



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Co-President's Report

The CPRS Toronto annual general meeting is our chance to look back at the past year's wins, take stock of where we stand, and make sure we're still delivering real value for our members.

As CPRS Toronto Co-Presidents for the 2025-2026 year, we are honoured to present to you this year's Presidents' Report. It comes as public relations in this country continues to be at cross-roads and at a time when our society is more important than ever.

In the last year, more post-secondary PR programs shuttered across southern Ontario and more of our dedicated educators have left the teaching profession. The pipeline for new public relations professionals has been devastated and this will have major repercussions for our industry moving forward.

At the same time, AI has completely changed how communicators work. Brands are reducing coordinator positions and using automated AI programs to pull media lists, write press releases and develop campaigns. Yet, without these junior positions—where we get our hands dirty and learn the basics of public relations— we can't expect new professionals to develop into strong, fully rounded professionals.

With this backdrop, CPRS Toronto has worked to develop programs that better serve our members and ensure their continued professional development.

Thank you to all our Board for their important and tireless work throughout the year. Matthew Celestial continued to oversee our finances as treasurer and Gwen McGuire served as secretary and was responsible for coordinating the AGM and the nominations for next year's board. Professional Development Chair, Bunmi Adeoye, and her committee developed events to help our members grow their skill set. Board operations chair, Caroline De Silva, ensured our team ran smoothly while membership chair, Calissa Busby, reached out to and engaged with our new and current members to ensure they were getting the most out of their membership. Sponsorship chair, Nela Drury, helped secure sponsors for our events while corporate community chair, Chantel Cassar, continued liaising with agencies to ensure we had mutually beneficial relationships with the biggest players in our industry. Communications chair, Samiha Fariha, and her team also oversaw our communications and social media efforts.

We want to say an extra thank you to Sarah Louise Gardiner for her tireless, but exciting work in overseeing the judging of all your ACE Awards submissions. The awards could not have happened without her work and that of Brittany Bell and Matthew Celestial, who helped organize the magical event.

This year we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the ACE Awards and we not only honoured our industry's best, but we also tipped a cowboy hat to our Canadian heritage. Thanks to everyone who dressed in the Canadiana theme.

Of course, we also want to thank Lois Marsh, the backbone of CPRS Toronto. On behalf of the Board and our members, thank you for everything you do to keep this organization running. Your unwavering commitment to CPRS Toronto and our members is inspiring.

We are excited to see where this next year will take us. We are confident that we will have another amazing board that will work to support and uplift our members and our industry. But for CPRS Toronto to thrive, it takes more than a board. It takes each of our members to be committed to the sustainability and growth of our profession. We urge you to volunteer with us, attend our events, and communicate with us about how we can be even better.

In the pages that follow, you will find a comprehensive overview of our accomplishments as well as challenges. I encourage you to review the report and please don't hesitate to reach out with questions or suggestions.

Thank you for your ongoing support of CPRS Toronto.

Warm regards,

Erin Griffin and Andrea Chrysanthou, APR
Co-Presidents

Treasurer's Report

For the 2026 Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) Toronto Chapter, I present a summary of our financial performance, including the unaudited financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and a comparison to the previous fiscal year. Please note that these financial results are unaudited and remain subject to final audit adjustments. Any material changes arising from the audit process will be presented to the Board and members as part of the audited financial statements at the next board meeting.

2026 Unaudited Financial Report (Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026)

As of June 30, 2026, CPRS Toronto is reporting an unaudited net loss of \$6,080.53, compared to a net loss of \$3,416.73 in FY2025. While this represents a year-over-year increase in our operating loss, it reflects broader challenges impacting not only our chapter, but professional associations and the communications industry more broadly. Despite these headwinds, our chapter remains in a stable financial position with over \$128,000 in total assets, including approximately \$64,000 in cash and cash equivalents and nearly \$60,000 in long-term investments, providing a solid foundation as we continue investing in programming and member value.

Financial Highlights

Notable achievements this fiscal year include:

- The ACE Awards continued to be the chapter's largest source of revenue, generating \$106,963.20, while expenses were carefully managed at

\$76,446.43, allowing the event to remain our most significant contributor to annual revenue.

