**AGM 2017 -- President’s Report**

Our task this year as board members and representatives of our community, was to advocate for a cohesive strategy for the 2016-2017 leadership of CPRS Toronto. Our focus was to underscore the directives of CPRS National by being leaders in the industry who: advocate for transparent and ethical communication; provide high quality PD & networking events; provide and encourage direct involvement from members with timely and reciprocal access to board member communication; continue to advocate for member involvement and succession planning; balance a responsible budget; develop new revenue opportunities and partnerships; and increase inter-regional societal collaboration.

**Celebrating Achievements**

We had an incredible year of achievements by local communicators in the public relations field and we are honoured to congratulate and celebrate the incredible talent of the CPRS Toronto community. In addition to the Leadership Awards handed out at the 2017 ACE Awards, we also celebrated incredible achievements in professional growth with the celebration of this year's PRKs, APRs, College of Fellows and Award of Attainment recipients. Much congratulations to Brooke Kelly and Carolina Salcedo for completing their PRK and Caitlin Coull, APR, Kim Daynard, APR, Ruth Fernandes, PMP, APR, Nate Habermeyer, APR, Audrey Ready Holt, APR, and Bryant Sullivan on their accreditation. As well we congratulate Sheldon Rose, BPR, APR, FCPRS on his induction into the College of Fellows and our recipient of this year's Lois Marsh Award, Carol Panasiuk, MBA, APR, FCPRS LM on her 2017 CPRS Award of Attainment.

**Financial Position**

From an operating perspective, we budgeted to meet last year’s numbers. In the 2016-17 year, we were down approximately $6,000.00 as compared to the $18,000.00 surplus in 2015-2016. The losses can be accounted for in the following areas:

1. Student membership fees, dues and revenues were down by $7000.00 net. CPRS Toronto, other organizations and in-school programming were competing for the same audience. Student membership will continue to be a challenge with the recent CPRS National student membership program that was announced a few weeks ago. Rest assured CPRS Toronto is in talks with CPRS National in the coming days to work together to create a membership scenario that is beneficial to both the national and local organizations, and the students.
2. For Professional Development we had to spend the amount of money as we did last year, but we did not generate revenue in 2016-17. To operate a PD program costs money, so to break even we do need member participation. This is an area of emphasis for the board going forward. We are working closely together to devise a program schedule for 2017-18 that is timely and accessible to all members going forward.
3. The ACE Award expenses increased by approximately $9,000.00 in 2016-17. This increase in expenditure was a deliberate attempt by the Boar to enhance the reputation of our awards program and the prestige of being a CPRS Toronto member. We have spent money for the future and have already received benefits from our increased focus on ACE awards in the form of enriched engagement with volunteer leadership opportunities with CPRS Toronto.

Your Board of Directors will make the very best efforts to ensure our association is a state-of-the-art, stand-up operation. In our view, this exercise is longer-term than a 12-nonth period. On an annual report basis we are comforted by the idea that we have protected the financial integrity of the organization in that we carry approximately $174,000.00 in reserve funds. While we were down for the year, we do feel we are well-situated to ensure member participation and engagement on a go-forward basis.

**CPRS National Conference**

Twenty-nine attendees from Toronto made their way to Kelowna, BC for Illuminate 2017. We look forward to seeing you next year in Charlottetown, PEI for Connexions 2018!

**Research**

We successfully launched a survey of CPRS Toronto members in hopes of providing better services and enhancing our membership communication. Thanks to Dave Scholz, Board Chair of Research and Sponsorship and Hilary Lawton, Membership Chair for their leadership in developing and analyzing this research. The results will be communicated in Q1 of the upcoming year.

**ACE Awards**

The 2017 Achieving Communications Excellence (ACE) Awards were held on May 2 at Arcadian Court. The Awards was attended by over 350 practitioners, with a benchmark year of submissions at 138. This year, to elevate the event to a topline glamourous awards show, the event imagery was rebranded and the theme was “Roll Out The Red Carpet”. This rebrand impacted revenues but resulted in an elevated experience, with positive feedback by attendees.

The ACE committee consists of volunteers, split into teams to manage judging, communication and gala logistics. Congratulations to Dave Scholz and Vincent Power our ACE Judge Co-Chairs and thank you to Nancy MacMillan, our ACE Awards Chair and her team of incredible volunteers, for their significant efforts in organizing another successful program!

**Volunteer**

CPRS Toronto has shown its vibrancy with a highly participatory membership of students and practitioners interested in giving back to their community and contributing to the growth of the industry. We were fortunate to have 36 individuals express interest in volunteering, with members contributing to our successful campaigns such as Membership Month and the ACE Awards. In addition, duties focused heavily on writing and communication skills, with volunteers submitting content and engaging in outreach on our social platforms and website. We have an opportunity to continue to reach senior practitioners with requests for content submissions, board contribution and panel/webinar/event construction and will focus outreach to this segment of our membership in the coming year.

We accomplish our goals of advancement in the practice of public relations with a skilled and hard-working board of directors and our enthusiastic volunteers.

**Membership Engagement**

This year membership was down by 15% to 572 members. The area of attrition was in student membership. To address this, we will direct a focus of effort to engage and solicit past student members for potential conversion to the Associate level. Plus as we continue to refine our strategy to address retention rate, we have a new opportunity to engage and educate a new audience of first-time ACE Award submitters.

The Membership Committee championed efforts for March’s Membership Month, propelling CPRS Toronto into the number 2 position for overall growth in members for the month.

