Canadian Political Science Association

2026 Strategic Directions

May 2026

1. Our Purpose

Since 1912, the Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) has encouraged, developed, and promoted the study of politics, government, and governance in Canada and beyond. The Association aims to support members of the Canadian political science community, including students, post-doctoral fellows, instructors, researchers, practitioners, and faculty in multiple ways. Through the Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de science politique, the Association's Annual Academic Conference, and its Annual Meeting of Chairs of Departments of Political Science, Political Studies, and Politics in Canada, the CPSA seeks to develop and sustain relationships of knowledge sharing among its members and the broader academic and practitioner communities.

In addition, the CPSA takes leadership within its communities on pressing issues directly relevant to political science in Canada. For example, the CPSA is a recent signatory to the Federation of Social Sciences and Humanities, Charter on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization in the Social Sciences and Humanities. The charter calls for "resolute effort to achieve equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization in our disciplines." The CPSA also has an expressed commitment to reconciliation and decolonization, specifically to addressing the legacy of colonialism within the discipline of political science. This commitment was formalized in 2016, with the establishment of the Association's Reconciliation Committee.

Finally, the CPSA also represents its members and promotes political science by liaising with research funding agencies, including Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, with the aim of ensuring the long-term stability and relevance of the discipline. The CPSA advocates for funded political science research.

2. Our Communities

The Association welcomes as members all those with an interest in political science. Individual members include the following:

- Students
- Post-doctoral Fellows
- Instructors
- Researchers
- Practitioners
- Professors
- Retirees

The Association also welcomes as institutional members departments of politics, political studies, and political science, as well as centers, institutes, and programs focusing on politics, government, and governance in Canada.

The Association shares similar goals with Société québécoise de science politique, with which we have a formal relationship. We share such goals also with the British Columbia Political Science Association, the Prairie Political Science Association, and the Atlantic Provinces Political Science Association. We share community with the Canadian Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences and with the International Political Science Association, as formalized through agreements.

Through our leadership in the development of political science and support of Association members in knowledge development around politics, government, and governing, we also serve broader community members. These include:

- Government officials and civil servants
- Consultants, pollsters, journalists, and political commentators
- Civil society organizations
- Public media

3. Our Benefits and Services

The Association provides several major services to its members and the wider Canadian political community. These include the following:

3.1 Indigenous Content Syllabus: The Reconciliation Committee of the CPSA has played a leading role in curating Indigenous content for political science. This online, freely accessible resource is highly valuable and relevant to our discipline and to many others.
3.2 Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de science politique: This is the flagship journal for Canadian political science. It is a high-quality, open access, academic publication with both French and English editorial teams.
3.3 Annual Academic Conference: This is a well-established and well-attended annual academic conference with more than a dozen sub-disciplinary sections. Often, the conference has over two hundred panels and several guest speakers. It also includes many special events such as poster sessions, workshops, receptions, and the Presidential Dinner.
3.4 Awards for Research and Teaching: The Association administers several prestigious peer-adjudicated prizes. These are awarded yearly to recognize excellence in research and teaching.
3.5 Graduate Student Mentorship Program: The CPSA offers mentorship opportunities designed to support graduate students and junior faculty as they navigate early stages of their academic and professional development.

3.6 Annual Meeting for Chairs of Departments of Political Science, Political Studies, and Politics in Canada: This is an opportunity for Chairs to share information and resources, to have collaborative conversations about addressing challenges facing the Association and discipline, and to build professional relationships.

3.7 POLCAN2 Newsletter and CPSA social media: These regular resources provide information on job postings, conferences, call for papers, and other information important to members of the Association. A related resource is a database of archived job offers posted on POLCAN2 according to field, rank, and university.

4. The Challenges we Face

4.1 Increasing Financial Vulnerability: Over the past decade, the Association has faced growing vulnerability as an economically stable organization. Between 2017 and 2021, our revenue from royalties for the CJPS from Cambridge University Press dropped by 34 percent. Another threat to revenue is volatile annual memberships and conference costs. The share of membership revenue fluctuated between 37 and 46 percent between 2016 and 2021. Revenue generated from the conference can vary significantly. For example, the difference between 2018 (Regina) and 2019 (UBC) alone was roughly 20k. The Association also faces growing operational expenditures.

In recent years, the Association has run deficits and has relied on its reserve fund. An important part of our strategic vision must be to ensure that we have stable financial resources to continue fulfilling the Association's purpose and offering its services.

4.2 Stagnant/Declining Membership: Membership levels in the CPSA fluctuate from year to year depending, in large measure, on the location of the annual Conference. However, membership has declined over the last 20 years. The Association has been struggling to keep members and to mobilize prospective members.