- National membership revenue totalled \$12,556.38, demonstrating the continued importance of retaining and growing our membership base.
- Sponsorship revenue totalled \$7,000, continuing a trend we have seen over the past several years as organizations reduce discretionary marketing and sponsorship budgets amid ongoing economic uncertainty.
- The chapter maintained disciplined oversight of administrative expenses while continuing to invest in governance, member services and chapter operations.

Comparing FY2026 to FY2025

While our financial position remains healthy from a balance sheet perspective, the comparison between FY2025 and FY2026 reinforces several important trends.

First, sponsorship continues to be one of our greatest challenges. Across the communications industry, many organizations have reduced sponsorship spending, making it increasingly difficult for professional associations like ours to secure long-term corporate partners.

Second, membership growth remains critical. Like many associations, CPRS continues to compete for professionals' time, attention and professional development budgets. Additionally, continued uncertainty surrounding post-secondary public relations programs presents an ongoing challenge to attracting and retaining student members, who represent the future pipeline of our profession.

Finally, as the communications profession continues to evolve rapidly with artificial intelligence, shifting media landscapes and changing business priorities, there has never been a greater need for CPRS Toronto to provide meaningful value through education, networking and advocacy.

Looking Ahead

As we enter the 2026–2027 fiscal year, the Board remains committed to strengthening the long-term financial sustainability of CPRS Toronto. Our priorities include:

- Growing both professional and student membership by clearly demonstrating the value of belonging to Canada's leading professional communications community.
- Expanding professional development programming that equips members with practical skills to navigate an increasingly complex communications landscape.
- Increasing social and networking opportunities that foster meaningful connections and strengthen our local communications community.
- Renewing sponsorship strategies by developing more compelling partnership opportunities that align with the evolving priorities of corporate partners.
- Continuing to champion the value, credibility and strategic importance of the public relations profession at a time when trusted communications leadership has never been more essential.

While the financial environment remains challenging, I remain focused on building a sustainable future for our chapter with our outgoing and incoming board. CPRS Toronto has always been powered by passionate volunteers, dedicated members and a shared commitment to advancing our profession. By continuing to invest in our

community and demonstrating the value of professional communications, I am confident we can continue building a stronger and more sustainable chapter.

Acknowledgements

Serving as Treasurer continues to be an honour, and I would like to sincerely thank our Board of Directors for their dedication, leadership and countless volunteer hours throughout the year.

Whether organizing professional development events, mentoring emerging practitioners, supporting our members, planning the ACE Awards or helping guide the strategic direction of the chapter, every member of this Board has contributed to our success.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to our Co-Presidents, Andrea and Erin, and Secretariat, Lois, whose unwavering commitment, institutional knowledge and day-to-day support continue to be invaluable to CPRS Toronto. Lois' dedication keeps our chapter running smoothly and provides tremendous support to every member of the Board. Finally, thank you to our members, volunteers, sponsors and partners. Your continued support enables CPRS Toronto to fulfill its mission of advancing the communications profession and supporting practitioners at every stage of their careers.

Matthew Celestial
Treasurer

ACE Awards Committee Report

The 2026 ACE Awards enjoyed another successful year as the marquee event for CPRS Toronto and the Toronto PR community.

The event showcased a total of 156 entries, which is similar to 2025 (158). These entries were evaluated by a panel of 29 experienced communications professionals who we want to thank again for volunteering their time to help.

Among the entries, the winners included:

42 Gold
47 Silver
41 Bronze

In addition to the main awards, there were three leadership awards evaluated and announced by the CPRS Toronto Executive Team. Of those, Samiha Fariha received the prestigious Lois Marsh Award for his outstanding contribution to the PR community.

The event featured the theme "Canadiana," which was creatively integrated into our narrative, marketing materials, and décor, adding a vibrant touch to the occasion.

This year's ceremony was held at The Carlu and attracted an audience of

245 attendees. This is a 30% decrease from the previous year but consistent with 2024. The Canadian Press served as the Exclusive Photography Sponsor, capturing memories from the evening. Other sponsors included National Payroll Institute, Craft Public Relations and FitzRoy. There were also 14 dedicated volunteers who contributed to the event's success.

Despite fewer attendees, net profit from the event was relatively flat compared to 2025, declining only 1.2 percent. This is a result of a similar number of submissions. The drop in attendees has a minimal impact on profit as the cost of food is a significant percentage of the cost of a ticket.

