

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

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I am very pleased to have the opportunity to write to you at the completion of one year of being President of The Psychological Association of Manitoba. My pleasure stems both from the privilege I have had to serve as your President and the fact that I actually made it through one year! I remember watching Dr. Slusky chair last year's Annual General Meeting and hearing him give his final report as President before taking on the role of Registrar. I suspected that, as Vice-President, I might be asked to take on his former role. I recall feeling a great deal of trepidation at the thought, as well as some fear as I imagined what it would be like to be chairing this year's meeting. I truly did not know if, or how, I could fill the big shoes that Dr. Slusky was vacating.

Well, I did make it through a year, with the help of the many excellent and dedicated volunteers on PAM Council and Committees, as well as with Dr. Slusky's advice and assistance. Although there are many duties involved in being President, PAM is run not by one or two people, but by a hardworking team of individuals who have provided much support, with patience and good humour, throughout this past year. As such, my most important task today is to acknowledge and thank all of the members of our PAM team.

Every two weeks, I have the pleasure of meeting with my colleagues on PAM Council: Drs. Hal Wallbridge (Vice-President), Linda Rhodes (Treasurer), Grace Tan-Harland (Member-at-Large), John Arnett (Chair, Standards Committee), Neal Anderson (Chair, Examinations Committee and Newsletter Editor), and Michael Stambrook (Member-at-Large). Dr. Wallbridge also has the daunting task of chairing the Registration and Membership Committee. I can assure you that this team has tackled the mandate of protecting the public and regulating our profession with great commitment and conscientiousness.

In addition to your Executive Council, there are a number of individuals not on Council who serve on our many committees. The work involved in these committees is time-consuming and often challenging, yet essential. I would like to thank all those who have

contributed their time and energy to participate in the meat-and-potatoes committee tasks involved in running our organization. In addition to the Committee Chairs I already have mentioned, I would like to thank Dr. Jaye Miles for her long service in the difficult position of Complaints Committee Chair, as well as members of her committee and her assistant, Lorna Leader. I also would like to thank members of the Inquiry Committee. Their often thankless PAM jobs require a large degree of commitment to service, and many of these volunteers have remained on committees for lengthy periods. We also appreciate new committee members who have come forward with willingness to offer their assistance.

For the third year, in addition to psychologists, we are fortunate to have equally dedicated and valuable public members serving on our Complaints and Inquiry Committees. These representatives have served a critical function in ensuring that we are, indeed, accountable to the public, and that our actions are transparent and justifiable. We are indebted to Dr. Neil Arnason, Mr. Herb Thompson, and Mr. Chris Sommerville, public representatives on the Complaints Committee, as well as to Dr. George Webster, Dr. Neil Craton, and Mr. Ian Hughes, of the Inquiry Committee.

I would like to extend appreciation as well to Dr. Jim Newton, who has served as our one-man Nominations Committee. Dr. Newton has years of experience in various PAM as well as community roles, and that experience, coupled with his committed and collegial attitude, make working with him a particular pleasure.

During the past year, we also have been fortunate to have Ms. Launey Chudy serve as assistant to PAM council and to the Registrar. She brings years of experience, great organizational skills, and a “can-do” attitude to her new role, and her help has been invaluable.

With this meeting, PAM Council will be bidding farewell to two of our members, Drs. Michael Stambrook and Linda Rhodes. Dr. Stambrook has served many years in various roles on Council, including a very long tenure as President. Dr. Rhodes joined council as our Treasurer and has done a formidable job in that challenging role. They both will be sorely missed.

My final thank you goes to Mr. Dave Wright, Counsel to PAM Executive and Mr. Blair Graham, who serves as Counsel to the Complaints Committee. They are great resources in their respective advisory roles and, in particular, have been a great help with some of the regulatory legislation issues that we continue to face each year. We are lucky to have

two individuals with such commitment to our work, and who are so highly respected and skilled in their field.

As I indicated, PAM, with Dr. Slusky continuing as our representative, has been very active this year on the working group developing the Regulated Health Professions Act, an important and necessary step toward quality standards and procedures in the regulation of health care professions. We appreciate having had an active role in its development and wish to thank Ms. Barbara Miller, Senior Policy Analyst for the Manitoba Department of Health and Healthy Living, for being receptive to our feedback about the draft legislation. The new legislation, which should be enacted very soon, will allow for a number of positive changes in the regulation of our profession. Psychologists, as one of the professions covered by this legislation, will be able to incorporate, a right long-afforded many of our colleagues and long-sought by our own profession. As well, PAM, as the newly-named College of Psychologists of Manitoba, will be on firmer ground in recovering costs of investigations and hearings, and potentially in assessing fines when psychologists are found negligent in practice. We also welcome the upcoming requirement to have public representation on PAM Executive Council.

