

*Probation Officers Association of Ontario*  
**P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E**  
***April 2004***

2004 has been a very busy year for the Association to date. With the number of changes and initiatives occurring in our profession, there are many matters requiring our attention. Here are some of the highlights from the first quarter of this year.

During the first Provincial Executive meeting in January, we discussed our priorities for 2004, including our response to the transfer of youth justice services. While the bargaining agent is solely responsible for staff transfer issues, we are providing input on matters including case management model, YCJA issues, best practices, and program delivery. Other areas of concentration for POAO this year include workload, continuing to increase awareness and profile of our profession and public safety issues, legislation and sentencing trends, professional development, programming and service delivery.

I met with Deborah Newman in January to discuss issues regarding the new Ministry, as well as on-going concerns related to YCJA implementation. I have requested a meeting with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, and will provide an update on this in the next issue of the Monitor.

Also on the youth justice front, we will be meeting with policy personnel regarding YCJA issues, as well as Ministry staff assigned to Alternatives to Custody initiatives. We submitted a written response to the Ministry regarding the proposed Case Management Policy, and changes to the Youth Pre-Sentence Report template. The Single Case Manager is the model we have supported since pre-YCJA implementation, and we are pleased that this model remains in effect with the transfer to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. POAO also continues to support direct service delivery for Extra-Judicial Sanctions (EJS) and we encourage the Ministry to have POs perform this function in all parts of the province, while re-allocating funds saved into areas that are lacking. Our entire position paper regarding the transfer of youth justice services, and related issues, will be posted on the website in the near future.

We met with the new Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Monte Kwinter, in late January. During this initial meeting, we provided an overview of issues facing our profession, as well as background regarding the Association. We stressed the need for the Liberal government to deliver on their election promise regarding the hiring of 100 additional POs. Minister Kwinter's response was that there would be no hires announced in the upcoming budget in light of the provincial deficit. However he stated that this promise would be met during their term in Office.

I emphasized the necessity of the additional Officers in light of the numerous legislative and policy changes, increased risk level of offenders, and resultant impact on public safety. The Minister did not disagree with these facts. Other matters discussed included appropriate levels of funding for training, sentencing trends regarding high-risk/repeat offenders, sex offender issues, Association activities and our Symposium.

In February, I was a speaker at The Continuum's Training Day regarding YCJA and Adolescent Sex Offenders. At this event, I provided background regarding our role with young persons, then spoke of positive developments as well as YCJA implementation issues of concern. Matters I discussed included non-reporting orders for sex offenders, appropriate and inappropriate uses of extra-judicial measures and sanctions, the negative impact of diminishing the importance of court orders, community programming, and sentencing trends for young persons.

We are delivering a workshop on innovative youth programming at the Ontario Association of Court Related Clinical Services Conference in Hamilton on May 14th. This workshop will also be delivered at the POAO Symposium in Toronto. Please continue to provide information regarding programs in your area that involve POs as we are promoting those while supporting best practices.

Within this issue of the Monitor, you will see correspondence between myself and the President of the British Columbia Probation Officers' Association (BCPOA). I was invited to attend their conference and address the delegates; however was unable to for a variety of reasons. We are considering a plan to budget for such attendance next year. In the interim, I continue to liaise with BCPOA regarding issues of mutual interest, and Lori Santamaria is assisting them with implementing PO Week in British Columbia.

In our involvement with Basic Training at Bell Cairn, we are working toward the goal of being included in the Core Curriculum. Bell Cairn has developed a one-day session on Professionalism, Values and Ethics with the plan to have us present during the day. At our upcoming meeting with Kathryn Biondi, we will finalize this proposal. We are also requesting a seat on the Training Advisory Committee.

The Safety and Security Committee completed its policy review and list of recommendations, which have been presented to the Provincial Health & Safety Committee as well as senior Ministry officials. This was a considerable time investment which I continue to support and be involved in, with the goal of encouraging adherence in an effort to jointly prevent future incidents against staff.

In response to the issue at Central East Correctional Centre regarding Board Case Officers and ILO duties, I sent a letter to Assistant Deputy Minister Michael Simpson. As always, the Association actively strives to protect the fundamental role of the PO, and consequently objects to any plans to assign our duties to other staff. The letter on this topic and the Ministry's response will be published in the next edition of the Monitor.

I was requested by the Toronto Police Service to attend the Gang Summit in late March. This meeting was convened to propose solutions to the situation Toronto is facing regarding gang and gun activity. I participated in the justice group making recommendations to this problem, and am hopeful that these will be met with appropriate follow-up activity.

In light of the transfer of youth justice services, the Ministry's Advisory Council on Correctional Issues has been divided into two councils – one for adult institution and community issues, and one for youth justice issues. We will have representation at both councils, and the meetings in this new format will take place in June.

In terms of planning for upcoming activities – two major events under development are PO Week – July 18 to 24 – around Ontario and POAO Symposium – November 7 to 10 in Toronto. Please get involved with PO Week activities in your community to promote and celebrate our profession. For any assistance with ideas or planning, Lori Santamaria is the lead and can be contacted at: [lori.santamaria@sympatico.ca](mailto:lori.santamaria@sympatico.ca). Mark Stehlin and Jenny Cece are doing an excellent job on Symposium planning. Stay tuned to the website for updates regarding this event at the Marriott Yorkville in Toronto.

Your feedback on these topics, or any other, is encouraged. Enjoy the Spring!

Cathy Hutchison  
President