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# FRESH focus



AN IPAC EDMONTON NEWSLETTER FOR NEW AND ASPIRING PUBLIC SERVANTS

## The Year Ahead

*What's planned for the 2008/09 IPAC Edmonton Program? Read on for all the exciting details!*

*Caroline Thomson*

The 2008/09 IPAC Edmonton Region Program was launched on Friday, October 3rd with an elegant wine and cheese reception at Government House. The event was well attended by public servants and academics from Edmonton, with a particularly strong showing from the City of Edmonton's new block membership.

IPAC Edmonton Region Chair, Michele Kirchner, spoke about the exciting program that is envisioned for this year, including a full slate of New Public Servant (NPS) events. Coming before Christmas is an NPS community of practice panel, a homelessness discussion and book review, an NPS brown bag lunch session on leadership and ethics, a luncheon showcasing knowledge networks available in Edmonton, the Lt. Governor's Award, and, of course, the ever popular Christmas Social.

Other events being planned for the new year include a book colloquium, a one-day workshop for new public servants on leadership and career management, a session on how much public consultation is too much and the annual NPS Recognition Dinner.

In addition to learning about the program, guests were treated to tours of Government House, where they learned that the main floor was recently restored for the Queen's Visit in 2005.

It now features a number of original pieces that the historical foundation has tracked down since all the house's contents were sold off after the last Lt. Governor left in 1938. The third floor consists mainly of the Alberta Room, where Caucus meets roughly once a week while the Legislature is in session. The reception was hosted on the second floor, which opens onto a balcony and allowed guests to enjoy the lovely weather and view over the grounds and the river valley.

For more information on this year's program, check the IPAC website, future issues of this newsletter and future emails.



For more information on historic Government House check out this great website:  
[www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/library/lt-gov/house.htm](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/library/lt-gov/house.htm)



Would you like to recognize an outstanding new public servant in your organization? Information is coming this fall for the first IPAC New Public Servants Award.



Edmonton Region

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Paige Szabo

I first joined the Edmonton Region's IPAC New Public Servants Committee in 2005, and since that time I have seen the committee grow and develop into an exemplary group that is dedicated to furthering the mission of IPAC by promising excellence in the public service through its programming, awards and communication products.

As we begin a new year of the IPAC New Public Servants Committee, I want to assure you that we are continuing with the full momentum that we left off with last spring. The committee has grown in size over the last few months and we are proud to have members from the provincial, municipal and federal governments.

This year we have endeavored to undertake a number of new initiatives and continue to carry on with past successes. Specifically, we will be launching an award for new public servants, developing a one-day conference entitled, "Row Your Own Boat", and holding new events geared towards new public servants.

*"I find myself part of a group with an impressive array of experience, skill, knowledge and commitment, and I am honoured to serve as their Chair."*

We are also continuing to distribute the **Fresh Focus** newsletter that launched in 2007/08 and, as always, we will be hosting our annual New Public Servants Recognition dinner.

In continuing to work with returning members, and getting to know new ones on the committee in the past few weeks, I find myself part of a group with an impressive array of experience, skill, knowledge and commitment, and I am honoured to serve as their Chair. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the team.

This year's Vice Chair is Mike Caverhill. Staying on as Past Chair is Brandy Cox. Our Communications Coordinators are Corey Tomsons and Elysia Johnson. Filling the role of Treasurer is Jennifer Gleave. Taking on the program are our Program Coordinators - Caroline Thomson, Joanne Sheardown, and Deanne Patsula. Finally, rounding out the team, we have Sarah Garstad, Kathy Chan, Alyssa Mortiz, Julie Kusiek, Erick Ambtman, Carmen Gilmore, and Sarah Monnon all serving as Members-at-Large.

Good teams have breadth and depth of leadership. We certainly have that strength here!



New Public Servants Chair, **Paige Szabo**, tries out an historic prison cell during a tour at this year's national IPAC conference.

I volunteered to take the Chair for the first year only because I felt this was the kind of group who would help me do the job, and already I have felt peoples' acceptance and support. I intend to give back the same loyalty as Chair.

I hope in the coming year everyone who wants to exercise leadership in the areas that are most important to them will take the chance to do so. I see that as my role as Chair – not to dictate, but to facilitate, so we all contribute to the best of our abilities.

We have an exciting opportunity before us, and I look forward to serving the new public servant community over the coming year.

If you have any ideas for the IPAC New Public Servants Committee, I would love to hear from you. Please drop us a line at: [ipacedmonton\\_nps@hotmail.com](mailto:ipacedmonton_nps@hotmail.com).