PAM responded quickly to a portion of the proposed legislation that would have disallowed the use of the title “Dr.” by psychologists in health care settings. We also met with representatives of the Manitoba Psychological Society to present our perspective on this issue, and to be informed about the wishes of the psychological community. Given that psychologists have been duly granted doctorates in the completion of their graduate studies, we are of the opinion that we have the right to utilize the title that is commensurate with our degrees. As well, psychologists have long worked as essential members of teams in various health care settings, working with the use of the title “Dr.” and have worked appropriately, collegially and with the respect of the public in those settings. We are pleased that our concerns were considered and that psychologists now are among those expressly listed as carrying the title “Dr.” in healthcare settings.

There are other issues that have not yet been finalized in the upcoming legislation, in particular, that relating to reserved acts. P.A.M remains firm in our stance that psychologists must have the right to make diagnoses of mental disorders, as we have been well-trained to do so and have done so successfully to date in practice.

Another significant change, but on the national front, involves the government-developed Agreement on Internal Trade, which was passed on April 1 of this year. The revision of this legislation formally ends the Mutual Recognition Agreement, a document developed

by psychologists across Canada (our own Dr. Rallo was instrumental in its development). The MRA was remarkable in that it brought together all regions of Canada, with many different standards of admission to the profession and regulation of psychology, in agreement about the means by which psychologists could have mobility across provinces and territories. While not without some challenges, we have been working successfully with the MRA for eight years. The revised AIT brings with it government-imposed requirements for registration of out-of-province applicants who now may not meet the standards that we have set for those within the province. Our profession, as well as others such as physicians, has voiced a number of concerns about these revisions. However, given the disparate standards for registration and title in psychology across Canada, it has been difficult to speak with a united voice in large numbers. PAM, through our participation in ACPRO, has attempted to be effective in mandating for acceptable standards for registration and continuation of the use of two titles for differently-prepared practitioners, and continued use of jurisprudence and EPPP exams. As yet, our status with respect to these issues is unclear and we remain vigilant and active, as we may face possible challenges in the future.

On the local front, our requirement for continuing education has received excellent support and compliance. PAM was at the forefront of developing CE requirements in Canada, but these requirements now are becoming quite standard across the country. We have considered the idea of adopting a system like that of Ontario, where psychologists develop an individualized Continuing Competency plan based on need for skill development or upgrading. We welcome your comments and suggestions on Continuing Education and appreciate your cooperation to date.

We also will continue to explore ways of assessing competencies for registration, in keeping with the current zeitgeist in regulation across North America. Similarly, Council plans to examine ways to assess and mandate competencies in supervisors, a task that our neighbours in Ontario have tackled with some rigour already.

Last, but certainly not the least, with respect to the business of PAM, I am very pleased that our financial situation during the past year has stabilized. We have striven to make all of our decisions with attention to the need for fiscal responsibility to our members and for the survival of our ability to self-regulate. Our success this year is due partly to reduced costs of the discipline process. Although these costs are largely dependent on situations not within the control of the Complaints Committee or Council, we have actively considered ways in which they can be kept as low as possible. As I alluded to previously, our ability in the future to recover costs in at least some disciplinary cases

may buffer us against unpredictable and uncontrollable costs in this area. The credit for our improved financial position is also partly due to our prudent, organized, and sometimes necessarily hard-nosed Treasurer Dr. Rhodes, who will provide more details about our finances in her report.

Before I close and you all, I hope, enjoy a lovely dinner, I would like to mention the passing of two long-time members of our psychological community, Drs. James Hardy and Morgan Wright. Dr. Hardy, as the 13<sup>th</sup> individual to become registered in Manitoba, practiced for many years in the Brandon area, and continued to be registered until his death this year. Dr. Wright was the first President of the Manitoba Psychological Society, and the first recipient of the Robson Distinguished Psychologist Award. We wish to acknowledge the valuable lifetime contributions of both of these individuals to the field of Psychology in Manitoba.

The last few years have been characterized by an unprecedented degree of change in the regulation of psychology in Manitoba (new bylaws; the MRA and AIT; the proposed Regulated Health Professions Act; the development of Continuing Education requirements; the Psychological Associate, Independent Practice category). PAM has remained strong and stable, moving forward flexibly into the future, thanks to the collective efforts of many dedicated psychologists and community representatives. The whole truly is greater the sum of its parts.

The next few years almost certainly will bring new challenges, some predictable and others less so. However, our mandate and commitment to protecting the public by advancing high standards in the practice of psychology will continue to be our unwavering guide.

Respectfully Submitted,

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President

Psychological Association of Manitoba