Identifying and addressing barriers to becoming and remaining members specific to professional status is important, perhaps especially with respect to our students and post-docs, as well as practitioners. So too is identifying and addressing barriers to participation that may be associated with the positionalities of members in terms of their gender, sexual orientation, racialization, and ability.

4.3 Conference Uncertainty: Recent disruptions to Congress and the CPSA's relationship with the Federation have introduced uncertainty around the planning and delivery of the Annual Academic Conference. Ensuring the stability and continuity of the conference in this evolving context represents an ongoing challenge for the Association.

4.4 Slow Progress toward EDID: Many members and prospective members do not see themselves within either the discipline or the community of political science. Many have experienced marginalization, exclusion, and aggression. Many continue to confront inequities in terms of professional opportunities.

Political science as a discipline continues to be dominated by colonial epistemologies, norms, and practices. Despite its virtues as a discipline and disciplinary community, despite the important progress the Association has made in terms of realizing EDID, we have much work to do. The Association's commitment to resolute and concrete work to realize EDID must be central in its strategic directions.

4.5 Continued Work toward Indigenization, Decolonization, and Reconciliation: The Reconciliation Committee of the CPSA has been very active in providing resources and organizing panels to further the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Calls to Action within the Association and with respect to its activities. This work must continue, and it must be supported by the CPSA. In particular, the Reconciliation Committee must be supported in its endeavors to take concrete steps toward decolonization within our community.

4.6 Continued Work to Maintain Bilingualism: The CPSA is a pan-Canadian organization, and its members live and work in both English and French, which are official languages. The collaboration between the SQSP and the CPSA to produce a journal that publishes in English and French is a testimony to that commitment, and yet the two teams are selected independently of each other rather than being selected as a joint team. The CPSA conducts its normal business almost exclusively in English. It is a bilingual organization only in the sense that communications and key documents are made available to members in both English and French. The Association needs to ensure that good relations with the SQSP are maintained and that services are provided to the French-speaking political scientists across Canada.

4.7 Finite Staff and Board Capacity: Our staff team led by a full-time Executive Director has long been doing an extraordinary amount of work on a limited annual budget. In recent years, staff has been working significant overtime hours. Moreover, the Board of Directors, which is volunteer-based, has been taking on operational functions to support the Association's various activities. The entire team is facing mounting pressure on their time and other resources. We must ensure that we have the human capacity to fulfill the Association's mission.

4.8 Implications of Climate Crisis: The climate crisis affects all of us and is an existential threat to our world. Serious weather-related catastrophes are now commonplace. The toll they take is of course material but also psychological. We are all suffering the consequences. The Association cannot ignore this reality, and it is in the best interests of our members to show leadership on how, as a disciplinary community, we can contribute to minimizing our greenhouse gas emissions, to conducting ourselves more sustainably, and to supporting each other as we face a deeply uncertain future.

5. Our Strategic Directions

5.1 Achieve Financial Resilience: The CPSA's financial situation would be improved by scaling back both expenditures and liabilities and increasing revenue. Current expenditures and liabilities may need to be scaled back in the very near future. An austerity plan may be necessary. At this point, the Association needs to ensure that expenditures and liabilities do not increase, and this principle should guide all Board decisions.

The Board must ensure that it does not take on additional commitments that would effectively increase expenditures and liabilities. Liabilities must be factored into Board decisions because they could result in very serious financial consequences for the Association.
In terms of increasing revenue, there are several current endeavors that should continue to be advanced by the Board. Of particular note is the Fund Development plan, which has already increased individual donations to the Association. Initiatives could include developing opportunities for organizational donations, planned gift campaigns, fundraising activities at the CPSA Annual Conference, and continuing to support Board work towards developing a major gifts strategy. Donations to the Association should be encouraged at the CPSA AGM, through the newsletter, via the Chairs Meeting, and through specific annual appeals to our members and supporters. Similarly, membership should also be strongly promoted, especially automatic renewal. Discounted multi-year memberships for students should also be encouraged. Lifetime memberships for retirees may also contribute to more financial stability.
5.2 Grow Membership: Increasing membership is critical for the financial well-being of the Association. It is also critical in terms of the Association moving toward greater inclusion, equity, diversity, and community. A vibrant membership must welcome and include the diversity of political scientists in North America and beyond, including students, post-docs., instructors, researchers, practitioners, and retirees, as well as professors. To this end, the Board should work to identify and address barriers to participation in the CPSA Annual Conference, on its Board and Committees, and in the CJPS. The membership fee structure of the CPSA should be periodically examined to ensure that it is equitable. The CPSA should consider innovations such as an associate membership for scholars in cognate disciplines, including Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, Indigenous Studies, Labour Studies, and Environmental and Climate Studies, for example. Attracting and retaining new members is a matter of becoming more inclusive and of addressing sexism, racism, ableism, and trans/homophobia in our discipline. Board Members, the Executive, department chairs, and senior members of the Association have a role to play in ensuring that all members feel included and are not subjected to any form of oppression that are often expressed in microaggressions and systemic exclusions.
5.3 Ensure Meaningful Consultation as Part of Strategic Planning: In line with several aims of the CPSA, it is important that the Association host multifaceted consultations, including a survey, but also face-to-face consultations during the CPSA, as part of the Strategic Directions Review in future years. This consultation process would be to learn about the disciplinary priorities of members. It could also extend to non-members to learn about what changes they seek within the Association in order for them to become members.
5.4 Stabilize the Annual Conference: The CPSA must ensure the stability of its Annual Academic Conference in the context of ongoing uncertainty surrounding Congress. The Association should be able to plan and deliver its conference independently, while remaining open to future collaboration where appropriate. Ensuring continuity, reducing uncertainty, and maintaining a high-quality conference experience for members should be central priorities.

