

Board of Directors

Katherine Huising, Chair

Katherine is the Associate Vice President, Ancillary Services at the University of Alberta. Prior to her time with the University of Alberta, Katherine had a career with the Government of Alberta, most recently as the Chief of Protocol. Her previous government positions included: Director of the Northern and Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditoria and Manager of the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium. In addition, Katherine has served on various Edmonton boards and committees including the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation, the Edmonton Downtown Farmers' Market Association, and the Canadian Country Music Awards Organizing Committee (2013 and 2014).

Michael Capus, Past Chair

Since 2017, Michael has been a Partner with KPMG LLP. He began as a consultant with the firm in 2006, and he was promoted to Senior Manager by 2012. He has extensive experience in strategy development, financial and cost modelling, business process improvement, and performance measurement and management. He has a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Alberta. His past community involvement includes work with 630 CHED's Santas Anonymous, Whitemud Equine Learning Centre Association, and the United Way.

Jill Thygesen, Treasurer

Currently the Director of Finance at Concordia University of Edmonton, Jill Thygesen has a Chartered Accountant designation (CA, CPA), complemented by a bachelor's degree from the U of A with a double major in Economics and French Language and Literature. She has a strong background in the fields of finance, accounting, and risk management, all honed during her time as an auditor at Ernst & Young LLP. During her career, Jill has become well-versed in the financial needs of NPOs. Her community involvement includes volunteering with InMotion Network and YWCA Edmonton.

Pam Lafferty, Secretary

Pamela Lafferty is currently the Director of Tax & Payroll at AutoCanada. She has over 20 years of accounting and tax experience, working with not-for-profit organizations, private companies, and public corporations.

Pamela earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Alberta. She articulated at PwC, where she obtained her Chartered Accountant designation and advanced to the role of Senior Manager in the Tax group. In 2014, she moved to leading the Liquids Pipelines tax group at Enbridge and then started at AutoCanada in 2020. Pamela is the past President of the YWCA Edmonton Board of Directors and has volunteered for several charitable organizations.

Pamela was born and raised in Edmonton and feels privileged to now sit on Edmonton's Food Bank Board of Directors and contribute to an organization that has such an important impact on our community.

David Benjestorf, Director

David has been practicing corporate commercial law in the Edmonton area since 2000 and currently serves as Chief Legal Counsel and Director of Development for the Alldritt Group's Alberta operations. He is also an entrepreneur, owning several Edmonton-based companies. Throughout his career, David has received numerous accolades for his outstanding achievements. These include being recognized as Alberta Venture Magazine's "Leader of Tomorrow" in 2005, Knighted under the International Order of the Noble Companions of the Swan in 2008, receiving the AFP Social Services Award in 2020, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal in 2022, and the Ukraine Crisis Humanitarian Aid Award in 2023.

During the pandemic, David spearheaded a community agricultural project that donated hundreds of thousands of pounds of fresh vegetables to the Food Bank. As the project expands, he aims to incorporate indoor vertical farming for year-round production. Affectionately known as "Farmer Dave," he wears this title with pride. In addition to his professional endeavours, David established a Friends of Ukraine Group, which has provided support and coordinated services for hundreds of families fleeing the war in Ukraine. In his leisure time, David enjoys traveling, education, sports, antique tractors, marksmanship, and spending time with his two Dachshunds, Maddie and Max.

Clodia Kanna, Director

Clodia has been calling Edmonton home since she immigrated from Syria in 2008. Clodia is a professional civil engineer with 22 years of experience in project management and a master's in business administration. She is also a certified Interior Designer with a creative eye and attention to detail. Clodia is a business owner for an initiative she and her hubby started in 2019.

Clodia grew up in the Middle East, and she immigrated to Canada to give her two kids a better life. Clodia is a strong advocate for equality and diversity, and she strongly believes in giving back to the community. Throughout her journey, Clodia felt the warmth of the Canadian generosity, from welcoming her with an open heart to supporting her drive to continue her education and achieve her professional designation as a Professional Engineer P. Eng in Canada.

Clodia currently works at Alberta Innovates as Senior Manager for the Project Management Office, and she has been with that organization for over five years. She previously worked for an engineering firm where she got the required experience and supervision to get her P.Eng designation.

Clodia has always been an active volunteer with different organizations, from Habitat for Humanity, where she built houses for low-income families, to Windmill Microlending, where she mentors professional immigrants like herself to integrate into the Canadian workforce.

Ryan Lowe, Director

Ryan Lowe has 15 years' experience in the energy industry. He is currently a manager at Enbridge and is responsible for the operations and maintenance of critical energy infrastructure in the Edmonton Area. Ryan is currently pursuing an Executive MBA from the University of Alberta with a focus on leadership and culture, corporate strategy, and technology & innovation. Prior to moving to Edmonton in 2020 with his wife and two school-age children, Ryan served as a board member with the Fort McMurray Search & Rescue. Ryan is a skilled leader who is passionate about building better leaders, better communities, and helping others to reach their full potential.

Paul McElhone, Director

Paul McElhone is a Senior Consultant with McElhone Consulting and the former Dean of the Mihalcheon School of Management at Concordia University of Edmonton. Previously, he served as Executive Director of the School of Retailing at the University of Alberta School of Business. Paul established the School of Retailing and helped to raise in excess of 11 million dollars for the Faculty of Business. His 40+ years of professional and academic marketing experience has led to consulting projects with corporations nationally and internationally. Paul's board experience spans more than 35 years. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from McMaster University and PhD from the ESCP-EAP (Pantheon-Sorbonne Doctoral School) Paris, France.

Alim Nizar Somji, Director

Alim is the Executive Vice-President of the Jaffer Group of Companies. Alim has a Bachelor of Arts (with distinction) in Honors Business Administration from the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario, and a Post Graduate Certificate in Real Property Valuation from the Sauder School of Business at the University of British Columbia. He has served as a Board Member for Elves Special Needs Society and as the Chairperson of the Economic Planning Board of His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shia Ismaili Council for Edmonton.

Tracy Wyrstiuk, Director

Tracy Wyrstiuk has held several senior executive roles with the Government of Alberta in the areas of social services, health, community development, arts and culture, and justice. She is currently the Assistant Deputy Minister of Court and Justice Services with Alberta Justice where she oversees all court operations for the province and works with the judiciary and legal community. Tracy previously served as an Assistant Deputy Minister within Community and Social Services, Culture and Tourism, and Human Services. Prior to joining public service, she was in private legal practice and was a sessional legal instructor with Arctic College teaching law courses in remote Arctic communities. Tracy holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree with Distinction and a Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of Alberta. She has completed the Niagara Institute Executive Leadership Program and the Ivey Senior Public Sector Leader Program. Tracy has a strong passion for not-for-profit organizations and knows the importance of strong vibrant communities.

