



Canadian Public
Relations Society
Hamilton Society

2025-26

ANNUAL REPORT

A photograph of the Art Gallery of Hamilton building at night. The building is modern with large glass windows and a prominent entrance. A large poster for an art exhibition is visible on the upper left side of the building. The sky is dark blue, and a bright light source creates a starburst effect on the right side of the image.

INTRODUCTION

Art Gallery of Hamilton

The Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) Hamilton is a professional organization comprised of dynamic communications and public relations members who practice throughout Southern Ontario.

Our Chapter is managed by a volunteer Board of public relations professionals who provide various career development options, such as the accreditation program that provides APR preparation and support, the highly sought-after mentorship program, and much more.

We support ethical standards of professional practice and conduct among our members while developing public awareness of the value and function of the public relations profession.

Our membership area covers Hamilton, Halton, Niagara and Southwestern Ontario. Learn more at www.CPRShamilton.ca



EXECUTIVE & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Niagara Falls

Executive

- President **Ryan Strang, APR**
- Vice President **Josie Cassano Rizzuti, MCM, APR, CMP**
- Treasurer **Kevin Floether, MCM, MCPRS, APR, CM**
- Secretary **Shawn McKillop, APR**

Board of Directors

- Chair, Professional Development, **Alex Sevigny, PhD, APR, FCPRS**
- Co-Chairs, Accreditation, **Alyssa Lai, APR, Michael Parente, APR**
- Chair, Events, **Bhrigu Bagga**
- Chair, Membership, **Bill Steinburg**
- Co-Chairs, Communications, **Nicolle Wahl, MCM, Andres F. Ibargen**
- Chair, Mentorship, **Andrew Macklin**
- Chair, Sponsorship and Business Development, **Naomi Fox**
- Chair, Awards, **Kim Zarzuela, MSc**
- Niagara College Student Representative, **Karolina Odrzywolski**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Downtown Georgetown

Greetings CPRS Hamilton:

This is my final President's message for CPRS Hamilton, and it brings me a sense of gratitude. Supporting and representing communicators across southwest Ontario in a leadership role has been a rewarding experience. It has been a great opportunity to work alongside Josie Cassano Rizzuti, APR, Shawn McKillop, APR, Kevin Floether, APR, Andres F. Ibarguen, Andrew Macklin, Alex Sévigny, APR, Alyssa Lai, APR, Bhritu Bagga, Bill Steinburg, Kim Zarzuela, Michael Parente, APR, Naomi Fox, Nicolle Wahl, and Karolina Odrzywolski.

As James Humes said, "The art of communication is the language of leadership." These individuals are volunteers and care about the current and future state of our industry.

While our name might suggest a narrow focus, CPRS Hamilton is the professional home for practitioners across Southwestern Ontario. Whether you are in London, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Sarnia, or Windsor, you are a part of this Chapter.

This year, your Board of Directors renewed its commitment to ensure members and practitioners outside of Hamilton felt represented, connected, and supported. This started with in-person events in Niagara and London. This commitment will continue with events in other areas in the near future.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Ryan Strang at 2025 Pinnacle Awards

I am proud of our collective commitment to support members. This year, CPRS Hamilton:

- hosted five in-person professional learning and celebratory events, drawing more than 200 attendees
- delivered our Mentorship Program, which continues to serve as a gold standard for our network.
- continued to be a national leader in the development of Accredited in Public Relations professionals, with another four members attaining their APR designation.

Our work would not be possible without the continued support of the Master of Communications Management (MCM) program at McMaster University. Their partnership and investment have supported many of these initiatives.

We often talk about the threat of AI. I believe communicators will continue to play an irreplaceable role in high-stakes human judgment, emotional intelligence, and strategic nuance, while building trusting and authentic relationships.

However, the future of our industry, specifically entry-level positions, is at a crossroads. With several post-secondary programs being impacted by shifting public policy and the automation of foundational tasks, we must remain committed to supporting the next generation of communicators as they navigate an increasingly complex entry point.

The future is bright, and the leadership amongst the Board of Directors is strong. I look forward to moving into the Past President role and continuing to support the Chapter's growth and look forward to connecting at an event soon.

