



DIGITAL ALBERTA 2021 AGM

SUBJECT: **President's Report to the Members**

PURPOSE: To Recap Significant Events from 2020

DOCUMENTS: N/A

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While staying true to our past, 2020 was a year of transition and evolution for Digital Alberta. In who we represent. In how we approach advocacy. In what our message is. In the audiences we seek. In how we conduct ourselves. And finally, in how we are structured. On all fronts, we grew, and I couldn't be more proud of the work the board was able to accomplish during one of the most bizarre years I expect I will ever experience in my lifetime.

1. COVID-19

A volunteer-led, working board that had many new directors added at the last AGM — and even more added over the course of the year — would be challenged at the best of times. Throw COVID into the mix, and it was even more challenging. I have worked with some people on the board for 15 months now, and we have never even had the chance to meet face-to-face. But through it all, the experience of returning directors, along with the energy brought in from newer recruits, has allowed us to work through some difficult decisions (e.g. cancelling the 2020 Ember Awards) while excelling in others (e.g. our core editorial content and membership increases). Thank you to all the board for your contributions in our committee's, at the board meetings, and the work you do outside of your day-to-day careers to help Digital Alberta succeed.

2. Digital Alberta Represents Alberta's IDM Industry — And Much More

Over the last year, we set out to expand Digital Alberta's membership and, as part of that, attract more IDM companies to our ranks. By the end of 2020, I'm proud to report we now represent the largest IDM companies in the province. BioWare, Beamdog, New World Interactive, Red Iron Labs, Unity Technologies, Improbable, Zugalu, Isto Inc, and many other IDM companies are now paid members and part of the Digital Alberta family.

This work has not gone unnoticed. Over the last year, we have collaborated with DigiBC, Interactive Ontario, and other provincial associations at the national stage. And, more locally, just last week *Alberta Makes Games* was folded into the Digital Alberta portfolio — something that may have been an awkward fit in years' past.

I would like to thank our long-standing IDM members, welcome our new IDM members, and give a call out to any IDM companies that are still looking for a place to call home.

Perhaps more importantly though, I invite all companies working at the intersection of digital technology and creative energy to stay engaged with Digital Alberta. Being part of a strong industry association has many benefits, and we are proud to represent all sectors of Alberta's digital economy.

3. *Advocacy*

As an industry association, it's our primary responsibility to work with the government to ensure they are aware of how key our members will be for the economic recovery that lies ahead. Digital Alberta has been fortunate enough to leverage our networks, work with other groups and members, and present ourselves in a reasonable and measured way to senior members of the Alberta government. This process is never easy. Nor is it quick — it's a journey. But we are seeing dividends. I remain hopeful that, in 2021, we will see some progress on programs that will support the IDM sector, in line with the interests of our members.

4. *Governance*

Underpinning any successful organization are strong bylaws and governance processes. Coming into my role as President, it was clear Digital Alberta's bylaws were showing their age and were in need of a solid rewrite. We have spent a significant amount of time at the committee level working on the bylaws now being presented at the AGM for consideration by the members. I would like to give a special callout to the Governance committee for the six-month long effort to research, collate, and iterate on the work being presented today. We have also solidified our relationship as clients with companies like PWC and Dentons, who assisted with the heavy lifting, in addition to day-to-day association activities. If you work with good people and good companies, you stand to benefit. And Digital Alberta is now benefiting from their efforts.

5. *What Lies Ahead*

The board will be participating in a two-day retreat in May 2021 to help us shape Digital Alberta's focus over the next few years. One clear objective that is a personal goal of mine is to secure enough industry funding to hire a full-time dedicated Executive Director. There is still a need for a strong volunteer base in that model, but having an ED working in a full-time capacity will, in my mind, take our activities to a whole new level. I'm excited to work with the board to define other aspects of what our future holds, and get busy on those plans.