

# 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## *Slate of Nominees Biographies*

### **Robyn Blackadar, Strathcona County**

Throughout her career, Robyn has sought to contribute to the creation of a fair and just society where all people are respected and thrive. She has had over 30 years of work experience in Alberta's social and health system in such areas of policy development and analysis, quality improvement, knowledge mobilization, and program evaluation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Calgary, a Master of Business Administration, Senior/Executive Management Development certificate, and a Canadian Health Services Research Foundation/Center for Knowledge Transfer Training Award from the University of Alberta.

In 2023, Robyn retired after 11 years as the President & CEO of PolicyWise for Children & Families, a nonprofit, charitable organization that generated and mobilized evidence for well-being through a collaborative, cross-sector approach between government, academia, and the community. Prior to her role with PolicyWise, Robyn held various senior leadership and policy positions in public sector organizations including Alberta Health Services, Capital Health and the Government of Alberta's Ministries of Health, Transportation, and the Women's Secretariat. Participating in numerous province-wide, as well as national committees and strategies, Robyn has had valuable opportunities to support system change. She was involved in initiatives such as A Stronger, Safer Tomorrow, Valuing Mental Health Strategy, Building an Inclusive Education System, Early Childhood Research and Innovation Strategy, and Integrated Youth Mental Health Hubs. An advocate for the appropriate and ethical use of data and research, Robyn was a reviewer for the Canadian Institute of Health Research, community data lead for Making the Shift Youth Homelessness Center of Excellence and Co-Chair of the Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy. As a champion for a strong and impactful nonprofit/voluntary sector, Robyn served on the Alberta Nonprofit Network, the Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative, and was a member of Imagine Canada's Equity Collective.

Robyn is currently a part-time assistant lecturer in the School of Business at the University of Alberta, instructing courses in nonprofit/public sector management and leadership. She is also an active volunteer in her community, serving on Strathcona County's Seniors Advisory Committee and Social Framework Grants Advisory Committee. Robyn lives with her husband and cat on an acreage in rural Strathcona County. She loves spending time with her family, having fun with her three grandsons and getting involved in all kinds of activities.



**Hala Ezzeddine, Grande Prairie**

My name is Hala Ezzeddine and I am a 2nd year bachelor of education student at Northwestern Polytechnic in Grande Prairie, Alberta. While a student at NWP, I have had the opportunity to be involved in the Student Ambassador program. This program is designed to get students involved with campus life through volunteering at campus events, working with different departments to host campus wide tours, etc. I had the privilege of being a Student Ambassador for three consecutive years and being awarded "Volunteer of The Year" in 2023. Last year, with the support of my mentor & Ambassador/Recruitment co-ordinator Christine Grant, I campaigned for the role of Vice President Internal at Northwestern Polytechnic's Students Association. After being elected into the role I have had the opportunity to sit on multiple committees and boards within NWP and the Students Association. I was re-elected into the role this May and will be in the position for the full academic year. I have a passion for volunteering, advocacy, post secondary & making a change. I have several years of experience in many sectors and I thrive to learn new things. Spending 20 years of my life in Grande Prairie has allowed me to network and meet people from a variety of backgrounds, which I believe will be an asset to Volunteer Alberta's organization.

**Meenakshi Ramanathan, Edmonton**

My name is Meenakshi, I also go by Meena. Over the years I have gained experience working with nonprofits by participating in programs that bridge the gap of organizations looking to advance youth talent/representation. A large part of my passion to enable nonprofits initially grew from participating in the Youth at the Table program by Volunteer Alberta in 2021. Where I learnt about the intricacies of policy making in relation to stakeholders. This experience grew my confidence and knowledge about the sector and further enabled my passion to become a community builder. Currently, I work in a nonprofit organization that empowers businesses to build their AI capacity. In my spare time you're likely to find me visiting local cafes and restaurants exploring different cuisines. Enjoying long walks in nature and participating in local community events to educate myself on what communities are up to.



**Amanda Jensen, Lethbridge**

Beginning in southern Saskatchewan... fast forward ten years and meet the Amanda that serves as the Executive Director for Volunteer Lethbridge! To get more honest, Amanda has been serving the nonprofit sector, largely in Southern Alberta for the past 25 years. She began at Volunteer Lethbridge at the start of the pandemic- a lone tumbleweed for a couple of years in the spacious and beautiful U of L Penny Building, virtually supported by amazing volunteer and team colleagues. Amanda is now gratefully getting to know what its like to work for a volunteer centre under more normal circumstances, though certainly no factor of the work has remained unaffected.

Amanda has worked for many nonprofit organizations in Lethbridge & area, including the Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden, Community Futures Lethbridge Region, the Town of Magrath, the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association, and serving the provincial Family & Community Support Services grant for the City of Lethbridge. Amanda has also been a prolific federal and provincial political volunteer, and now, like many Canadians, enjoys getting out for inspiring episodic volunteer opportunities. Amanda describes Volunteer Lethbridge as her most fond employer to date. The board and staff exemplify the true spirit of community support; she hopes that anyone that connects with Volunteer Lethbridge feels this spirit of care and inclusion. She's equally proud, though, of what a volunteer centre brings to its community. In 2023, the organization directly or indirectly supported 57% of Lethbridge residents that volunteered- that's more than 60,000 volunteers! They contributed an average of an astounding 91 hours each, and that equates to a \$134M economic impact to Lethbridge and area. Wow. Humbling.

Amanda holds a B. Mgt from the incredible U of L, and a M.A in Organizational Leadership from the University of Guelph- an experience she shares with the current Board Chair David Reeve. Amanda was also the recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal in 2023. With lots of family support, she specifically has four amazing children (two are teenagers- she's holding her hat) and has the best friend in the world with her Golden Doodle Rolo.

