



Eric M. Kraushaar  
WRHBA 35<sup>th</sup> President  
2008-2009

**Past President's Message**  
**Eric M. Kraushaar**  
**Waterloo Region Home**  
**Builders' Association**  
**Annual Meeting of Members**  
**May 21, 2009**

As this is the last meeting in which I will be appearing before you as your president for this fiscal year, it is my privilege to report to this annual board turnover meeting some highlights of activities and events which took place during my term.

Probably what will be the most remembered feature of this past year will be the commencement in the early fall of 2008 of an economic downturn which in the eyes of the media was to be of epic proportions. Recall how day after day and week after week we heard very little in the way of news other than how terrible we will all suffer in the recession. Despite all of that, our association did fare quite well, and actually better than might have been expected. Our membership numbers have maintained and we are actually five members higher from where we were at this time last year.

Our association has always been good at running events for the members to network and to socialize together. We again this year had very successful dinner meetings each month with a very good slate of guest speakers. I believe that the meeting this past April will be particularly memorable. The guest speaker who had been lined up had to cancel fairly late in the game and with that news there was some scrambling to come up with an alternative. We had 4 past presidents, all of differing backgrounds and experiences sharing some advice of handling business aspects during tough times. There was a real feeling of comradery and warmth emulating through the room that evening, making for a memorable night. This year we had a spring golf tournament and a fall golf tournament. Both were well attended and financially successful. In the month of June we had a steak barbecue, which was also very successful. We had a great awards of distinction night in November, and an industry luncheon just a couple of weeks ago, with a very entertaining guest speaker Rod Black.

One area which I particularly wanted to improve on over the past year was communication of news and information with the general membership. We started working with staff early in my term to establish a protocol for the manner in which items would be forwarded to members, to replace the otherwise random or haphazard forwarding of emails to members, which at times could be inundating. We were able to establish a practice of bundling news, information and documents in bulk emails with headings and sending them out on a fairly predictable bi-monthly basis, which the members could then sort through and select items which they wished to pursue further. This is sent out now as our E-News and has turned out to work quite well, but may still be treated to some further tweaking. This is a great example of the behind the scenes work done by our staff members, providing great value to the membership at large.

The other aspect which our association has become increasingly involved in is a heightened awareness of changes and issues concerning our industry as they occur and to respond to those issues and changes, by way of advocacy or otherwise, to minimize the negative impact or enhance the positive effect that such issues or changes may have on our industry.

Here are some of the issues we have participated in advocating on over the past year.

- there were many changes brought about concerning Tarion - these included posting of a Notice Board on Site; new requirements for agreements of purchase and sale regarding delayed closing provisions; recent changes to coverage requirements for major structural defects; new additions to construction performance guidelines; and a new fee structure introduced
- there was work on new policy requirements for brownfield developments;
- legislation and policies concerning the establishment and enlargement of the provincial greenbelt;
- issue of sprinklers becoming mandatory in new construction was ongoing - it was determined that they are to be required for mid rise buildings as of July/08; more recently, it has been accepted that sprinklers will not be required for single family residential - the OHBA is still dialoguing with interest groups including fire safety representatives on alternatives;
- OHBA has acquired additional shares in Enerquality, with contractual negotiations and due diligence ongoing over most of the past year and which purchase transaction is expected to close this coming August;
- there were ongoing discussions concerning inclusionary zoning, provincial discussion regarding amendments to the development charges act and the importance of local involvement in creation of municipal background studies in relation to new development charge amounts;
- series of meetings with the Record regarding participation in a new Home Show - and we engaged in discussions about whether to renew the current agreement for home show at auditorium - consideration of future benefits and obstacles of each of two options;
- establishing of advocacy account by WRHBA to fund future research and advocacy requirements so that we will be prepared to respond as the issues arise;
- we received information on and were advocating on planning and land use issues from a provincial perspective concerning the greenbelt policies and the places to grow legislation, and at regional level respecting the regional land budget calculations and the regional draft official plan, and also at the local municipal level concerning the growth management plans and reurbanization policies;
- our association continued its ongoing participation in the issue of development charges, both at the local level with our cities and at the regional level as well;
- participated in CMHC roundtable in August, discussing a new home sales survey for Kitchener catchment area - this new survey is now being conducted and we are beginning to see the results of it;
- last summer we initiated steps to explore and ultimately proceed with the successful launch of the Renomark program for our association, which occurred in February of this year, and led to signing of several new renovation members;
- we established and scheduled meetings with local area MP's to inform and discuss issues concerning our industry;
- we continued to seek out, to obtain and process information regarding changes and developments in our industry concerning green building technologies;
- we conducted meetings and shared information throughout the year with chamber of commerce to explore common interest in issues regarding housing cost and availability of choice for consumers, and a similar relationship was established this year as well with the KWREB;
- new provincial legislation was passed this year creating a greatly expanded registration requirements and premium remittance for WSIB, and we participated in a provincial Ministry and MPP letter writing campaign opposing it;
- the latest economic issue in which we got involved is concerning the HST, how it will affect our industry and our housing consumers and what changes we would like to see to soften the potential economic blow which could result from it;
- we experienced the start of the downturn in the economy in the fall of 2008, and its escalation throughout the winter, and we participated in a publication campaign to discourage the extreme negativity in news reporting for months over the economic status and how it affects our industry, and we worked at trying to focus on positive news stories;

