



## Happy Retirement Mr. CAA

*A tribute to our long-time colleague and friend, Bill Willard*

Bill Willard took an interest in cars at a very early age. In the evenings while he was in high school, he would head over to his grandfather's and father's business, Willard & Son Towing, and assist with the repair and maintenance of their tow trucks. He also enjoyed spending his free time working on stock cars in his dad's garage—which he would later race at Merrittville Speedway. As a lover of all things automotive, it made perfect sense that Bill decided to join the Emergency Road Service (ERS) team at CAA Niagara following completion of high school in 1981. In his new role, he worked alongside his grandparents and parents, all of whom joined the CAA team four years earlier when the club acquired Willard & Son Towing.

For several years in the early 2000s, Bill worked in CAA Niagara's Car Care Centre in St. Catharines, leading a team of certified technicians as they serviced Members' vehicles. Upon his father's retirement in 2002, Bill entered into the role of Vice President of Automotive Services.

Within his various roles, Bill has played an integral part in the advancement of CAA Niagara's road service business, leading the charge on new initiatives that have brought the club to the forefront of the industry. From spearheading the formation of the club's battery program in 1998 and the Mobile Tire Service program in 2018, to rallying the community around Slow Down, Move Over advocacy efforts and representing CAA Niagara on various committees and task forces across North America, he's truly been at the centre of our business for decades. In fact, as someone who lives and breathes his work, you could even call Bill "Mr. CAA"—that is what his licence plate says, after all.

Throughout his time at CAA Niagara, Bill has exemplified our club's four core values: Integrity, Service Excellence, Teamwork and Respect & Inclusivity. According to his team, Bill approaches every project with a smile, inviting new challenges with open arms. He takes great pride in providing our Members with exceptional service, as well as being a voice for all motorists on road safety initiatives. A sign of a true leader, Bill always makes a point of ensuring new employees feel welcome.

**After 40 years of service, Bill will be retiring from the CAA Niagara team on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.** We are sincerely grateful for Bill's hard work, dedication, and friendship over the years.

Keep an eye out for Bill in the community—he'll be spending his retirement with his six grandchildren, riding his motorcycle, and cheering on the Niagara IceDogs from his season ticket holder seats.



*The Road to the*  
**CAA NIAGARA OF TODAY**







# A Spotlight on WILLARD TOWING

In 1977 with 66 years under our belt, CAA Niagara made the bold move of purchasing a leading Niagara towing company, Willard & Son Towing, which had been the primary contractor for the club since 1946. The acquisition took place as a way to ensure service excellence, as well as establish a stronger market presence in the Niagara Region.

At the time, CAA Niagara had just four in-house towing vehicles, which all came from Willard & Son Towing. But the purchase of Willard's family business inspired further expansion and through the early 1980s, CAA Niagara built up its fleet to a total of 24 vehicles, which all sported a coat of vibrant Yukon Yellow paint.



Following the purchase in 1977, Bill Willard Sr. and Allan Willard (aka Willard & Son), along with their families and a handful of drivers, came to work for the club. Many of them remained a part of the CAA Niagara team for the rest of their careers, with Allan joining on as Road Service Manager and later becoming Vice President of Automotive Services, a role he held until his retirement in 2002, and his wife, Laura, retiring in 2004 as Vice President of Auto Club.

Following in his family's footsteps, Bill Willard Jr. joined the CAA Niagara team at just 18 years old and has remained with our club ever since. Today, he holds the role of Vice President of Automotive Services, from which he will be retiring in September 2021.

CAA Niagara is proud to continue the Willard family legacy.



## A Timeline of CAA Niagara's History

On November 14, 1911, 16 car enthusiasts gathered for the very first meeting of the St. Catharines Automobile Club, a new chapter of what was then known as the Ontario Motor League. They each paid \$5 to join the club, a generous sum at the time, and quickly established three simple goals as part of their mission: protect Niagara motorists, promote traffic laws and road safety and encourage the maintenance and construction of roadway infrastructure

Over the next 11 decades, as the number of vehicles on Niagara's roads and the need for road safety continued to rise, the club, now known as CAA Niagara, took on a larger role in advocacy and, in conjunction with its sister clubs, went on to make history through its lobbying efforts. Today, the club services more than 140,000 Members within the Niagara Region, providing not only Emergency Road Service, but also offering everything from insurance and travel planning to attraction tickets and Rewards savings.

