

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

It was with shock and great sadness that we learned of the tragic passing of Louise Pargeter, Federal Parole Officer in Yellowknife, who was killed in the line of duty. Probation and Parole Officers were deeply affected by this tragedy. The Provincial Executive made a \$300.00 donation to the trust fund for Ms. Pargeter's child. In addition, we are holding a moment of silence at 12:15 p.m. on Monday November 8<sup>th</sup> during the luncheon plenary session at Symposium. Those who will not be in attendance are encouraged to respect this moment of silence in their local areas. Details regarding the national service arranged by CSC will be posted on our website when they become available.

MCSCS Assistant Deputy Minister Mike Simpson indicated that results of the CSC internal investigation into Ms. Pargeter's death will be shared with the Community / Home Visit Risk Assessment Team. We are following up in this regard to ensure that all efforts are made to prevent any future tragedies. This sad event serves as a reminder to all of us to keep safety and security a priority during the performance of our duties.

The Fall season has been extremely busy in terms of Association activity. I met recently with members of the Administrative Business Process Review team to review the final products of their work. As we had advised at the outset of this project, POAO supports clear role definition between POs and Support Staff to facilitate productive teamwork, and less discrepancy in duties between offices. On a positive note, I can advise that the products developed by this team, including a long overdue Support Staff manual, should assist greatly in establishing consistency in expectations and responsibilities.

The Ministry has committed to addressing Support Staff training issues by investing in training for this group, and in that regard we have been asked to host Support Staff during the POAO Symposium. These delegates would have training specific to their duties while participating in the larger event as well. Negotiations have commenced and it is anticipated that this will be in effect for Symposium '05 in Kingston. This would undoubtedly be of benefit in terms of positive working relationships, professional development, and enhanced morale.

Recently, Gord Longhi and I met with the MCSCS ADM regarding the credentialism issue. There was recognition by the Ministry of the shortcomings in allowing a PO to work without a degree, and steps to prevent this from recurring were explored. I raised our strong objections to the situation in Cornwall and the fact that this demonstrates a lack of integrity which must not be tolerated. We are still awaiting the resolution of this specific case, and will continue to monitor the broader issue of credentialism.

In terms of quality assurance issues which we have raised repeatedly, ADM Mike Simpson advised that there will be movement on this subject in the near future, in the form of a committee involving POAO, OPSEU and Ministry representatives. We strongly support some initiative to address gaps in quality assurance in our profession.

I met with a member of the Deloitte and Touche risk assessment team to discuss issues related to community / home visits. The POAO discussion paper on safety in our profession was provided, and we had considerable discussion about issues regarding our role in the community, concern with our identification process, Peace Officer status, and other relevant topics.

Our next meeting with Minister Kwinter is on November 5 at which time we will again be raising issues related to workload and the urgency of hiring the remaining Officers promised during the election. The Minister of MCYS has yet to meet with us, and also advised that she is unable to attend the Symposium to address the delegates. We are hopeful that a representative from MCYS will attend in her place.

Many staff members who were transitioning from Adult Community Corrections (ACC) to the new Ministry have now moved and become dedicated Youth Justice staff. POs in MCYS have been receiving training and adapting to many changes. We continue to raise issues with MCYS regarding Youth Justice matters, and have a meeting pending with the new Directors in MCYS. Please advise of any additional issues that may emerge as the new Ministry continues to develop.

The POAO Research Project is progressing and the surveys to Probation Officers will be issued later this Fall. This unprecedented opportunity to survey POs about their experiences working with victims and supervising community sentences will provide an excellent tool for making recommendations for improvement. Following the surveys of Probation Officers, we will conduct focus groups with victims, police, crown, and VWAP (Victim Witness Assistance Program) personnel. The end product will be a report documenting results and recommendations. Any questions on this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We continue our thoughts and prayers for our beloved Chair of Southwest Branch, Darlene Humeniuk, who is in a courageous battle against cancer. Darlene's strength, spirit, and dedication are a source of inspiration to us all.

Symposium '04 will be an outstanding venue for professional development and fellowship. Thanks to Jenny Cece, Mark Stehlin and the organizing committee for their outstanding efforts. I look forward to seeing you there.

Cathy Hutchison