Hilary Lawton, our membership chair for the last 2 years, will be exiting her position. We thank her for her enthusiasm and dedication to CPRS.

**Communication**

A special thanks to Robin Smith our Communications Chair who took over this role in March/April during our heaviest communications’ outreach cycle of the year (due to Membership Month and the ACE Awards.) The committee supported the messages from CPRS National and our local chapter with member communications through website updates, monthly member e-newsletters, blogs and social media channels, the later which saw an increase in followers this year. Thank you to Irit Shtock, our e-newsletter editor and to fellow board members, students and volunteers who posted blogs throughout the year and shared their personal PR perspectives with CPRS members.

Unfortunately our CPRS Toronto LinkedIn group was shut-down and efforts to work with LinkedIn administrators to restore it, were unsuccessful. The group page has been reinstated and we will endeavour to rebuild and brand the community in future communications. The 2017-2018 year will see a website rebuild/redesign of CPRS Toronto’s hub, to update and innovate and better reflect our progressive and dynamic group of members.

**Professional Development**

We remain committed to increasing the number of learning and networking events while maintaining a high level of quality in the coming year. A special thanks to Jenny Shin and Tina Romano our Professional Development Co-Chairs, who prepared engaging and unique events for learning and networking. We’d like to thank Tina Romano, who will be stepping down from the position. We’d also like to thank Heath Applebaum and Diane Bégin and Jeff Rohrer, who sourced and prepared engaging and timely events for our members this year, on The Future of PR and the Fort McMurray Wildfire Response, respectively as well as a thank you to all of our participatory panelists for their time and expertise.

This coming year communication and marketing of events will commence well in advance, to improve planning and increase event attendance. We continue to welcome feedback on preferred topics of interest for upcoming learning opportunities.

**Education**

This year our Education Chair Heath Applebaum, dedicated his focus of outreach to program administrators and teachers facilitating the local college and university Public Relations and Communications programming. The intent was to strengthen our commitment to working with educators to support their program goals, to reflect an inclusive community and to reach the next level of communicators with our branded messaging.

This year seven outstanding students were awarded The Doris Whiteside Award and the schools participating in the category was increased to 8, and the prize value increased from $100 to $200. Currently, new categories are being explored for the 2018 ACE Awards, to recognize and celebrate student achievements and their instructors.

**Student Engagement**

The Student Steering Committee led by Fiona Pswarayi, Vivian Sadeh, Kyleigh Benninger and Mary Aloia, the team included 8 student representatives from various PR/communications programs from across the GTA including Humber College, Seneca College, Centennial College, Durham College and Sheridan College.   
  
Though there were challenges due to competing organizations and school programming, all vying for student attention, the CPRS Toronto’s Student Events: Passport to PR, Building Media Relationships and PR 360 all trended on Twitter and received positive feedback through post-event surveys. Thank you to Fiona Pswarayi for her commitment to CPRS, who will return as President of the Student Steering Committee for the 2017/2018 session.

**Sponsorship**

Through the dedication of our Sponsorship Chair David Schulz, we saw an increase in direct financial support of $2,802 over last year, totalling $28,000. Additional in-kind sponsorships increased $1,000 over last year, totalling of $45,580. Business Wire, has increased their sponsorship for 2018 and is now the Professional Development Sponsor of CPRS Toronto’s PD events for the upcoming year. CNW, A Cision Company, became the main sponsor for the ACE Awards in 2017.

Thank you to all our partners: CNW – a Cision Company, Marketwired, Fifth Story, Leger, Canadian Press Images, Business Wire, Freeman Audio Visual, ConsumerVision, CEDROM – SNi, NASDAQ, and McMaster University.

**Accreditation**

The Board of Directors was unable to fill the position of Director of Accreditation. Co-Presidents Erica Siler, MA, APR, Danielle Kelly, APR and volunteers Nicki Luscombe, APR and Elizabeth Bak, APR managed the portfolio. We would like to thank Nicki and Elizabeth for their leadership and once again congratulate our new APRs on their significant achievement and commitment to the profession.

**In Memorium**

It is with sadness that we need to acknowledge the loss of three long-time CPRS Members Krys Popatckz and David Milliken, and past president Nick Volk all of whom were dedicated members and of our organization.

Regretfully, I did not have the pleasure to meet David, but I did get several opportunities to meet Nick. I sat with Nick and a few past-presidents at a Communicator of the year award luncheon and Nick had a parable about how his wife asked him to address his recent retirement. He said she had very clear instructions: I married you for better or for worse, but not for lunch! Find something to do! I didn’t know him well, but from what I could gather, he found a great many things in his life.

As some of you may know, I got the opportunity to work quite closely with Krys as well before she passed away. A few months ago I received a letter from Krys’s husband and he said something that struck me deeply, and it is something for us all to consider. He said: “Spread the word: CPRS paid huge dividends to this proud member and everyone who is able to should join”. This is what I challenge each of you to do. Here in this room, of course, are all members. So my challenge to you is to seek dividends. Make the most of your membership. Volunteer at an event, participate as an examiner or award judge, write a piece for our newsletter. Be a proud part of this community, and share your experience with your peers.

**The Road Ahead**

Danielle and I will be continuing our Co-Presidency roles in 2017-18, and we are committing to continuing to build on the foundation we began constructing this past year. We have an enthusiastic group of Board members ready to bring you another great year of programming. We look forward to bringing you a summary of our successes to come next September.

**Thank you all!**

Danielle Kelly, APR

Erica Silver, MA, APR