

Probation Officers Association of Ontario
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
July 2002

This has been a very trying season for our membership, in terms of being away from our work, and returning to it. Many members had conflicting feelings regarding the labour disruption because of their professional dedication and concern for public safety. Simultaneously, members are proud of themselves for advocating for the respect and recognition they deserve as integral players in the criminal justice system. Returning to work has also been a great challenge, as members cope with significant financial loss, and an even more staggering workload than usual. I hope all of you are coping as well as possible, and remembering to take care of yourselves!

Despite the difficult times, the Association has continued to advocate on your behalf in many areas including policy, perks, legislation, fellowship activities, and public awareness. In honour of POAO's 50th anniversary, we are celebrating the first PO Week in Ontario. My thanks to Lori Santamaria for her hard work at organizing this initiative. Activities for the week include media awareness, Open Houses, PO gatherings, charitable work and donations.

Regarding legislative issues, we are involved with developments related to the YCJA and Conditional Sentences. In terms of the YCJA, I participated in a meeting with the Crown Attorneys' YCJA Implementation Committee. Our discussion focused on sentencing under the Act, operationalizing the numerous community options, and the role of agencies. POAO's concerns related to this legislation are certainly known to the Crown group, and we are exploring ways to implement the Act in the most effective way possible.

We are *still* awaiting the Standing Committee hearings regarding Conditional Sentences. The current word is that they will occur this Fall. Prior to our appearance there, we will seek your input regarding this legislation, and its impact on our profession. To date, concerns continue to be raised around truth in sentencing, workload, inappropriate use of CS, and enforcement issues.

Within this Monitor is a letter from ADM Deborah Newman, in response to our letters regarding workload and OTIS. Although POAO's request to establish a workload index was not directly answered, we are continuing to pursue this goal. Regarding OTIS, it is apparent that the Ministry has no intention of discontinuing the mandated use of OTIS case management. However, you will see that there is a commitment to improve the technology and the Ministry recently held a Focus Group to explore possible technological improvements. It is positive that some of these issues are under examination, but we continue to stress that the case management component of this program causes considerable time loss and stress to PPOs, and detracts from our important duties.

Recently a memo was released from the ADMs in MPSS and MCFCS indicating that the integration of Phase I and II will occur as previously announced. The Association is preparing a paper incorporating our views on best practices, and important issues related to this initiative. Please contact Darlene Humeniuk for further information on this project.

Sadly, in the last quarter I have attended two funerals on behalf of the Association, for police officers who contributed greatly to criminal justice in Ontario. Detective Sergeant Steve McAteer, the pioneer of the ROPE (Repeat Offender Parole Enforcement) Squad, died of a rare form of cancer. Steve played a significant role in changing the way that apprehensions are handled. Rather than having warrants sit on CPIC until chance contact with police, Steve felt that wanted high-risk offenders should be actively pursued in order to protect the public. He was credited with the recent decision to expand ROPE's mandate to a provincial one. Our condolences have been extended to Steve's loved ones, colleagues, and particularly his partner, Lynn Dnieper, a PPO in Toronto.

Terry Ryan, President of the Durham Regional Police Association, and a Director of the Police Association of Ontario, was killed by an impaired driver in late May. Terry had previously worked in the Bail and Parole Unit of Durham Regional Police and was known to our senior PPOs there. Over two thousand people were in attendance at the service and many spoke of Terry's incredible dedication to both his front-line, and association duties. Our condolences to his family, friends, and many colleagues in policing services.

Looking forward - the Symposium 2002 Committee has been working diligently to bring you an exciting 50th anniversary celebration in London! The Provincial Executive held our April meeting at the Symposium host hotel, and I can promise the membership that you'll be very impressed with the facility (bring your bathing suit!) and the program. This will be a great opportunity for some advanced training on important topics, and "spirit-boosting". As with last year's Symposium, members will benefit from a positive professional development experience, and the camaraderie. Some branches are providing financial assistance to members so please contact your Branch Chair in this regard.

I wish everyone a warm, peaceful, and happy summer!

Cathy Hutchison
President