

Probation Officers Association of Ontario
P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E
June 2006

Six months will have past us by when this issue of the Monitor makes it to your desk. Membership has steadily increased. Commitment to our profession has strengthened. Your Board has continued to advocate on behalf of our professional interests and I commend them for their efforts.

Southwest Branch is well underway with planning for Symposium 2006. By now you have received their announcement and outline for what appears to be another valuable training venue. Look for the Symposium Program on the POAO website at: www.pao.org at the end of June. The Honourable Ministers from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services have confirmed their attendance at Symposium to address the delegates. We look forward to their attendance and message.

POAO hosted another successful Probation Officers Week this past May. All reports indicate very strong support Province-wide in all Branches. The Board was very pleased to see the high level of commitment and dedication to our profession in our local communities. Probation Officers exhibit care and concern for victims of crime and our communities while at the same time holding offenders accountable. Thank you to both of our Ministries for their support and acknowledgement of this important event. Jim Adams - Vice President's report will highlight in more detail some of our events.

We have continued to advocate with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services – Youth Justice Services Division, on the issue of education and appropriate training for Probation Officers working with youths involved with gangs and guns. Probation Officers have reported a need for resources around identifying and understanding local gangs in their working neighbourhoods. Our colleagues need to be educated and appropriately trained in order to be able to assist youths with their reintegration to the community/education/family and employment. We must maintain strong relationships with both Law Enforcement and Community Programs. Services should address our clients' needs and educate parents in understanding issues around gang prevention. Youth Justice Services Division has advised that they are presently studying the current level of gang-specific training offered to Probation Officers. An enhanced education and training package is required.

The Board continued to follow up with the commitment from Youth Justice Services Division with respect to the Probation Safety & Security Working Group. I am pleased to announce that I am currently representing the Association on this

committee along with representation from both the Ministry and the Union. Although in our initial stages, much progress has been made.

The Youth Justice Services Manual has been released to the field through orientation sessions throughout the Province. Currently there is no initiative underway to provide training around the manual. It has been identified that the new Manual is equipped with a detailed index making it easy to navigate. If feedback to Probation Managers from the field shows the need for training then the matter will be re-visited to address these concerns. One of the Sections missing from the Manual is a description of the duties for the Court Liaison Officer. We have addressed this with Youth Justice Services Division and requested the opportunity to be part of any discussion group that may be developed. We will continue to work with our colleagues in the field on this matter. Members are encouraged to forward your concerns to Laura McAndrew – Director of Policy.

As a follow up item with the “Youth OTIS Briefcase” technology, we have put forward a few items to Youth Justice Services Division that may assist Probation Officers in the community. Court Orders and terms of Probation Orders are not downloaded with case notes and would be beneficial to Officers in the field. If there are any additional suggestions to assist in this area please refer them to Laura McAndrew – Director of Policy.

The Risk Management Community Visits Training is coming to a close around the Province. Thanks to all of our colleagues who assisted in this much needed training with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

At our recent meeting with Assistant Deputy Minister Michael Simpson, we were advised that an announcement is forthcoming with respect to the conversion of the unclassified MCSCS Probation & Parole Officer positions. POAO has continued to advocate for these conversions as well as the full time hiring of the remaining 100 hires; 25 the current fiscal year and 20 in 2007/08.

The 12 Probation and Parole Officers to be selected through the “Guns and Gangs” initiative has recently been posted and closes June 30, 2006. A number of “positions” have been put forward by Adult Community Corrections as to how to address the “backfill” for those PPO2’s who will be selected but a decision has not yet been made. POAO has advocated for permanent backfill.

We also brought forward our concern of the appropriateness of case assignment to Probation and Parole Officers who are not yet trained in accordance with the Sex Offender Revised Policy. In addition, the issue of “outside agencies” conducting the assessments for these offenders as opposed to the PPO’s who have been trained was identified as an ongoing concern. We have been assured

that these issues will be rectified. Identified as a high priority by MCSCS, Bell Cairn has been asked by Assistant Deputy Minister Michael Simpson to develop a training strategy for staff for the revised Policy.

The Department of Justice Canada contacted POAO regarding their Introduction of Bill C-9, Conditional Sentencing Reform Bill and the Association's position and potential presentation at the Hearing. The "backgrounder" to this Bill can be found on the Department of Justice Canada – Newsroom. The Board is in the process of sending out information to the membership, via the Branch Chairs, requesting short turnaround feedback to assist us with our possible presentation. Cathy Hutchison – Past President and I plan to attend the Public Hearing in Ottawa to present our position should we be called upon, otherwise we will submit a written response.

Cathy Hutchison – Past President, continues to work with Professor Julian Roberts towards the completion of our Research Project. Final recommendations are anticipated for late August 2006.

There have been many challenges in our field and there will be more to come throughout the year. As a profession we continue to find innovative ways to work with our clients and our community partners in this ever changing environment of ours. I salute each and every one of you for the job you do and how well you perform.

Have a safe summer. See you in Stratford!

Donald Larman
President
Probation Officers Association of Ontario