

Dr. Jane Storrie's State of the Association Address



On October 17, 2017, Dr. Jane Storrie was inducted into the Past-Presidents' Council. Having passed the torch onto to our new President Dr. Jonathan Douglas the day previously, Dr. Storrie provided the participants at the Summit on Innovation in Psychology with her rationale for seeking election to the Presidency of the OPA and a detailed update on the status of the OPA as she ended her term of office. She received a well-deserved standing ovation. The following is her State of Association Address.

In December 2012, when I decided to run for OPA President-Elect, it was primarily out of guilt. I had griped and carped about OPA for a while by then, like so many others. I questioned the relevance of OPA. I wondered exactly what my dues were paying for. I didn't know what OPA was doing for me or for my profession. It occurred to me one day that the griping and carping was ridiculous...if I wanted to see change, I had better be prepared to help. So I effectively "guilted" myself into an election. I quickly learned that it's easy to gripe and carp but so much harder and way more rewarding to actually get to work.

As part of the election process, I was asked what I wanted to achieve. I wanted OPA to be a louder, bolder, stronger and more respected association. I wanted us at the table whenever decisions were made that impacted mental health. I wanted Ontarians to have better access to psychology. I wanted to increase our numbers in primary care, hospitals, school boards and the correctional system. I wanted to highlight the contributions of our academics and researchers. And I wanted to give our members more benefits, more continuing education activities, and more opportunities for jobs, growth and professional development. Most of all, I wanted those who had left OPA or who had never been members, to want to join us. But, where to begin?



We were lucky to have a terrific Board of Directors....people who were really dedicated to OPA and not afraid to roll up their sleeves. But we really became a force to be reckoned with when we hired Jan Kasperski as our CEO. Jan's professional career was in health care. She was legendary at Queen's Park, and had connections that we could only dream of. And she committed herself to learn everything she could about the profession of psychology right out of the gate. Jan took me under her wing, and mentored me....I learned so much from her and I will never be able to thank her for her guidance and her patience.

We soon learned that OPA had been branded a “lobby group” by government. They thought we were only out to benefit ourselves, rather than the people of this province. We were constantly dismissed as a profession that couldn’t get our own house in order. We couldn’t get a meeting no matter how hard we tried. It was time for a re-branding....



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We started by commissioning a new logo, and started working on a state of the art website.



We met with government relations and media relations specialists to craft our messages. Environics trained me in how to speak to the media. We threw ourselves into strategic planning, updated our Mission and Vision and Values statements, and returned to the original Objects...one which recognized clinicians, academics and researchers. We developed proposals for government, all designed to increase access to psychology.

We re-configured the Board and updated the By-Laws and Policy and Procedures and developed Rules and Regulations to make sure we were in compliance with the Not-for-Profit Act. We launched our Statutory Committees (Communications and Members Services, Continuing Education and Research, Planning and Policy Development) to determine and carry out our goals.

We reached out to the Ontario Association of Psychological Associates (OAPA), the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), the College of Psychologists of Ontario (CPO), and the Canadian Academy of Psychologists in Disability Assessment (CAPDA) to strengthen relationships within the profession.



We developed relationships with other professional organizations, like the Ontario Medical Association (OMA), the Nurse Practitioners Association of Ontario (NPAO), and the new College of Psychotherapy. And we started to meet with anyone and everyone who needed to learn about the “new” OPA and could help us achieve our goals.

Starting with visiting MPPs, we were soon invited to political events and fundraisers where we could get facetime with various Ministerial staff. We held



receptions at Queen's Park to highlight the work of psychologists and psychological associates in many different arenas. We managed to meet with

the Premier's advisors and those of many of the Ministers and their parliamentary assistants, associate deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, deputy ministers and finally the ministers themselves.



We talked about access, wraparound care, psychologists as triage agents, RxP, Form 1s and other advocacy initiatives and finally we were on the radar at the Ministries of Health, Labour, Community Safety and Correctional Services, Community and Social Services, Child and Youth, Education, Labour, Seniors Affairs, Northern Development and Mines, Finance, Aboriginal Affairs...there are some 14 Ministries responsible for mental health.