- advocacy is engaged in as a significant priority in our association - it is pursued on a volunteer basis drawn from our membership - our association has been recognized by the CHBA as the most active local association in advocacy exclusively by members - much of this volunteer work is drawn through our various committees, and it is expected to continue to grow in priority for our association - we owe a great debt of recognition and gratitude to our members who regularly volunteer time and expertise to these very important advocacy issues - there is no indication that this need will decrease in the future, but rather will continuously increase;
- at the CHBA level there was ongoing federal advocacy with up-dating thresholds for GST exemptions, dealing with the underground economy controls, and federal funding for municipal infrastructure needs;
- the CHBA urban council, at which we have been very effectively represented most recently by Brian Blackmere, and before him by Douglas Stewart, and before him by Scott Gareau, has been very effective in its work - by example it has produced a whole series of toolkits for dealing with the common issues facing the local associations;

Overall we have had a very successful year, in spite of the severe economic challenges which we have all felt. The success of our dinner meetings and of all of our events, is largely as a result of the tireless efforts of our staff of Marie and Michelle and Melissa. I offer congratulations and a deep gratitude to each of them individually and collectively for completion of a great year. They were assisted by volunteers from our membership who helped in organizing the events, which many members enjoyed over this past year.

Our executive committee was very effective and hard working this year again, and I express my deepest thanks on behalf of all members of the association to the individual members of our executive committee over this past year for their time and devotion and expertise which they provided. I am also grateful and express my thanks to the Board of Directors and my appointed advisors for all of their efforts in providing guidance on setting the agenda for the association and helping with important decisions, through attending the meetings held over the past year and for the additional volunteer work in our committees, whether they be the regular ongoing committees or those established on an ad hoc basis as the need arose. One example was the ad hoc committee established to address the draft regional official plan which was released this year and proposes a dramatic shift in how population growth of our region is to occur.

My year as president was a great pleasure for me and I enjoyed the opportunity to serve you throughout. I enjoyed being able to represent WRHBA at both the OHBA Conference in Collingwood in September as well as the CHBA Conference in Quebec City in February.

My term with you is surprisingly drawing to a close. The time passes very quickly. As your president, I had many opportunities to interact with very astute and qualified people at our local level, as well as the provincial and federal level. It has been an enjoyable experience and I thank you for allowing me to be of service to this association. I pass the position on to Brian Blackmere, who will be speaking to you shortly, and who I have no doubt will continue the tradition of providing solid leadership and continue to guide our association in a strong and effective manner. I look forward to continuing to work with the executive committee as your past president, and facing the challenges which will confront us.

Thank you.

Eric M. Kraushaar  
President 2008-2009