Ryan Strang, APR
President, CPRS Hamilton



Each year, CPRS Hamilton is proud to celebrate the exceptional talent and achievements of its members and those of the wider community of communications, marketing and PR professionals through our two local award programs, the **Pinnacle Awards** and the **Special Awards**.

The Pinnacle Awards

Open to all communicators across Hamilton, Halton, Niagara and Southwestern Ontario, the Pinnacle Awards recognizes the best of the best in our industry. Each year, we provide a number of categories through which public relations professionals can demonstrate their achievements from the previous year.

In 2025, we awarded 14 awards total to CPRS Hamilton members and communications practitioners across Southwestern Ontario, including 8 Pinnacles (5 gold, 3 silver) and 6 special awards.

We also presented the inaugural Mark Gregory Memorial Award in honour of our friend and colleague, Mark Gregory, APR, recognizing his contributions to the profession and his deep commitment to mentorship, education, and CPRS.

Kim Zarzuela, MSc
Chair, Awards





GOLD AWARDS

- **External Communications Campaign:** YMCA Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford, *Igniting the Potential to Save Lives*
- **Media Relations Campaign under \$50k:** Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority, *On the Road at HOPA Port*
- **Advocacy and Social Marketing Campaign:** Creative Guild, *Hamilton Poop Project*
- **Charitable Campaign:** YMCA Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford, *Igniting Potential to Save Lives Campaign*
- **Communication Project, Research:** McMaster University, Master of Communications Management, *Cutting the Cord to the Gas Tank and Plugging in (Capstone Project by Nicole Woodall, MBA, MCM, APR)*

SILVER AWARDS

- **Integrated Communications:** City of Hamilton, *Solar Eclipse*
- **Multimedia Campaign:** Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority, *On the Road at HOPA Ports*
- **Communications Project, Research:** CBV Institute, *Decoding Digital Trust - McMaster - Masters of Communication Management Capstone Project by Kevin Floether, MCM, APR, CM*



SPECIAL AWARDS

CPRS Hamilton is proud to recognize the outstanding contributions of its members to the Chapter and the public relations profession. The Special Awards honour members in good standing who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and volunteerism within the PR community.

Nominated by peers, the CPRS Hamilton Special Awards recognize exceptional leadership and action in the public relations profession by members of CPRS.

- **Student Award of Excellence**, Marcus Giancola, Niagara College
- **Sharon Little, APR Legacy Scholar Award**, Cynthia Liebel, PhD, MCM, APR, and Nicole Woodall, MBA, MCM
- **Bob Deans, APR Mentorship Award**, Bill Steinburg
- **Heather J. Pullen Memorial Award**, Tiana Melnychuk
- **Mark Gregory Memorial Award**, Naomi Fox





TREASURER'S REPORT

London, Ontario

CPRS Hamilton's fiscal year ending March 31st was marked by a full calendar of professional development events, an active mentorship program, and continued investment in member engagement across the region. The dedication of our volunteer board made this programming possible.

Financially, CPRS Hamilton generated \$17,457 in revenue from membership fees, the Pinnacle Awards, sponsorships, professional development events, investment income, and our job board. Total expenses for the year were \$16,575, resulting in a net surplus of \$881. This reflects careful stewardship while continuing to invest in events, mentorship programming, and member communications.

As a not-for-profit, our total assets stand at \$53,710 in short-term investments, receivables, and cash, indicative of sound financial management. The organization remains well-positioned with healthy reserves to support future programming and growth.

Looking ahead to 2026-27, we will continue to focus on membership growth, new sponsorship and professional development revenue opportunities, and delivering high-quality mentorship, accreditation support, and member events. We thank McMaster's Master of Communications Management program for its continued generous Platinum sponsorship.

We deeply appreciate all current and former board members for their commitment and support. With a solid financial foundation, CPRS Hamilton is well-positioned for continued growth and enriched member programming in the year ahead.