We paid our dues, and can now directly contact a Minister's office and have a meeting scheduled in no time.



We also started to raise our profile by developing a presence on Twitter and Facebook. We made ourselves available to members of the media by circulating our Media Contact List, and suddenly we were everywhere....Television, radio, and newspapers.



We took the message of the importance and relevance of psychology to organizations like Health Quality Ontario, CAMH, the Ontario Hospital Association, Legal Aid Ontario, the Office of the Children's Lawyer, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, the WSIB, and FSCO.



We developed partnerships with TEMA Trust, BizLife, the Public Services Health and Safety Association, the Ontario Bar Association, the Canadian Forces and others.



We started consulting to police services and other first responder organizations to develop health and wellness programs, we developed a Workplace Mental Health Certificate Program with BizLife, and we are participating in a Best Doctors pilot project to offer psychological assessment and treatment in Canada.



Many of these endeavours are resulting in job opportunities for our members, including a recently posted full-time position for a psychologist to work in the office of the Minister of Labour, advising on Workplace Mental Health and Psychological Safety.



We re-launched a CE Accreditation Program, and developed workshops designed to add tools to the clinician's toolbox. We had amazing programs for our Annual Conferences. We developed best practice guidelines (telepsychology, electronic communication, social media, supervision, IE, concussion) and updated the Guide to Fees and Billing Practices.

And while we were doing all of this, we tried to be quickly responsive to issues brought to us by our members.

One thing that's been hard for me to accept is how slowly things change, particularly with government. But we're still in negotiations about access and RxP and Form 1s. No doors have been closed to us...it's all about being patient.



But nothing says we have to wait to make change. We decided to bring psychology to those who couldn't otherwise afford it through Psychology Aid Ontario. PAO will be very similar to Legal Aid Ontario, and will do more to increase access to psychology than any other initiative to date. PAO has been praised by a number of government Ministries, and we're hopeful to bring you an official announcement very soon.



As I worked on My State of the Association Address, it became clear to me how far we've come. OPA is an association that has earned respect. We're seen as integral to any discussion of mental health. We are now described as nimble, as visionary, as an organization that advocates on behalf of Ontarians. And the future remains bright.



Dr. Jonathan Douglas, and then Dr. Sylvain Roy will continue to lead OPA to heights we once could only dream of.



We had so much interest this year in joining the Board that we chose to increase the number of Directors rather than lose any one of the stellar nominees.

I hope that, as members, you are proud to be a part of OPA. I hope that you will encourage colleagues to join us...to take advantage of all OPA offers. I hope that you see the value in becoming a stronger voice for the profession of psychology, and the people that we serve.



I hope that you will continue to support OPA by attending our events, joining our committees and working groups and sections, and allowing your name to stand for nomination to the Board. I hope that you continue to embrace change, think outside the box, and see the big picture.



Ending my term of President is bittersweet. To be quite honest, I'm exhausted. It has been quite a challenge to take on this role while still practicing full-time. I couldn't have done this without the support of my partner Diana Velikonja, who always lent an ear or a shoulder.

And the clinicians and staff in our practice who stepped up to help me meet the responsibilities of my day job.



My husband, Gord, and son Bryan picked up the slack at home, and only whined a little bit about never seeing me. I'm not joking about picking up the slack....I haven't set foot in a grocery store in two years. My family truly carried me through this, always making sure I knew that they were proud of me. What a tremendous gift.

The next year, as I sit on the Board as Past-President, will allow me to continue working with the best Board I have ever had the pleasure to be a member of. Thank you for having my back, and for challenging and inspiring me. I look forward to working with our new Directors.

The OPA Staff, particularly Jill and Lara, have been enthusiastic and tireless and I appreciate all that you do for us.

Thanks to all of you....the membership. For holding me to account, demanding that I always gave my best, and for sending me encouraging emails just when I needed them.

And, Jan, I hope you're proud of what we accomplished together. I'll always think of us as the Dynamic Duo.

Dr. Jane Storrie, President

