

*Probation Officers Association of Ontario*  
**P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E**  
*October 2003*

Our second celebration of PO Week in Ontario was a great success. Thanks again to Lori Santamaria for leading this initiative, and to the Ministry for their support of the event. Within this issue of the Monitor is a letter from ADM Mike Simpson recognizing our efforts. We were successful in celebrating our profession, raising awareness, having fun, and contributing to worthwhile causes in our communities. Thanks to everyone who participated!

As mentioned in the last Monitor, I am once again sitting on the provincial Safety and Security Committee. We are currently engaged in a line-by-line review of the policy while simultaneously making global recommendations. Issues I have raised to date relate to the inconsistent implementation of this policy across the province, training and awareness, as well as critical dynamic factors that we must collectively observe in an effort to prevent further incidents against staff. Please do not hesitate to contact me with your input.

Issues related to the management of sexual offenders in the community have continued to surface. As you know, this subject was raised by the Provincial Auditor last December, and further concerns arose following recent tragic events in Toronto. Our former Minister requested a review of sex offender issues and requested my involvement. In addition, two of our members from Toronto, Lynn Dnieper and Mark Stehlin, participated in this review which was conducted at the regional level. Our recommendations included appropriate caseload size for sex offender officers, increased treatment resources for offenders, and a dedicated site for intensive supervision / sexual offenders. Despite the change in Ministers subsequent to completion, these recommendations will still go forward with our support.

In terms of Youth Criminal Justice Act issues, implementation has had the impact we anticipated on sentencing trends. Open and secure custody facilities have considerably fewer young persons in them. Our members are reporting the use of extra-judicial sanctions for youth with patterns of repeat offending. Of particular offence to POs is the inclusion of Breach of Probation in extra-judicial sanctions. Although we had requested that this offence be excluded from diversion, this is not the reality. The detrimental effect on the "meaningfulness" of youth court orders, and ability to enforce them, has not gone unnoticed. We have also had input into the Residential Liaison Officer (RLO) issue, and programming needs for young persons in the community. Youth Pre-Sentence Reports are another subject that we have raised with the Ministry. We have requested appropriate levels of training, and quality assurance, to ensure that POs are able to provide PSRs that meet YCJA criteria. Despite the complexity of this legislation and minimal time for preparation, POs are demonstrating a great deal of professionalism in providing services during this 'learning curve'.

Unfortunately, the YCJA PO positions that were held back, have not been hired due to the current spending freeze. Please continue to identify YCJA-related workload issues to assist in advocating for the hiring of these promised positions.

We have continued to follow Single Jurisdiction issues closely, and discuss such matters with the ADM. Members have been interested to know when the Phase 1 side of Probation would be getting individual offices, and the response continues to be that this will occur as leases

expire and offices move. In terms of policy change, best practices, and service delivery, the indication has consistently been that any change will be gradual. We have requested to be involved in any committees or processes created to examine these matters and make recommendations.

The situation related to our exclusion from the Workload Analysis Instrument Committee has been resolved. Thank you to Mike Simpson for supporting us in this regard. Barry McCann, Policy Director, is sitting on this committee on POAO's behalf. Our own workload paper, which highlighted significant changes over the past few years, can be found on the POAO website. Lori Santamaria would have sat on this workload committee; however she is at home doing the most important job of all! Our congratulations to Lori and Alex on their birth of their second son.

During the election, I did a CBC radio interview on Ontario Today, which can be accessed through a link on our website. Many are pleased with the results of the provincial election and are hoping for positive working relationships with the new government. In that regard, I will meet with our new Minister as soon as possible following the Cabinet announcement and will advocate for the hiring of the 100 POs promised in the Liberal platform. We are hopeful that the Minister will attend the Symposium; however, the minimal time between announcements and the event make that a considerable challenge.

Thank you to ADMs Deborah Newman, Mike Simpson, and DM John Rabeau for their efforts in ensuring that Ministry sponsorship of delegates to the POAO Symposium continues in the current fiscal climate. As a result of single jurisdiction, the Ministry added \$10,000 to the usual allocation to support registrations for Phase 1 POs. The Ministry's recognition of the Symposium as an important training event is appreciated. Some Phase 1 POs were disappointed at no longer having their Symposium expenses paid by the Ministry, as we have become reluctantly accustomed to in Phase II/Adult. This is an issue that we continue to raise. As always, my appreciation and admiration go to our colleagues who finance a portion of their attendance to Symposium.

Don Larman and the Midwest Branch Symposium Planning Committee promise another incredible event in Niagara Falls in November. Their dedication and level of organization is most impressive, and will be appreciated by all. I look forward to the enriching experience we will have together.

See you in the Falls!

Cathy Hutchison  
President