

RhetCanada President's Report 2025

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Reflecting on the past two years as RhetCanada's president, I am encouraged by the ever-expanding scope of our members' research into the theory, practice, and intersections of rhetoric. Between an exciting Montreal conference in June 2024, an erudite sophist conference in December 2024, and our recent gathering in June at George Brown College in Toronto, RhetCanada has continued to draw veteran rhetoricians, newcomers, students, and online attendees joining us from around the globe.

I am grateful to the many members coming back year after year to maintain our strong traditions of intellectual and interpersonal hospitality, diverse and rigorous research, and generous mentorship. I'm particularly grateful to Shannon Lodoen, David Beard, and Rency Luan for committing to help us with next year's conferences, and to Bruce Dadey for his trusty support on many fronts as past president. I'm thankful for Monique Kampher, Kyle Gerber, Sarah Casey, and Sean Zwagerman on our executive committee, for the help of Randy Harris, Tess Laidlaw, and Jeffrey Orr in selecting and improving our conference papers, and for all the new members who bring energy to our conferences.

Our most recent 2025 online and in-person conferences saw new types of events that built on RhetCanada's traditional conference structure—discussions on the global state of rhetoric research, student-oriented job and publishing sessions, and casual Projects in Progress updates. These developments, however, seem quite small compared to what's in store for 2026.

Our next in-person conference, to be held in Waterloo in late May, has emerged over the past six months under rather exceptional circumstances, and I hope it will be exceptionally memorable (in the good way, of course). As dozens of conference planners busied themselves with preparing for Congress 2025, they were startled by the news that Congress 2026 wouldn't be happening (at least in the traditional sense of allowing dozens of associations to physically convene in one central location). For RhetCanada, this predicament has led to a kairotic opportunity: we'll be partnering with the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW) for a large, joint conference, which will also feature the launch of the Rhetoricon project (led by Randy Harris). Thoughtfully proposed by Sarah Banting, the CASDW president, this plan means that we'll be able to share resources and common interests. We've selected Saint Jerome's University (a college of the University of Waterloo) as our host, which should be a friendly and convenient location for many attendees. In light of the complexities of this plan, we decided to move the online conference to late January and use a lightning papers and "projects in progress" model, so that it builds anticipation for the summer conference without interfering with in-person conference submissions or scheduling.

Given the bespoke nature of next summer's conference, looking past 2026 seems particularly difficult. Based on my experiences this year, however, I'd say we have two long-term challenges or goals:

1. Managing and dividing the conference organizing workload to make it more fair and efficient. For all the conferences in my memory, RhetCanada's president has been the lead conference organizer, responsible for the vast majority of the conference tasks. This model, which isn't standard among other associations, must be reformed if we continue to grow—and to make growth, in numbers and in quality of experience, possible in the first place. Changing this model will give the president the capacity to work on all the emerging opportunities and problems, and the big-picture issues, that deserve their attention.
2. Recruiting and retaining a healthy group of stable, core members, who can become future leaders of our association and/or set a high standard of research. In other words, we should aim to build long-term relationships that ensure people return—we need a larger group of reliable members able and willing to lead us into the future.

During our meeting at George Brown College, we began working on these two goals, and further insights will no doubt follow.

The coming year will be an ambitious one for our association, and I'm grateful and excited for all the contributors to our online conference in early 2026, and our in-person conference in Waterloo next May!