

President's Report, 2013-2014

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My year as president of the Canadian Political Science Association has gone by quickly. Along with the daily management of the organization's basic activities—preparation of the Annual Conference, planning the attribution of the various prizes, holding the annual meeting of department heads, working with the editors of the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* and of the other associations in our field, planning meetings of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, conducting the nomination and election procedure—some more substantial and longer term projects were able to show progress, due especially to the priceless assistance of both the previous president and the president-elect, who serve as guarantors of the Association's continuity. In fact, I had the privilege of following Michael Atkinson, who did so much to give our association its new strategic orientations, and of preceding Jill Vickers, who is tremendously enthusiastic about her impending role and will be a fine president in the year that is starting now.

Three important developments have marked the year just ended: the arrival of a new executive director, Silvina Danesi, the reconfiguration of our rules and procedures in response to the new *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*, and the gradual implementation of the strategic orientations adopted by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors during the year.

First, a word about recruiting Silvina Danesi. With degrees in political science and law, an extensive background of working with parliamentarians in the Argentine National Congress and good knowledge of comparative parliamentary systems, Silvina has a doctorate in political science from the Université de Montréal. She has done post-doctoral studies at Carleton University, where she also gives courses on Latin American politics. She is obviously an experienced political scientist, as well as an assured analyst of institutions and political life. In short, she's a colleague with sound judgment and admirable efficiency. In less than a year, Silvina has not only mastered the workings of our association but also begun to make her mark, by improving the structure of our practices and procedures. Many times this year I said to myself that if I had nothing else to show for my term but recruiting Silvina Danesi, I would still have a very positive record to present to you. Thank you so much, Silvina.

That brings us to what has been without any doubt the most delicate task undertaken by Silvina this year, the revision of our articles and by-laws in compliance with the *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*. As you doubtless know, this Act required us to revise our electoral procedure and introduce a new one, which will be applied starting this year. The transition will require changes in our practices, as well as some adjustments to allow a gradual and consistent shift from our habitual approach to the new configuration. At the same time, we have had to take steps to confirm our status as a not-for-profit organization with the Canada Revenue Agency. In the current political context, that is not a simple matter. But the ship has nearly reached a safe harbour, again thanks to attentive and rigorous work by Silvina.

For the medium term, the Association has adopted four main objectives: to promote and develop networks of researchers, increase and diversify the membership, analyze and introduce new communications practices and improve our commitment and services to our members more oriented toward teaching and education. In the short term, these objectives can be seen in a series of initiatives, in particular a major redesign of our website that is already well advanced.

In fact, our whole IT and informational infrastructure is gradually being rebuilt with the installation of a new server, the reconfiguration of our databases and the renewal of all interfaces. All of this work has been done with elegance and professionalism by Sean Hart, IT consultant, and Michelle Hopkins. Members can already see the improvements on the home page and the website. The on-line programme this year is already a great success, after getting off to a rocky start last year, when there was not enough time for full integration of all the expected functions.

Gradually, the Association's site will become richer and livelier. As an example, this year we opened a space listing resource persons and presenting analyses of Bill C-23, the Act to amend the Canada Elections Act. While some members may have wanted the Association to become more involved in this debate, we felt it was better to adopt a strict reading of section 3.2 of our constitution, which stipulates that "the Association as such will not assume a position upon any question of public policy not directly related to the discipline of political science." But that does not stop the Association from promoting and distributing the expertise and analyses of its members.

The implementation of our strategic objectives has also resulted in the creation of a committee of chairs and former chairs of the programme committee, who will consider the format and future of our annual Conference. Chaired by Debora L. VanNijnatten, this committee, which includes as well Yasmeen Abu-Laban, Éric Montpetit, Peter Graefe and Cheryl Collier, began its work this winter and organized a lunch meeting on this topic yesterday.

Likewise, in connection with the objective of consolidating, expanding and better serving our membership, we have invited the Committee on Diversity, chaired by Yasmeen Abu-Laban and composed of Joanna Everitt, Richard Johnston, Martin Papillon and David Rayside, to present their results and thoughts to the members during this conference. The association is also working to consolidate and increase its development fund which, thanks to donations from members, will be used to help more young researchers participate in our scientific activities.

Much remains to be done, of course, to make the various objectives proposed in our strategic directions document a reality. But thanks to the leadership of Michael Atkinson, we now have a clearly established course. And I am convinced of the determination of Jill Vickers to go forward with these objectives.