The Best in Show award was presented to Chevrolet Canada and Weber Shandwick. Meanwhile, the Best Creative Award was awarded to Edery & Lord Communications/Target/Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism's 'Hello Humpback' and White Ribbon/Narrative XPR's 'My Friend Max Hate'.

A press release announcing the winners of each category was issued with the support of Business Wire on May 1.

Sarah Louise Gardiner
ACE Awards Committee Chair

Board Operations Report

Throughout the year, I supported the Board by providing operational guidance and governance oversight to help ensure the smooth functioning of the organization. I served as a resource to committee members and Board colleagues, offering counsel and strategic input on operational and membership and people-related matters as they arose.

Key contributions included:

- Providing guidance and support to committee leads to help address operational questions and challenges.
- Advising the Board on governance and membership matters, contributing to informed decision-making.
- Supporting collaboration across committees by remaining available to assist where needed and helping maintain continuity throughout the year.
- Acting as a sounding board on emerging issues to ensure the Board remained responsive to member and organizational needs.

While much of the role involved ongoing governance support rather than major initiatives, the focus remained on strengthening Board effectiveness and providing timely guidance to support CPRS Toronto's strategic priorities.

Caroline De Silva
Board Operations Chair

Communications and Marketing Report

The Chair for Communications and Marketing is responsible for all external-facing marketing and communications to the CPRS Toronto membership base, including the organization's website, e-newsletter and social media platforms, while supporting member engagement, professional development and chapter visibility.

PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

- Conceptualizing content for CPRS Toronto's social media channels.
- Proactive community management across CPRS Toronto's social media channels to increase visibility, engagement and awareness of the chapter.
- Providing promotional support through social media content for CPRS Toronto events and initiatives.
- Interviewing and drafting content profiling CPRS Toronto corporate members as part of the monthly In Conversation With blog series.
- Interviewing and drafting content profiling CPRS Toronto members as part of the monthly Member Spotlight series.
- Encouraging member-generated thought leadership by promoting guest blog contributions and developing contributor guidelines for the CPRS Toronto blog.
- Providing ad-hoc editorial and content support, as needed.
- Responding to incoming queries regarding CPRS Toronto, membership and upcoming events from members of the GTA communications community.
- Assembling and coordinating the monthly CPRS Toronto e-newsletter by collecting updates across board portfolios and managing distribution.

KEY METRICS

- Increased member participation in the CPRS Toronto blog by launching an ongoing call for guest writers through social media and e-newsletters distributed to more than 1,300 members, while developing formal contribution guidelines to support the submission process.
- Published member-contributed blog articles covering topics including artificial intelligence, stakeholder engagement, environmental communications and career development, while continuing the monthly In Conversation With and Member Spotlight series to showcase communications leaders and members across the CPRS Toronto community.
- Instagram generated 25,743 views, 393 interactions, 946 profile visits and 21 net new followers between April 23 and July 21. The top-performing posts featured Stephanie Lasica in the July In Conversation With series, Marya Kalra's blog on the role of AI in communications and the July Member Spotlight featuring Josh Cobden.
- LinkedIn generated 254,991 impressions, 2,254 reactions, 140 comments and 58 reposts between July 22, 2025 and July 21, 2026. The page also welcomed 20 net new followers, bringing the total community to 7,625 followers. Top-performing posts included the
- Guest Writer recruitment post, Job Action Day post and Global James Bond Day post.

Samiha Fariha
Communications and Marketing Chair

Corporate Community Report

This year, my focus was on strengthening CPRS Toronto's corporate membership community by growing membership, increasing member value, and building stronger relationships between CPRS Toronto, its corporate members, and CPRS National.

I'm pleased to report that CPRS Toronto now has **13 corporate members**, representing a growing network of agencies and corporate communications teams. Throughout the year, I focused on engaging prospective members while also identifying opportunities to improve the overall experience for existing corporate members or spotlight the CPRS members within those organizations. To support this, corporate members were featured through our **Member Spotlight** or "**In Conversation With**" campaign, providing additional visibility for their organizations while celebrating the expertise and work happening across our membership community.

As both Corporate Community Chair and a corporate member through *Category Communications*, I was also proud to support two of CPRS Toronto's flagship student initiatives by hosting **PR Sparks** and **Passport to PR**. These experiences gave students valuable exposure to agency life while creating meaningful opportunities for corporate members to connect with and inspire the next generation of communications professionals.