# New Friends

## News from the IPAC National Conference - New World, New Society, New Public Administration

Paige Szabo

The theme of the 2008 IPAC Annual Conference held in Québec City was 'New World, New Society, New Public Administration' and between August 24-27 it sought to address key issues in public administration with an eye on the past and a view to the future.

With speakers including Samuel de Champlain (or rather, someone acting as him), former Québec Premier Pierre Marc Johnson, and Donald Kettle, Director of Fels Institute of Government in the U.S., the conference presented attendees with a view of what the world and society look like today, and offered strategies on how the public administration can respond to the 'new world'.

Speakers outlined issues that the public service will face now and in the future. They challenged us to think of one problem that can be solved by one government agency. Increasingly, issues and problems cross over boundaries: both political and administrative.

The role of public administration was discussed to respond to these challenges. Some of the solutions presented were: the need for a more networked, vision-centered leadership in the public service that is shared, collective and collaborative; a more responsive service that creates flexible choices for public; and a re-framing of accountability to reflect a more horizontal administrative structure.

As a new public servant, the thought-provoking lectures allowed me to contemplate how I might begin to embody solutions and respond to a changing society and public service as I move forward in my career.

For me, the best part of the conference was being able to meet other new public servants from across Canada and learn about what they felt were the emerging policy issues and trends.

With the backdrop of the conference being Old Québec City, we enjoyed hospitable receptions and were welcomed to attend one of the numerous events marking the 400 year anniversary of the city. The conference was a truly a memorable experience.

If you would like more information about the sessions offered at this conference, check out the conference website at:

[http://www.ipac.ca/2008/?LEAP\\_Apache=2008](http://www.ipac.ca/2008/?LEAP_Apache=2008).

Also, plan to attend next year's conference, which will be held August 23 to 26, 2009, in Fredericton, New Brunswick where the theme will be "**Turnarounds**."

**"For me, the best part of the conference was being able to meet other new public servants from across Canada."**

Making new friends - Past Chair, **Brandy Cox** (right) and Program Coordinator, **Caroline Thomson** (centre right), at a Quebec City discoteque with new public servants from the Government of Manitoba

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Seeing the sites of Old Quebec - **Brandy Cox** at la Porte St Jean.



**Caroline Thomson** (left) and **Paige Szabo** (right) enjoying la petit déjeuner a la ville de Quebec!



# Theresa Williams

*Sarah Garstad*

Theresa Williams began her career in government in the 1980's, and since then, her career has moved in and out of the public sector. In her work, she has been actively involved in social planning, adult education, community engagement and health promotion by working with stakeholders in public consultation, and on education, development, and policy. Her current position as Director, Workforce Research and Planning for Alberta Health and Wellness poses many interesting and challenging opportunities allowing her to utilize her past experience and education to the fullest.

In addition to her work with the government, Theresa is working toward her PhD, and has published articles and presented at conferences adding to her already rich educational background. She has completed three degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, a Bachelor of Education in Adult Education and a Masters Degree in Adult Education. All of her degrees have built on community engagement, community development, and ethics.

When asked how her research has influenced her work in the public service on a daily basis, Theresa says, "My research in ethics is an integral part of who I am – I can't divide the two. I try very hard to practice what I speak. This means I have high expectations of others. Ethics isn't easy -not when it comes down to some of the day to day challenges we all have in our very busy careers, but I just can't imagine living my life any other way. I don't want to sound sanctimonious about it; I just know that for me, ethics, leadership and day-to-day work need to be in sync."

In her rare spare time, Theresa is learning a second language by listening to language CDs in her car on the way to work! As a new member of IPAC, she enjoys reading IPAC journal publications and is looking forward to attending a future conference.

With respect to changes she has observed in the public service during the course of her career, Theresa enjoys seeing the range of generations found in the public sector. She enjoys working with colleagues in their 20's, 30's, 40's and beyond because she feels it's crucial for ensuring representation from all of society. "It brings such strengths, but it also challenges," Theresa relays. "I am impressed by colleagues who are dedicated to serving the public in a booming economy where individuals have employment choice. It's always interesting to see who chooses to work in the public sector, and why."

About the challenges the public service will need to respond to in the future, Theresa thinks, "We face tremendous challenges with public engagement and ensuring the public service demonstrates leadership and ethics...it becomes more challenging in an era of turbo capitalism- where the pace of development and change is happening at a tremendous rate and societal and individual needs are not always at the forefront of this change. Balance is crucial."