5.5 Ensure EDID Charter Informs all Activities and Services: The CPSA Board and its committees should continue working to demonstrate leadership in equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization. More importantly, the CPSA put resolute effort into achieving these goals within the Canadian political science community specifically and the discipline of political science more broadly. An initial step toward realizing these aims is the collective interrogation of dominant norms within our community and discipline. Another basic step toward EDID is good data collection and analysis. To this end, effort needs to be put into revising the Chairs' Survey to ensure that it captures quality equity data and into increasing its response rate of the Chairs. Another option would be to develop a survey intended for the entire membership that includes demographic questions as well as questions about experiences related to EDID. Another data collection methodology would be "listening circles" for underrepresented groups in our discipline. Better quality equity data could be used to produce a second report, this time including not only diversity (the focus of the first report in 2010), but also equity, inclusion, and decolonization. The CPSA should continue its support for its EDI Committee, as well as for such various EDID initiatives taken up by its members.

5.6 Continue Work toward Indigenization, Decolonization and Reconciliation: There has been considerable work by the Reconciliation Committee, Executive Committee, and Board to achieve Indigenization and decolonization, and to achieve reconciliation. Much more needs to be done. In particular, the CPSA should continue supporting the development and curation of Indigenous content for political scientists and political science courses. Those of us who are not Indigenous immerse themselves in this content to better understand the legacy and reality of colonialism in our discipline specifically and in Canadian society more broadly. The Executive, Board, Chairs, and senior members of the community all play a leadership role in this collective work toward decolonization and reconciliation.

The CPSA should continue support for its Reconciliation Committee to translate the primarily English language canon it has identified into French. As with other fields in Political Science, the inability of scholars to read both French and English materials on Indigenous matters inhibits the research, publication, and teaching of relevant materials. It also inhibits the recruitment of students interested in Indigenous matters. With Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation as goals of the Association, communicating about their problematics and potentialities in both official languages is essential to the Canadian discipline of political science.

5.7 Increase Bilingual Capacity: Bilingualism should remain a core principle of the CPSA, which should be reflected in all of its activities, committees, and communications. With specific regard to CJPS, the English and French editorial teams are currently chosen independently of each other. As the flagship journal of the Association and discipline in Canada, ideally we would explore creating a process that requires application by joint teams.

This ideal would need to be balanced to ensure that we do not create barriers for teams willing to take on the editorship. It is also important to ensure that editorial teams include a range of epistemological and methodological approaches, and that they are broadly representative of the diversity within our discipline. With respect to the Annual Conference, it is important to remind our members that papers are encouraged in both official languages.

5.8 Consider Ways to Reduce Carbon Footprint: The CPSA, as an association, should work to minimize its carbon footprint. For example, its events, including the annual Chairs Meeting and the Annual Academic Conference, should be hybrid with both in-person and on-line options. Moreover, any in-person events should be organized to encourage walking, cycling, public transit, and the consumption of plant-based food options. Single-use plastics should also be minimized at CPSA events. The Association should also encourage discussions among its members to minimize their number of flights per year. The Association should continue with virtual board meetings. It may also be appropriate to encourage more disciplinary research, publication, and teaching on global warming, environmental catastrophes, environmental protest and social movements, and mitigation and adaptation policies.

5.9 Ensure Organizational Effectiveness and Sustainability: The CPSA will promote a well-functioning secretariat and governance structure that enable staff effectiveness, continuity, and a positive working environment. Attention to organizational practices and workloads will be important to maintaining this capacity over time.