

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

50 YEARS - what an amazing accomplishment! Happy 50th anniversary POAO! At this time, I would like to acknowledge and thank all previous POAO Presidents, Provincial and Branch Executives, and the general membership for making this Association the success that it is. Fifty years of advocacy for our profession is definitely something to be proud of. A new POAO pamphlet will be issued shortly, acknowledging this anniversary. Please join us for the POAO Family Picnic at the African Lion Safari on June 22, 2002 to celebrate.

On January 18-19, the Provincial Executive held its first meeting of the year. A fond farewell to Board members Jacqueline Grenon and Beryl Stovell, and thanks to both for their contributions. Welcome to new Provincial Executive member, Joy Wallace, the Director of Membership. We also welcome back a new (and old!) Monitor Editor, Mark Stehlin. Thanks to Patricia Giroux for her years of service in this capacity.

Priorities set for this year by your Executive include workload, OTIS, YCJA, consolidation of Phase I and II, communication, and continuing to enhance our profile among our criminal justice partners and the general public. As always, we will monitor and respond to emerging issues that impact our profession and public safety.

With regard to workload, the Association has recommended engaging in a process to establish a workload index. As indicated in the enclosed letter, our duties have changed considerably. While some of these changes are for the benefit of public safety, the necessary resource increase has not occurred. We do not currently have a way to "measure" our workload, given the complexities of our offender population, and the numerous legislative, policy and technological changes. However, we can say with certainty that working conditions remain at the unmanageable level. While the hiring of the 165 PPOs is a positive step, there is clearly more to be done in this area.

During a meeting with Deborah Newman on January 8, 2002, your Vice-President and I were quite surprised to be told that, contrary to our statements, OTIS was going "well". We again advised the ADM that this Internet-based system is undeniably slow and cumbersome, and continues to detract from our important duties. We also advised that simply because PPOs are mandated to use this technology, and may "give up" on the possibility of change, does not mean it is an appropriate system for case management.

Further correspondence and media coverage related to OTIS is featured in this issue of the Monitor. The Ministry's refusal to respond appropriately to OTIS concerns clearly demonstrates that the public perception of success is more important to this government than effective correctional intervention.

On January 21, 2002, your Vice-President and I met with four members of the Provincial Auditor's team, following their audit of several P&P offices. During this meeting, we educated the team regarding positive and negative changes in our profession over the years, why our workload remains unmanageable, and what could be done to improve this situation. They were receptive and clearly benefited from this meeting.

During a holiday in British Columbia in December, I met with Executive members of the

British Columbia Probation Officers Association. It was interesting to compare situations between our provinces. Not coincidentally, they are also faced with concerns related to workload, YCJA, the role of agencies, and a new government intent on cutting public services. We are maintaining contact with BCPOA and also providing assistance to them in setting up their website.

The Y.O. Committee of your Provincial Executive held a full-day meeting on January 3, at which time I provided initial training on the YCJA and sections of particular relevance to our profession. We also strategized around consolidation issues, and our vision of best practices from the two Ministries. Darlene Humeniuk is chairing this YO Committee and I encourage you to forward your consolidation issues to her.

As you have no doubt heard, YCJA passed and implementation is set for April 2003. Regarding this legislation, we have continued to meet with relevant individuals to educate, and provide our position regarding implementation. Laura McAndrew and I had a lengthy meeting with Glenn Semple in December, at which time we enlightened him regarding the integral role of the PO in young offender rehabilitation, and our view of YCJA implementation.

We have also been meeting with Miriam Bloomenfeld, who is the Crown Attorney Lead on YCJA implementation. Discussions with Ms. Bloomenfeld have occurred regarding current and future issues related to YO sentencing, supervision, the role of the Ministries, and appropriate role of agencies. I am scheduled to present to the YCJA Crown Policy Group on April 17, 2002 regarding this legislation. This date will undoubtedly be postponed if the strike continues at that time.

On February 1, Barry McCann, Jenny Cece, Laura McAndrew, and I met with Paul Fleury and Doug Stapleton on the YO Confidentiality and Privacy Project. This project was triggered by the release of YO information by an MPP, and concerns the Association had regarding information sharing with transfer payment agencies. During this initial meeting, we discussed our concerns related to the use of volunteers, agencies, transfer-payment agency compliance, and the definition of pilot projects funded under Youth Justice Renewal.

Also regarding young offender projects, Jenny Cece, Laura McAndrew and I have been working with Toronto Police on a YO out-tripping program. This project will provide at-risk and high-risk youth, some of who are probation clients, with an out-tripping opportunity with Police, Parks and Recreation, and Probation staff, as well as others. This is an excellent example of how P&P, police, and communities can work collaboratively on crime-prevention projects.

In late February, I attended the Youth Officers Conference in Niagara Falls on behalf of POAO. The highlight of this conference for me was definitely the YCJA panel. I congratulate those panel and audience members who expressed the truth! Following the presentation, I again inquired to Justice Department Counsel Paula Kingston, regarding the lack of evaluation of pilot projects. Ms. Kingston acknowledged our on-going concerns and indicated that evaluation will be undertaken by a private firm. We continue to be concerned with projects that clearly operate outside their mandates, but receive funding from the federal government nonetheless.

I met with Inspector Joseph Tomei, the new head of the Provincial ROPE Squad, on February 8. During this meeting, we discussed our respective roles, emerging issues, and how the police and PPOs can work together effectively to protect the public.

On February 11, 2002 at Bell Cairn, we presented to the first graduating class of the new six-week PPO training program. This group was provided with an overview of POAO and our role in the justice system. One "trainee" purchased her membership on the spot - welcome to our profession, Shonna Smith!!

The next Provincial Executive meeting is April 26-27, at the Best Western Lamplighter in London. This is the host hotel for Symposium 2002 - our 50th anniversary celebration. Please plan to attend this special symposium to participate in the future of your profession, your Association, and to enjoy fellowship with your colleagues. Some branches will assist members with travel costs. Please contact your Branch Chair for further information.

Remember to check our website for recent position papers, including the Senate Submission on Bill C-7, the Peace Officer Discussion Paper, and the Domestic Violence paper that was passed at the AGM in North Bay.

I realize that POs and PPOs will experience financial hardship as a result of the civil service strike. However, membership is essential for us to continue to advocate for improvements to our profession, and public safety. If you have not done so already, please purchase your membership, and have a voice in our future!

In closing, I wish everyone peace, strength and cohesiveness during this time. I continue to be impressed by my colleagues who stand together for the benefit of our profession, and the citizens of Ontario.

Cathy Hutchison
President