potential loss of membership.

It wasn't a great 2009 for the Brampton Board of Trade.

First came the economy, in the throes of the biggest recession in generations.

Next came a decision by the board to purchase a property at 196-198 Main St. N, the potential new home of the BBOT.

The property was purchased for \$842,500 when it was sold for \$480,000 only seven months earlier.

Why was the board, a non-profit organization, so keen on buying this property at a seemingly inflated price? Will that purchase impact on the finances of this organization for years to come?

Brampton's Michael Gagnon penned a letter to the Brampton Guardian in mid-October '09 asking some tough questions about this potential "money pit."

"What is certain is that this organization has a decision making process which certainly needs to be fixed," he wrote.

No doubt it's been a trying time for BBOT and its new president Charles Waud, owner of WaudWare Inc., which provides IT solutions for its customer base, mainly in the produce industry.

"Have we [the Board] lost some credibility? Yes," he said, in an interview with the Times recently.

Can the Board win back the confidence of its membership, and grow its numbers over the next few years? And what about the purchase of the home? Will that problem be rectified in the near future?

Waud, who succeeded Carman McClelland

in July of '09 and inherited the housing problem, says yes, but only over time.

There are money concerns, said the longtime member of the governing council, and "we have to take a look at what the membership wants."

To that end, the Board will be making a major announcement this month in regards to the house purchase.

It seems a fire sale is in the works, although Waud wouldn't confirm this. He also said the BBOT membership will be contacted with a new governance model the main objective.

Waud promises that the board will also "tighten up" the number of functions it sponsors or co-sponsors each year.

"I think people are golf tourneyed, evented, and galad out," he said.

Waud said the Board will study which business lunches, speakers' series, golf tournaments, and business awards are needed – and which ones make money.

"We have to ask ourselves, are they relevant?" he said.

Waud is probably the best person to be in charge of the Board during this critical time in its history.

He knows about tough times, and about staying the course.

In 2003, the SARS scare devastated the fresh fruit industry. WaudWare had to refocus



Charles Waud

and downsize. And just in the middle of doing this, the company's controller (and Waud's father-in-law), died suddenly.

The company survived, and eventually thrived, and that's why Waud said he doesn't "get too excited, or overreact [to the problems that now face the Board]."

He also emphasized, "I'm not a quitter."

Waud is a practical businessman who

thinks the key to building up the Board's membership and solving its economic problems is to be honest.

In an upcoming issue of Trade Talks (the Board's publication), he will explain the reforms planned for the BBOT. He'll also talk about why the board may pull back some on event organizing, and what it is doing about the house purchase.

The BBOT has about 1050 members, down some from its high-water mark (1,200) only a few years ago.

Waud isn't worried about the "hard core membership" leaving, but he is hoping renewals will be strong in 2010.

The key issues facing the city, and therefore falling within the radar of the BBOT over the next year will be development in the southwest quadrant of the city, the redevelopment of the old Peel Memorial Hospital lands, and the building of a convention centre in the city core.

Waud has lived in Brampton since 1966, when he moved to the city at the age of four. He has worked his entire business life here, and remains committed to the city's well being. He's been a tireless volunteer and charitable giver, and he believes business leaders should give back to their community.

WaudWare became a member of the BBOT in 2000, and its president thinks the membership has more than paid for itself many times over.

As president, he's spent hours and hours visiting businesses and sitting in on committees. Although the house purchase and the Gagnon letter were a double-barreled blow to the Board, Waud remains unfazed about its future – and is more than up to the challenge of changing its course.

Like his business that went through tough times, only to celebrate its 20th anniversary in '09, so too, the Board will survive its latest setbacks, he vowed.

Under Waud's guidance the Board has improved information technology, and enhanced the various uses of computer systems. Next up is surveying the membership to see what it wants. The ultimate outcome is a new model of governance that is open and accountable.

"We'll be delivering what people are paying for," said Waud in an earlier interview with the Business Times.

It's a sizeable task turning around a ship that has sprung a few large leaks over the past year.

Waud says he and the governing council are more than up to the task.

BSC celebrates anniversary and move

Forty years ago BSC Solutions Group Ltd. was a TV and VCR repair shop. It gradually transitioned into computer repair, and then into full computer network support for corporate clients. In November of '09 the company celebrated those four decades of business success and opened its new 5,200 sq ft facility at 321 Deerpark Dr., Brampton. Owner and President, Bill Boisvenue says, "you have to welcome change and be on the cutting edge of market trends to be successful in the technology business. The ability to react and adapt quickly is a must, along with superb customer service. Otherwise, you won't succeed in the long term." BSC Solutions Group is a provider of managed computer network support services and internet services including server and application hosting as well as internet access. From L to R: Patricia Petti, Daniel Di Felice, Andrew Sammut, Paul Hogan, President Bill Boisvenue and Charles Waud (president of the BBOT) cut the ribbon, Nick Dorak, Jason Paulo and Susanne Boisvenue of the BSC Solutions Group Ltd.



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Great life on ice

Cont. from page 8

I was intrigued and could see the possibilities. Interviews on Hockey Night In Canada. A Governor General's Award for non-fiction. An instant bestseller.

But I wanted it to be a tell-all tale. Sure, it would have dreamy segments and hilarious anecdotes, but there was so much that needed to be exposed - it should be about the glory and the gory of the game.

Wicksy being Wicksy (a gentleman and a scholar), he was uneasy with something that would expose the game to ridicule. Besides, this was a book about the invisible men who skate beside the stars.

I soon begged off the project, and only weeks ago, A Referee's Life arrived on my desk. Wicksy was so kind as to thank me for my input in the acknowledgements. A Referee's Life is a wonderful read about a wonderful life and a wonderful game.

Wicksy represented the raw, natural ethos that was sports in a bygone era. During his entire career, he had to work summers to make ends meet. This world-class referee was also a tax assessor for the Region of Peel, and a realtor who began practicing his craft a decade before he retired from the game. Today, Wicksy fights for decent pensions for both the older players and the older officials.

He sells his book out of the trunk of his car for \$20 a pop, and even appeared at Chapters recently signing books for those who still remember him and his career.

He knows that at a very young age (the youngest in NHL history), his life was sprinkled with fairy dust – he got a free ticket to participate in the most absurd, and greatest game in the world.

If you'd like a copy of A Referee's Life, visit www.gsph.com.