Theresa attributes her success in government from the association with some talented and dedicated people she has met along the way. She also believes the willingness to learn and to challenge herself to not lose sight of the people and things in her life that are most important to her has guided her career. Her advice for new public servants is to find work where you feel you can make a valuable contribution, keep learning, and don't shy away from opportunities that will challenge you.

## SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE

*This regular feature profiles two public servants - one new professional and one senior public servant. Learn about exciting public sector careers and opportunities!*



## Mike Ponting

*Caroline Thomson*

Mike Ponting is currently enjoying the fast-paced environment of Executive Council on a secondment as a policy analyst. We talked to him about his education, career goals and the public service.

I have a BA in Political Science from the University of Calgary, and an MA in the same field from the University of Alberta. During my undergraduate studies, I did cooperative education work terms with the Canada West Foundation, Canadian Heritage, and the former Department of Human Resources Development Canada. Immediately after finishing school, a professor of mine helped me get a job in the Minister's Office of the then-Deputy Prime Minister, Anne McLellan. I worked there for just over a year and it was an incredible and invaluable

experience in terms of learning to work in a strategic environment.

I guess I have always been attracted to the concept of working in the public sector, and have always been ideologically hesitant to work in the for-profit sector. I've also always wanted to work in policy, close to decision makers (every poli-sci nerd's dream). Since moving to Edmonton, I've tended to focus on the Government of Alberta (GoA) because there are, obviously, the most policy positions in this government.

*Continues on next page....*

I started with the GoA in March 2006 in the policy shop at the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) at Alberta Justice and was there for a year before accepting a two-year secondment to Executive Council.

I saw the secondment posted on the GoA jobsite, applied and was offered the job and my Executive Director at MEP was kind enough to let me go, I think because he recognized the unique opportunity to work in a more broad policy environment.

The best part of working at Executive Council is getting to work on policy issues from many departments. I get to work on new policy issues all the time, rather than working on the same issues, day in and day out. I've found some of the work I've done on Aboriginals in Alberta and seniors' issues particularly interesting.

In terms of my career, I'm not exactly sure where I'll go. After being able to dabble in lots of issues in this job, I'm not sure how I'm going to fare when I go back to a real line ministry job. I'd like to work in a position that enables me to develop my leadership skills, maybe through leading a team or project. I'd also like to get back to working for the federal government one day, because I find the scope and magnitude of federal issues to be really interesting.

I've found my limited involvement in IPAC to be really helpful and interesting, both from a professional development perspective (seminars, networking, etc.) and from a public service development perspective. Public service isn't held in the same esteem that it used to be, but I really believe in the value of spending your career serving society, and IPAC's work helps develop Canadian public servants' abilities in a way that I think is important. It sounds very poli-sci nerd to say that, but I see real value in that.

Attend the NPS Brown Bagger event on November 6<sup>th</sup> to learn more about the work Theresia has done in the area of ethics. She will be speaking about ethics and leadership and how we in the public sector are well placed to encourage ethical leadership in society and to get more advice from successful new public servants like Mike join us for our NPS Community of Practice Panel on October 29, 2008.

*This regular feature brings you useful links to help you with your job. This newsletter, we are featuring IPAC Resources.*

*Joanne Sheardown and Caroline Thomson*

**IPAC Homepage** [www.ipac.ca](http://www.ipac.ca)

This website of the IPAC national group is an excellent resource whether you're new to public service or an experienced public servant. The website provides information on upcoming events, employment opportunities and an electronic version of the New Public Sector magazine. Exploring it will take you to all of the resources listed in this overview of online resources for public servants.

**IPAC Edmonton** [www.ipacedmonton.ca](http://www.ipacedmonton.ca)

The IPAC Edmonton regional group's website provides information on IPAC events happening in the Edmonton region. You can register online for any of these events. Current and past issues of this newsletter – *Fresh Focus*, which is geared to people with less than five years in the public service – are also available on this site.

**UN Public Administration** [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org)

The IPAC website links to public administration sites such as the United Nations Public Administration (UNPAN) site. UNPAN is a global networking tool that connects relevant international, regional, sub-regional and national institutions worldwide for the promotion of better public administration.

