

## **APSA President's Report 2020 – David Agosti**

In my president's report from last year, I talked about how new everyone was to APSA. It was the completion of my first year as president, the first year for many board members, and the first year for many of our APSA staff. I talked about my pride in how we'd improved communications, new insights and challenges in our work environment, and put out a call for more volunteers for our organization.

We were starting to build momentum, and myself, the board, and the APSA staff were excited to keep that momentum going and then...

This five-letter word started appearing in the media.

### **COVID**

I have reached COVID exhaustion. Personal life, work-life, things in-between. I'm a single parent (as some of you are), I have aged parents, I have friends with compromised immune systems, I have staff with compromised immune systems, I have a budget that is completely shot... I could go on and on.

That pride I mentioned in 2019 about how we have become more transparent and more communicative? I look back on 2020 with an even greater sense of pride in how APSA members have responded to the pandemic.

Many APSA members still have their regular duties PLUS new COVID duties PLUS have been asked to "finally get to that project on the side of your desk" — and somehow, you managed.

Many APSA members have budgetary responsibilities, and during COVID, that budget has disappeared — and somehow, you managed.

For many of you, COVID has brought challenges outside of work: family challenges, health challenges, emotional challenges, an almost endless list — and somehow, you managed.

APSA had to change during COVID, and I think we were able to, in part because of the work we did last year on communication. We were able to clarify some of the [COVID communications](#) coming out of the University and amplify supports like the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#). As the pandemic continued, I had many [president's messages](#) on the topic, including things like tips on working from home. APSA was able to continue with some, but not all, of our educational and professional development offerings. We were able to get out to all three campuses to offer people APSA branded face masks (contact [apsacomm@sfu.ca](mailto:apsacomm@sfu.ca) if you didn't get one).

What COVID didn't change was APSA's role in advocating for, and negotiating for our members. In fact, COVID may have amplified these issues.

### **Employment Standards Act Grievance & Contract Negotiations**

Approximately 18 months ago, we filed a grievance on behalf of a couple of APSA members. These members were required to work significant extra hours without any sort of compensation: monetary or time-in-lieu. This was not a small amount of time — it averaged out to something like an extra 25 days a year of "free" work for the University. Furthermore, they weren't able to be "self-directing" or have "discretion about the time and location of work performed" as our conditions of employment state.

Approximately 4 months ago, that grievance was resolved, and three things happened:

1. We "won" the grievance: The University acknowledged that what they were doing was wrong, and the employees were compensated.
2. Both APSA and the University came to realize that parts of AD10.13 were contrary to the Employment Standards Act - they were illegal.
3. The University introduced immediate temporary changes to comply with the law. HOWEVER, permanent changes would need to be negotiated with APSA (since this is part of our "contract").

APSA's goals are as follows:

1. Ensure our members receive proper compensation for their work (whether in time, money, etc.)
2. Solidify what our agreement currently says about self-direction, discretion, and flexibility.
3. Do #1 and #2 while staying in compliance with the Employment Standards Act.

Since this all involves the AD10 policies, which form our conditions of employment, we felt the best way to do this was through bargaining.

And then the University refused to bargain with us.

In March, when the COVID pandemic shutdowns began, APSA had yet to commence bargaining with the University. The other employee groups had started (some had completed), and it just turned out that this time around, APSA was the last to start.

We approached the University about an "informal COVID" bargaining process, but at the end of the day, were unable to reach an agreement through that process — largely because what we were offered was less than what the University offered other employee groups. We then "filed the paperwork" to begin the formal bargaining process, and the University refused, so we are pursuing that through arbitration. I haven't gone into detail because the [Salary and Benefits Committee](#) has kept all of us up-to-speed through their communications.

## **Moving Forward**

As much as the Employment Standards Act grievance and bargaining represent contentious items between APSA and the University, we continue to look for collaborative ways to work with the University to promote the interests of APSA members.

We still often need to remind the University, and sometimes others, that we are neither a union nor a "branch" of the University. We are [a member-driven Professional Association](#) registered as a Society with the responsibility to Advocate, Negotiate, and Educate on behalf of our membership.

Negotiation (bargaining) on behalf of all members continues, as mentioned above. If you have advocacy needs, please contact the APSA office.

On the education front, COVID has greatly impacted our ability to offer professional development, networking/social events, etc. In the coming year, as COVID hopefully winds down, one of our goals is to increase and revitalize our educational offerings.

I mentioned at the beginning of this report our improvements in communication. To be more specific, these improvements have been in *communicating out* to APSA members. I think everyone now has a better sense of who APSA is and what APSA does.

For the coming year, I hope we can build on that by encouraging you to *communicate* to the APSA office — especially on the education/professional development piece. As a member-driven organization, I encourage you to tell us what you'd like to see in terms of education, professional development, networking, etc.

We can all see that 2021 will continue the trend of change when it comes to APSA. We look to bargain a new contract. We look forward to the end of COVID, but acknowledge that it will likely have created permanent change in our workplace. And we look to the membership to continue to communicate with us and guide us in what they'd like to see in their Professional Association.