

*Probation Officers Association of Ontario*  
**P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E**  
**December 2005**

Thanks to Penny Arp, Dave Fagan and their organizing committee for putting on an excellent Symposium in Kingston. The attendance was very high at approximately 370 delegates! We had media coverage in television, newspaper, and radio. Workshops and plenary sessions were informative and interesting. As always, we greatly appreciate the amount of time and effort it takes to plan such an event. The dedication of Symposium organizing committees each year results in high quality professional development for all delegates.

Once again, our thanks go to both Ministries for agreeing to fully fund our annual training forum. ADM Michael Simpson has already indicated that full funding will be available for 2006 and we are seeking a similar commitment from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. This return to full funding for our Symposium remains a significant achievement for our Association and the profession.

Awards were given at the Symposium to Member of the Year Judith Flammia, Branch of the Year for Central Branch, and Provincial Executive Member of the Year Laura McAndrew. A special recognition plaque was provided to our Webmaster Dave Sheen in honour of more than five years of service. We were sad to see Jenny Cece leave the Board, but welcomed in new Secretary Kimberley Ridgers, and new Directors Katherine Lehti and Terry McDonald. Thanks to Jenny for all the hard work as Secretary, and in perks and merchandise, and welcome to new Provincial Executive members!

Now it's on to planning Symposium 2006 in Stratford. Co-Chairs Darlene Humeniuk and Gino Franche provided us with a very entertaining performance in Kingston encouraging all to be at their conference this November. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend!

We were very pleased to see positive results from the efforts of POAO and OPSEU to stop the divestment of parole in Ontario. In December, Minister Kwinter announced that this initiative would not go forward. Your Association has been opposed to this proposed divestment from the outset for reasons outlined in our position paper. Gord Longhi and I did a CBC Radio interview in November speaking against the plan to relinquish Ontario parole to our federal counterparts. Fortunately, the negative impacts we were discussing will not become reality due to successful advocacy!

As the members are aware, POAO has supported Peace Officer status for PPOs and POs provided that it would not exacerbate existing workload issues. We had taken this position with the desire to elevate the status and recognition of the PO's role within the justice system. Of specific concern were the assaults and other incidents against staff, which were not recognized as assaults on Peace Officers. However, being very

cognizant of on-going workload issues, we did not want this designation to result in numerous additional duties for POs. After many discussions on this subject over the past several years, both Ministries have made the decision to designate POs as Peace Officers while in the performance of their duties. We are pleased with this development and the added benefit that POs will be able to lay an information electronically with a Justice of the Peace.

Mark O'Sullivan continues to sit on the Community Visit Risk Assessment (CVRA) Task Force on my behalf. This committee, as well as the Safety and Security Committee, has involved a great deal of effort toward the ultimate goal of keeping our staff safe. Undoubtedly some policy / procedures will emerge from this initiative, with which not all Officers will agree. However, it is critical that we keep safety and security at the forefront of all decision-making in our field. To do so means removing staff discretion related to certain activities in the community. We are hopeful that enhanced training and adherence to the established procedures will result in a safer working environment for all. POAO has been involved in both committees from the outset, and we wish to thank Brian Wilson for his tremendous dedication and commitment over so many years.

The POAO Research Project continues. There was considerable interest in our article on Conditional Sentencing in Ontario, which contained some of our results from the first systematic survey of POs done in Canada. If you would like to receive a copy of this article which was published in Criminal Reports, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail at [president@poao.org](mailto:president@poao.org).

POAO is now represented in yet another forum as I was invited to join the National Joint Committee of Senior Criminal Justice Officials, Ontario Region. This group includes corrections, policing and other justice officials, and is managed by the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Many of you are familiar with this organization through the training day that they host in York Region each November. I attended their meeting in late November in Toronto, and will continue to represent POAO at that table.

This is my final report as President of your Association. After six years in this position, I did not accept the nomination to run again. I am confident that leaving the presidency at this time is the right decision. You have an experienced, enthusiastic Provincial Executive, led by your new President Don Larman, and new VP Jim Adams. I am very pleased with the progress we have made as an organization, both internally and externally, and I am certain this will continue. In terms of the profession, we are in significantly better shape than when I commenced my term. We have had many hires of new POs, return of full funding to the Symposium, gains in Safety and Security, Peace Officer designation, professional development and training, technology, improved identification system, enhanced liaison with our policing partners, retaining our parole duties, and an increased profile within the criminal justice system. All of these initiatives and many more have been advocated for by your Association.

While there continue to be areas requiring improvement, I am pleased with how far we have come. I thank all of you for your impressive commitment to our profession and to the Association. I will continue to sit on the Provincial Executive as the Past President, and look forward to seeing you at the next event.

Best wishes for 2006,

Cathy Hutchison