I am happy to report that our Lifesaving Society enjoys a thriving provincial base due to the tireless work of our dedicated volunteers and staff. Thanks to their efforts, the Society provides continuity and reliability in our mission to deliver strong, supportable member services and effective drowning prevention education to the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador.

2019 was an exciting year for the Society – especially in leadership training. We published the Examiner Handbook and Trainer Manual and introduced a new Examiner Mentor designation. These improvements and innovations to our leadership training systems provide our Instructors, Examiners and Trainers with the critical resources and support required to deliver courses of the highest caliber.

Furthermore, we continued to benefit from the efforts of our Training Programs VP, Christopher Mercer, who dedicated his time and travel to avail of in-person meetings across the province.

The 2019 edition of the Canadian Drowning Report and Newfoundland and Labrador Drowning Report yielded some positive information. In the most recent 5-year period across Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador experienced the greatest reduction (31%) in drowning fatalities. However, the reports also demonstrate the need for us to make every effort to constantly advance our drowning prevention education and initiatives, as Newfoundland and Labrador continues to experience the highest drowning rate among Canadian provinces, and one that is significantly higher than our Atlantic counterparts. While these challenges remain ever-present, the Society’s research data enables us to see the value of our efforts, the real impact we have on the mitigation and reduction of drowning in our Province, and how critical our continued efforts in drowning prevention are.

With the impact of our efforts in mind, I am pleased to report growing participation in the Society’s First Aid and CPR programs. Though our Bronze awards declined modestly in 2019, growth in Swim Patrol indicates we can expect growth in Bronze programs to return as we launch the revised Bronze medal awards in 2020.

In December, Doug Ferguson retired as CEO and the Society’s Member Services Manager, Raegan Wiseman, was announced as his successor. Mr. Ferguson’s efforts and those of his accomplished staff during his tenure were instrumental in the stability and strength we now enjoy, and we cannot say enough about his work. I take this opportunity, both for myself and on behalf of the Lifesaving Society, to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for all he has done for us over the years, and to wish him the best in his future endeavours.

I also congratulate our own Dr. Cody Dunne, who was awarded the prestigious Dr. Ian Mackie Fellowship by the International Life Saving Federation at the 2019 World Conference on Drowning Prevention in Durban, South Africa. A truly incredible accomplishment, Cody is the first Canadian to receive the fellowship and we are extremely proud of him.

I offer my continued gratitude to my fellow Board members, including Maria Viscount who we had the distinct fortune to welcome as our new VP – Finance at our April AGM, and I thank our dedicated staff, volunteers and members for everything you do in service of our drowning prevention mission.

Gary Nolan