

Money & Mission

Volume VII, Issue 12 - March 15, 2017



Editorial: Lifelong Learning

"Lifelong learning" has been defined as the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. This recognizes that what has been referred to as the classic model of education – a burst at the start and top-ups through on-the-job training – is breaking down. The main reason is the need for new, and constantly updated, skills.

We certainly see this within the Army. As the work required to manage the Army's "business" becomes ever more complex due to legislative requirements and societal expectations, we need people who are committed to lifelong learning to help ensure that the Army stays cutting edge. Lifelong learning also recognizes that the development of personal interests, perhaps unrelated to one's job, should be encouraged, especially as longer life spans lead to extended periods of retirement.

Numerous benefits have been attributed to lifelong learning, apart from the obvious one of being able to assume new responsibilities in the workplace. According to the Sheridan Centre for Elder Research at Sheridan College in Mississauga, lifelong learning also brings improved health and well-being, longer life span, greater likelihood of community and civic

engagement, increased creativity and greater self-fulfillment. A study conducted by George Washington University in Washington, DC, found that lifelong learners were less likely to visit a doctor, take medication, experience depression, or suffer from low levels of morale. Significant benefits, indeed!

Not surprisingly, governments are encouraging lifelong learning. In 1999 Canada instituted the Lifelong Learning Plan (LLP) which allows withdrawals from your registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) to finance full-time training or education for you or your spouse, without having the withdrawals treated as taxable income; in effect, they are interest-free loans from your RRSP. However, if you are studying full-time you will probably have little taxable income, so a withdrawal from your RRSP would attract minimal tax, making it less necessary to go the LLP route.

The Role of the Audit Committee - I

A recent major development in the governance of The Salvation Army in Canada and Bermuda is the establishment of an Audit Committee with external members. Paul Goodyear, Financial Secretary, indicates that this is “.. perhaps the most important step that the Governing Council has taken from a public accountability standpoint since its formation in 1909.” A move that is in line with the General’s Accountability Movement, other territories will soon follow the lead taken by Canada and Bermuda.

Since some readers may not be familiar with Audit Committees, this two-part article will summarize the activities of Audit Committees, and the perceived benefits brought by them.

Audit Committees generally exercise oversight in three areas (which are explained below in relation to the annual consolidated financial statements and the charitable information returns of The Governing Council of The Salvation Army in Canada):

Financial Reporting. This includes oversight of the selection of accounting policies used in preparing the financial statements, and reviewing other financial information for consistency with the financial statements, i.e., the Management Discussion and Analysis and the Management Responsibility for Financial Statements, which are published with the financial statements. Also, the Committee will review the charitable information returns.

Audit Activities. These activities include reviewing the scope of the external audit, discussing the auditors’ findings, discussing the financial statements (including notes) with the auditors, recommending approval of the financial statements, and recommending re-appointment (or replacement) of the auditors. The recommendations referred to here will, for the Army, be made to The Governing Council, which approves the financial statements and appoints the auditors. Where the organization has internal auditors, like the Army, the scope and findings of their work is reviewed too.

Risk Management and Control. Here the Committee reviews risk management policies/processes, management responses to these risks, and the adequacy of the systems of internal control. A Risk Committee is already in place at Territorial Headquarters, so the Audit Committee will coordinate its work with that body to ensure there is no duplication or overlap in their roles.

Part II will address membership of the Audit Committee, the terms of office of the members, and its communications to stakeholders.

Warning: Telephone Scams

A common tool used by the scam artist today is the ordinary telephone. The criminals behind these scams often create elaborate scenarios in attempting to trick the victims into sending funds via money transferring services such as Western Union, or payment from victims' credit cards directly. These calls generally reach victims at their homes.

Three of the commonly-used scenarios are:

Canada Revenue Agency (CRA): The caller pretends to be from the CRA, claiming back taxes are owed, and threatening police or court action unless a payment is made immediately. In many cases a voicemail is left on the victim's phone with the threat and a call-back number.

Microsoft tech support: The fraudster pretends to be a technician from Microsoft. He (it is usually a "he") claims they have monitored suspicious activities on the victim's computer, and requests visits to websites and to download software. (The fraudster could then take control of the computer and install tracking software to obtain personal information about the victim.) In addition, the fraudster might request credit card information to bill for fictitious services in the future.

Grandchild or other family member: This type of call is not new, but is still frequently used. The fraudster contacts the potential victim and poses as a grandchild, or other family member, in urgent need of cash. The story often involves an accident or arrest while out of the country, and the claim that funds need to be transferred to them right away.

How do you protect yourself against telephone frauds? We suggest three simple steps:

- Always verify the identity of the person on the other end of the line
- Do not give out personal information
- Educate yourself about types of frauds out there

Fraudsters are always coming up with new schemes to scam potential victims, so stay informed and be particularly vigilant when you are asked to provide personal information.

Who's Who - Samantha Moss

Samantha is one of three Assistant Financial Secretaries. She has been with The Salvation Army for the past eleven years and this is her sixth role within the Army during that time, all of which were held in the finance department. Samantha began her career with the organization as a financial analyst shortly after graduating from university, and has also held roles as assistant director of accounting and director of accounting for both Ontario and Territorial Headquarters. In her current role, Samantha is primarily responsible for accounting policy and procedure. She also holds donation fulfillment, estates and property project finances within her portfolio.



Samantha graduated from the University of Guelph with a Bachelor of Commerce specializing in economics and finance, received a post graduate diploma in accounting from Wilfred Laurier University and holds a CPA, CMA designation.

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