**Facebook** [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

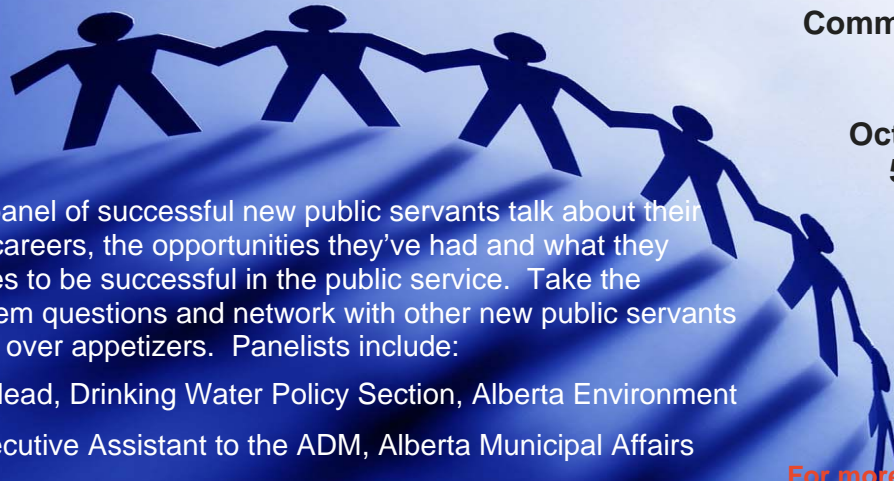
Did you know that IPAC has a Facebook page? You can chat with members of IPAC from across Canada and check out members blogs! It is a great way to discuss ideas and ask questions of other members. Use the IPAC website's link to the page or go directly to Facebook and type IPAC into the search engine.

**Smart Tape** [www.smarttape.ca](http://www.smarttape.ca)

Challenging the old stereotype of public administration bound up in red tape, the SmartTape Centre for Regulatory Innovation, run by the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, provides a window on the leading developments in regulatory practice and the scholarly analysis of those innovations.

**Quantum Governance** <http://quantumgovernance.ca>

Learn about the most innovative and effective practices in citizen engagement, public participation and deliberative democracy from around the world. Get involved in keenly disputed issues in debates over governance, including discussions about the roles of officials and experts in dealing with the public. Coming soon to this website is a guide to using the IPAC Centre for Governance Dialogue.



## New Public Servant Community of Practice Panel

October 29, 2008  
5:00 to 8:30

University of  
Alberta  
Faculty Club

Come listen to a panel of successful new public servants talk about their education and careers, the opportunities they've had and what they believe it takes to be successful in the public service. Take the opportunity to ask them questions and network with other new public servants over appetizers. Panelists include:

**Stephanie Clarke**, Head, Drinking Water Policy Section, Alberta Environment

**Brandy Cox**, Executive Assistant to the ADM, Alberta Municipal Affairs

**Ian Howett**, Acting Director, Strategic Business Planning, City of Edmonton

**Jason Labonte**, Director of Finance, City of St. Albert

Federal Government Representative

For more information, contact  
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# Learning Ladder

In each newsletter we hope to bring you suggestions on courses and conferences that may be of interest to you! This newsletter we are featuring information on **Employee Engagement**

Alyssa Moritz

## What is Employee Engagement?

Employee engagement enables employees to have both opportunities and choices in their work environment. An engaged employee is somebody who is fully involved in and supportive of their work and organization's interests.

## Why is Employee Engagement so important?

Attracting employees is difficult in today's labour market; however, keeping skilled, educated, and intelligent employees is often a greater challenge. With the competitive job market, employers are seeing a mobile job market with an average length of employment of two to three years. If an employee feels that their employer lacks leadership and growth opportunities, they are more likely to leave and seek alternative employment or levels in the organization. These factors lead to higher employee retention and lower turn-around of employees.

## How can I promote employee engagement in my work environment?

We are working in a very diverse multi-generational environment and it is important to understand and appreciate what motivates each generation. Develop engagement plans and activities based upon the expectations and demographic of your employees.

Those **62+ years** are motivated by work, want to be involved, and want to aid younger workers by transferring their knowledge. **Baby boomers** (44-61 years) are focused on self improvement and derive their self identity from work. **Generation X** (31-43 years) seeks security in their job through training opportunities and career development. **Generation Y** (18-30 years) wants to hear continual feedback, not just at their performance review and want their supervisors to teach them rather than dictate to them. They also want clear and concise goals and deadlines.

Create an environment where employees feel valued and understood. As a manager, listen to what your employees are telling you through Employee Satisfaction Surveys as well as casual conversation. Be proactive and create change - let your employees know what you are doing. What about trying an interactive "What is your Personality Type" activity? Try Carolyn Kalil's "True Colors" questionnaire and create opportunities for employees to discuss their personality type with each other. This will help everybody understand and appreciate how people's individuality creates a vibrant and diverse team.

Alyssa had the opportunity to listen to a presentation on employee engagement at the Alberta Call Centre Association Conference, May 2008. Visit <http://www.abccallcentre.com> for information on their 2009 conference and on their brown bag lunch sessions.

