

**Joyce Borden-Reed: Established in 2007 through the generosity of The Canadian Society of Corporate Secretaries. To be awarded to a student in the MBA program with outstanding scholarly activity and who demonstrates an affinity for study in governance, or illustrates interest, achievement, leadership, involvement, or extracurricular activities in relation to governance and governance issues. Application must be accompanied by a written submission relating to the stated criteria.**

Corporate governance has reached a new pinnacle of public awareness. Companies are being asked to identify and eliminate accountability problems, and rightfully so. The principle agent theory has been the foundation of today's global recession, with management at all levels finding and then exploiting weaknesses in corporate governance. Although the most publicized challenges occur in large companies, small and medium sized companies should also be taking note. I grew up working for a family run business, renting vacation properties to tourists and corporations in Bermuda. Due to the composition of the shareholders (effectively, my father and mother) and the relative lack of stakeholders (my siblings, part-time employees, and the Bermudian homeowners themselves) governance was not a pivotal issue. After completing my undergraduate degree in business from the University of Western Ontario, I persuaded upper management (my mother) that corporate governance, regardless of the lofty label, was just as important to our company as a larger company. By holding ourselves accountable for the experiences of our customers, the vacancy rates for our homeowners and our own paycheques, we were able to slowly employ best practices from other company into our own. I headed up this corporate governance review and solidified our corporate governance. Our internal corporate governance controls included monitoring (by senior employees who were encouraged to speak up), internal auditors (an employee was assigned the task of going through all of our business practices to ensure that we were completing transactions and follow up in the most ethical, most efficient way), and long term performance compensation (encouraging sales people to change one time vacationers into repeat customers). I have encouraged all employees to be open in communicating concerns or ethical challenges so that we can maintain transparency and accountability to all stakeholders. As a privately held corporation, we have neither shareholders nor the requirement to make our financials public, however we candidly discuss our current market situation with our homeowners in an effort to give them as much information possible. Having standardized business procedures, which I created from past experience and industry best practices, we have been able to make the sales process quicker and also reduce the possibility of the principal-agent problem. All employees are screened to recognize integrity and accountability as well as our professional reputation being based almost entirely on word of mouth and online brand.

In addition to this family business, I am also the Director of Marketing for a local ratepayers organization. This organization is one of the many stakeholders of our neighbourhood and actively participates in holding development corporations and the local government accountable. We create a quarterly newsletter, host meetings with condo developers and lobby our councillors to ensure that the community does not suffer as a result of a lack of corporate governance. The active participation of stakeholders is necessary to ensure that ethical standards are adhered to, and corporations are monitored. I can clearly see when we have not been able to hold a corporation accountable for their actions. When this happens, as it sometimes does when the balance of power is not in our hands, it solidifies for me the importance of the work we are doing for the community.