Another continued focus this year was collaborating with **CPRS National** to improve the employee group membership experience and making it a more seamless sign up experience.

Key Learnings & Recommendations:

As this portfolio continues to evolve, I believe there are several opportunities for the next Corporate Community Chair to build upon:

- **Continue partnering closely with CPRS National** to simplify the corporate membership experience by introducing online registration, credit card payment options, and auto-renew functionality.
- **Develop a stronger year-round value proposition** for corporate members through exclusive benefits, recognition opportunities, leadership programming, and member-exclusive resources.
- **Create a structured onboarding and renewal program** so every corporate member receives a consistent experience from the time they join through renewal.
- **Improve reporting and data visibility** to better understand corporate membership growth, retention, renewals, and regional trends.
- **Continue integrating corporate members into student programming**, such as Passport to PR and PR Sparks, which has proven to be a valuable benefit for both members and students while strengthening CPRS Toronto's talent pipeline.
- **Build additional opportunities to showcase corporate members** throughout the year through spotlights, case studies, speaking opportunities, and thought leadership initiatives.

I believe the greatest opportunity moving forward is to continue transforming corporate membership from simply a membership category into an engaged community that delivers tangible value throughout the year.

It has been a privilege serving as CPRS Toronto's Corporate Community Chair over the past two years, and I'm excited to see the continued growth of this portfolio in the years ahead.

Chantel Cassar
Corporate Community Chair

Membership Committee Report

From July 2025 to present, CPRS Toronto chapter welcomed:

- 48 National Members
- 29 National Student Members
- 27 Toronto Student Members

For the July 2025 – June 2026 fiscal year, we saw a total of 104 new memberships, which is a great increase from the 86 memberships recorded the previous year. This growth reflects continued interest in the value that CPRS Toronto provides to both communications professionals and students.

Looking ahead to 2026–2027, there is an opportunity to build on this by increasing awareness of membership benefits throughout the year rather than focusing around key events. Strengthening relationships with post-secondary PR programs at Humber College through classroom visits, networking events, and consistent engagement will help maintain visibility and encourage more students to join the organization early in their academic journey.

A key initiative to consider is introducing a student member event incentive. Student members could receive complimentary admission (or a minimum of \$5 registration fee) to CPRS Toronto student events, while non-members would pay a standard registration fee of \$20–\$25 for events. This approach would create more of a benefit to becoming a member, encourage event attendance, and provide students with ongoing opportunities to network with industry professionals.

Additionally, a "Join Today" option could be incorporated into events allowing non-members to purchase a membership. This creates a seamless pathway from event attendee to active member.

Calissa Busby
Membership Chair

Sponsorship Committee Report – 2026

As the Sponsorship Chair in my first year on the Board, my primary focus was to strengthen CPRS Toronto's sponsorship program by refreshing our sponsorship materials, expanding our network of prospective partners, and supporting sponsorship efforts for the Society's flagship events.

To begin this work, I led a comprehensive update of the sponsorship deck to better reflect CPRS Toronto's membership, programming, and partnership opportunities. I also expanded and organized our sponsor contact lists, creating a stronger foundation for future outreach and equipping the incoming Sponsorship Chair with an enhanced pipeline of prospective partners.

As the year progressed, Board capacity changes resulted in fewer networking events and professional development programming than originally planned. With a reduced calendar of sponsorship opportunities, the committee focused its efforts on supporting the ACE Awards while investing in sponsorship resources and relationship-building that will benefit future Boards.

With sponsorship efforts centred on the 30th Annual ACE Awards, we were proud to secure the National Payroll Institute as our Gold Sponsor, alongside Craft Public Relations and The Fitzroy, with The Canadian Press serving as our Exclusive Photography Sponsor. We are grateful to these organizations for their support in helping celebrate excellence within Toronto's communications community.

Looking ahead, I recommend continuing to expand the sponsorship prospect database, engaging partners well in advance of major events, and aligning sponsorship outreach with a consistent schedule of networking and professional development programming. A more robust year-round events calendar will provide greater value for sponsors and create opportunities to build sustainable, long-term partnerships.

As I conclude my term on the Board, I will ensure that updated sponsorship materials, sponsor contacts, and relationship notes are documented to support a smooth transition for the incoming Sponsorship Chair and continued momentum in the year ahead.