Kevin Floether, MCM, MCPRS, APR, CM
Treasurer



TREASURER'S REPORT

Cambridge

Balance Sheet

as of March 2026

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalent	
101000 RBC – 4509	\$11,998.09
101000 RBC GIC – 1390	34,000.00
10050 Mark Gregory Trust Fund	\$5,000.00
Total Cash and Cash Equivalent	\$50,998.09
Other Current Assets and Prepaid Insurance	\$2,711.95
Total Assets	\$53,710.04
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Current Liabilities	
20005 Miscellaneous	\$551.44
Total Liabilities	\$551.44

TREASURER'S REPORT

Burlington Pier

Balance Sheet

as of March 2026

EQUITY	
30000 Opening Balance Equity	\$37,457.46
Retained Earnings	\$14,819.81
Profit for the Year	\$881.33
Total Equity	\$53,158.60
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$53,710.04



TREASURER'S REPORT

Halton Hills

Statement of Operations Year to Date

April 2025 to March 2026

INCOME	
40105 Membership	\$7,610.30
40300 Events and 40440 Sponsorship	\$8,218.49
40510 GIC Interest	\$1,178.00
40220 Job Board Revenue	\$450.00
Total Revenue	\$17,456.79
EXPENSES	
50100 Board Expense (Insurance etc)	\$1,635.83
50150 Communications	\$1,035.81
50300 Event Expenses	\$10,306.15
50400/50500 Office Expenses, Legal and Bank Charges	\$3,597.67
Total Expenses	\$16,575.46
Profit/Loss	\$881.33

ACCREDITATION REPORT

Dundurn Castle

Another year brought another cohort of newly accredited members. Achieving the APR is a career milestone that demonstrates dedication, knowledge and expertise. This year, the Hamilton chapter celebrated four new APRs from among our members.

A hearty congratulations to:

- Kevin Floether, MCM, APR, CM, MCPRS
- Danielle Friest, MCM, APR, MCPRS
- Onyinye Ijeoma Oyedele, BSc, MCM, APR, MCPRS
- Kelly Noseworthy, APR, MCPRS

Along the journey, we also saw local members who have gone through the APR process, lend their support to candidates by providing guidance and advice. A sincere thank you to this year's volunteers:

- Carla Marshall
- Carleen Carroll
- Josie Cassano Rizzuti
- Grace Diffey
- Amanda Richardson

Michael Parente & Alyssa Lai
Co-chairs Accreditation





MENTORSHIP REPORT

Mentorship Orientation 2025

CPRS Mentorship portfolio exists to help students and young professionals connect with industry mentors, helping them better navigate the challenges of becoming a working member of the public relations industry in Canada.

Over the past two years, three mentees from our mentorship program have gone on to become members of the CPRS Hamilton Board of Directors.

Some key highlights:

- Successful 2025 campaign led by Caitlin Costello (total of 12 pairings)
- Successful outreach to Conestoga College, future target for program expansion
- Held out first-ever coffee chat with students (in St. Catharines), with 11 students in attendance to discuss current industry issues and trends
- Welcome nine students and one young professional to 2026 program (including, I believe, our first-ever from London)
- We had outreach from more mentors than the program needed (12 mentors for 10 positions)
- 50% of this year's mentors are in their first year with the program
- Mentees of the mentorship program were the hosts of our second annual networking event created by the Niagara College PR program

Andrew Macklin
Chair Mentorship





PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT

McMaster University

Professional development is a key driver of membership in the Canadian Public Relations Society. It provides communicators with affordable tools to grow their skills and advance their careers. CPRS Hamilton remains committed to offering high-quality opportunities for members at every career stage.

This was a transitional year for the profession as artificial intelligence gained currency across the workplace, which was a motif in the themes of our 2025-26 professional development program.

This year, we had four professional development events that focused on different areas of the practice: measurement, leadership and career, artificial intelligence and data, and accessibility.

First, Lisa Covens, MA, APR Senior Vice-President (Communications) at Léger, joined us to demystify the world of quantitative and qualitative market research for communicators. She covered survey research, focus groups, and emerging areas of practice such as synthetic audiences and client personas. It was a great survey of the importance of data-driven decision making and analytics in the practice of communications.

