

Probation Officers Association of Ontario
P r e s i d e n t ' s M e s s a g e
January 2005

2005 is off to an extremely busy start. This report includes an update of recent activities as well as the focus of our efforts during the coming year.

Symposium 2004 was an incredible, first-class experience! My gratitude to Jenny Cece, Mark Stehlin, and their organizing committee for staging such an impressive event. We had good media coverage, with CityTV, Toronto Sun, W5, the National Film Board, and OMNI News all in attendance. Participants benefitted from the high-calibre training, plenary sessions, and the camaraderie with colleagues in superb surroundings.

At the Annual General Meeting, we had exciting elections for a number of positions. Welcome to our new Vice President Don Larman, and new Directors Jim Adams, Erin Olesen-Schinke and Jennie Yeomans. At the same time, we said a fond farewell to outgoing Board members Lori Santamaria, Barry McCann, and Terry Goodwin. Thanks to all for their contributions.

I would like to express particular thanks on behalf of the Board to Lori Santamaria. Lori sat on the Provincial Executive for 15 of the past 16 years, and made a tremendous contribution to both the Association and the profession. She was invaluable to me as Vice-President and will be greatly missed by all.

On November 29, 2004, I attended the National Memorial Service for Louise Pargeter in Ottawa. The service was well-attended by correctional, policing and other officials. The comments made by Ms. Pargeter's father and her partner, Anne Lynagh, were very poignant in that they acknowledged her dedication to the field but also questioned why this tragedy occurred. There are many questions for the Correctional Service of Canada related to this incident. From the statements made by Ms. Pargeter's colleagues, it was obvious that she was well-regarded by many for her contributions to the field and the community.

On the safety and security front, ADM Mike Simpson has released the recommendations of the Deloitte & Touche Community Visits Risk Assessment Report. He has indicated that a Task Force is being developed to implement the recommendations and we will have membership in this group.

Regarding Peace Officer status, there has been some movement. In recent discussions with ADM Simpson, I have emphasized POAO's position of supporting Peace Officer status for POs, but not assigning additional duties. In line with our discussion paper of 2002, we have supported POs getting Peace Officer status to enhance recognition of our role in the justice system, and to provide for additional charging capability in the event of incidents against staff. However, because of both workload, and safety and security issues, we do not support additional duties being assigned to the PO along with Peace Officer status. ADM Simpson indicated his agreement with this position and we

are hopeful that a decision will be made in the near future. We have also continued to advocate for the implementation of a new identification system for both MCYS and MCSCS POs. Both ADMs have advised that this initiative is under development and we hope for positive news regarding implementation.

ADM Mike Simpson requested the development of a Performance Standards Committee in light of on-going issues regarding quality assurance, and related subjects. POAO has two representatives on this committee – myself and Mark O’Sullivan. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us for further information.

The POAO Research Project is progressing well and by now you have received your on-line survey to complete. If you are aware of any PO who did not receive the survey via e-mail, please advise me and I’ll distribute it accordingly. The response to date has been most encouraging. The deadline for survey completion is February 25. The next phase of the research project will consist of data analysis of the PO responses, then focus groups with Crown, Police and VWAP personnel. I will continue to update the membership on the project but if you desire any further information in the interim please feel free to ask.

On December 13, 2004, I was invited by the Premier’s office to attend the launch of the province’s new Domestic Violence Action Plan. I have details for those who are interested.

In terms of Conditional Sentence issues, we have continued to raise concerns around the nature of offenders / offences receiving this sentencing regime, particularly those with sexual offences against children and other serious crimes. I have raised this in two meetings with Minister Kwinter, and it is apparent that the message is being carried based on the Ontario Justice Ministers’ comments prior to the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Minister’s meeting. According to the press release following completion of the F-P-T meeting, Justice Minister Cotler has agreed to renew the reference to the Standing Committee. We will request an appearance at the Standing Committee to testify on CS issues. In terms of publicity around Conditional Sentencing matters, the W-5 feature is currently under production. I have assisted by explaining issues of concern, as well as being interviewed for this show.

Regarding youth justice, we have continued our advocacy on issues related to the transfer such as training, service delivery, safety and security, and policy issues. There are several YCJA-related matters still pending including the decision around who will be responsible for extra-judicial sanctions (EJS). We are still urging the Ministry to embrace the direct-service delivery option so that POs would retain this function. It does not make fiscal sense to pay a transfer-payment agency to perform a function that is provided directly by POs. There are also concerns regarding the conflicts this poses with the Single Case Manager system, as well as objectivity and accountability issues around administration of this sanction. We are disturbed to hear the frequency with which this duty is assigned to transfer-payment agencies, and also one location in which Support Staff has responsibility for EJS. We are hoping that Ontario will embrace the

direct-service delivery model and re-allocate any funding saved to necessary programming.

Now that Ontario is preparing to implement the optional provisions of the YCJA, we continue to provide input on appropriate models for ISSP. As always, we are stressing that any of these options (non-residential attendance centre, ISSP) should be a condition of a probation order, and consequently case managed by a PO. In our recent meeting with ADM Deborah Newman, all of these topics were discussed.

There is a review underway on the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA). Our response to this legislative review is being prepared by Don Larman, Lisa Hadland, and Laura McAndrew. Please contact one of them with your input. If there are any additional youth justice issues that we have not referenced, please advise either me or another member of the Provincial Executive.

I have received an invitation from the organizers of the Judges' Conference to deliver a workshop at their event in May. This promises to be an enlightening session for our profession and the judiciary. If there is any particular issue you would like to see included in this presentation, please feel free to advise me.

We continue to advocate for the hiring of the additional staff promised in the Liberal election campaign to address workload pressures in our profession. In this regard, I was invited to present to the Finance Minister regarding the upcoming budget. A written submission will follow the oral one and will be included in the next Monitor edition.

Symposium 2005 planning is well underway. Discussions are on-going with ADMs of MCSCS and MCYS regarding Ministry co-sponsorship of our Symposium. We are hoping for a positive outcome to the funding issue. Penny Arp, Symposium Chair, and her committee are planning a dynamic program for our annual event which will take place in Kingston from November 6 to 9.

Your Provincial Executive made a \$250 donation through the Canadian Red Cross for the Tsunami disaster. We encourage others to contribute in your own way.

Special thanks to Southwest Branch Chair Darlene Humeniuk, who wrote the "P. O. Rap Song" included in this edition of the Monitor.

Best regards,

Cathy Hutchison