

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2022**

Welcome to all the people I like to think of as my PAL pals. It is so great that you are able to join us this evening for the 2022 PAL Annual General Meeting. While it is more fun to have everyone in the same room, we are still in the middle of the COVID 19 pandemic and want to ensure everyone's safety and good health. The one benefit of having our meetings online has been that many more participants have been able to join us from across Toronto and even further afield. It is my pleasure to have a chance to hear the voices of our old friends as well as some new people, too.

This has been my first year as President of PAL and it has brought both challenges and accomplishments. I would particularly like to thank our staff people, Derek Simunovic and Mark Fielding, for continuing to ensure that PAL records your text materials and gets those recordings out to you, our clients, in a timely manner. As a volunteer reader myself, I must say that being able to move from recording during lock-down in my home office to return to the PAL studios has been a great pleasure. Not only can I escape from the sounds of elementary school kids at recess and my neighbour's dogs, which continuously interrupted my recordings, I now also get to spend time with our wonderful staff (and raid the treats bin!) I hope those of you who have listened to my recordings have enjoyed the difference in the quality of the sound.

Again, because of the pandemic, over the past two and a half years, many of PAL's usual activities have had to be curtailed or moved online. Fundraising has been successful because our generous donors have risen to the challenge and responded to messages and campaigns – even though, like other agencies, PAL has not been able to participate in in-person fundraising events – because most of such events have been cancelled. As our treasurer will report later on, despite the difficulties caused by COVID, and some additional expenses, PAL ended its fiscal year in an even better financial position than the previous year.

I would like to say a very special thank you to board members Susan Loube and Anne Musgrave (and her lovely dog Hector), who along with PAL client Peter Tsatsanis represented PAL at the White Cane Week event this May. We met many of our old friends and got to talk with some people who had not yet learned of PAL.

This is the year the ONCA regulations begin to go into effect. Susan Loube and our late friend John Rae worked rather tirelessly with a law firm to ensure that PAL complies with all of the requirements of the new legislation. We are nearly there, thanks to them and to board member Ramya Amuthan who stepped up to fill in after John so sadly left us.

You may have noticed that Derek and Mark have different titles from those of last year. This is because the Personnel Committee of the board, working closely with our staff members, have agreed that it is important for their titles to reflect the work that they do. We are very pleased that Derek and Mark now have new titles of Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator, respectively. And of course, we thank them for everything they do!

I would like to close by thanking Vice-President TJ Lloyd, and his adorable son Yoan (who has joined a few board meetings from his high chair); Secretary Anne Musgrave; Treasurer, Marguerite Wallace; and board members Susan Loube, Wanda Fitzgerald, and Ramya Amuthan for all of their contributions to the smooth governance of PAL and for their great ideas.

But most of all, I want to thank all of the volunteers and clients for continuing to make PAL the vibrant and excellent organization that it has been for so many years.

In conclusion I would like to paraphrase poet Strickland Gillilan who said, "You may have tangible wealth untold. Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold. Richer than I you can never be – I have [someone] who reads to me."