

## **President's Report**

Michael Atkinson

2012-2013

During the past year we have taken a hard look at the CPSA's direction and priorities. Perhaps the key event, from the members' perspective, was the long awaited referendum on whether to hold annual meetings in conjunction with the Congress. Although the turnout for the vote was far from overwhelming, those who voted clearly indicated a desire for the Association to continue meeting with Congress. The Board, which has the ultimate authority in determining the location of our meetings, welcomed the advice and direction of the membership and intends to remain, under normal circumstances, committed to meeting at Congress.

The debate around Congress benefited from the excellent work undertaken by Yasmeen Abu-Laban and her team at the University of Alberta and Debora VanNijnatten and her team at Wilfrid Laurier. Their efforts demonstrated that the Association is capable of organizing superb meetings outside Congress. Their experience also reminded us of the immense efforts required to do so. The Association clearly benefited financially from these two experiments, and emerged from them with a relatively healthy balance sheet.

Returning to Congress means having to make budgetary adjustments, some of which members are already aware of in the context of these meetings. Our move to an electronic version of the program has produced significant savings, albeit with a few glitches along the way. This is something we will get better at doing. Other adjustments include the elimination of the annual meeting of the program committee. In the future we will put the program together digitally; it will be an adventure, but it represents a sensible approach. These changes have helped ensure that our budgetary situation is sound, as the Secretary-Treasurer will explain, but we do not have the luxury of much manoeuvrability going forward.

In addition to overseeing the Association's financial affairs, the Board took on some investigative assignments in several areas including our relations with regional political science associations, the emerging world of social media, the continuing issue of practitioner involvement, the prizes that the Association awards, and the potential role of research groups within the Association. I want to thank, in particular, Pascale Dufour for her work on the prizes file, Dietlind Stolle and Mireille Paquet for helping us understand the possibilities and challenges of using social media, and Debora VanNijnatten and Siobhan Byrne for help in adapting our by-laws to the new legislated requirements.

At its meeting in December the Board reviewed many of these items and discussed our Internet strategy and the possibility of improving our service to members by investing in a stronger website presence. We also discussed the emerging world of open access publishing and confirmed that, although we enjoy excellent relations with Cambridge University Press, the Journal's publisher, we are in an era of change that will ultimately affect our finances as well as access to our major publication. I should mention, as well, that the Board endorsed the creation of a French language prize that would be open to all political science publications in French. The rules, and the name for the prize will be finalized over the coming months.

Some of the items discussed this year find their way onto the agenda of the AGM. Of particular importance are changes to the manner in which the Association selects its leadership. At our December meeting the Executive Director briefed the Board on changes to the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, which obliges all non-profit organizations to revisit their by-laws to ensure

that they comply with the requirements of the Act. These changes, which have been approved by the Board, will be discussed at the AGM.

In addition to these topics, the Board agreed to fund a study of the Ottawa office of the CPSA to determine how responsibilities might be properly apportioned, job descriptions put in place, and reporting relationships clarified. To that end, the Executive contracted Emmett Hossack, an Ottawa based HR consultant, to conduct a work place assessment. His report, which will be available on the website, made some useful suggestions and observed that the Association lacks a proper strategic directions document to guide the work of the Executive Director.

To provide the Association with such a document, the Board agreed to the Executive's suggestion that an ad hoc committee, comprised principally of former Presidents of the Association, be engaged to assess the current situation and create a preliminary set of priorities. This committee met in Toronto on April 22 and, with the help of Richard Florizone (the incoming President of Dalhousie University) and reviewed many issues on the Association's future. The result is a draft document, circulated to the Board in May and to be discussed at our meeting in Victoria.

In addition to these core business items, the Association also hosted the annual meeting of Chairs of Departments of Political Science in Saskatoon in February. Chairs focussed heavily on developments in their universities concerning support for the social sciences in general. They benefited from the opportunity to hear from the University of Saskatchewan Provost, Brett Fairbairn, and University of Guelph Provost, Maureen Mancuso. Both spoke to internal processes aimed at prioritizing programs and realizing budgetary savings. On a more philosophical note, Peter MacKinnon (former U of S President), Ken Coates (former Dean, University of Waterloo) and Jim Cheesman (U of S Faculty Association) joined us for a discussion of academic freedom. Finally, Chairs discussed the implications of the changes to the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, particularly the manner in which the CPSA Executive is chosen. They welcomed some of the clarifications that will attend to these changes, but urged that care be taken in ensuring that the Nominations Committee is aware of its new role.

This year's Nomination Committee was comprised of Neil Nevitte, Kathy Harrison and François Pétry. They helped me find jurors for the prize committees and confirmed the wisdom of seeking out Jill Vickers to serve as our incoming President. Congratulations, Jill, and thank you on behalf of the Association. Thank you, as well, to those who have given so much of their time to adjudicate the various prizes that we will be awarding at this year's meeting. I am very grateful for your willingness to help the Association honour its scholars and teachers.

The work of your Association could not take place without the commitment of colleagues who serve in a variety of capacities. I would like to acknowledge, in particular, the work of my colleagues on the Executive: your incoming President, Alain Noël; our Secretary-Treasurer, Christine Rothmayr Allison; the past President, Reeta Tremblay; and the Board's representative, Laura Stephenson. All of you made yourselves available, sometimes on very short notice, to conduct the affairs of the Association in between Board meetings. We are very fortunate to have such capable and dedicated colleagues. Alain, I know we've left you with a big agenda, but I also know that you are enormously talented and that you will be an excellent President.

We are similarly fortunate to have dedicated employees. Sally Rutherford has withstood, with patience, all our queries and demands and has helped us deliver some important changes in the Association. Michelle Hopkins continues to be the memory of our organization and its very human

face. She has served us all with good humour and intelligence for a long time and we all owe her a deep debt of gratitude.

A huge amount of work goes into putting on the annual conference. Special thanks go to Éric Montpetit and Janni Aragon, who, along with an exceptional group of section heads, have put together a superb set of meetings. When I asked Éric if he would undertake this challenge, he told me it would be irrational to do so. Thank goodness for irrationality, and thank you Éric; you've been a true colleague.

CPA maintains links with several national and international organizations and, once again, we rely on our members to do the heavy lifting. Tony Porter (McMaster) deserves our thanks for his activity with the Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Linda Cardinal serves as our representative to IPSA, while Christine Rothmayr has ably represented us at the meetings of the SQSP.

The AGM will receive reports from the internship programs that we sponsor and from the editors of *CJPS*. I will let them speak for themselves, but I do want to say that these important endeavours are in excellent hands. Again, without the work of Hank Jacek of OLIP and Garth William of PIP, we would not be able to claim ownership of enormously successful enterprises dedicated to experiential learning for political science students. Our new *CJPS* team—Graham White, Daniel Salée, Dominique Caouette, Peter Loewen, Bryan Evans and Carolyn Johns—have finished their first year on the job and, bumps notwithstanding, I hope you agree that they are off to a strong start. Our thanks to them.

Finally, thank you to the members of the Association for the opportunity to serve. I will never forget the experience (and I mean that in a positive way!).