

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2023

Welcome to everyone joining us this evening for the 2023 PAL Annual General Meeting. One of the lessons we learned during the worst of the COVID pandemic is that you, our PAL pals, are great users of technology and able to join the meeting via Zoom from wherever you happen to be. While many of us like being together in the same room once a year, this kind of gathering has meant that many more participants have been able to join us from across Toronto and even further afield. I think we are all a bit safer and healthier this way – and we have a chance to hear the voices of our old friends as well as some new people, too. In the years to come, we may revisit how the AGM is held, but for now, it is a great pleasure to have all of us here.

The past year has brought PAL many 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 have really enjoyed coming into the office to record the texts (some quite challenging!) that our eclectic clients have brought us. It sometimes feels like a bonus education when I get to record something I did not know about or find an author whose works I had not previously encountered. My sincere thanks to you all for giving the PAL volunteers an opportunity to grow and expand our knowledge and our fields of interest.

Speaking of volunteers and clients, I am gratified to report that this past year has seen an increase in numbers of both volunteers and clients. As before, word of mouth has been a successful way for PAL to increase its outreach. To those of you who have told your friends and family about our work, I send a special thanks. You are helping to demonstrate the continued relevance and importance of our work.

Another vote of thanks goes to those members who took time from their busy lives to join the meeting in March this year to ratify the changes to PAL's constitution as required by the new ONCA regulations. I am very happy to announce that our lawyers have confirmed that PAL is now compliant with all of these regulations. It took the enormous efforts of Board Member Susan Loubé who kept us on track and in motion, Ramya Amuthan, our late friend John Rae and staff members Derek Simunovic and Mark Fielding who worked closely with our law firm to finally ensure that PAL complies with all of the requirements of the new legislation.

I would like to close by thanking Vice-President TJ Lloyd, who has brought a lot of fun to meetings when his adorable son Yoan peeks onto the screen; Secretary Anne Musgrave, whose lively guide dog Hector has made a few appearances; Treasurer, Marguerite Wallace, whose patience with explaining all the numbers is remarkable; and stellar board members Susan Loubé, Ramya Amuthan, Terry Bray and Vangelis Nikias for all of their contributions to the smooth governance of PAL and for their great questions and ideas. Today, we say a fond farewell to long time Board Member Wanda Fitzgerald who has contributed so much to PAL over the years. We thank Wanda for everything she has done for the organization and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

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.

To end, I would like to quote a great children's author, Lemony Snicket, who said, "Never trust anyone who has not brought a book with them."