

# CANADIAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY - SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE D'ASTRONOMIE

## Minutes of the fiftieth Annual General Meeting Thursday, June 20, 2019 4:30-5:30 pm EDT Mont-Royal Room, Centre Mont-Royal, Montréal, QC

### Minutes

The Annual General Meeting of CASCA started at 4:30 pm with approximately 80 members present.

#### 1. Adoption of the agenda

- **Motion to adopt the following agenda (Cowan/Heyl): Carried.**

- 1) *Adoption of agenda / Adoption de l'ordre du jour (Secretary/Secrétaire)*
- 2) *Adoption of the minutes of the 2018 AGM / Adoption du procès-verbal de la réunion tenue en 2018 (Secretary/Secrétaire)*
- 3) *Nominations to the Nominating Committee / Nominations auprès du Comité de nomination*
- 4) *President's report / Rapport du Président*
- 5) *Secretary's report / Rapport du Secrétaire*
- 6) *Treasurer's report / Rapport du Trésorier*
  - *Motion to go to e-transfers for dues payments*
- 7) *Election of Auditor / Élection du Vérificateur*
- 8) *Coordinated Graduate School Deadlines / Dates limites coordonnées pour les études supérieures*
- 9) *Selection of scrutineers / Sélection des surveillants d'élection*
- 10) *Results of the election / Résultats des élections (Secretary/Secrétaire)*
- 11) *Committee reports / Rapports des comités*
- 12) *Future CASCA meetings / Prochaines réunions de la CASCA*
- 13) *Other business / Divers*
  - *WESTAR seed funding for education/outreach programs*
- 14) *Adjournment / Levée de l'Assemblée*

#### 2. Adoption of the minutes of the 2018 AGM

- Though available on the CASCA webpage for several months, the Secretary did not circulate by e-mail the draft minutes to the membership prior to this meeting.
- **Motion to table approval of the minutes of the 2018 AGM to next year (Thacker/Cowan): Carried.**

### 3. Nominations to the Nominating Committee

- No nominations were proposed by the membership during the meeting. Instead, Nic Cowan (McGill) and Gary Davis (retired) volunteered to join the Nominating Committee.
- **Motion to accept the offers of volunteers to join the Nominating Committee (Di Francesco/Thacker): Carried.**
- Past President Roberto Abraham will continue to serve as Committee Chair.

### 4. President's Report [Thacker]

- *Coalition Report:* The Coalition for Canadian Astronomy continued to engage Government extensively with four visits to Ottawa over the past year. The key messages delivered were the need for a policy route for major projects and concern over funding for space-based science. In parallel, the aerospace industry's lobbying campaign "Don't Let Go Canada" was itself very successful, resulting in federal funding to CSA for participation in NASA's Lunar Gateway project. Despite the numerous visits, with attention paid to include diverse faculty and students, there is still low awareness by politicians of Canada's successes in astronomy. The summer and the upcoming election in October will impact further short-term engagement with government. In the meantime, the Coalition is developing new ideas of communicating with policy makers.
- *LRP2020:* After considerable effort by the CASCA Board over the past year, the 2020 Long Range Plan process has begun. President Thacker thanked ACURA, CSA, and NSERC for providing funds and NRC for contributions in support of the LRP2020 process. Thacker also expressed his appreciation to LRP2020 Co-Chairs Pauline Barmby (Western) and Bryan Gaensler (Dunlap) and the panel for their participation. Though the LRP2020 process will identify exciting new astronomy projects in which Canada may become involved, Thacker cautioned that any optimism must be balanced by realism.
- *NSERC:* Canadian astronomer participation in NSERC grant panels has been strong, with five members just this past year (Houde (Western), Heinke (Alberta), McConnachie (NRC), Spekkens (RMC), and Thibault (Laval)). Names of possible new panel members have been submitted to NSERC for this year's reviews.
- *IAU:* Thacker thanked Sharon Morsink (Alberta) for stepping up to lead Canada's participation in the IAU's "NameExoWorlds" outreach project that will involve Canadians selecting the name of a newly identified exoplanet.
- *Facilities:* Thacker reported on several Canadian facilities, including
  - *TMT:* Permission for construction has been granted by no start date has been yet announced. The instrumentation plan for TMT is still a major concern.
  - *SKA:* Involvement in this project is challenging from a treaty perspective but Canadian engagement is still moving forward
  - *MSE:* The partnership and interest in MSE has expanded significantly over the past year. The next step includes drafting statements of understanding between potential partners