Nela Gojevic
Sponsorship Chair

Student Steering Committee Report

The CPRS Toronto Student Steering Committee (SSC) is a team devoted to creating professional development opportunities for the public relations practitioners of tomorrow in the Greater Toronto Area.

With the goal of addressing topics that aren't discussed enough in classrooms, the committee regularly shared informative, relevant, and engaging content across all of its platforms to educate audiences about job search best practices, industry trends, networking, events, and more.

The 2025–2026 year was led by Lucy Luc. Members of the team came from a variety of post-secondary institutions, including York University, Conestoga College, and Humber Polytechnic. The committee worked hard throughout the year to deliver four major events, along with comprehensive and educational content across social platforms, to attract new student members, drive interest in CPRS Toronto events, and contribute financially to the CPRS Toronto chapter.

Events:

Passport to PR Session 1 – January 23

The event kicked off with visits to top-tier agencies, giving students the opportunity to engage in hands-on workshops tailored to each agency's area of expertise. Attendees gained invaluable insights into the operations of these esteemed agencies while networking directly with industry professionals.

Delivery method: In-person

Agenda: 30-45 mins for each presentation - 20 minutes of office tour - MORE TIME FOR NETWORKING, buffer in between

Participating Agencies:

Strategic Objectives: Strategic Objectives's session will focus on Experiential and Event-Based PR

Golin: Golin's agenda will focus on Research, Data & Analytics in PR

Crestview Strategy: Crestview Strategy's agenda will focus on Creative Design Marketing Campaigns for NFPs

Talk Shop: Talk Shop's agenda will focus on Media Relations in issue and crisis management

PR Sparks – Wednesday, February 18

PR Sparks focused on envisioning and navigating the future of public relations. This event was designed to inspire students and equip them with practical tools and insights to guide their career paths. With presentations, workshops, and networking sessions led by industry leaders, attendees gained knowledge and built connections to help them succeed in the PR field.

Delivery method: In-person

Event name and slogan: PR Sparks: Lighting the Way to Your PR Future!

Participating Agencies: Veritas and Category Communications

Passport to PR Session 2 – March 20

Following up on Session 1, this session included visits to top-tier agencies with a focus on client showcases. Students had the chance to learn about real-world

campaigns and client strategies, further enhancing their understanding of the PR industry.

Delivery method: In-person

Participating agencies:

Proof Strategies with TikTok Canada, **APEX** with Walmart, **ChangeMakers** with Meta, CRAFT with Crush and Canada Dry

Career in Focus: Corporate Communications with IKEA and Edelman - April 10

SSC team created this event to give students a real and behind-the-scenes look at what a Communications/Public Relations function can look like within a corporate setting. While many students are familiar with agency life, this experience would help them better understand corporate communications and explore career pathways in-house.

Upcoming:

The SSC team will focus on transitioning and onboarding the next committee, with the goal of having a greater variety of schools join. We also plan to introduce a new edition of Passport to PR in October, allowing students to have more one-on-one networking opportunities with PR professionals. For next year's committee, here are some tips and suggestions to ensure continued success and value for PR students in Toronto:

1. **Develop a comprehensive transition package** to ensure the incoming committee has the confidence, knowledge, and resources needed to continue the committee's work successfully.
2. **Reach out to partners earlier** to secure event dates, speakers, and collaborations, allowing for stronger planning and promotion.
3. **Expand virtual programming.** Building on the success of the Craft Your Excellence Application for the ACE Awards session, introduce more virtual networking and professional development events to make learning and networking opportunities more accessible for students across the Greater Toronto Area.
4. **Strengthen relationships with post-secondary institutions.** Connect with a wider range of communications and public relations faculties to encourage greater representation from diverse schools and increase student involvement.
5. **Promote student leadership and involvement.** Encourage students to take a more active role in planning and executing events. This provides valuable hands-on experience while fostering a stronger sense of ownership, collaboration, and community within the committee.
6. **Increase collaboration within the committee and with industry professionals.** Create more opportunities for team discussions, idea sharing, and mentorship conversations with communications professionals to inspire innovative programming and ensure events reflect students' evolving needs.

By implementing these strategies, the committee can ensure that PR students in Toronto receive comprehensive support and opportunities to thrive in their academic and professional journeys.

Lucy Luc
Student Steering Committee President