

Frank G. Shaw: Ontario Land Trust Alliance volunteer



You could say volunteerism runs in Frank Shaw's blood. Growing up with parents who were active volunteers in their local community left a lasting impression on Frank, and now, at the age of 73, he continues as a committed, effective and valued volunteer in the world of land conservation.

For almost two decades, Frank has volunteered with numerous conservation groups, community groups and land trusts in various leadership roles. In 2015, Frank joined the OLTA Board of Governors and since that time, has provided both insight and direction on organizational policies and procedures and communications strategies. Frank's energetic approach to his work continues to motivate both his fellow board members and the OLTA staff to do more, and to do better. **THANK YOU FRANK, FOR ALL THAT YOU DO!**

Despite his busy schedule, Frank recently took the time to speak with us about why he is so committed to volunteering, and why he believes volunteering is an important role for citizens in the future of Canada. Take it away, Frank!

Q. You are a very busy person! Why do you dedicate so much of your personal time to volunteer work?

Growing up in Norfolk County, my ancestors and parents - as examples to me - had always contributed and volunteered in the rural community and in nature conservation. Throughout my public service career of 33 years, as an executive manager of people & programs, I had some wonderful mentors (bosses, colleagues & staff) who helped show me the way. Without them I would not have progressed or been as successful, so I have a debt of family and a debt of honour to pay it forward - to give back some of what I gained from others to others - and to my children for the future. I gained life experience so why not continue to give back in the world of land trusts and farmland protection where I have like-minded passion and professional know-how that could be of some value on a volunteer team. And it helps me continue my learning.

Q. What do you enjoy most about volunteering and in particular about volunteering your time for OLTA?

After 17 years of volunteering with land trusts and as part of the OLTA, the team achievements are so community reinforcing AND the experience so personally rewarding that I am still prepared to contribute 250 to 500 hours per year to save the land, nature & water that we love. At 70, I thought that being able to contribute and volunteer my land trust expertise to the Board of the Alliance might help or serve to build capacity and excellence in Ontario land trusts and across Canada. Not for profit groups that incorporate and register as charities have a much higher duty of care and of accountability in their daily governance policy and management action. This is my strongest area of expertise and interest beyond the land & nature.

Having been a Board Member and Governance Chair for local land trusts and now for OLTA, I have been able to encourage, help, support and/or write the essentials for Policy Frameworks, Board Manuals & Templates, Board Orientation & Learning and Recruitment Actions. The OLTA Board and Staff are a professional team of diverse talents with democratic passion from whom I learn every day.

Q. In your opinion, is a strong volunteer culture important in the life of all Canadians, and if so, why?

A strong volunteer culture is what built this Canada, our diverse country - its energetic communities and its conservation groups - including Ontario land trusts. In a real democracy, governments at all levels follow the will of the people more than they determine the will of the people. You don't need to have a title to be a leader, a learner for life, a volunteer or just be an effective person. There would be no Greenbelt Plans, Ontario Land Conservation Act or Land Trusts to protect significant lands or to prompt governments to create policy, provide funding or save bio-diversity without the incredible power of people in their persistent service as volunteers.

For years, I have saved the quotations of famous leaders and mentors, who are much wiser than me, that in many ways explain why citizens, community leaders of all kinds and volunteers can, should and must contribute to society. Like the words below, spoken by Jane Goodall, I am continually inspired by these quotes that often express my own beliefs, feelings and values in better words than I can muster.

“What you do always makes a difference and so you have to decide what is the difference that you want to make” – Jane Goodall