Next, Christine Szustaczek, Vice-President (Communications) at the University of Toronto spoke to us about how she built one of the most successful careers in communications management in Canada. It was a master class in how to bring communications to the top strategic decision-making tables in the postsecondary education sector.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT

King's College

Our third speaker was Alex Sévigny, PhD, APR, FCPRS who gave a level-setting presentation on how AI is affecting the communications profession and how to leverage AI to build a gain greater strategic influence in your organization as a communications manager or consultant.

Our fourth and final speaker was Jeff Preston, PhD, who spoke at Western University on building greater access in public relations and communications – a growing area of practice as our society ages and becomes more inclusive of different ways of being in the world.

The first three talks of the year were held in beautiful L.R. Wilson Hall at McMaster University and were each followed by a social at the university's historic Phoenix Crafthouse and Grill, where speakers and attendees got to continue the conversation in more casual surroundings over refreshments.

Alex Sevigny, PhD, APR, FCPRS
Chair, Professional Development



Alex Sévigny, PhD, APR, FCPRS





EVENTS REPORT

The Power House, Stoney Creek

The Events Team collaborated across three to four portfolios to deliver high-quality programming for members while gaining valuable insight into the organization's governance structure and operating style. Strong registration across events demonstrated the society's strong positioning and relevance among PR and communications professionals.

In addition, the establishment of the Events Committee, comprised of Niagara College PR students - strengthened our collaboration with Niagara College, expanded students' understanding of CPRS and gain valuable work experience.

Over the past year, CPRS Hamilton delivered a strong slate of events that enhanced member engagement and strengthened external partnerships. Programming included two socials (including our upcoming Pinnacles award night), in-person sessions featuring guest speakers and panel discussions on topics such as artificial intelligence, adaptive strategy, leadership development, the evolving media landscape, and accessibility.

A key milestone this year was the establishment of the Events Committee with Niagara College PR students Karolina Odrzywolski and Jade Cappadocio. This partnership further strengthened our collaboration with Niagara College and created meaningful opportunities for students to engage with CPRS and gain greater insight into the public relations profession.

Thank you to everyone who supported, led, and attended our events. We look forward to bringing many more exciting opportunities in the coming calendar year and continuing to connect with all of YOU — the people who make the CPRS Hamilton chapter so valued and vibrant!

Bhriugu Bagga
Chair, Events

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Grand River

In 2025, we welcomed five new board members to CPRS Hamilton, all while adapting to a transition in our executive leadership. Amid these changes, we maintained effective collaboration and embraced initiatives aimed at enhancing efficiency and continuity as we progress. One notable initiative introduced during board meetings is a rotating land acknowledgment, which highlights the various treaties recognized across southwestern Ontario by featuring our board members from different regions. We eagerly anticipate continuing this practice and fostering meaningful reflection on our personal journeys toward Truth and Reconciliation.

Shawn McKillop, APR
Secretary



CPRS Hamilton Board of Directors at the 2025 Pinnacle Awards

SPONSORSHIP & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Windsor, Ontario

Sponsorship and Business Development

This year, our Sponsorship and Business Development team has enhanced our offerings and outreach, solidifying industry connections through initiatives like the Lions Lair Communications training with Innovation Factory in Burlington. Our revamped sponsorship package and communication strategies have effectively engaged our partners, fostering key relationships and securing essential sponsorships.

Our Platinum Sponsorship with the McMaster University Master of Communications Management program is particularly invaluable, allowing us to provide enriching professional development opportunities and connect with their engaged alumni network.

For the 2025-26 period, we successfully generated \$1,000 in sponsorship and event revenue, which will support improved programming and strengthen our partnership with the MCM program. We are actively seeking new professional development partnerships to diversify our revenue streams.

This year has showcased dynamic engagement and strengthened industry connections, further enhanced by our robust relationship with the MCM program. We are eager to build on this momentum as we move into 2026-2027.

Naomi Fox

Chair, Sponsorship and Business Development





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ANNUAL REPORT

www.cprshamilton.ca

info@cprshamilton.ca

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