

# MEMBER PROFILE

JIM BELL, CPA, CGA

CEO

SILOAM MISSION



Jim Bell, CPA, CGA has an office filled with mementos and artifacts that tell stories of his renowned thirty-seven-year career – from a Winnipeg Blue Bombers jacket hanging on his coat rack to a piece of artwork behind his desk painted by someone who experienced homelessness. Bell shares that he couldn't predict he'd be sitting as the CEO of Siloam Mission but however, given his career and dedication to Winnipeg, there is no doubt that a kid from the West End would go on to accomplish so many things.

Bell graduated from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate in 1977 and wasn't sure what to pursue in his post-secondary career. When he had to start picking his classes, he was reminded of the Introduction to Accounting course he took in high school.

"Math has always made sense to me and it really pulled me through the rest of my schooling - I just didn't know how to translate it into a career. When I realized that accounting could be more than just a fun class to take, it was a huge moment because I had found a way to combine what I liked and what I knew how to do."

Bell would go on to graduate from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, double majoring in Accounting and Finance. After graduation, he worked at

Canada Revenue Agency and with a property management firm before researching the benefits of an accounting designation.

"It was a natural decision to work towards an accounting designation with my educational background and a young family to think about. The knowledge I learned while pursuing my designation really helped my career by providing the depth I needed to round out my skills. To this day, I am grateful for that decision I made as it continues to apply to my career," says Bell.

Shortly after receiving his designation in 1988, he was promoted to Controller at his workplace, Kona Enterprises Ltd.. Then, for the next 14 years, he moved forward and gained experience through various positions, including working in the non-profit sector with the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), where he helped business owners in developing countries.

In April 2002 – Bell, a lifelong football fan – received his first life-changing phone call in his career. "I was working at Palliser Furniture as a Business Manager when the phone rang for my dream job. The Winnipeg Football Club was looking to hire a Director of Finance and the hiring

firm wanted to see if I would apply for the position. I was interviewed by Blue Bomber Hall of Famer Lyle Bauer, who was CEO at the time, and it felt like a year went by until I got the call a few weeks later that I got the job!”

Bell worked as Director of Finance for the organization for four years. In January 2006, he was promoted to Vice President of Finance and had the opportunity of gaining first-hand experience on what it takes to host a Grey Cup when Winnipeg held the championship game in 2006. In January 2010, he was named President of the Football Club for two years and then moved to Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Club – a post he would hold until he left in August 2014.

“Working for the Bombers was an absolute privilege and one of the highlights in my career. I took the positive moments and what I learned with me and came out of the experience more resilient. The passion I had during my time there continues to guide and motivate me in keeping the community at the forefront of everything I pursue.”

A few weeks after he left, Bell found himself sitting in a coffee shop with a yellow legal pad strategizing his next move. With some reflection, making a few calls to friends and picking people’s brains with numerous questions, Bell decided to turn towards the political realm and run in the 2015 federal election. Bell won his nomination to be the Progressive Conservative nominee for MP in the Kildonan - St. Paul electoral district but lost to Liberal candidate MaryAnn Mihychuk. After another short time sitting at the same coffee shop with the same notepad, he decided to work as a real estate broker at the suggestion of a friend in 2016. It wasn’t even a year later that he would receive his next life-changing call.

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Siloam Mission reached out to Bell to see if he was interested in applying to be the Chief Executive Officer after the predecessor, Dr. Garry Corbett, announced his retirement. After several interviews with the Board of Directors, Bell was hired as the next CEO after decades of relentless dedication to make Winnipeg a better place.

“The highlight of working at Siloam Mission is getting to know the people who work hard every day to provide crucial services for our community. I’m overwhelmingly thankful to be a part of an organization with a group of people that are all pulling on the same side of the rope.”

In his current role at CEO, he primarily works with leaders in other departments to help provide excellent service to the hundreds of people they serve every day, from supplying a warm meal to assisting in their transition process, with programs such as housing placement, employment readiness and spiritual care.

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Bell takes great pride in cultivating meaningful relationships with stakeholders in the city. “One of the most wonderful gifts in my role is being able to have long-lasting, sustaining relationships with all levels of government, donors, volunteers as well as individuals who have been affected by the services provided by Siloam Mission. I am consistently humbled and grateful for this great community in Manitoba that believes in our mission of helping those who are at their most vulnerable.”

When asked what his advice would be to future CPAs and current candidates and students, he had three words to say.

“Jump into it! Jump into everything that life has to offer. If you have even just a gut feeling for something, you owe it to yourself to see where that path will lead. I truly owe a deep sense of gratitude to my family and to my designation for all it has taught me and for the opportunities it allowed me to pursue. The skills you learn go way beyond any numbers or balance sheets - they taught me to be a decision maker, leader and team player. With these skills, and the right team around you, we can all achieve our goals.”

As Bell reflects on his career and what is yet to come, he often refers to his designation as the inspiration that started it all.

“From watching the Winnipeg Blue Bombers practice through a fence as a child to be a CPA and CEO of Siloam Mission, I could never have predicted that my life would lead me to where I sit today. Through all the achievements and failures, both in my career and in the public eye, I am very thankful I started my career on the right foot by getting my accounting designation. I am humbled to be at Siloam Mission and I look forward to continuing the legacy of the critical work we do.”