



**NOVEMBER 22, 2012 WAS A LAW SOCIETY DAY TO REMEMBER. FOR 10 HOURS BENCHERS DEBATED ISSUES IMPORTANT TO THE PROFESSION. DECISIONS DID NOT SATISFY ALL VIEWPOINTS BUT DEMONSTRATED A VIBRANT AND TRANSPARENT, REGULATORY BODY FOCUSED ON THE REGULATION OF THE PROFESSION IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.**

## ARTICLING TASK FORCE

Convocation decisively approved a 3 to 5 year pilot project, that will allow lawyer licensing candidates to either article or complete a Law Practice Program beginning in the 2014 - 2015 licensing year.

The debate was webcast and can be viewed at <http://live.lawsocietygazette.ca/> together with twitter comments.

The enormously difficult task of implementing the approved policy now falls to the Professional Development and Competence Committee of the Law Society. It must create a new licensing track and identify 300 to 400 suitable co-op placements for those who cannot find articles or choose the Program instead. Without the placements, the Program cannot proceed.

Once the Committee produces the implementation and costing report, Convocation will have another opportunity to consider the wisdom of its decision to proceed with the Pathways to the Profession Report. Stay tuned for further developments.

## PARENTAL LEAVE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Since 2009, the Law Society has provided financial assistance to Lawyers in firms of five or less with no access to other benefits at a fixed sum of \$750 a week for up to 12 weeks. The actuarial cost estimate for 2013 for 73 applicants is \$627,000.

Termination of the program was recommended by the Audit and Finance Committee. The Equity and Aboriginal Issues Committee was of the opposite view and sought approval for a modified program becoming permanent. The debate in Convocation considered the Federal Employment Insurance Act and recognized that many of the program beneficiaries have household incomes over \$100,000. Also 47% of them closed their practice during their parental leave notwithstanding that the program goal was to support Lawyers in the maintenance of their practice during the leave period.

Convocation was unable to make a long-term, permanent decision based on the information at hand. However starting in 2014, only lawyers with net annual practice income below \$50,000 will be able to access the program to cover overhead costs of parents while on maternity or paternity leave. More analysis will be undertaken to consider the program's effectiveness before a final decision is made.

## BUDGET

As part of the long day, Convocation approved a 2013 Budget resulting in an increased fee for a practicing lawyer to \$1851 from \$1826. That \$25.00 increase was only achieved because the Finance Committee allocated \$8.4 million from an accumulated fund balance. We are deficit financing. Lawyers would otherwise have been required to pay an additional \$206 if the accumulated fund balance had not been available. The Law Society is spending more money to maintain its operations than it receives. (Remember, Lawyers also pay an additional \$3,350.00 for the 2013 base LAWPRO premium.

## LIBRARYCO BUDGET

The approved Budget includes Lawyers' contributions of \$205 each for the operation of libraries. This represents a \$2.00 increase but was only achieved by drawing upon \$218,000 of prior year surpluses and a Law Foundation grant of \$722,000. The debate about funding libraries now at a cost in excess of \$8 million will continue yearly

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## CONVOCATION REPORTS:

All reports to Convocation can be viewed at <http://www.lsuc.on.ca> in order to more fully understand the issues facing Convocation, you may wish to review previous editions of Banack's Bencher News at <http://banackresolutions.com/bencher-newsletter/>.

If you would like to either receive this newsletter via email or be removed from the subscription list, please send a message with your instructions to: [larry@banackresolutions.com](mailto:larry@banackresolutions.com)

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## HOLIDAY WISHES:

Have a Happy, Healthy, Safe Holiday and New Year Season.