- *Compute Canada*: A new organization to replace Compute Canada is expected to begin operation in 2022.
- *EDI Issues*: CASCA's Equity and Inclusivity Committee has been particularly active on several issues, including a forthcoming climate survey. Also, they have hoped to capture anonymized demographic information as part of the CASCA membership renewal process, leading to changes in that process this past year. Indeed, such data are required for the Memoranda to Cabinet needed to secure funding for astronomy projects. Regrettably, the amount of data obtained so far has been low and Thacker urged the membership to provide the requested information.
- *EPO Issues*: There were two highly successful WESTAR Lecturer visits this past year, by Stan Metchev (Western) to Igloolik, NU and Christian Marois (NRC) to The Pas, MB. CASCA continued to support the Discover the Universe teacher education initiative, and would like to encourage further initiatives via a new seed-funding stream to support small programs at the level of \$5K/year. Please see the CASCA webpages for more information.
- *New Honorary Member*: Thacker announced that Sidney van den Bergh has been made an Honorary Member of CASCA. Dennis Crabtree read a letter of appreciation for the honour received from Dr. van den Bergh. CASCA now has three Honorary Members.
- *Miscellaneous*: Thacker thanked James Di Francesco (NRC) and Nicole St-Louis (Montréal) for their service as CASCA Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. In addition, he thanked Erik Rosolowsky (Alberta), Samar Safi-Harb (Manitoba), and Kristine Spekkens (RMC) for their service as Directors of the CASCA Board. Thacker then reminded the membership to check out the quarterly CASCA newsletter, e-Cassiopeia. Finally, Thacker apologized to the membership for the recent due payment headaches involving PayPal.

## 5. Secretary's Report [Di Francesco]

- *Election 2019*: After this meeting, James Di Francesco's (NRC) second term as CASCA Secretary will end. In addition, Nicole St-Louis' (Montréal) second term as CASCA Treasurer will end. Finally, the terms of Directors Erik Rosolowsky (Alberta), Samar Safi-Harb (Manitoba), and Kristine Spekkens (RMC) will also end. The Society thanked each of these individuals for their service. The Nominating Committee found candidates for all five positions. By acclamation, **Judith Irwin** (Queen's) and **Lewis Knee** (NRC) will become CASCA's next Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. An election is presently taking place for new Directors. For the three-year positions, those nominated are Étienne Artigau (Montréal), Ivana Damjanov (SMU), and Aaron Sigut (Western). For the one-year position, those nominated are Michael Balogh (Waterloo) and Suresh Sivanandam (Dunlap). The election results will be announced later in the AGM.
- *Memberships*: The CASCA membership numbers are again up significantly this year, from 539 to 575. There are 78 new members, of which 65 are students, which more than offset the loss of 17 members who resigned over the past year and 21 members who are to be expelled at this meeting for non-payment of dues

for two years. Twenty-six members converted from one membership category to another over the past year.