On a day-to-day basis, obviously, the Association continues to perform its basic functions. The primary one, naturally, is the Annual Conference. I had the good luck, as

president, to succeed in recruiting the person who was my first choice for this responsibility, Peter Graefe. Peter brought together a fine committee to ensure an excellent conference, doing so with his characteristic and agreeable efficiency. He and all the members of his team have my sincerest thanks, with a special note for the much appreciated contribution of the local coordinator, Tim Heinmiller.

Every year, the Association awards a series of prizes for the best books, articles and lectures, and for teaching. For this purpose, a large number of our members are asked to contribute by judging the merits of various candidacies. My thanks to all those members who so willingly agreed to contribute to the life of the association in this way. Let me use this opportunity as well to warmly congratulate the many colleagues who were nominated.

The Association also publishes a prestigious journal, the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. For this, we rely on the formidable team led by Graham White and Daniel Salée, assisted by Peter Loewen, Carolyn Johns, Bryan Evans and Dominique Caouette. For the coming years, the journal faces significant challenges, starting with the inevitable transition now underway toward open access, skillfully piloted by Graham in a still uncertain context. Our parliamentary internship programmes, in Ottawa and Toronto, are likewise in good health, under the supervision of Garth Williams and Henry Jacek, whom I sincerely thank.

It is also the responsibility of the president to receive the heads of the country's political science departments at his own university. This year, in Montreal, we used this meeting to examine a number of important issues, including Association affairs, diversity among professors, research funding and on-line courses. A number of people contributed to making this meeting a success, but I would especially like to mention the support of my department head, Éric Montpetit, who greatly facilitated the preparation of the meeting, and of my dean, also a political scientist, Gérard Boismenu, who gave us a very warm welcome at the Université de Montréal.

The Association also has close and on-going relationships with related organizations. That is the case, of course, with the Société québécoise de science politique, this year led by Catherine Côté, with whom it was a pleasure to collaborate. The same was true for the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, presided over this year by our colleague Antonia Maioni, and at which Patrick Fafard willingly agreed to represent us, after Tony Porter, whom I thank most warmly. Our links with the International Political Science Association are also significant, since this association will be holding its World Congress in July in Montreal. On that occasion, the Canadian Political Science Association and the Société québécoise de science politique have teamed up to host a reception to greet the delegates. I thank the team of the World Congress, and especially Linda Cardinal, who represents our two associations with IPSA.

To ensure continuity, the president must also create a nominating committee, which manages the nominations for various elective positions. This year's committee consisted of Keith Banting, Jane Jenson and Guy Laforest. It was a pleasure to work with them,

and I thank them for their constantly renewed commitment to the Association. It is likewise with great satisfaction that I see Bill Cross take up the position of president-elect. Bill knows the Association well. He was a member of the Board of Directors and of the Executive Committee, and chair of the programme committee for the 2002 Annual Conference. And, of course, he is also a top-ranked researcher. I greet his election with pleasure and I take this opportunity to congratulate the new members of the Board, Loleen Berdahl, Cheryl Collier, Marc Doucet, Jonathan Malloy, Tamara Small and Jessica Kolopenuk, as well as our new secretary-treasurer, Luc Turgeon.

Much of the life of an association actually occurs as part of the deliberations and regular decisions by its executive committee and board of directors. This year, on the Executive Committee, I was assisted in excellent fashion by Jill Vickers, who will be succeeding me, as well as by Michael Atkinson, who prepared the ground very well, Christine Rothmayr Allison, who managed our finances with great expertise and gave me much good advice, and Debora Van NijNatten, who masterfully represented the members of the Board. I especially thank Christine, who completes her term in order to start up another, doubtless more demanding one, as head of our department at the Université de Montréal.

Finally, I would like to say a very special thank-you to Silvina Danesi and Michelle Hopkins, who literally keep the Association alive from day to day. With us for less than a year, Silvina quickly found her place, ensuring solid, competent and very pleasant management, in French and in English. It has been a pleasure to work with her, and I end my term with confidence, knowing that the Association is in very good hands. As for Michelle, I would like to point out two things. First of all, for several months we operated without an administrative director, and Michelle filled that void with her habitual kindness and efficiency. As a member, for many years I have appreciated the presence of Michelle and, I suspect like all our francophone members, the smiling and francophone face she gives our Association. This fall, in fact I received a call from Catherine Côté, president of the SQSP, asking me how her Société could find their own Michelle Hopkins! Michelle has been with us for 25 years. This is an anniversary worth mentioning, and on behalf of all members, I wish to express to her our recognition for her contribution and our sincerest thanks.

Finally, I thank all the members of the Association for the privilege I received to be your president this year. The presidency is an important responsibility but it is above all an honour, and I thank you for giving it to me.

Thank you.