



40 YEARS OF AWESOME!

2022 Annual General Meeting Speech by Executive Director, Penny Lyons



Good evening and again, welcome to Seva Canada's 2022 Annual General Meeting (AGM). My name is Penny Lyons and I am the Executive Director of Seva Canada.

I love this tagline that our brilliant communications director, Deanne Berman, created – 40 Years of Awesome – it really does sum up the generosity of our donors and the work of our programs and partners, board and staff.

First, thank you to you, our donors and supporters for your dedication to eliminating preventable and treatable blindness. We can't do this work without you and we, and our program partners, are so grateful.

It's always a pleasure to see so many familiar faces and to meet new friends attending their first Seva AGM.

Please allow me to introduce our volunteers and my staff.

Christine Smith and Lisa Demers – former and beloved staff members of Seva Canada and now our volunteers.

Ashley Holm – our new Operations Manager

Deanne Berman – Director of Marketing

Paul Crosby – Director of Fundraising

Ken Bassett –Director of Programs and Katie Judson, Seva Canada's Program Manager.

Some of you may have met Katie at our last AGM – she has transitioned from Board Member to a Program Role. Katie has a Master's in Public Health and 13 years of experience as a public health leader. She has worked with both Seva Foundation and Seva Canada to increase access and quality of healthcare services to poor and marginalized populations.

"It's all done with people" is a refrain often repeated over our 40-year history. I heard it in my first meeting with Seva Canada Board members and staff in 2005 when I started as a volunteer. It's more than a saying; it is the backbone of Seva Canada's success.

We have highlighted many over the years who have contributed so much. In our 40th year celebration, we want to recognize, and thank, those who shared their skills, time, expertise and resources.

Our debt to the experts who have provided training to our programs that we could not: training in surgical skills, teaching cost recovery methods within programs to improve financial sustainability, teaching research methodology, and sharing human resource processes and procedures to ensure high quality, sustainable programs that reach those most in need.

Our gratitude to our corporate partners, granting agencies and foundations who generously fund Seva's work and encourage others to do the same.

Our thanks to current and past Board Members who have stewarded Seva with care, compassion and sometimes, brilliance.

Our awe of the talented photographers and videographers who have captured Seva's work in the field with both beauty and compassion so we can share the importance of Seva's work with donors, funders and all Canadians.

Our appreciation for our office and home-based volunteers who make thank you calls, send shipments, count inventory and keep the office running smoothly.

And finally, our sincere thanks to our donors who have given for years (some from our very first year) and the donors we have just met who will continue to restore sight and prevent blindness for years to come.

Truly, it is all done with people.

Which brings me to my closing remarks. **As of January 1st, 2023, Seva Canada will have a new Executive Director, Elizabeth (Liz) Brant.** Many of you may already know her as she was, earlier in her career, Seva Canada's Development Director.

Since then, Liz has acquired an MBA at the Sauder School of Business at UBC and has, most recently, been the Director, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre. At BC Women's Hospital, Liz's key roles were accountability and human resource management.

For those of you who know her you will remember her fierce intellect, her dedication to excellent work and her appreciation of the ridiculous. Seva Canada will thrive under Liz.

My 16 years of service to Seva, beside our dedicated partners and my fabulous staff, has been an honour and a privilege and I am forever grateful for the opportunity. I want to thank 4 individuals whom I call my 'Seva Parents' – Michel Maurer, for telling me to

take the job and challenging me to always do better; You were right, it's been the best job ever. Ian McLennan for his quiet wisdom and experience, Susan Erdmann for making sure I always saw the joy in what Seva does and Peter Nash for encouraging us all to have fun while doing good.

Seva has grown over the years; and we are raising more funds to treat more blindness, but what I am most proud of is how we do what we do:

We believe in, and invest in, equitable programs because everyone has the right to sight;

We believe in development with dignity and we pay attention to the culture, context and local institutions of our programs and partners so we don't create unintended consequences that are wasteful and potentially harmful;

And, we believe in our partners' capacity, and autonomy, to create eye care programs that provide high-quality care to those most in need.

While I am stepping away as the Executive Director I am not stepping away from Seva – it's been said that Seva is like the Hotel California- you can check out anytime you like but you can never leave.

I will have ongoing program projects for the foreseeable future.

Thank you!