- *Deceased Members:* This past year CASCA lost Charter Member Dr. Ian Halliday, formerly of NRC in Ottawa. This loss was noted at the AGM with a minute of silence.
- *Members' Queries:* A member inquired about whether CASCA memberships could be obtained as part of meeting registration, to streamline the process for new members. The Secretary responded by saying CASCA membership requires evaluation of the suitability of applicants via information provided on the membership form, making it awkward to pair membership application with meeting registration. A member inquired about whether undergraduate students could become members of CASCA. The Secretary responded that the current By-laws do not permit undergraduates to become CASCA members.
- *Further information:* Please see the detailed Secretary's Report posted on the CASCA website.
- **Motion to accept the Secretary's Report (Kirk/McCutcheon): Carried**

#### **6. Treasurer's Report [St-Louis]**

- *Society Finances:* CASCA financial situation remains very good. The operating balance is \$45.3K, very close to the amount predicted a year ago. Income from dues payments was \$55K, about \$7K lower than predicted. Expenditures by CASCA this year, however, were \$96.4K, lower than expected by about \$15K. Expenditures include transfer of the \$16.4K endowment for the Richer medals to the investment account. In addition, the WESTAR Lectureships cost \$12.2K this past year.
- *Dues:* Given CASCA's good financial situation and continuing low inflation, membership dues for the upcoming renewal drive will not increase this year. Dues will be set at:
  - Ordinary: \$163
  - Student/retired: \$66
  - Postdoc/Associate: \$119
  - Joint CAP+CASCA: \$114

After the end of the renewal drive, the dues will increase over by 25%.

- *CASCATrust:* Members generously donated \$2158 to CASCATrust over the past year, an amount similar to last year (\$2090). These funds continue to be used for student/PDF travel to the annual meeting, the Plaskett Medal award and travel to the annual meeting, and prizes for best student presentations at the annual meeting.
- *Investments:* CASCA's investments grew by 4.8% for FY2018-19, slightly less than our target range of 5-7%, but much better than overall market performance. The capital of all endowments has been protected in all cases. The Board will soon adopt guidelines to protect CASCA's investments drafted by Past President Christine Wilson (McMaster) and Treasurer St-Louis.
- *Further information:* Please see the detailed Treasurer's Report posted on the CASCA website.
- **Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report (Joncas/Spencer): Carried.**

## **7. Election of Auditor**

- **Motion to reappoint Wilkinson & Sons as CASCA's auditor (Lovekin/Kirk): Carried.**

## **8. Coordinated Grad School Offer Acceptance Deadlines [Thacker]**

- The CASCA Board has considered issuing a recommendation to Astronomy or Physics Departments at Canadian universities that they institute a coordinated date for the acceptance of first-round graduate school offers. Such a coordinated date would allow a fairer evaluation of offers by prospective graduate students. Thacker presented a proposal for this recommendation to the membership, with the expectation of a motion to adopt it. Some members, however, thought that the proposed date of February 14 was too early given it came before NSERC Graduate Scholarship notifications. A member suggested that an ad hoc committee be struck to find an appropriate date.
- **Motion to table the proposal until a committee could meet (Bell/van der Marel): Carried.**

## **9. Selection of Scrutineers**

- Nic Cowan (McGill) and Jeremy Heyl (UBC) kindly volunteered to serve as scrutineers to oversee the results of the 2010 CASCA election.

## **10. Result of the Election**

- For the open positions of Director (three-year term), **Étienne Artigau** (Montréal) and **Ivana Damjanov** (SMU) were elected.
- For the open position of Director (one-year term), **Suresh Sivanandam** (Dunlap) was elected.
- The Board looks forward to working with its new members, and thanks the Officers rotating off the Board this year for their service.

## **11. Committee Reports [Wilson, on behalf of Thacker]**

- Reports on activities by CASCA's many committees can be found on the CASCA website. Each committee is performing important work for the Society, and members are encouraged to read these reports and contact the committee Chairs as needed. Discussion of the reports at this meeting was omitted for lack of time.

## **12. Future CASCA Meetings**

- CASCA 2020 will be held in Toronto, ON in 25-28 May 2020. Michael de Robertis (York) addressed the membership prior to the AGM to encourage everyone to attend.

## **13. Other Business**

- *WESTAR-based seed funding for new EPO activities*: This item was discussed previously by the President in his Report and was not revisited.

## **14. Adjournment**

- **Motion to adjourn the AGM (Cami/Davis): Carried.**