The year 2014 was another busy one. I am going to take this opportunity to review some of the highlights from the last year.

We have surpassed 7000 members. Our members are working across this province in all sectors. Some of our members are working in very difficult situations. I am so impressed with the social workers I have talked to who are persevering in very challenging circumstances because of their dedication to their clients. It is really important to support our colleagues by continuing to bring attention to these issues. ACSW was invited to participate in the Alberta Government, Human Services Round Table discussions regarding the Child Death Review held in January. Our Registrar and the Manager of Professional Affairs participated in the discussions. We will continue to work with the Ministry on this issue.

Throughout the year we have had several meet and greet sessions on the evening before Council meetings. These sessions provide us with opportunities to meet with politicians, partners and other groups to share information and build networks. The February meeting of Council was held at Mount Royal University in Calgary. The evening before our meeting we held a meet and greet session with Kerry Towle who, at that time, was the Seniors Critic for the Wild Rose Party. We have met with Arusha, several workers with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, area coordinators, social work students from Edmonton, and members of the Next Up leadership program.

In March we celebrated social work week. There was a wide range of activities across the province in recognition of social workers. Area coordinators, working with ACSW staff, did a great job of organizing these events. It is so important that we acknowledge and celebrate the contributions our members are making in their daily work, volunteer commitments, and political activities.

A number of social workers attended the Truth and Reconciliation sessions held in March in Edmonton. Social workers were moved by the stories from resident school survivors. It is very clear that social workers have a role to play in truth telling, reconciliation, and addressing the negative impacts of colonization. This emphasizes the importance of the work of the Indigenous Social Work Committee. This committee has hosted two very successful workshops on the Indigenous Social Work Standards. One workshop in February at Red Crow College on the Kainai Nation and the second one in Edmonton.

In the spring we developed the draft of our 3 year strategic plan. We also worked on revising our vision and mission statements. We opened the process to ACSW members for feedback. From that point we incorporated comments from the membership and finalized the strategic plan. I am very proud that the strategic plan is grounded in the information that was collected during the membership consultation of the previous year. I feel that our strategic plan has been driven by our membership.

One of the key components of the strategic plan is the development of online services. This project will continue to be developed once we have the core project completed. This is incredibly exciting for our organization.

In August three of our Council members attended the New Board Member Training in Seattle Washington with the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). In November Lynn and I attended the ASWB meeting in Boise, Idaho. This gathering celebrated the 35 anniversary of ASWB. Alberta was the first Canadian member. ASWB now includes all the Canadian provinces and 49 states. ASWB presented the draft of Regulatory Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice. With the increasing use of technology I believe that this will be a key document for our consideration.

We were very pleased that the government recognized the need for more social workers and increased the funding to the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. We are hoping that this will lead to more social workers being hired by Alberta Human Services - Child and Family Services. At this time it is estimated that only 40 % of the workers are social workers.

Our continued partnerships with Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, Arusha, Canada Without Poverty, Canadian Council on Social Development, Edmonton Social Planning Council, Friends of Medicare, Greater Edmonton Alliance, Public Interest Alberta and Parkland Institute continue to keep us engaged with advocacy and social justice.

Working with the Parkland Institute and other sponsors we supported research to develop social policy recommendations that will address gender inequality. In November, in partnership with Public Interest Alberta and Edmonton Social Planning Council, the report entitled ‘No Change’ was released. This report identifies that after 25 years of promises it is time to eliminate child poverty. It was released on the 25th anniversary of the all-party House of Commons vote to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. The report identified that 143,200 children live in poverty in Alberta.

With support from the Ministry of Human Services the research to support social workers in the ministry was completed. The report was prepared by Dr. Val Kinjerski and is titled Supervision, The Cornerstone for Caseworkers to Flourish.

In October Public Interest Alberta (PIA) held a 10th anniversary celebration. The event included a presentation video on the history of PIA and the successes and achievements of grassroots projects over the past ten years. ACSW has been a partner of PIA from the beginning. With the numerous changes at the provincial government level it has been difficult to build relationships as ministers and staff have changed. Our
We will continue to make efforts to engage ministers including Minister Klimchuk and Minister Mandel.

We have continued dialogue with Canadian Association of Social Workers and are moving forth with a vote as to whether or not to rejoin the CASW. A sub-committee has compiled the background documents to provide historical context of the decision and the discussions that have taken place.

A key piece of the work that is being done by the national regulators group is on inter-jurisdictional practice. Lynn Labreque King, Executive Director & Registrar is chair on a national committee working on this issue.

Over the past year we have had two of our government appointed public members complete their appointments. I would like to thank Marija Bicanic and Austin Madron for their service to ACSW as public members. They have been great assets to our Council. With this, in November we welcomed a new public member Murray Hiebert to Council. Our other public member, Lyle Berge, has been confirmed for an additional 3 year term. We continue to wait for two more appointed members.

I would also like to thank the Council members who have completed their terms on Council. Timothy Wild, Cynthia Gallop and Richard Sheldon have all made significant contributions to Council and their commitment to ACSW is greatly appreciated.

We have many other volunteers who commit countless hours to our organization. Regulatory committee members, area coordinators, conference organizers, practicum students, and others are integral the work that we accomplish. The work that these people do is indicative of their commitment to the profession and to the organization.

I cannot say enough good things about our excellent staff. We are very fortunate to have a group of conscientious, committed and talented professionals working for ACSW. I don’t know that our members really appreciate the amount of work that our staff do on their behalf.

As we move forward to a time with economic challenges we must be diligent in our resolve to protect the interests of our most vulnerable citizens. We know that historically, programs and services to vulnerable people are often seen by politicians to be expendable services. Upcoming provincial and national elections are good times to ensure that issues are brought forward. It is up to social workers to ensure that the interests of our most vulnerable clients are given priority in campaign discussions.

We have lots of work ahead of us. I am a strong believer that ‘together we are stronger’. If we work together we can accomplish great things. I look forward to a very exciting year!